**Test format – Reading (60 minutes)**

The Reading section consists of 40 questions, designed to test a wide range of reading skills. These include reading for gist, reading for main ideas, reading for detail, skimming, understanding logical argument and recognising writers' opinions, attitudes and purpose.  
  
**IELTS Academic test**- this includes three long texts which range from the descriptive and factual to the discursive and analytical. These are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers.  They have been selected for a non-specialist audience but are appropriate for people entering university courses or seeking professional registration.  
   

**IELTS Academic Reading description**

**Paper format:** Three reading passages with a variety of questions using a number of task types.

**Timing:** 60 minutes

**No. of questions:**40

**Task types:**A variety of question types are used, chosen from the following; multiple choice, identifying information, identifying the writer’s views/claims, matching information, matching headings, matching features, matching sentence endings, sentence completion, summary completion, note completion, table completion, flow-chart completion, diagram label completion and short-answer questions.

**Sources:** Texts are taken from books, journals, magazines and newspapers, and have been written for a non-specialist audience. All the topics are of general interest. They deal with issues which are interesting, recognisably appropriate and accessible to test takers entering undergraduate or postgraduate courses or seeking professional registration. The passages may be written in a variety of styles, for example narrative, descriptive or discursive/argumentative. At least one text contains detailed logical argument. Texts may contain non-verbal materials such as diagrams, graphs or illustrations. If texts contain technical terms a simple glossary is provided.

**Answering:** Test takers are required to transfer their answers to an answer sheet during the time allowed for the test. No extra time is allowed for transfer. Care should be taken when writing answers on the answer sheet as poor spelling and grammar are penalised.

**Marks:**Each question is worth 1 mark.

**IELTS Academic Reading in detail**

A detailed look at the paper with links to related resources.

**Task type 1 – Multiple choice**

**Task type and format:** Test takers are required to choose the best answer from four alternatives (A, B, C or D), or the best two answers from five alternatives (A, B, C, D or E), or the best three answers from seven alternatives (A, B, C, D, E, F or G). Test takers write the letter of the answer they have chosen on the answer sheet. The questions may involve completing a sentence, where they are given the first part of a sentence and then choose the best way to complete it from the options, or could involve complete questions; with the test takers choosing the option which best answers them.  
  
The questions are in the same order as the information in the text: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be located in the text before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.

**Task focus:**Multiple choice tests a wide range of reading skills, including detailed understanding of specific points or an overall understanding of the main points of the text.

**No. of questions:**Variable

**Task type 2 – Identifying information**

**Task type and format:** Test takers will be given a number of statements and asked: ‘Do the following statements agree with the information in the text?’ They are then required to write ‘true’, ‘false’ or ‘not given’ in the boxes on their answer sheets.  
  
It is important to understand the difference between 'false' and 'not given'. 'False' means that the passage states the opposite of the statement in question; 'not given' means that the statement is neither confirmed nor contradicted by the information in the passage.  
  
Students need to understand that any knowledge they bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.

**Task focus:** Identifying information assesses the test takers’ ability to recognise particular points of information conveyed in the text. It can thus be used with more factual texts.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 3 – Identifying writer’s views/claims**

**Task type and format:** Test takers will be given a number of statements and asked: ‘Do the following statements agree with the views/claims of the writer?’ They are required to write ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘not given’ in the boxes on their answer sheet.  
  
It is important to understand the difference between 'no' and 'not given'. 'No' means that the views or claims of the writer explicitly disagree with the statement, i.e. the writer somewhere expresses the view or makes a claim which is opposite to the one given in the question; 'not given' means that the view or claim is neither confirmed nor contradicted.  
  
Students need to understand that any knowledge they bring with them from outside the passage should not play a part when deciding on their answers.

**Task focus:** This type of task assesses the test takers’ ability to recognise opinions or ideas, and so it is often used with discursive or argumentative texts.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 4 – Matching information**

**Task type and format:** Test takers are required to locate specific information within the lettered paragraphs/sections of a text, and to write the letters of the correct paragraphs/sections in the boxes on their answer sheet.  
  
They may be asked to find: specific details, an example, a reason, a description, a comparison, a summary, an explanation. They will not necessarily need to find information in every paragraph/section of the text, but there may be more than one piece of information that test takers need to locate in a given paragraph/section. When this is the case, they will be told that they can use any letter more than once.  
  
This type of task can be used with any text as it tests a wide range of reading skills, from locating detail to recognising a summary or definition.

**Task focus:** Matching information assesses the test takers’ ability to scan for specific information. Unlike task type 5, Matching headings, it is concerned with specific information rather than with the main idea.

