



BEC Preliminary Reading Overview – Teacher's Notes

Description

Students do a matching exercise to think about different ways of reading, a prediction exercise on what skills are tested in the Reading paper, and finally a True/False exercise about the structure and content of the Reading paper.

Time required: 30 minutes

Materials required:

- *Student's Worksheet* (one per student)

Aims:

- *to familiarise students with the structure of the Reading test*
- *to make clear to students what is expected of them*

Procedure

1. Ask students what different types of things they've read in the past week, both in English and in their own language [e.g. blogs, web pages, newspapers, magazines, advertisements, instructions, leaflets, stories, etc].
2. Ask what they read carefully, reading every word from the beginning to the end [e.g. reading a story or novel for pleasure]. Ask what they read to get the main ideas [e.g. a report or website, where they didn't need to know all the details]. Ask what they read to find specific information [e.g. an advertisement for a conference]. Ask what they read to check if it was correct [e.g. an email or report they had written]. Point out that we read in different ways for different purposes.
3. Give each student a **Student's Worksheet**. Ask them to read Exercise 1 and match the situations to the best way of reading. Elicit the answers when they are ready [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
4. Explain that you want the students to get to know the Reading part of the Reading and Writing test. Ask them, in pairs, to look at Exercise 2 and decide if they expect each skill to be tested in the Reading paper. Point out that there is an overview of the paper at the end of the worksheet, and they might find it useful to refer to that – although some words might be hard to understand.
5. Check their answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
6. Ask students to do Exercise 3 in pairs, using the summary at the end of the worksheet to read for specific information. Tell them that they won't be able to find all the answers, but encourage them to make sensible guesses.
7. Elicit the answers to each question. [See **Key to Student's Worksheet**.]

Suggested follow-up activities

1. Give students a copy of the Answer Sheet (page 25 of the handbook, found at <https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/exams/professionalenglish/becpreliminary>), and ask them to keep it and fill it in when they do sample tasks. Note that the pages from the handbook need to be enlarged.



BEC Preliminary Reading Overview activity – Answer Keys

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 1

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. C

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 2

1. Yes, in Part 1
2. No – articles in the test are based on sources for native English speakers, but are simplified to be at BEC Preliminary level),
3. Yes, in all parts
4. Yes, particularly in Part 6
5. Yes, in all parts
6. Yes, particularly in Part 5
7. No – that would be part of a test of scientific English, not general or business English
8. Yes, particularly in Part 5
9. Yes, in all parts
10. Yes, sometimes in Part 1 and always in Part 3
11. No – that would be a maths test. Where figures appear in the test, i.e. sometimes in Part 1 and always in Part 3, candidates are never required to carry out arithmetical processes on them.
12. Yes, in Part 1
13. Yes, in most Parts
14. No – everything in the test is spelt correctly

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 3

1. Right. Each of the four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking – gives 25% of the marks.
2. Wrong. The final result depends on the candidate's total score in all the papers combined.
3. Right
4. Wrong. That time includes the Writing tasks, so it's sensible to spend no more than one hour on reading.



5. Right. They are based on genuine business materials and situations, and are adapted to the level of BEC Preliminary.
6. Wrong. You should aim to read quickly for the overall meaning, then to look for the answers to specific questions. It is usually unnecessary to understand every word.
7. Wrong
8. Right
9. Right
10. Wrong. That's true of Parts 1-6, but for Part 7 candidates must write words, phrases or numbers.
11. Right. You can write on the question paper if you want to, but you must write your answers on the Answer Sheet and give that in to be marked. It's important to be familiar with the Answer Sheet.
12. Wrong. You must write on the Answer Sheet in pencil, as it's read by a computer.



