

IELTS Vocabulary Topics

Family Word List

Word/phrase	Meaning	Example
Spouse	A wife or husband.	I've been married to my spouse for 20 years.
Sibling	A brother or sister.	John has five siblings, three sisters and two brothers.
In-laws	The relatives of your spouse.	It's important to have a good relationship with your in-laws. Especially your mother in-law.
Foster parents	People who have children living with their family for a period of time.	She lived with various foster parents during her teenage years.
Strict	Limiting someone's behavior.	My parents were very strict when it came to school studies.
Easy-going	Not easily upset or worried.	My boss is easy-going about time keeping. He doesn't get angry when we are late.
Obedient	Following the rules and regulations without question.	She was a very obedient child. She did everything her parents asked without complaint.
Raise	To take care of someone until they are grown up.	My sister raised four kids on her own after she got divorced.
Family values	Beliefs about how a family should behave.	Our family values included hard work and loyalty to each other.
Great grandparents	The parents of your grandparents.	My great grandparents originally emigrated here from Ireland.
Ground rules	Rules telling how people should behave.	My parents had very strict ground rules about doing homework before dinner.
Sibling rivalry	Competition between siblings.	There was a lot of sibling rivalry in my family especially when it came to who got the best exam results.
Nephew	The son of your sister or brother.	My nephew Jim is only 5 years younger than me.
Niece	The daughter of your brother or sister.	My niece was the first to graduate from college in my family.
Cousin	The children of your aunt or uncle.	Every summer we spent our holidays with our cousins at the seaside.
Nuclear family	A family consisting of two parents and their children but not including other relatives.	The average nuclear family today has two children.

Extended family	A family that includes relatives such as grandparents, uncles, aunts etc.	We have so many relatives in our extended family that it is hard to remember all their names.
Immediate family	The closest family members such as spouse, siblings, and children.	We only buy Christmas presents for our immediate family.
Bonding	Developing close personal relationships with someone.	Going on holiday together is a good opportunity for families to bond.
Childcare	Looking after children in a formal, usually paid, setting.	After school childcare is very popular today because both parents are working.
Babysitting	Looking after children in an informal setting.	My sister earns extra money babysitting her nephew.
Single parent	Someone who has children but no spouse or partner.	Being a single parent can be quite demanding without the support of a partner.
Dual income	A family where both parents earn a salary.	Because of the rising cost of living, most families are dual income these days.
Guardian	People who are legally appointed to look after children in their parent's absence.	The court appointed a guardian after his parents passed away.
Divorced	Previously married but not anymore.	They got divorced after a very difficult marriage.
Nurture	To take care and help children.	She doesn't work. She prefers to stay at home and nurture her children.
Adopt	To legally take someone else's child into your family.	They don't have any kids, but they are hoping to adopt.
Orphan	A child whose parents are dead.	She was an orphan adopted by a wealthy family.
Maternal/Paternal	A mother's/father's feeling and behavior towards their child.	Studies suggest that maternal care has a more positive impact than paternal.
Relative	A member of your family.	All my relatives were present at my wedding.
Blood relative	A member of your family by birth.	I don't have many blood relatives but lots of in-laws.

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Family Idioms

Helicopter parents

Meaning: Over attentive parents.

Example: My aunt supervises everything her daughter does and never lets her make decisions. She's a real *helicopter parent*.

Spitting image

Meaning: To look very similar to one of your family members.

Example: She was the *spitting image* of her mother. Some people thought they were sisters.

The apple of one's eye

Meaning: Someone's favorite.

Example: Jenny is *the apple of her* grandparent's *eye*. They really adore her.

A chip off the old block

Meaning: To have a similar ability or personality to a parent.

Example: James is a professional footballer just like his father. He's *a chip off the old block*.

Breadwinner

Meaning: The person who financially supports the family.

Example: My father is the *breadwinner* in our family. He works 6 days a week to provide for us.

Run in the family

Meaning: Family members have the same personal or physical quality.

Example: Baldness *runs in our family*. All my brothers lost the hair before they were 30 years old.

Child's play

Meaning: Something that is very easy to do.

Example: My sister is incredibly smart. Passing all her school exam was *a piece of cake* for her.

Wear the pants

Meaning: To have the authority in the family or relationship.

Example: When we were growing up, my mother *wore the pants* in our family. She made all the important decisions.

Black sheep

Meaning: A person who causes problems to the family through bad behavior or doing something different.

Example: James is the *black sheep* of the family. He passed all his exams but chose not to go to college.

Born with a silver spoon in one's mouth

Meaning: To come from a wealthy family

Example: Mike was *born with a silver spoon in his mouth* and never lacked anything. His father was a multi-millionaire banker.

Blood is thicker than water

Meaning: The relationship with one's family is stronger than any other relationship.

Example: I always agree with my brother when he argues with his company. *Blood is thicker than water*.