

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE PTE ACADEMIC

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From Author

I am grateful to all those close to me who have supported me in the completion of the book.

The book is dedicated to you the reader. May you always achieve what you set out to do.

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What this book will help you do

This book is written as a step by step guide to enable you to get your desired score in the PTE exam. Whether your end goal is migration to your dream country or enrolling yourself to a university abroad, this English Exam is a stepping stone to realizing your dream.

You will receive actionable tools and techniques that can be put into practice to help you nail the exam. Through this book we are going to navigate the obstacles in our way.

You will specifically learn how you can improve your scores on the various question types. Wherever possible, I have included instructions and resources on how to go about practicing and improving on each question type.

You don't necessarily need to be an expert in English to get your desired score in the PTE exam. You just need to:

1. Understand the specific area that is being tested.
2. Know what can be done to improve on it.
3. Keep practicing consistently till you are at the level where you need to be.

Through this guide I will help you with point 1 and 2. Point 3 lies in your hands. As long you put in the practice wherever required, you will get the results.

How to use this book

I have tried to cover all aspects that will assist you in tackling the exam ranging from attitude and goal setting to tools, tips and techniques on dealing with individual question types.

I have tried to keep the book compact and to the point wherever possible. If you are still short on time and feel a particular section does not apply to you, use the table of contents to skip over to the sections that is most applicable and useful to you. It is up to you to make the most out of it. Read, understand and Practice. Keep practicing till you get there.

My story for some background

The end goal for me was to migrate to another country. I specifically need 'Superior English' i.e. a score of band 79 or more in each of the sections (Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing).

Below are my results:

PTE Mock1 - Breakup L: 77, R: 73, S: 60, W: 84

PTE Mock2 - Breakup L: 89, R: 79, S: 72, W: 90

Actual exam Breakup L: 90, R: 84, S: 90, W: 90

As you can see my specific weak point initially turned out to be speaking, but I had to improve on other areas as well to reach my goal. I didn't want to end up wasting time and money in reattempting the exam.

There was hardly any reliable content out there that broke down every element at the time. I personally spent more than two months researching, identifying and practicing various methods that helped improve my score. By trial and error I have found out what works and what doesn't. I didn't want this to go to waste so I condensed everything I learned into this guide to help people like you to achieve your dreams.

I honestly believe by following this guide you can improve upon areas you face difficulty in.

Attitude and mentality

"Whether you think you can, or you think you can't--you're right."

— Henry Ford

I feel it's important to spend some time on this topic as I have seen students struggling due to lack of correct attitude and mentality going into the exam.

Like any other exam or challenge in life, persistence and self-belief are keys to success.

English may not be your native language and there may be few people out there who have a slight advantage to you in this regard. You need to understand, that using this as an excuse, will not change anything or help you in anyway. Focus on what you can change and improve. If English isn't your first language that's great! You will have an even better success story to tell once you conquer this exam and get your desired score.

On the contrary, there are those who have good command of the English language and show up at the exam over-confident with minimal preparation. This is a recipe for disaster and one you want to avoid.

Whichever category you fall under, know that you can only get better, so stay humble and take some time to familiarize yourself with the format of the exam.

If you are taking this exam it is probably because you will be working, studying or living in a country where English is the language of communication. You will be expected to converse and interact with others in English. As I worked on improving my scores for the exam, I could also observe improvements in the way I communicated with others in English during day to day life.

So keep in mind that your time and efforts in preparation are not going to go to waste even after the exam. The practice and time that you spend can be carried forward in other areas of your life, either now or in the future whenever English is involved.

Goal setting

"The greater danger for most of us isn't that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it." ~ Michelangelo

Research¹ shows that those who write their goals accomplished significantly more than those who do not write their goals. Know what score you want and write it down somewhere. Write it on a small piece of paper and make sure you keep it somewhere you can see it every day. Stick it on the mirror so you see it in the morning. Make a note on your phone and pin it on your [home screen](#). Do what works for you.

The goal I had written was to get 90 in each section of the PTE.

All I needed was 79, so why 90 you ask? Because I rather fall few short of 90 and still fall under superior English than aim for 79 and fall short. I invite you to do the same. If you need competent (50 each) English - Aim for a Proficient (65) English Score. If you need Proficient (65) English – Aim for Superior (79) English score. You get the idea. Do not limit yourself.

Make a commitment to yourself right now that you will stop at nothing to get the results required. Now that we have taken care of these things, are you ready to get started?

¹ <http://www.dominican.edu/academics/ahss/undergraduate-programs/psych/faculty/assets-gail-matthews/researchsummary2.pdf>

Short Exam Overview

PTE Academic assesses listening, reading, speaking and writing all via computer in a single 3 hour test session. To complete a PTE Academic test, you will need to attend a secure Pearson test centre. You will use a computer along with a headset to listen, read and respond to questions.

During the three-hour test session there will be four main parts to the test: speaking, writing, listening and reading. There are twenty different question formats, ranging from multiple choices to essay writing and interpreting information. Strategies to tackle each of these formats are covered in the upcoming sections.

PTE Academic assesses real-life, academic content, so you will hear excerpts from lectures and view graphs and charts. You will hear a range of accents in the test, from British and American to non-native speakers, so you will be exposed to the type of accents you will be encountering in everyday life.

An important thing to keep in mind is that the scoring and assessment is automated and done by a computer program. You are given an erasable notepad for taking notes during the exam. Below is how PTE classifies the exam and various question formats.

PART 1: SPEAKING & WRITING (77 – 93 minutes)

- Personal Introduction
- Read aloud
- Repeat sentence
- Describe image
- Re-tell lecture
- Answer short question
- Summarize written text (one sentence)
- Summarize written text (paragraph)
- Essay (20mins)

PART 2: READING (32 – 41 minutes)

- Multiple choice questions (x2)
- Re-order paragraphs
- Fill in the blanks (x2)
- A ten minute break is optional

PART 3: LISTENING (45 – 57 minutes)

Summarize spoken text
multiple choice x2
Fill the blanks
Highlight the correct summary
Select missing word
Highlight incorrect words
Write from dictation

Overall exam strategy

The Exam is 3 hours long and intense focus during the exam will help you avoid many mistakes.

It is time bound, so speed is a crucial factor as well. During the exam, there will be a timer displayed for each section. It is a good idea to keep an eye on it throughout the exam, so you know if you are lagging behind and need to speed up. You don't want to spend too much time rechecking your answers and then have time run out with questions to go.

You also need to be well versed and prepared on the different question types that you will be tested on. Nothing should come as a surprise during the exam. Here is where all your practice will come into use.

One of the most important parts of your preparation is to know early on what your areas of improvement are. The scored PTE official mock tests available online are particularly useful to help identify this. These mock tests can be taken from home over the internet. You receive scored results similar to what you would receive in the actual exam. This is highly recommended as this is as close as you can get to the actual exam at a fraction of the cost. It makes sense to go for this rather than spend \$150-200 and reappear for the exam.

An alternative way to do this would be to do tests and do a self-assessment. Scoring parameters for each question format is given in subsequent chapters. You can manually compare your answers against these parameters and get an idea of where you stand. For correct/incorrect type answers, doing this will be easier. For some of the speaking and writing answers though this will be a rough guess.

For some of you; your weak area may be speaking, for others it will be reading. You may even need to improve on all sections. Whatever the case may be make sure you identify this early so you can tailor your preparation plan accordingly and know what to focus on.

Preparation plan

*If you love life then don't waste time, because time is all that life is made of –
Bruce Lee*

The preparation time will vary from person to person. Generally, 3-4 weeks with 2 hours per day should be sufficient time for you to familiarize yourself and prepare for the exam. If you are a complete beginner to English and have trouble putting together English sentences, it would obviously require additional time and efforts. If you can read and understand this book, I believe you are at an appropriate level to attempt the exam.

There are few who struggle to make the required time for preparation. If you are one of them, I suggest taking an inventory of how you spend your day and identify tasks that you can eliminate or cut down on for a few weeks till the exam is out of the way.

Basic grammar knowledge is essential for a decent score, as this will be used in almost all sections, so quickly brush up on areas on which you have known issues. Google is your friend here. There is comprehensive content available on the internet for free on this topic.

Your time is valuable and you would want to get the exam over with as soon as possible. A relatively short and dedicated action plan tends to work better than an unorganized preparation with long breaks in between.

