

Welcome to the APTIS Preparation Material

You are now nearly ready for your exit-Aptis test. Congratulations for getting this far 😊

The aim of this material is to:

- 1) Refresh your memory about the **procedures**, style and presentation of the test.
- 2) Give you further **practice** at the speaking, grammar and writing sections.
- 3) Provide you with **tips** for the test to give you the best possible chance at moving up one level on the Aptis framework and so completing the course successfully.

Available Marks and Timings

Language ability in all four English skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). Component	Number of Items	Time
Grammar & Vocabulary	50	25 minutes
Reading	25	30 minutes
Listening	25	50 minutes
Speaking	4 tasks	12 minutes
Writing	4 tasks	50 minutes

Listening

What to expect: You will begin with the listening part of the exam. There are 25 short recordings that you will listen to with headphones. These might be answer phone messages or short conversations for example. They start off easy and get more difficult as you go through them.

Grading System Descriptors – Listening

C	Has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast native speed.
B2	Can understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation.
B1	Can understand straightforward factual information about common every day or job related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.
A2	Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
A1	Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning.
A0	Not enough language knowledge demonstrated to allow for any meaningful inferences about the candidate's ability.

Listening Tips

- **Section 1 & 2:** **Don't** fall behind the tape-script. For example, many students fall behind and end up answering question 2 while listening 3 is beginning. You will lose a lot of marks this way. You don't have much time - but it's better to lose 1 question that you are not sure of than to lose all the questions because you fell behind. You need to be reading the question/answer options for the next question before that listening begins. Remember that you also have 5 minutes at the start to read the questions, so read these sections then.
- **Section 2:** Listen for the **question word** (e.g. when, where...etc). Most of the answer options include the same content words and the only difference relates to the question word (e.g. where vs. why...etc). If you hear the question word you are already half way.
- **Section 3:** The questions follow a logical sequence and it is a listening comprehension task as opposed to 'scanning', so you are much better just listening to make sure you get the main ideas. Of course you should still read the questions but many students write and then rub out the first question and therefore losing the remaining 3.
- **Section 4:** This is a very difficult section (C1+). Don't try to understand everything. Read the 3 questions and pick out key words. Then as you listen just '*scan*' or listening out for the information related to those words.

To finish off this section, try the online demo for the listening test.

- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisListeningDemo/>

Writing

What to expect: After you have completed the listening section you will then be able to take a little time to relax before you start the writing section. The writing section will test your ability to write both formally and informally.

- 1) You will start off with a familiar subject – writing your personal information into a spread sheet for example.
- 2) Next, you will write a short paragraph (about 30 words) on a more unfamiliar subject. For example – explain why people like taking photographs.
- 3) The third part is more flexible. There can be a variety of tasks. It usually tests your writing creativity. For example, write a short paragraph in a blog about why you like photography.
- 4) Part four will test your ability to write formal and informal emails on the same subject. For example, a tourist company has cancelled your holiday but refuses to refund you the full amount. Write an email to a close friend explaining why you're unhappy and next write an email to the tourist company explaining why you're not satisfied with their decision.

Grading System Descriptors – Writing

C	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
B2	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest and shows an ability to use different registers within written texts
B1	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within his field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.
A2	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors like 'and', 'but' and 'because'
A1	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.
A0	Not enough language knowledge demonstrated to allow for any meaningful inferences about the candidate's ability.

Tips for Writing

- You have written a lot on this course in the online component, on Facebook and in the classroom. So, your writing is actually very good but the hard part is going to be the genre (e.g. letter of complaint). You only need to focus on two genres and these are 1. Letters & 2. Essays. Pay close attention to what the questions asks for and give them exactly what they want in terms of length, tone, format...etc. No matter how well you write, if you don't stick to the expected **genre** conventions you will not do as well as you could.

Speaking

What to expect: Next is the speaking section. You will wear headphones and a microphone. You will listen to questions and then answer them for a set period of time. A time-counter will show you how long to talk for. Similarly to the writing section, topics will start off more familiar (family, friends, work etc.) and become more unfamiliar by the end of the text.

- Part one, three familiar subjects. 30 seconds long each. Familiar subject e.g. "Tell me about your school".
- Part two, you will describe a picture in as much details as you can. Next you will have two follow up questions about the picture to answer.
- In part three you will see two more pictures. This time you will have to compare the pictures. For example, you might see a picture of a supermarket and a local/family shop. After comparing the pictures you will then have two follow up questions. For example, why do people sometimes go to supermarkets and other times to local shops?
- Part four is the extended speaking section. You will be asked three questions and given three minutes to answer them. For example,
 - Tell me about a time when you got lost.
 - How did you feel?
 - What do people do when they get lost?