**No. of questions:**Variable

**Task type 5 – Matching headings**

**Task type and format:**Test takers are given a list of headings, usually identified with lower-case Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, etc,). A heading will refer to the main idea of the paragraph or section of the text. Test takers must match the heading to the correct paragraphs or sections, which are marked alphabetically. Test takers write the appropriate Roman numerals in the boxes on their answer sheets. There will always be more headings than there are paragraphs or sections, so that some headings will not be used. It is also possible that some paragraphs or sections may not be included in the task. One or more paragraphs or sections may already be matched with a heading as an example for test takers. This task type is used with texts that contain paragraphs or sections with clearly defined themes.

**Task focus:** Matching headers tests the test takers’ ability to recognise the main idea or theme in the paragraphs or sections of a text, and to distinguish main ideas from supporting ones.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 6 – Matching features**

**Task type and format:**Test takers are required to match a set of statements or pieces of information to a list of options. The options are a group of features from the text, and are identified by letters. Test takers may, for example, be required to match different research findings to a list of researchers, or characteristics to age groups, events to historical periods, etc. It is possible that some options will not be used, and that others may be used more than once. The instructions will inform test takers if options may be used more than once.

**Task focus:**Matching features assesses the test takers’ ability to recognise relationships and connections between facts in the text and their ability to recognise opinions and theories. It may be used both with factual information, as well as opinion-based discursive texts. Test takers need to be able to skim and scan the text in order to locate the required information and to read for detail.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 7 – Matching sentence endings**

**Task type and format:** Test takers are given the first half of a sentence based on the text and asked to choose the best way to complete it from a list of possible options. They will have more options to choose from than there are questions. Test takers must write the letter they have chosen on the answer sheet. The questions are in the same order as the information in the passage: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.

**Task focus:**Matching sentence endings assesses the test takers’ ability to understand the main ideas within a sentence.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 8 – Sentence completion**

**Task type and format:**Test takers complete sentences in a given number of words taken from the text. They must write their answers on the answer sheet. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. ‘NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage’, ‘ONE WORD ONLY’ or ‘NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS’. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the passage: that is, the answer to the first question in this group will be found before the answer to the second question, and so on. This task type may be used with any type of text.

**Task focus:** Matching sentence endings assesses the test takers’ ability to locate detail/specific information.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 9 – Summary, note, table, flow-chart completion**

**Task type and format:** Test takers are given a summary of a section of the text, and are required to complete it with information drawn from the text. The summary will usually be of only one part of the passage rather than the whole. The given information may be in the form of: several connected sentences of text (referred to as a summary), several notes (referred to as notes), a table with some of its cells empty or partially empty (referred to as a table), a series of boxes or steps linked by arrows to show a sequence of events, with some of the boxes or steps empty or partially empty (referred to as a flow-chart).

The answers will not necessarily occur in the same order as in the text. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text.

There are two variations of this task type. Test takers may be asked either to select words from the text or to select from a list of answers.  
Where words have to be selected from the passage, the instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. ‘NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage’, ‘ONE WORD ONLY’ or ‘NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS’. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark.

Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. Where a list of answers is provided, they most frequently consist of a single word.

Because this task type often relates to precise factual information, it is often used with descriptive texts.

**Task focus:** Summarising assesses the test takers’ ability to understand details and/or the main ideas of a section of text. In the variations involving a summary or notes, test takers need to be aware of the type of word(s) that will fit into a given gap (for example, whether a noun is needed, or a verb, etc.).

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 10 – Diagram label completion**

**Task type and format:**Test takers are required to complete labels on a diagram, which relates to a description contained in the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. ‘NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage’, ‘ONE WORD ONLY’ or ‘NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS’. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark. Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words will not be tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The answers do not necessarily occur in order in the passage. However, they will usually come from one section rather than the entire text.

The diagram may be of some type of machine, or of parts of a building or of any other element that can be represented pictorially. This task type is often used with texts describing processes or with descriptive texts.

**Task focus:** Diagram label completion assesses the test takers’ ability to understand a detailed description, and to relate it to information presented in the form of a diagram.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**Task type 11 – Short-answer questions**

**Task type and format:** Test takers answer questions, which usually relate to factual information about details in the text. This is most likely to be used with a text that contains a lot of factual information and detail.

Test takers must write their answers in words or numbers on the answer sheet. Test takers must write their answers using words from the text. The instructions will make it clear how many words/numbers test takers should use in their answers, e.g. ‘NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS AND/OR A NUMBER from the passage’, ‘ONE WORD ONLY’ or ‘NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS’. If test takers write more than the number of words asked for, they will lose the mark.  
Numbers can be written using figures or words. Contracted words are not tested. Hyphenated words count as single words. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text.

**Task focus:** Short answer questions assess the test takers’ ability to locate and understand precise information in the text.

**No. of questions:** Variable

**IELTS Academic Reading – how it's marked**

The Academic Reading test is marked by certificated markers, who are regularly monitored to ensure reliability. All answer sheets, after being marked, are further analysed by Cambridge Assessment English.

**Band score conversion**

A Band Score conversion table is produced for each version of the Academic Reading test, which translates scores out of 40 into the IELTS 9-band scale. Scores are reported in whole bands and half bands.