On the following page is a suggested study plan for 25 days, which will enable you to get the best PTE score you can, with your current level of English. All of the tasks have been given equal weightage. This is a recommended plan. You can tweak it around as per your requirements and needs. Remember to cover all tasks at least once.

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Day	Task	Time	Notes
1	Speaking Writing	60 minutes 60 minutes	
2	Listening Reading	60 minutes 60 minutes	
3	Speaking Writing	60 minutes 60 minutes	
4	Listening Reading	60 minutes 60 minutes	
5	Grammar brush up	60 minutes 60 minutes	Sort out any grammar related issues observed.
6	Familiarize with exam format. Revisit book.	60 minutes 60 minutes	Know what to expect in upcoming mock. Revisit areas which you are unsure.
7	Day off (optional)		If you couldn't stick to the schedule during the week, this can be a day to catchup
8	Full mock test 1	180 minutes	This should be timed (three hours at a stretch) with no interruptions.
9	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	This is your chance to focus on sections you struggled with in the mock test.
10	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	
11	Speaking Writing	60 minutes 60 minutes	
12	Listening Reading	60 minutes 60 minutes	
13	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	
14	Spell check Grammar check	60 minutes 60 minutes	Visit inventory of misspelled words. Brush up any Grammar issues.
15	Day off (optional)		If you couldn't stick to the schedule during the week, this can be a day to catchup
16	Full mock test 2	180 minutes	This should be timed (three hours at a stretch) with no interruptions.
17	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	

18	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	
19	Speaking Writing	60 minutes 60 minutes	
20	Listening Reading	60 minutes 60 minutes	
21	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	
22	Development section 1 Development section 2	60 minutes 60 minutes	
23	Day off		Take it easy. A Good night's sleep is highly recommended.
24	Exam Day		Time to perform!

Additional Notes: The 2 hours of practice should be focused with no distractions, so try and keep your phone aside. Feel free to take 5-10 minutes breaks within this.

Track your progress/Self-evaluating

You can only manage and track what you measure. Tracking your progress is an important part of your preparation. There is no point practicing speaking for 3 days and not knowing if you have gotten any better.

Be aware of the scoring criteria that have been provided in all sections. Use this to track your progress. Remember that knowing how much you have gotten better is an important aspect, especially on your areas of improvement.

1 SPEAKING

General guidelines

This is the first part of the test and is a part where some people tend to struggle. Have no fear, because as you master the techniques and guidelines presented below with enough practice, you should be able to make your way.

Understand what is being tested:

As you will be in a country where English is the language of choice, the speaking section is designed to measure how well you can converse with others, be it in a professional or social setting. In simple words, what you say should be understood by the person you are talking to (in our case a computer).

How you are scored on speaking:

A detailed version of how you are scored for each question type is given in the subsequent pages. However, for the speaking section you will be more or less scored on the following parameters.

Content: 5, Pronunciation: 5, Oral fluency 5

Note that parameters of pronunciation and oral fluency together have more weightage compared to content, so these are two areas that require our focus in terms of improvement. A few pointers and guidelines have been provided on these two topics below. Whatever level of English you are at, you should find some takeaways that will improve your score, if put into practice.

Pronunciation and Oral Fluency

What is Pronunciation? As per the official PTE definition it is, "Production of speech sounds in a way that is easily understandable to most regular speakers of the language. Regional or national varieties of English pronunciation are considered correct to the degree that they are easily understandable to most regular speakers of the language "

This is a critical component of the speaking test for this exam. Each and every word that you speak must be understood clearly.

Bad pronunciation negatively impacts the listener's ability to comprehend or understand. More importantly it negatively impacts your speaking scores in the exam. The goal of pronunciation practice should be to pronounce words/sentences clearly and not necessarily sound like a native English speaker. If you have a very strong accent from your mother tongue that makes it difficult for others to understand your English, it can impact your pronunciation scores.

What is Oral fluency? It is the ability to speak in a smooth, effortless and natural-paced delivery of speech. Don't speak too fast and club words together. Focus on pronouncing each and every word clearly.

So how can you improve your pronunciation and oral Fluency?

There are couples of quick fixes, that can immediately improve your pronunciation and there are few other things that can be done if required, but takes additional time.

Pronunciation and oral Fluency Quick Fixes:

1. **Use hand movements:** Using hand gestures while speaking can improve the tone of the voice and gives a sense of purpose to it. New research² suggests that gesturing while you talk may improve your access to language.
2. **Open your mouth more:** Another quick way to improve your pronunciation is to open your mouth widely and fully while speaking. English has a lot of sounds that require the speaker to drop their jaw, or open their mouth wider than in other languages. When the jaw is too tight, and the mouth is not open far enough, the sound will not be easy to hear, and it will get muffled. Speaking with an open mouth will specifically give you a stronger voice, clearer speech, relaxed pace and more expression. Not doing so gives a muffled voice and negatively impacts pronunciation.

Practice:

Go in front of the mirror and keep at least a thumb width (1 inch) distance between your teeth while talking on the stressed vowels sounds (far, today, around, etc). Practice saying single words in the beginning, then move onto full sentences. Make sure you practice in front of the

² www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2005/05/050511105253.htm

mirror so you can actually see how far your mouth is opening. Carry this practice into all of the speaking sections.

While doing the above, also practice the hand movements mentioned. Start by keeping your hands by your side. Move them up so your elbows are at a 90 degree angle. This can be a starting point. Keep your hand free and let them move around naturally as you speak. Notice how your tone varies and improves while you do this.

Pronunciation and oral Fluency additional hacks:

1. Listen to podcasts (mp3 recordings) and YouTube interviews on the go. There is research³ that shows that simply listening to a language repeatedly can increase your language learning capability.

This is simple to setup. You just need to get a collection of any topic you find interesting. Search the internet for categories you are interested in and you will find a related podcast or YouTube video. As long as the speaker's English is of good quality, feel free to pick any category that you will enjoy.

The best part of this hack is that you can fit this into your daily schedule without putting in additional time. Simply listen to the audio on your commute to work or college be it on the bus, train or even in your car.

This is something that can improve all sections on your exam. As you listen to people with fluent English your brain will automatically start picking up on this and you will improve your vocabulary, listening skills and comprehension.

Tools and recommendations:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLj3yWdMwimwl_wwNpUA-Neu_P1O44vw1a
Optimal living interview YouTube playlist: It's a series of interview with various authors on how to optimize your life, so you will be learning some useful material at the same time!

<http://www.clipconverter.cc/> (- avoid clicking on ads)

³ <http://phys.org/news/2009-01-revolutionize-language.html>

The above website converts YouTube videos to mp3 for free. Pick any video you like and paste the URL into the site below. Select the conversion format as MP3 and click on download. You can save the mp3 onto your phone and listen to it anytime. Avoid clicking on ads that show up.

2. Read aloud every day: Take the newspaper or anything you read (even this book!) and read it aloud, instead of in your head. If you think your pronunciation isn't up to the mark yet, you may want to avoid this as you will end up reinforcing incorrect pronunciation. You can instead do this exercise while listening to audiobooks, podcasts or Videos with English by pausing and then copying pronunciation.
3. Listen to yourself – Often how we actually sound and how we think we sound are different. While you do your practice sessions take recordings of yourself. Listen to the recording once you are done, and take note of any words or phrases you could have done better.

<https://online-voice-recorder.com/>

Free tool that allows you to record your voice online and play it back.

4. Speak to others in English: This is the most effective way to learn. Speak with your friends or colleagues in English. If you're having trouble finding a partner look online. There are many likeminded people who are looking to practice.

<http://www.english-corner-online.com>

It is a free network that allows learners of English to connect with other students anywhere in the world. You can have conversations with people having Basic to Advanced Levels of English.

Practice:

A good way of judging how well you are doing in this is to use Google voice. Most mobile phones have voice to text options. So to gauge how clear your pronunciation is, simply speak what you want to say and see how much is picked up accurately into text. Try repeating the sentences that doesn't get picked up correctly few times till you do better.

While using this method, keep in mind that certain words or sentence combinations may not get picked up correctly no matter how clearly you speak due to system limitations. If you get about 80% correct, you are on a right track

Note on distractions:

Although this varies from centre to centre, there are exams held with many other students in the same room. During the speaking section this can be disturbing as you may hear voices of others in the background. Don't let this bother you. The headsets are designed to pick up your voice only, so you need to focus on your answers and speech.