BEC Preliminary Reading Overview – Student's Worksheet

Exercise 1

Different ways of reading

- Look at these situations, 1-4.
 - For each situation, choose the best way of reading, A-D.
-
- 1 You look at a company's website to see if you would like to apply for a job with the company, and you only have a few minutes.
 - 2 You look at two product brochures to decide which supplier to use.
 - 3 You look at a sign in a language you don't know.
 - 4 You look at a form that you have just filled in.
-
- A reading to work out the meaning from the situation
 - B reading for specific information
 - C reading to check you have done it accurately
 - D reading for the main points (the gist)

Exercise 2

- Which of these skills do you think the Reading paper might test?
 - Tick (✓) the skills you think are tested and put a cross (x) by the skills that are not.
 - The overview on the last page of this worksheet may help you.
-
- 1 Understanding short notices and messages
 - 2 Understanding long articles about business topics written for native English speakers
 - 3 Understanding common business vocabulary
 - 4 Understanding how grammatical structures help to make the meaning clear
 - 5 Understanding factual statements
 - 6 Understanding a writer's opinions
 - 7 Understanding scientific vocabulary
 - 8 Understanding the writer's purpose in a text, e.g. to persuade, inform or request
 - 9 Understanding different ways of expressing the same idea



- 10 Understanding bar charts, pie charts and graphs
- 11 Adding numbers together
- 12 Finding information in an email, advertisement, etc
- 13 Finding the main point of a piece of text
- 14 Correcting the writer's spelling mistakes

Exercise 3

- Decide if each statement is right or wrong.
 - If a statement is wrong, write the correct information.
 - You can find some of the information in the overview of the Reading part of the test: Read the overview for specific information.
 - If you don't know, your teacher will tell you at the end.
- 1 25% of the total marks in the BEC Preliminary exam come from the Reading paper.
.....
 - 2 You have to pass the Reading section of the paper in order to pass the BEC Preliminary exam.
 - 3 There are seven Reading sections.
 - 4 You have 1 hour 30 minutes for the Reading paper.
 - 5 The texts are adapted from real business sources or situations.
 - 6 It's a good idea to read every word in the Reading texts.
 - 7 You can use a dictionary during the test.
 - 8 There are 45 questions.
 - 9 There is one mark for every question.
 - 10 The answer to every question is a letter (A, B, etc).
 - 11 You must write your answers on an Answer Sheet.
 - 12 You must write your answers in pen.



Overview of the Reading parts of the Reading and Writing test

Paper format	The paper contains seven Reading parts and two Writing parts. Each Reading part contains a text or several shorter texts and a corresponding comprehension task.
Length of texts	750 – 900 words approximately overall. Some texts have only about 20 words and some have a maximum of 400 words.
Questions	45 Reading questions.
Text types	Authentic business-related texts from the following: newspaper and magazine articles, business letters, product descriptions, reports, minutes, advertisements, notices, timetables, leaflets and messages.
Task types	Multiple-choice, matching, right/wrong/doesn't say, multiple-choice cloze, form-filling, note completion.
Task focus	Understanding gist and global meaning, detailed comprehension of factual material, interpreting visual information, grammatical accuracy, understanding text structure and transferring information.
Answer format	For Parts 1 to 6 of the Reading paper, candidates indicate their answers by shading the lozenges on the answer sheet. For Part 7 candidates write a one- or two-word answer, or a number onto their answer sheet.
Timing	1 hour 30 minutes for Reading and Writing
Marks	Each Reading question carries 1 mark. The scores are weighted to 30 and are worth 25% of the total exam.



PART	Task type and format	Task focus	Number of questions
1	Multiple choice There are five short texts. Each text is followed by a three-option multiple-choice task.	Reading for gist and global meaning	5
2	Matching One text with five questions. Candidates match the questions to a part of the text labelled A – H. Three of the parts A – H are redundant.	Reading for vocabulary and meaning	5
3	Matching There are eight graphs or charts (or one graphic with eight distinct parts) and five questions. Candidates match the questions to their corresponding graphs which are labelled A – H. Three of the graphs or parts of the graph are redundant.	Interpreting visual information	5
4	Right / Wrong / Doesn't say A single text with seven 3-option multiple-choice statements. Candidates indicate whether the statement is A Right, B Wrong or C Doesn't say.	Reading for detailed, factual information	7
5	Multiple choice A single text with six 3-option multiple-choice statements or questions. Candidates have to choose the correct option.	Reading for gist and specific meaning	6
6	3-option multiple-choice cloze A single text. Candidates have to select the correct word from three options to complete twelve gaps.	Reading for grammatical accuracy and understanding sentence structure	12
7	Form-filling, note completion Two short texts providing information. Candidates have to complete five gaps in a form based on this information.	Reading and information transfer	5