

BEC Higher Exam University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

To download sample papers go to <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/resources/learner/index.html>

Reading 1 hour	Consists of	This part of the exam tests	Suggested exam technique:	Definition
Part 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> eight statements numbered 1-8, which appear before the reading texts five short texts lettered A-E on a related subject, or five paragraphs from the same text <p>You must decide which statement refers to which extract.</p>	<p>your ability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> scan texts and identify relevant information locate information expressed in the numbered statements. <p>In the exam, you should allow ten minutes to do this part.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the statements before the texts carefully first. This saves valuable time. 2. While reading the statements, underline the key words or phrases. This helps you concentrate on their meaning. 3. Words in the statements are not repeated exactly in the texts, so think how they might be expressed in other words. 4. Read the texts carefully to locate the ideas in the statements 5. Be strict about timing: take exactly ten minutes 	<p>Scanning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scanning is the type of reading you do when you run your eyes over the page looking for particular information (like when you are looking for a name in a phone directory), not reading carefully to understand everything from beginning to end. Scanning is looking for particular information, not global meaning.
Part 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one text of 450-550 words with seven gaps eight sentences listed after the text. <p>You must fit the correct sentence in each gap.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You will have six gaps to fill. There is one extra sentence which you will not use. 	<p>your ability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> understand the global meaning of the text understand the organization or sequence of information relate sentences to the information which comes before and after them and to use the cohesive features in the text to help you fill the gaps. <p>In the exam, you should allow ten minutes to do this part.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Look at the sentence which was given in the example (H) and cross it off the list immediately. 2. Read the text carefully first. You should be able to follow a clear line of argument, even with the sentences missing. 3. Read the list of sentences carefully. As you are reading them, some answers may occur to you. 4. Read particularly the sentences before and after each gap. Does the sentence you want to put in the gap fit logically with them? 5. Underline the cohesive features. They provide useful clues. 6. Fill the gaps you find easiest first and this will reduce the choices for the gaps you find more difficult. 7. When you have finished, read the whole text again with your answers. Does it develop logically? 	<p>Cohesive features</p> <p>These are words or phrases in the text which relate to other parts of the text. For example, pronouns may refer to someone or something mentioned earlier in the text, adverbs such as however will refer to the previous sentence, etc.</p>

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Part 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one text of 500-600 words six multiple-choice questions where you must choose the best answer, A, B, C or D. 	<p>your ability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> read in detail interpret opinions and ideas expressed in the text rather than facts. <p>In the exam, you should allow ten minutes to do this part.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Skim the text first to get a quick, general idea of what it says. This way, when you read the questions, you will know roughly where to find the answers in the text. Read the stem of the first question (the part before the alternatives A, B, C or D) and underline the key words. Find where the question is dealt with in the text and read that part of the text carefully. Then read the four alternatives and decide which matches the idea expressed. Remember: the words of the text will not repeat the words of the question. You will have to find the same idea expressed in a different way. Make sure there is evidence in the text to support your answer. The answers to the question come in the same order in the text, so when you have answered one question, move on to the next part of the text to answer the next question. 	<p>Skimming</p> <p>Skimming consists of reading very fast to get a general idea of the meaning and contents of the whole text (for example, you get a long email marked urgent just before you are going into an important meeting and you have to decide what action to take very quickly).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you see unfamiliar words or sentences you don't understand, do not spend time trying to understand them – continue reading. Only worry about difficult vocabulary or sentences if you find there is a question about them.
Part 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one text of 250 words 10 multiple-choice gaps where you must choose the best word, A, B, C or D. 	<p>your knowledge of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vocabulary dependent prepositions grammatical structures which go with particular words idiomatic expressions collocations.. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Before looking at the alternatives A, B, C and D, try to think which word will go in the gap. The alternatives may have different meanings: look for the word which best fits the context. The alternatives may have similar meanings: look for a dependent preposition or a grammatical structure which only goes with one of the alternatives. Look for possible collocations. Does the gap seem to be part of a fixed expression? If so, can you remember it? When you have finished, read the text again with your answers. Check and change anything which doesn't sound natural to you. 	<p>Collocations</p> <p>Collocations are words that are often found together, but which are not fixed expressions. Collocations may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adjectives and nouns, e.g. tight deadlines Adverbs with verbs, e.g. risen sharply Verbs with nouns, e.g. repay his debts

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Part 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one text of 250 words ten gaps which you must fill with one word. 	<p>your knowledge of grammar, sentence structure and cohesion. The words you will need are likely to be “grammar” words, especially:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> prepositions, articles (a, an, the) auxiliary verbs, pronouns, relative pronouns, grammar adverbs (however, still, yet, etc.), conjunctions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the whole text first. 2. Then look at each gap, sentence by sentence. 3. Consider what type of word you need – this will depend on the position of the word in the sentence. 4. When you know what type of word you need, think of alternatives and try them in the space. 5. Look carefully at the other words in the sentence, e.g. <i>interesting than</i> – you must write <i>more or less</i>; if <i>will depend</i> – you must write <i>on</i>. 6. Read what came before the gap and , if necessary, previous sentences. Similarly, read the sentences after the gap. 	<p>What type of word? The position of the word in the sentence will often tell you what type of word you need. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between the subject and the main verb, either an auxiliary verb, a modal verb or an adverb: • before a noun, either a preposition, an article or an adjective
Part 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one text of 150-200 words 12 lines in the text with one extra, unnecessary word in most lines. 	<p>your ability to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and correct errors in texts your knowledge of grammar. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skim the text quickly to get a general idea of what it’s about. 2. Although there is an extra word in most lines, read the text by sentences not by lines. 3. There will not be more than one extra word per line. 4. Remember that some lines are correct, but read each sentence carefully to make sure. 5. When you have finished, read the whole text again carefully to check that it sounds natural. 	<p>Extra words Mostly you should look for small “grammar words” such as pronouns, articles or conjunctions.</p> <p>Editing texts Editing texts to find errors is an essential business skill. You do it every time you read something you have written in your own language. In business, you may have to do it with texts you have written in English and when checking colleagues’ texts in English as well.</p>

Reading sources:

<http://www.economist.com/>

<http://www.businessweek.com/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/>

<http://edition.cnn.com/BUSINESS/>