Note on low pronunciation and speaking scores: If you see your pronunciation and speaking scores in the PTE Exam significantly lower than what you require after repeated attempts, it is best to get 1-1 help from an experienced English teacher who can give you specific guidance on how to improve your pronunciation and speaking. Self-identifying pronunciation errors is difficult and can be frustrating as you often do not know where you are going wrong

1.1 Personal Introduction

What to expect

In this section, you are given a prompt and are asked to introduce yourself orally. You speak about yourself for up to 30 seconds. This is not assessed but is sent to institutions along with your score report.

This is a non-scored part of the examination. If you are applying for a university this is a good chance to give a short introduction about yourself and make a good first impression. The institutions that receive your scores may also use it to verify your identity.

Strategy

Be prepared with what you are going to say. This is the first part and delivering a good introduction can boost your confidence for the rest of the section. You can use the below template as a guideline.

Personal Introduction template:

My name is (your name). I am (enter age) years old and I live in (enter location). I have completed my (enter education) from (enter college name). I am currently working at (Company name) as a (job title). In my free time I like to (enter hobby or something unique about you). I am giving this exam as part of the (visa requirement/university requirement) to assess my English language.

1.2 Read aloud

What to expect

In this section, you are given a text on screen. You get 40 seconds to read through the text and understand the content before the time starts. You then have another 40 seconds to read aloud as naturally and clearly as possible.

You can expect around 7 texts for this section. Each text will usually be a single paragraph between 50-65 words.

How you are scored

Content: Each replacement, omission or insertion of a word counts as one error

Maximum score depends on the length of the item prompt

Pronunciation: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Intrusive 0 Non-English

Oral fluency: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Limited, 0 Disfluent

Strategy

The official PTE sample test recording of answers were completed between 23-28 seconds. As a guideline, this is a good time-frame to keep in mind. Anything out of this range will usually mean you are speaking too fast or too slow.

Although this is a fairly straightforward section, special attention needs to be placed on pronunciation and oral fluency. You may say something and understand what you say, but it's important that the software interprets what you say correctly as well.

Many people have questions on what the tone of voice should be. The tone should be appropriate to the message conveyed in the text. You have time to go through the text before you speak. Use this time wisely. Make sure you read the text and understand what it says. This way when you repeat it you will have a better chance of speaking in a tone that conveys meaning. While reading the text in the initial time given also pay special attention to words that you may find difficult to pronounce. Repeat in your head or speak aloud how you are going to pronounce any such words during this time.

Another important aspect of the section is to use appropriate pauses during punctuations (full stops, commas, etc.). Full stops generally will have a longer pause and commas a bit shorter. For example, if there is a comma in the sentence, the spacing between comma and next word is

usually longer than when there is no comma. Similarly, the spacing for a full stop should be longer than what you use after a comma. This is fairly basic, but something you want to keep in mind when you practice.

In case you come across instances where quotation marks like "xxx" or 'xxx' are used to encapsulate a word, make sure you stress this word higher than the ones around it.

Example: In his book "The 10x Rule" Grant Cardone notes that excuses are for people who refuse to take responsibility for their life and how it turns out. (In this sentence the words 10x rule is the highlight of the sentence which needs to be stressed upon)

When you speak, try to link the words within phrases and do not emphasize grammar words such as prepositions (e.g. for, to, with) and articles (e.g. the, a, an). This will help you achieve native-like rhythm and phrasing, and sound more fluent.

Again, this is not a very difficult section, and is good chance to increase your speaking score, provided you keep in mind the above points.

1.3 Repeat sentence

What to expect

In this section, you will be played an audio recording of a short sentence. You have to listen to the phrasing of a short sentence as it is and read aloud

You can expect around 12 item sets or sentences in this section. Each recording will be fairly short and between 4 to 10 seconds long. There can be between 8 to 15 words in each sentence.

How you are scored

Content: Errors = replacements, omissions and insertions only

Hesitations, filled or unfilled pauses, leading or trailing material are ignored in the scoring of content

3 - All words in the response from the prompt in the correct sequence

2 - At least 50% of words in the response from the prompt in the correct sequence

1 - Less than 50% of words in the response from the prompt in the correct sequence

0 - Almost nothing from the prompt in the response

Pronunciation: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Intrusive 0 Non-English

Oral fluency: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Limited, 0 Disfluent

Strategy

You hear a short sentence ranging from 8-15 words. Don't get overwhelmed by this. Focus on understanding the sentence instead of remembering word by word. A strategy that can be used is to break the sentences given into meaningful phrases. This way you have a better chance of reproducing it. You are scored on the correct word sequences that you can correctly speak for this item type.

Copy the stress and intonation of the speaker. If you hear the audio and the speaker stressing on a particular word or set of words make sure you do the same. You do not need to copy the accent but it will help your score if you can reproduce the tone of the speaker.

To illustrate the above two points, let's take the below sentence as an example. This has 13 words. If I ask you to remember 13 words after listening to it once, it sounds like a scary task. Notice how this can be easily broken down into 3 simple phrases (separated by |). These 3 phrases can be easily replicated and you are more likely to reproduce them, if you understand

the meaning of the sentence. Words in a phrase will be spoken together in relatively quick succession.

The professor recommends | arriving in the classroom | 5 minutes[↑] prior to the lecture[↓].

In this particular sentence; you can see that the speaker had stressed on “5 minutes” while speaking, so you would want to do the same. The speaker also had a falling intonation towards the end of the sentence at “to the lecture” which you would replicate.

To summarize, listen carefully to the meaning of the sentence, remembering it by breaking the sentence into phrases. Also pay attention to the tone of the speaker and on any words spoken in high or low tone and copy when speaking.

1.4 Describe image

What to expect

You are given an image such as a graph, map, chart, table, flowchart or picture. You have 25 seconds to observe it and need to then describe the image in about 30-40 seconds.

There will be around 7 different images displayed in this section including but not limited to line charts, pie chart, bar charts, image with facts, multiple tables, flowcharts, process diagrams, etc.

How you are scored

Content:

5 Describes all elements of the image and their relationships, possible development and conclusion or implications

4 Describes all the key elements of the image and their relations, referring to their implications or conclusions

3 Deals with most key elements of the image and refers to their implications or conclusions

2 Deals with only one key element in the image and refers to an implication or conclusion.

Shows basic understanding of several core elements of the image

1 Describes some basic elements of the image, but does not make clear their interrelations or implications

0 Mentions some disjointed elements of the presentation

Pronunciation: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Intrusive 0 Non-English

Oral fluency: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Limited, 0 Disfluent

Strategy

Keep it simple here. Your description should have 3 mains parts.

- 1) Start with an introduction, 2) followed by the main body, and 3) end with a conclusion.

The goal for you here is to get to a point where can speak for 35 seconds, without long pauses and hesitations. Needless to say proper grammatical structure is important as well.

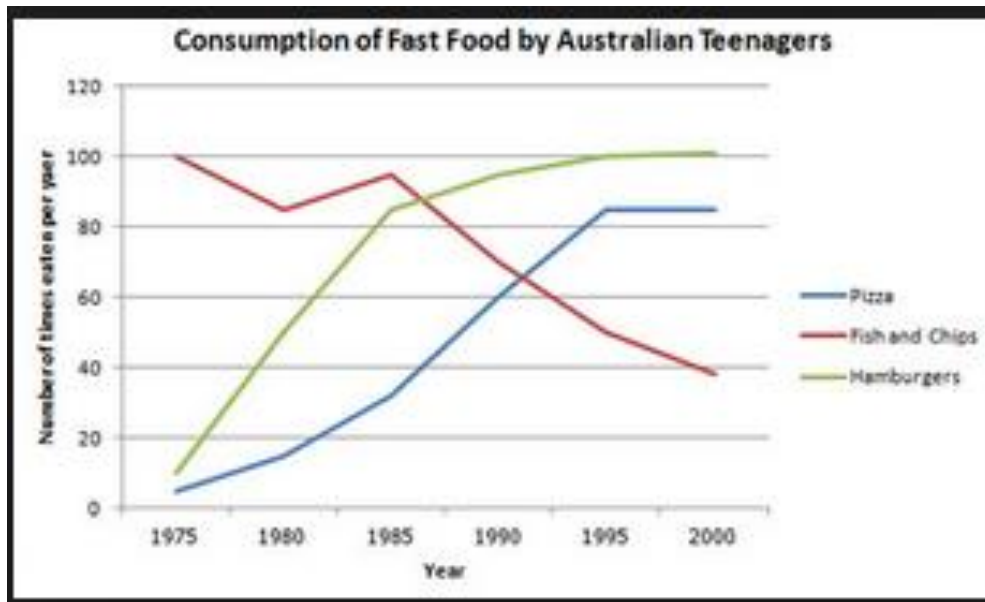
Let's focus on the 3 parts.