Grading System Descriptors – Speaking

C	Can produce clear, smoothly flowing well-structured speech with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
B2	Can give clear, systematically developed descriptions and presentations on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest, with appropriate highlighting of significant points, and relevant supporting detail.
B1	Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within his/her field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points.
A2	Can give a simple description or presentation of people, living or working conditions, daily routines likes/dislikes, etc. as a short series of simple phrases and sentences linked into a list.
A1	Can produce simple descriptions on mainly personal topics.
A0	Not enough language knowledge demonstrated to allow for any meaningful inferences about the candidate's ability.

Tips for Speaking

- You need to answer the questions fully and talk more, as quite a lot say 'I don't know about it' or 'I have nothing to say' or just answer 'Yes/No'. Try to elaborate whenever you can.
- Try not to repeat things you've said. Expand upon your answers and move the topic forward.
- Practice describing pictures / comparing two pictures. Even if you feel you don't have the right vocabulary, try to speak impromptu, and explain whatever ideas you have.
- In the long turn (...1 min. preparation – 2 min. speech) don't spend the preparation time on writing full sentences because this will only be enough for 20-30 seconds. Just write bullet points (single words) which will act as a prompt for you to talk about more freely. If you don't fill 2 minutes you will not get the full score.
- Answer the question accurately. For example, if the question says '**Tell me about a musical festival in your country**' don't talk about festivals generally – it should only be a music festival. Or, '**Tell me about a close relative of yours**' the question is actually about ONE relative and not all of your family.
- Overall, try not to feel nervous while speaking; exams can actually be an enjoyable experience.
- Finally, speak **confidently** and clearly. You will be fine!

Use of English and Reading – Paper Test

The paper starts off with 25 grammar questions. They start off easy and get more difficult. They are multi-choice answers A, B or C. Next comes the vocabulary section. Again, 25 marks are available here. This might be matching synonyms for example.

Tips for Use of English

- This is not too difficult; however there are some tips to help. A lot of the options are based on collocations (i.e. words that commonly go together) so don't try to analyse the language (subject, verb...etc.). Sometimes analysis will not help you because all options are grammatically possible.

Good advice is to **"trust your ears"**. So for example in this question: *It's a _____ your wife can't come (a.harm, b.sorrow, c.shame, d.shock)*, I'd like you to just 'sound' the options (i.e. say them to yourself and listen for which is the most natural.) There will definitely be one which sounds more natural because you have heard/read 'It's a shame' before but you have never heard the other 3. So basically, when it comes to collocations, if it sounds correct it is...

- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisGrammarVocabDemo/>

Reading

Once you have finished the grammar and vocabulary you can have a few minutes to relax before moving on to the reading section. There can be a variety of tasks for example – missing words. You must place missing words into the reading text.

Or you might be given the opening paragraph of a short story. The following paragraphs are jumbled up and you have to put them in the right order.

This section finishes with a longer reading. One example of a task here would be to match each paragraph of the story with a suitable heading (topic sentence).

Grading System Descriptors – Reading

C	Can understand and interpret critically virtually all forms of the written language.
B2	Can read with a large degree of independence, adapting style and speed of reading to different texts and purposes, and using appropriate reference sources selectively.
B1	Can read straightforward factual texts on subjects related to his/her field and interest with a satisfactory level of comprehension.
A2	Can understand short, simple texts on familiar matters of a concrete type which consist of high frequency everyday or job-related language.
A1	Can understand very short, simple texts a single phrase at a time, picking up familiar names, words and basic phrases and rereading as required.
A0	Not enough language knowledge demonstrated to allow for any meaningful inferences about the candidate's ability.

Tips for Reading

- As with *English in Use*, don't only focus on analysis (subject, verb...etc.). Reading is ultimately about understanding and so the first thing you need to go for is **meaning**. Once you understand what they are saying - you are 50% nearer to success. Don't rush through the easy questions and then waste time on the last question which is C1+. Work steadily and make sure you get the easy ones right as they are all worth the same number of points!
- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisReadingDemo/>

Finally, is just to wish you the best of luck for the test. You'll do great!!!