Introduction – Almost all of the content in the introduction will be available in the graph headings and Axis Titles. If the image is not a graph, give a general overview of what the image is about.

Main body – This should include the key information that the image is trying to display. If it is a graph, any remarkable rise or fall should be noted during this section. You do not need to cover all points in the image. Only key ones will suffice, as quality over quantity is required. Ensure to keep time for the conclusion.

Conclusion – A short line about the conclusion you have come up with after looking at the image. This can be a personal interpretation or opinion of the image. Make sure to save enough time to get your conclusion in. Always include a conclusion. It is an indicator that you were able to analyze the graph/image in a short time.

Example:



Let's break the above graph into the three parts

Introduction –The given line chart shows the consumption of Fast Food by Australian Teenagers from the year 1975 to 2000.

Main body – If you follow the graph closely, you can see that the consumption of pizza and Hamburgers have steadily increased over the last few years. Hamburgers were eaten 100 times and pizza was eaten 80 times per year in 2000. The consumption of fish and chips has conversely decreased over the same time period.

Conclusion – We can conclude from studying the graph, that the overall consumption of fast food has been on the rise, and teenagers should look to switch to healthier food.

General tips:

Don't be too concerned of the content in your speech. As long as you are speaking something on the lines of what is given in the image you should be fine. Focus on presenting what you have in the 3 parts as given above without breaks in speech. Speak at a steady pace and avoid rushing through.

Don't pause for more than 3 seconds or the system thinks you have finished recording and will move to the next section. If you still get stuck during the exam use fillers such as ummm or 'let me think' instead of not speaking at all. This is not ideal and it will definitely impact your score if used, however it is better than not saying anything at all.

How to Practice this?

This is not something most of us are naturally good at, so it would be wise to practice this. You can get hundreds of good graphs if you Google 'IELTS graph' and look up under images. During my practice, I personally went through about 15 or so graphs per day. Give yourself 15 seconds to study the graph instead of the 25 you get during the exam. Add in some flowcharts or pictures into you practice so nothing comes as a surprise in the exam. Again your goal during practice should be to speak for 35 seconds, without pauses or hesitations. [Record](#) your voice and re-listen making a note of where you could have done better. Remember, this is a skill which may take time to develop, but it is well worth the investment in terms of getting your speaking score up.

Here's a bonus practice tip that you can incorporate in your daily schedule, without additional time investment. During your daily commute or as you walk around, look at a building or any scenery. Challenge yourself to speak for 35 seconds. If you stumble during practice, do not start over. Continue till you reach the 35 seconds mark.

Sample phrases that you can use

Following are sample phrases that you can use in your practice. Simply fill in the blanks with relevant information from the image and amend as appropriate. After practicing pre-set phrases enough, it buys you some time, as you don't need to think about saying them.

Introduction:

The given line chart/bar graph/pie chart shows/compares, "....."

Main Body:

If you follow the graph closely, you can observe that, "....."

By studying the graph it can be clearly seen that, "....."

Conclusion

In conclusion, this a very informative/useful graph that tells us about, ".....".

After analyzing the information/details given in this graph/image, we can conclude that, "....."

Other useful terminology

For any contrasting increase and decrease –

Between the year "xxxx-xxx", as X increased to "certain amount", Y decrease to "certain amount".

Between the year "xxxx-xxx" In contrast to Y increasing, X actually decreased.

For upward movement – went up, climbed, increased

For downward movement – went down, fell to, declined, decreased, dropped

No change – remained the same, was flat, maintained the same level

Large movement – Sudden rise/fall, Sharp increase/decrease

Slow movement – Gradual rise/fall, Steady increase/decrease

1.5 Re-tell lecture

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a lecture. After listening to the lecture, in 10 seconds you need to speak into the microphone and retell the lecture in your own words. You will have 40 seconds to give your response

There will be around 3 item sets or lectures in this section. Each lecture will be between 1 to 1 and a half minute long. The lectures can be on a wide range of topics. It can also include an interview or conversational style lecture with two individuals speaking.

There may be background noise in the lecture as well. There will also be a single image displayed during each question. You may use this to guess what the lecture is going to be before it starts.

How you are scored

Content:

5 Re-tells all points of the presentation and describes characters, aspects and actions, their relationships, the underlying development, implications and conclusions

4 Describes all key points of the presentation and their relations, referring to their implications and conclusions

3 Deals with most points in the presentation and refers to their implications and conclusions

2 Deals with only one key point and refers to an implication or conclusion. Shows basic understanding of several core elements of the presentation

1 Describes some basic elements of the presentation but does not make clear their interrelations or implications

0 Mentions some disjointed elements of the presentation

Pronunciation: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Intrusive 0 Non-English

Oral fluency: 5 Native-like 4 Advanced 3 Good 2 Intermediate 1 Limited, 0 Disfluent

Strategy

The goal for you here is the same as in describe image, speak for 35 seconds, without long pauses and hesitations in grammatically correct English.

You only have 40 seconds to speak and make sure that you include all the main points of the lecture. If you repeat ideas, correct yourself or hesitate, you will use up valuable time and lose score points. So keep talking and ignore any mistakes that you make.

This section involves listening and note taking skills as well. Try to understand what is being said and the main point that is trying to be conveyed. Make sure you take notes. You may not get time to right down full sentences. If you can write incredibly fast, then that's great. Most probably you are not going to be able to write entire sentences, so try writing down key points on whatever you hear. Try to include any facts, figures, numbers or dates given as these should be relatively easier to note down.

The lecture will be longer than the time allotted so you do not need to cover all points when you speak. So do not worry if you miss out on few things while taking notes.

Taking note is one aspect. Even more important is to ensure that you are able to translate those notes into full sentences while speaking. You may have some excellent note taken down, but if you can't frame these into grammatically correct sentences while speaking they go to waste and will reduce your score.

You only have 10 seconds before you speak. You don't want to be writing down notes ideally during these 10 seconds, but instead you would want to quickly review your notes and get have an idea of what you are going to say.

Correct smooth English, delivered at a natural rate, has higher weightage over content here as well. You get fewer points if your content is correct and your English is bad. This doesn't mean you talk about 'life on mars' if the topic is on 'conserving nature'. Stay broadly to the topic all the way.

This may seem a difficult section at first but remember that 're-tell lecture' is a skill and you should see improvements after continuous practice.

Sample phrases that you can use

The given lecture was a stimulating conversation between two individuals on the topic of...

The lecture talks in great detail about....

Another important point covered in the lecture was....

In conclusion...

1.6 Answer short question

What to expect

You will hear a question and need to give a simple and short answer. Often just one or a few words are enough.

There will be around 11 item sets or questions played in this section. The questions are general knowledge in nature and probably related to topics you would have come across in school or daily life.

There may be up to two or three options given in few a questions.

How you are scored

Correct/incorrect:

1 Appropriate word choice in response

0 Inappropriate word choices in response

Strategy

There isn't a lot to talk about on this question type. The question that are asked are general knowledge type and will most likely be something that you have come across during school or day to day life.

There is no use in speaking extra. Marks are awarded for a short, accurate answer. There are no extra marks for additional words so keep it short. Make sure you pronounce the answer as clear as you can as well.

After the question is asked the recording status box will change to recording. Start your answer as soon as you see this. If you wait for more than 3 seconds, recording will stop and the item status will change to 'completed', which means that you have lost your chance to give your answer.

If it's a question with options give like the following example, copy the pronunciation of the answer from the speaker in the audio prompt.

Example: "Are animals that give birth to live young termed as Mammals or Reptiles?"

How many sides does a pentagon have? Four, Five or Six?

2 WRITING

General Guidelines

Here are some general points that apply to all writing sections and will impact your writing score.

- The Grammar used in sentences should be correct.
- Punctuation should be on point.
- Vocabulary should be diverse. Use of same words repeatedly is best avoided.
- Spelling should be correct.
- Summaries and essays should have some structure and logical flow to it, especially if more than 1 sentence.
- Type your practice answers in MS Word, Outlook or any other writing software, so that basic grammatical or spelling mistake can be identified.

2.1 Summarize written text (one sentence)

What to expect

In this section, you are given a passage on screen and need to summarize it using one sentence. You have 10 minutes to finish the task. Your response is judged on the quality of your writing and how well your response presents the key points in the passage.

There can be 2 items sets from this section. Each passage will be between 200 to 350 words long.

How you are scored

Content:

- 2 Provides a good summary of the text. All relevant aspects mentioned
- 1 Provides a fair summary of the text but misses one or two aspects
- 0 Omits or misrepresents the main aspects of the text

Form:

- 1 Is written in one, single, complete sentence

0 Not written in one, single, complete sentence or contains fewer than 5 or more than 75 words.
Summary is written in capital letters

Grammar:

2 Has correct grammatical structure

1 Contains grammatical errors but with no hindrance to communication

0 Has defective grammatical structure which could hinder communication

Vocabulary:

2 Has appropriate choice of words

1 Contains lexical errors but with no hindrance to communication

0 Has defective word choice which could hinder communication

Strategy

The idea here is to simplify the text into one grammatically correct sentence. The use of conjunctions over here can be employed, if suitable. Go through the passage given and understand what is being presented. There may be several facts and figures presented, and you do not need to include them all in your summary. You should have one crisp sentence that conveys the general idea that the passage is trying to convey.

The summary sentence word count needs to be 5-75 words. Anything shorter or longer and you get zero score. Make sure your grammar and spellings are correct. A general rule is to avoid using any word of which spelling you are unsure. The summary made should make sense if viewed in conjunction with any of the other sentences in the main passage.

Take below as an example.

Sample Question:

On 6 July 1910, the National Congress of Chile passed a bill allocating 400,000 pounds sterling to the navy for two 28,000-long-ton battleships—which would eventually be named Almirante Latorre and Almirante Cochrane—six destroyers, and two submarines. The contract to build the battleships was awarded to Armstrong Whitworth on 25 July 1911. Almirante Latorre was officially ordered on 2 November 1911, and was laid down less than a month later on 27 November, becoming the largest ship built by Armstrong at the time. The New York Tribune reported on 2 November 1913 that Greece had reached an accord to purchase Almirante Latorre during a war scare with the Ottoman Empire, but despite a developing sentiment within Chile to sell one or both of the dreadnoughts, no deal was made.

Almirante Latorre was launched on 27 November 1913, in an elaborate ceremony that was attended by various dignitaries and presided over by Chile's ambassador to the United Kingdom, Agustín Edwards Mac Clure. The battleship was christened by the ambassador's wife, Olga Budge de Edwards. After the First World War broke out in Europe, Almirante Latorre was formally purchased by the United Kingdom on 9 September 1914; she was not forcibly seized like the Ottoman Reshadieh and Sultan Osman I, two other ships being built for a foreign navy, because of Chile's "friendly neutral" status with the United Kingdom.

Sample Answer:

Chile purchased several naval ships in 1911, of which one battleship named the 'Almirante Latorre' was bought back by the United Kingdom after the First World War broke out.

The above is a good answer because it is one sentence, has correct Grammar, has no spelling mistakes, has appropriate vocabulary and provides a fair summary of the text.

To practice this question simply pick up 200 to 350 words from a random Wikipedia/Internet article and try to summarize it. Link: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Special:Random>

2.2 Essay (20mins)

What to expect

In this section, you have 20 minutes to write an Essay on the topic given. You are judged on how well you develop a position, organize your ideas, present supporting details, and control the elements of standard written English. Your essay should be between 200-300 words.

There will usually be a single essay question in the exam.

Scoring and Strategy

For this section I have given given strategies on each scoring section, so you will see the scoring methodology and a strategy for that parameter.

Your Essay is scored on the following parameters:

Grammar, vocabulary, spelling, written discourse, Content; development, structure and coherence; form, general linguistic range

Content:

- 3 Adequately deals with the prompt
- 2 Deals with the prompt but does not deal with one minor aspect
- 1 Deals with the prompt but omits a major aspect or more than one minor aspect
- 0 Does not deal properly with the prompt

Scan through the prompt and understand it clearly. Get a clear sense of what the topic is and what key points you have been asked to cover. Make sure you take in any points of view that may have been asked.

In the unlikely event that you do not deal with any of the content in the prompt, you are not scored further on the remaining parameters.

Form:

- 2 Length is between 200 and 300 words
- 1 Length is between 120 and 199 or between 301 and 380 words
- 0 Length is less than 120 or more than 380 words. Essay is written in capital letters, contains no punctuation or only consists of bullet points or very short sentences

Fairly straightforward instructions. Keep the length between 200 and 300 words. You do not get extra points for just writing 299 words instead of 201. In fact, by ending up at the lower end of

the 200-300 word count, means you potentially save time in writing extra content and have time to review and correct for spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.

Development, structure and coherence:

2 Shows good development and logical structure

1 Is incidentally less well structured, and some elements or paragraphs are poorly linked

0 Lacks coherence and mainly consists of lists or loose elements

It is a good idea to take the first minute or two to plan your essay out. During this time you should create a rough outline and consider points you will be covering. Your essay should be divided into 3 to 4 logical paragraphs. Firstly; the introductory paragraph, where you will introduce the subject of the essay using some basic information or facts. This should also talk about what you are going to write about. The second or third paragraph will have the main idea that you will discuss and write about. These paragraphs should clearly tackle any points noted down and which you have been asked to cover in the question. Examples and support sentences should be included here. The conclusion should emphasize and summarize what you have been asked to present. You can also add in your thoughts on the future and the way forward.

Grammar:

2 Shows consistent grammatical control of complex language. Errors are rare and difficult to spot

1 Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control. No mistakes which would lead to misunderstandings

0 Contains mainly simple structures and/or several basic mistakes

You want to eliminate any chances of grammatical mistakes while writing as an increased error count will have an impact on your score. As recommended, you can practice this by writing your practice essays into Microsoft word. It usually does a good job of picking up any basic mistakes. For those of you who use Outlook at work, pay attention to anything highlighted by the editor. Consider turning off auto correction so you are more aware of your mistakes.

After performing a few practice essays you will have a fair idea of any grammatical areas that need your attention. Do a quick brush up on any part that is giving you issues or you are unsure of. Once these are cleared, you are good to go.

Be are a couple of very basic rules that I have seen test takers without typing knowledge get wrong.

A comma (,) when used should be placed directly after the word and then you leave a space.

These days, there is CORRECT

These days there is INCORRECT

A period (.) should come directly after the last word and you need to leave a single space after it

It was a new language. The CORRECT

It was a new language. The INCORRECT

For a list of the top 10 grammatical mistakes and how to avoid the grammar police refer to the below link.

<http://www.yourdictionary.com/index.php/pdf/articles/99.top10grammarerrors.pdf>

General linguistic range:

2 Exhibits smooth mastery of a wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. No sign that the test taker is restricted in what they want to communicate

1 Sufficient range of language to provide clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments
0 Contains mainly basic language and lacks precision

In some of the essay topics given for PTE, you may have to consider how different groups of people might feel about a particular situation. Your need to be clear and definitive in your language about your stand and opinion. If you are asked to choose between two viewpoints, don't sit on the fence. Take one dominant stance arguing for your view and only briefly touch upon the other viewpoint.

Vocabulary range:

2 Good command of a broad lexical repertoire, idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms

1 Shows a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to general academic topics. Lexical shortcomings lead to circumlocution or some imprecision

0 Contains mainly basic vocabulary insufficient to deal with the topic at the required level

You want to avoid using the same word repeatedly throughout your essay. Instead, try using synonyms or alternate word sequences. This can demonstrate a wide linguistic range and improve score. Again a good tool is Microsoft Word or Outlook. You can simply right click on a word and under the synonyms pop up you will get a list of acceptable synonyms.

Below is an example of how meaning of the word 'use' can be implied with the help of synonyms.

Example: The teacher recommended to use books to get better at a skill. It is not only reading a book that makes you better. Utilizing it appropriately by putting ideas into practice gives the best results.

Fun game to test your synonym skill

http://www.scholastic.com/wordgirl/synonym_toast.htm

Incorporation of idioms can be useful, only if used correctly.

Spelling:

2 Correct spelling

1 One spelling error

0 More than one spelling error

This is probably one of the simplest ways to improve your writing score. Only use words that you are sure you can spell correctly.

Using fancy words can improve your score, but they actually reduce it if you spell them wrong. So keep it simple if you are not sure of the correct spelling. Make a list of words that you spelt incorrectly during your practice. Keep revisiting them to make sure you get them right. There is no spell check in the exam so be extra vigilant on this.

You want to manage time and ensure you have sufficient time to check for spellings. Target to complete the essay in 15 minutes. This way you will have 4-5 minutes for spell checks or any grammatical revisions.

For a collection of actual exam questions, refer to the below collection.

<http://dylanaung.blogspot.in/2015/04/pte-academic-essay-questions-and-ideas.html>

Sample Essay: The following is an example of what a good essay for the exam would look like.

Topic: Team sports are promoted as a great way to maintain health and build character. However, violence between supporters and antisocial behavior has often been seen during such events. If sporting events can lead to such behavior, can team sports be good for us?

Although a small number of sporting events are marred by violence and other antisocial behavior, majority of these events go by without such incidents taking place and, in my opinion, actually provide for a range of benefits to both participants and the spectators alike.

Most sports in general require a certain level of physical fitness. Through training and actual participation sportspeople tend to have higher levels of fitness than others, which can be highly beneficial. Team sports in particular also involves high amount of cooperation and understanding between fellow team members. You are required to work together, and in some instances even have to sacrifice personal glory for the benefit of the entire team. These are skills which can be carried forward in our day to day lives.

The benefits of team sports are not limited to participants. Spectators feel elated and celebrate the success of their teams and likewise, they also support their team during the bad times. This creates a sense of oneness within the community. Programs involving participation of youth in sports training help divert their attention from other non-productive antisocial elements and focus their attention on character building. This is particularly useful in regions prone to such elements.

While more work needs to be done by authorities over controlling fan violence and antisocial behaviors at sporting events, I believe that these ills are outweighed by the numerous benefits and team sports should be promoted as way of keeping fit and developing important life skills.

3 READING

General Guidelines

The most critical part about Reading is understanding what you have read. Having the capacity to read quick is also important, however keep in mind that speed is secondary to understanding. Below are some tips for exam-preparation as well as for general improvement.

People who have a normal reading habit will tend to do better in reading tests than the individuals who don't. Regular reading enhances you're reading speed, as well as the depth of your understanding of a new passage. Developing a regular reading habit that you follow with discipline will help improve on this section. Here are a few things you can do:

- Read from an assortment of sources: daily papers, the Internet, books, magazines.
- Read for 30 minutes a day.
- Read over an expansive scope of topics, business, sports, governmental issues, science and so on.
- Read effectively and be focused. Read once with complete understanding.
- Summarize to yourself the material you have read.

What you have to do is to understand it quick, as opposed to reading it quick. Your focus while reading should be not to read quickly but to comprehend quickly.

3.1 Multiple choice questions (choose single answer)

What to expect

In this section, you are given a text. Read the text and answer the multiple-choice question by selecting the correct response. Only one response is correct.

There will generally be 2 questions asked in the exam from this section. The text will be around 100 words each with 4 options provided in each question.

How you are scored

Correct/incorrect:

1 Correct response

0 Incorrect response

Strategy

Read the question first and quickly go through the options given. Don't focus too much on what the correct answer is going to be at this stage. Just get a sense of what is being asked. Now read the text given. As noted, it is important to read with the intention of understanding. Don't think about the question, just focus on understanding the text. Once you have read it all, get back to the question and eliminate all the incorrect responses, picking the correct answer.

For difficult questions there may be one or two options that seem correct. If needed, re-read the section of the text that contains content related to the question to narrow down on the answer.

Do NOT try to answer the question in the light of any knowledge which you may personally have. Additionally, as far as possible, do not assume anything to be true in the options unless specifically mentioned or implied.

The options generally fall under the below three categories:

1. The option is true
2. The option is false
3. Insufficient information given to determine true or false.

Only category 1 option is the correct answer. Category 3 options are often included to make it harder, so be mindful of these during the exam.

You will better relate to the above concepts after going through the below example.

Select the correct option after reading the below text:

Other criminologists, political scientists, and similarly learned forecasters laid out the same horrible future, as did President Clinton. "We know we've got about six years to turn this juvenile crime thing around," Clinton said, "or our country is going to be living with chaos. And my successors will not be giving speeches about the wonderful opportunities of the global economy; they'll be trying to keep body and soul together for people on the streets of these cities." The smart money was plainly on the criminals. And then, instead of going up and up and up, crime began to fall. And fall and fall and fall some more. The crime drop was startling in several respects. It was ubiquitous, with every category of crime falling in every part of the country. It was persistent, with incremental decreases year after year. And it was entirely unanticipated—especially by the very experts who had been predicting the opposite.

Question:

Why was the fall in crime rate particularly surprising?

- A. It had been predicted at the time by President Clinton
- B. It happened after six years of steeply rising rates of crime.
- C. It took place despite fewer people expressing an interest in crime and Justice policies
- D. It happened in all criminal categories and continued for a number of years.

Answer explained:

A is false as the opposite was predicted

B is not specifically mentioned so there is insufficient information given to determine true or false. Notice how 'six years' mentioned in the paragraph is part of the question. This is deliberately included to test your understanding. Do not assume that the option is right because it contains certain keywords from the text. Select the correct answer after understanding the meaning of the entire sentence in the option.

C is also not specifically mentioned so there is insufficient information given to determine true or false

D is correct because it has been stated that the every category of crime fell year after year.

3.2 Multiple choice questions (choose multiple answers)

What to expect

In this section, you are given a text. Read the text and answer the question by selecting all the correct responses. More than one response is correct.

There will generally be 2 questions asked in the exam from this section. The text will be around 100 to 300 words long and each text with 5 options provided in each question.

How you are scored

Partial credit, points deducted for incorrect options chosen:

- 1 Each correct response
- 1 Each incorrect response
- 0 Minimum score

Strategy

It is important to note that more than one option is correct in the question type. You score marks for correct option selected but you will also lose marks for any incorrect option selected. The minimum score however is 0 for each question so it is better to give an attempt.

Similar guidelines from the previous section apply to this one. Here too, you can expect some category 3 options (Insufficient information given to determine true or false).

Scoring for this question explained with example:

There is a question which has 5 options to choose from and 2 options are correct. Let's see how you score for each of the 4 sample scenarios defined below.

- 1) You select two correct options: Your score for this question will be +2. (+1 for each correct option selected)
- 2) You select one correct option and one wrong option.: Your score for this question will be 0. (+1 for correct answer and -1 for incorrect option selected).
- 3) You only select only one option and that is correct: You score will be +1 (You get +1 for the correct option)

4) You only select three options and they all are incorrect. Your score for this question will be 0 (You get -1 for each incorrect option, however, minimum score is 0)

While you should aim to select all correct answers, if you are unsure it's better to select option(s) you are sure of and leave other unsure options blank. This will ensure you don't get penalized for selecting a wrong option.

3.3 Re-order paragraphs

What to expect

You will be given 5 sentences in a text panel (left) and a blank text panel (right). The text boxes in the left panel have been placed in a random order. Restore the original order by dragging the text boxes from the left panel to the right panel.

There will generally be 2 questions asked in the exam from this section.

How you are scored

Partial credit:

1 Each pair of correct adjacent textboxes

0 Minimum score

Strategy

You are given jumbled text and need to reorder them in a paragraph that makes logical sense. Most of the sentences given will have a structure and a chronology i.e. sequence of events that happen one after the other. Your goal is to simply identify this.

Start with the first sentence as this is the most easily to identify. This is the sentence that will have the general topic idea/statement within it. Generally, this sentence can stand alone by itself. It will be the first item in the sequence of events. Note any paragraphs that begin with conjunctions such as However, Nevertheless, But, Also, Furthermore, and so on. Such sentences do not usually go first. Additionally, paragraphs that are referring back to text in a previous paragraph will probably contain pronouns referring to someone (he, she, them, they) or something (it). Any other clues that related to sequences (Another, firstly, secondly, finally, next, subsequent, following, in addition, too) should be noted as they will probably not be the first sentence. During the above exercise you will also get a feel for the other ordering of the sentence.

The below group of words are used to identify connecting ideas.

Word that express the same idea: Additionally, too, also, as well, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover, likewise, etc.

Word that give an alternate idea: However, Conversely, nonetheless, but, nevertheless, whereas, on the contrary/other hand, then again, while, etc.

Words that link to reason and outcome: so, as a result, therefore, consequently, thus, for this reason, since, accordingly, because of this, due to, subsequently etc.

Words that demonstrate Sequence or order: Another, firstly, secondly, finally, eventually, in the end, next, subsequent, following, in addition, too, first of all)

Another tool that will help is to ask questions to the different paragraphs in the text. We will try to look at this and some of the concepts above through the below example.

Reorder below text

Example

- a) However, many citizens resented the Pact due to the invasion of Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis
- b) Britain controlled all aspects of the Iraqi government, which caused resentment towards the Western powers and led to the 14 July Revolution in 1958, overthrowing the Hashemite monarchy.
- c) When the Baghdad Pact was signed, the governments of the coalition believed it to be beneficial for their citizens.
- d) Iraq was dragged into the conflict due to their imperial ties with Great Britain, and many Iraqis felt that it was wrong to invade a fellow Arab nation.
- e) The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), originally known as the Baghdad Pact or the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO) was formed in 1955 by Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

Analysis:

1st sentence

Let's analyze each sentence to see which is appropriate.

- a) - Which pact is being referred? Starts with however, so cannot be topic sentence.
- b) - The timeline of 1958 is given which is later than other dates.

- c) - Refers to Baghdad pact. Have more introductory details been given anywhere else about pact?
- d) - Which conflict? Which Arab nation?
- e) - Sentence can stand alone. Is introductory to other related sentences. Must be topic sentence)

2nd sentence

Sentence c) Gives more details about the pact directly after it was introduced.

3rd sentence

The Pact mentioned in previous sentence is being referred back to in sentence a). The 'however', indicates a contrarian view which is reflected in the resentment versus the benefit noted previously. So this should be third in order.

4th sentence

The conflict referred to in sentence d) can be tied back to the invasion in Iraq mentioned in the previous sentence. Invasion of Arab nation (Egypt) is also mentioned in the previous sentence.

5th sentence

Britain and Iraq has been referred to previously. Also, the timeline of 1958 gives clue that it should be towards the latter half.

Correct order: e), c), a), d), b) When the Baghdad Pact was signed in 1955, the governments of the coalition believed it to be beneficial for their citizens.

Note on timing: This is a section that exam takers tend to spend a lot of time on. Be mindful of the time you spend and keep an eye on the timer on screen. Ensure that you keep sufficient time to answer the subsequent sections.

3.4 Fill in the blanks (Drag and Drop)

What to expect

In this section there will be a text given, where some words are missing. Drag words from the options given to the appropriate place in the text. To undo an answer choice, drag the word back to the box below the text.

There will be 4 item sets in the exam from this section. Each passage will have between 3 to 5 blanks to fill and have between 6 to 8 options.

How you are scored

Partial credit:

1 Each correctly completed blank

0 Minimum score

Strategy

Skim through the test quickly trying to guess which word would fit in the blank without looking at the options. Search the options for words which match or are close to your prediction and drag it in the box. Make sure that the whole sentence sound grammatically correct when filling blanks. This can be done by taking into account words surrounding the blank and figuring out what part of speech is appropriate(e.g., preposition, conjunction, adjective, plural noun, adverb). If you are unsure for a difficult blank, then quickly narrow down on the words that are a possible fit, pick what sounds right and move on.

Below a few examples of how you can narrow down between words.

Q. The nation ___ turmoil during the recent war. (Options - suffers, faced).

A. Faced is correct as it reflects correct tense of the sentence and is grammatically correct.

Sufferedu would have been appropriate if given instead of sufferss which is present tense.

Q. The thief snatched the chain in a ___ of an eye (options- blink, opening)

A. Blink is correct. 'Blink of an eye' is an expression used in day to day speech. Be on the lookout for these.

Q. The man had a ___ expression on his face. He was overjoyed after meeting his friend after such a long time. (Options - worried, delighted)

A. Delighted is correct. Note that in this instance it was not possible to guess just by looking at the sentence. Only after observing the surrounding sentence for the 'overjoyed' context could we guess the right answer.

3.5 Fill in the blanks (Select from list)

What to expect

In this section there will be a text given, where some words are missing (blanks). Click on each blank, a list of choices will appear. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.

There will be 4 item sets in the exam from this section. Each passage will have between 4 to 6 blanks to fill and have between 4 options for each blank. The text will be between 100 to 250 words long.

How you are scored

Partial credit:

1 Each correctly completed blank

0 Minimum score

Strategy

In this question type go through the text carefully once and fill it as you go. You will save time this way. Do not skim but make sure you understand what is being written as you read. Look at the text around the blank for clues on what the best answer is. Similar to the previous section use Grammar to eliminate responses.

Do not skip a paragraph of text even if they do not contain blank. They sometimes contain key information that could be the determining factor in picking the correct answer in the blank in next paragraph. Refer to the example given below to illustrate this point.

"Clive was deeply hurt by the sudden death of his mother due to cancer.

He was sent to boarding school. With the Strict rules and ____ (insensitive, egoistic, coolheaded, purposeful) headmaster he resented the place and missed home."

Explanation: By looking at the paragraph in isolation, the correct answer could be insensitive or egoistic. If we take into account the death of his mother mentioned in the previous paragraph, we can conclude that 'insensitive' is the more appropriate response.

Ten minute optional break

Post the reading section; a ten minute optional break is given which I suggest taking. Go splash some water on your face; drink some if you need to. Take a minute or two to clear your mind of the last section whether it went good or bad and make an intention give your best for the final section.

4 LISTENING

General Guidelines

Your English listening ability is a skill that can be learnt and improved upon. For those who need improvement in this area, this can be done by listening to English Television shows, podcasts or audiobooks. For the purpose of the exam, audiobooks or other audio recordings will be the most helpful. While listening to these if you have any parts that you didn't catch, you can go back and listen to it again. If your exposure to the English language so far has exclusively been through reading, I strongly suggest spending some time actually listening to English. This can be improved upon passively while taking a walk, commuting to work/college, etc.

Just because you know to read a word doesn't ensure you will actually pick it up once you hear it. There could be a possibility that it is pronounced in a different way than what you think.

4.1 Summarize spoken text

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a short audio lecture. You need to write a summary for a fellow student who was not present. You should write 50-70 words. You have 10 minutes to finish this task. Your response will be judged on the quality of your writing and on how well your response presents the key points presented in the report.

There will be 2-3 item sets in the exam from this section. The recording will be between 60 to 90 seconds long.

How you are scored

Content:

- 2 Provides a good summary of the text. All relevant aspects are mentioned
- 1 Provides a fair summary of the text, but one or two aspects are missing
- 0 Omits or misrepresents the main aspects

Form:

- 2 Contains 50-70 words
- 1 Contains 40-49 words or 71-100 words

0 Contains less than 40 words or more than 100 words. Summary is written in capital letters, contains no punctuation or consists only of bullet points or very short sentences

Grammar:

2 Correct grammatical structures

1 Contains grammatical errors with no hindrance to communication

0 Defective grammatical structures which could hinder communication

Vocabulary:

2 Appropriate choice of words

1 Some lexical errors but with no hindrance to communication

0 Defective word choice which could hinder communication

Spelling:

2 Correct spelling

1 One spelling error

0 More than one spelling error

Strategy

The lecture is about 2 minutes and you have 10 minutes to write down your summary. You need to listen carefully and take down notes that you will be able to expand upon later. Note taking is an important skill that needs to be practiced to get a good score for this section. Do not take down entire sentences as notes. This is a time waster.

Some general tips to help in note taking:

- Only important points and keywords should be captured.
- Keywords are words that are stressed/emphasized by the speaker or something that he/she has specifically mentioned as important. Names, dates, figures, number can be a part of this.
- If you miss an important point it is fine. Focus on the remaining piece.
- Use abbreviated words while taking notes to shorten time taken.
- Be on the lookout for the overall idea of the lecture and any connected main ideas.

After the lecture gets over, spend the next thirty seconds noting down any additional important content that you can remember and you will expand upon later. It is not realistically possible to cover everything that would have been said during the lecture. This is fine. Having few quality notes can be more useful than many notes that you can barely make sense of.

If you really had a tough time during the lecture, as a last resort you can expand upon the key words of the lecture based on your general knowledge and views. If you do this, make sure you

broadly stick to content keywords as much as possible and focus on writing clean English free of grammatical and spelling errors. You are allowed and are encouraged to paraphrase information using your own words.

While writing your summary use words that you are confident you can spell correctly. Avoid using the same word repeatedly. Try rephrasing or use a synonym that conveys the same meaning. This will improve vocabulary score. Another important point is to make sure you stay between the given word count (50-70). The word count will be displayed on screen as you type.

Content makes up only 20% of the scoring in this section, so you would want to give appropriate importance to grammar, vocabulary, form and spelling as well.

4.2 Multiple choice (More than one answer)

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a recording and will have to answer the question given by selecting all the correct responses. You will need to select more than one response.

There will be 2 item sets in the exam from this section. Each question will usually have 2 correct options, sometimes 3. The recording will be between 40 to 90 seconds long.

How you are scored

Partial credit, points deducted for incorrect options chosen:

- 1 Each correct response
- 1 Each incorrect response
- 0 Minimum score

Strategy

You have seven seconds before the audio begins. Use this time to look at the question and quickly skim through the options given. This will give you an understanding of what to focus on during the recording.

The exam may contain some trick questions to try and confuse you. Some options will have a section with exact words from the audio but an opposite and different meaning applied to it. This is where understanding what the option means and implies is important.

There are three methods you can choose from to tackle this section.

- 1) You can take notes while the recording is being played. Use notes to select the correct option later.
- 2) You can listen to the recording and eliminate wrong options or select correct options as it is being played.
- 3) You can close your eyes and focus exclusively on listening and understanding the recording. After the recording ends, move to selecting the correct options.

I personally found option 2) and 3) to be the most effective. However, pick whatever method works best for you.

4.3 Fill the blanks

What to expect

In this sections, a transcript of a recording appears on screen with several blanks. After listening to the recording, type the missing word in each gap.

There will be 2-3 item sets in the exam from this section. Each recording will be between 40-90 seconds long.

How you are scored

Partial credit:

1 Each correct word spelled correctly

0 Minimum score

Strategy

Fill in the blanks as the recording is being played. Don't bother for spellings when filling initially. Just make sure you quickly capture the word and are staying on the same text as the recording. Try not to lag behind or go too far ahead. Once you are done filing all the blanks quickly revisit them and correct for any spelling errors. Incorrect spelled words get zero marks.

Few things to watch out for:

- 1) Singular and plural. For example a blank which the audio said 'strategies' can be easily heard as 'strategy'. You will get zero marks for the option if you make this mistake. Place special focus as the blank is approaching, so you can catch any such instances.
- 2) Blanks in quick succession. There may be instances where blanks appear in quick succession. It could happen that while you are filing the first blank, the second one has already passed and you missed it. You have 7 seconds before the recording begins. This is your chance to look out for such instances, so you will be aware of them.

4.4 Highlight the correct summary

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a recording. Click on the paragraph that best related to the recording.

There will be 2-3 item sets in the exam from this section. Each recording will be between 30-90 seconds long.

How you are scored

Correct/incorrect:

1 Correct response

0 Incorrect response

Strategy

I suggest not taking notes in this section, but to instead focus on listening to what is being said and do your best to understand the meaning/main idea of the recording. This way you will have a better chance of picking the right summary.

Do not simply look out for words that are contained in the recording and assume that is the right answers. Often few parts of the recording are pieced together as an option, but these options do not provide an apt summary of the response.

Many times the options have similar text within them making it difficult to select the right one. Ask yourself what distinguishes this option from the other. Often it will be one or two things that change the meaning of the lecture.

Lookout for incorrect information in the options given to eliminate them. If you still cannot narrow down on options simply go with your instinct and guess the best answer. Do not fail to attempt any question.

4.5 Multiple choice (choose single answer)

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a recording and will have to answer a multiple-choice question by selecting the correct response. Only one response is correct.

There will be 2 item sets in the exam from this section. Each recording will be between 30-60 seconds long.

How you are scored

Partial credit, points deducted for incorrect options chosen:

- 1 Each correct response
- 1 Each incorrect response
- 0 Minimum score

Strategy

You have 5 seconds in this question type before the recording begins. Use this time to go over the question so you know what answer to look out for when the recording begins. Try to skim through the answers too, if you get time.

Similar to the previous section don't select an answer just because the text was contained in the recording. Check if the answer fits in appropriately with the question.

More often than not the answer is contained towards the latter part of the recording so stay focused throughout.

4.6 Select missing word

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a recording. At the end of the recording the last word or group of words has been replaced by a beep. Select the correct option to complete the recording.

There will be 2-3 item sets in the exam from this section. Each recording will be between 20-70 seconds long.

How you are scored

Correct/incorrect:

1 Correct response

0 Incorrect response

Strategy

Pay attention to the entire recording. The more you understand what is being said, the more chances that you will be able to guess the right word.

Take for example if the recording had the below sentences:

"With learning, what you think about when learning is a critical factor. The intention and desire to learn is also very ____" (options - confusing, problematic, irrelevant, unique, important).

Since something that implied importance ('critical factor') was talked about in the last sentence, this section will most likely end with the word important. If you missed out on listening to and understanding the previous sentence the chances of you selecting the right answer goes down.

If you are unsure, pick what sounds right and move on.

4.7 Highlight incorrect words

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a recording. The transcript (text) of the recording appears on screen. While listening to the recording, identify the words in the transcript that differ from what is said. You need to click on the words that are different.

There will be 2-3 item sets in the exam from this section. Each set will have between 4-6 incorrect words. Each recording will be between 15-60 seconds long.

How you are scored

Partial credit, points deducted for incorrect options chosen:

- 1 Each correct word
- 1 Each incorrect word
- 0 Minimum score

Strategy

Be super focused on this section. This is towards the end of the test but it is no time to lose your concentration as this will turn out to be costly.

You have 10 seconds before the recording begins. You can have a quick glance at the text for not more than 5 seconds and wait for the recording to begin. It is important that you have your mouse pointed at the beginning of the text before the recording begins.

Move the cursor as the recording goes along. Read the sentence in your mind as the recording is being played and quickly click on any word that has been changed by the speaker. It is important not to lag behind while doing this. The text you are reading and recording that is playing should be more or less the same word during the entire recording.

In the event that you miss a word or were unsure of anything, do not look back. Get back to the current text being spoken and carry on. Thinking about the past will make you lose focus and you may end missing any incorrect word.

Things to look out for: You may have one or two sentences with no incorrect word and then have two or three incorrect words thrown at you in relatively quick succession. If you follow instructions in the above two paragraphs you will be fine and should be able to deal with it.

4.8 Write from dictation

What to expect

In this section, you will hear a sentence. Type the sentence in the box below exactly as you hear it. Write as much of the sentence as you can hear. You will hear the sentence only once.

There will be 3 item sets in the exam from this section. Each set will have between 5-15 words in the sentence. Each recording will be between 3-5 seconds long.

How you are scored

Partial credit:

- 1 Each correct word spelled correctly
- 0 Each incorrect or misspelled word

Strategy

Some real points up for grabs here. If you are good at typing, I recommend the type and repeat method. You will type out the sentence as it is being said and keep repeating it in your head as soon as it's over. Don't bother for spellings when you type, just make sure you capture whatever is being said.

For example: "The lecture will be held tomorrow afternoon in the main classroom."

You might type this initially as, "the lecute will be ihoeld tom afterono in the main classorm."

Once it's all out there come back and correct for spellings or typos.

Two reason why this method is effective.

- 1) You are less likely to remember the initial part of the sentence. Writing as you go will make sure this is captured correctly.
- 2) When you repeat it over in your head as soon as it's over. The chance of it sticking in and you capturing the remaining part increases.

During practice if you feel your typing is not up to the mark, try using same approach instead writing it down on the notebook provided and then typing it back to the screen.

You have 7 seconds before the recording begins. Get yourself ready to type (or write) during this period. End each sentence with a full stop. Keep your ears open for plurals.

You get zero marks for incorrect spelling, so spell your words correctly!

ULTIMATE GUIDE TO THE PTE ACADEMIC

So there you have it. You now have some proven strategies and tips that can help you tackle each and every question type in the PTE Academic Exam. These will give you the most benefit if you practice them as much as you can. If any of this material helps you in getting your desired result do email me with your score and share the good news 😊

The fact that you are attempting this exam is an indicator that you are someone who isn't afraid to pursue your dreams. This alone makes you stand out. I'd like to acknowledge you for taking this journey and wish you all the best for your exam and life.

- Steven Fernandes

Thank you

To report any feedback, suggestions, comments, errors or support contact -
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