

Exam tips

Reading: It's all about understanding!

- When answering questions based on several texts:
 - > Scan each text and look for the specific information mentioned in each question.
 - > Make sure you read each question carefully and understand what it means. The part of the text corresponding to the question will express the same meaning but most probably in different wording.
- When answering multiple-choice questions:
 - > Read through the text before you look at the questions.
 - > Then read each question carefully to get an idea of what you are looking for and underline the section in the text where the answer is found.
 - > Make sure you have chosen the correct answer by eliminating the wrong options.
 - > Be careful! Don't assume an option is correct just because it contains a word or phrase that is also in the text.
- When you are presented with a text from which sentences have been removed:
 - > First read the whole text in order to get an overall idea of what it is about.
 - > Read the sentences before and after the gap and the sentences that have been removed from the text, looking for clues in both the text and the sentences. The correct option must logically complete the writer's meaning and grammatically fit the gap.
 - > Pay attention to sentence linkers (moreover, on the other hand, as a result, after, etc.) as well as reference items (he, it, this, there, etc.) and identify what they refer to. This will help you understand the text.

Exam tips

Vocabulary and Grammar: Making sense of it!

- When completing a word-building exercise:
 - > Decide what part of speech is needed to fill in each gap. The words to be formed will usually be nouns, verbs, adjectives or adverbs.
 - > When you have to complete a blank with a noun, read the sentence carefully and decide if the noun should be in singular or plural form.
- When completing an open close text:
 - > Read the text quickly to get an idea of what it is about.
 - > Read the whole sentence, not just the words before and after the gap, as there may be clues that can help you.
 - > Try to guess what part of speech the missing word is. Remember that most of the missing words will be prepositions, articles, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, time expressions, determiners, etc.
- When doing transformation:
 - > Remember that your answer must be between two and five words.
 - > Keep in mind that you must definitely use the 'key word' and not change it in any way at all.

Exam tips

Listening: Getting the message!

- Before you listen, read the rubric carefully to find out the situation and the topic discussed. Try to predict or guess what the speakers are going to say. That way the listening text will be easier for you to understand.
- Read the questions and options carefully before you hear each extract. Pay special attention to question words (who, when, etc.).
- Listen to each extract carefully. Don't try to understand every single word or phrase, but focus on the whole message.
- The questions follow the order the information is heard in the recording, so make sure you concentrate on the right question each time.
- Choose the option that best answers the question. Don't choose an option just because words or phrases included in the extract appear in it.
- Listen for 'key words' which will help you choose the correct option.
- Choose an option after you have heard the whole extract and confirm your choice when you have heard the extract for a second time.
- Don't work on a question while the next question is being spoken.
- When doing a multiple-matching listening task:
 - > Read through the statements carefully to get a clear idea of what you are listening for.
 - > Wait to hear the recording a second time before you make your final decision.
- When choosing the correct picture:
 - > Before you start listening, look at the pictures carefully to get a general idea of what you are going to hear.
 - > Listen carefully to the dialogue and focus on the question. All three situations in the pictures may be referred to in the dialogue. However, only one of them correctly answers the question.

Exam tips

Speaking: Let's talk about it!

- When discussing photographs, don't describe the photographs in detail. Briefly compare them and make sure you answer the question asked.
- When speculating and making a decision:
 - > There are no right or wrong answers, but you must make sure to justify your answer.
 - > Remember that this is not a monologue so both speakers must have an equal opportunity to speak.
 - > You should listen to the other speaker's opinion and respond by either agreeing or disagreeing with it.
- When choosing between options:
 - > Look at the photographs carefully to make sure you understand the situation and what the options are.
 - > Carefully consider all the information you have received before making your decision.
 - > Remember that you must explain why you prefer the option you chose.

Exam tips

Writing: Putting words on paper!

- When writing an essay expressing an opinion:
 - > Underline the 'key words' in the writing task to get a clear idea of what your essay should focus on.
 - > Spend a couple of minutes making a brief outline of what you plan to write. In the case that the rubric includes prompts, make sure you use them appropriately.
 - > Organise your writing into paragraphs, presenting major points in separate paragraphs.
 - > Expand on your ideas by explaining them clearly and supporting them with reasons or examples.
 - > Avoid repetition of ideas.
 - > Do not introduce new ideas in the conclusion.
 - > Write in a formal style and do not use abbreviations or short forms.
 - > Use linking words/phrases to list and add points, express result, etc.
- When writing an article:
 - > Use a catchy title to interest the readers.
 - > Think about the purpose of the article and who will read it in order to write in an appropriate style (formal or informal).
 - > Organise the article in paragraphs which expand on, describe or give examples of the topic.
 - > Use lively colourful language: a variety of words/phrases/expressions, direct and indirect questions, etc.
 - > Comment on the topic or give your opinion.
- When writing a letter expressing your opinion:
 - > Write in an appropriate style.
 - > Group related ideas together in paragraphs.
 - > List ideas in order of importance.
 - > State your opinion clearly.
 - > Do not be aggressive or use offensive language.
 - > Use linking words and phrases.
- When writing a story:
 - > Try to keep the plot of the story fairly simple.
 - > The story should continue from the prompt sentence.
 - > The story should be organised in paragraphs, have an interesting introduction and an appropriate ending.
 - > Use informal or consistently neutral language.
 - > Use past (narrative) tenses.
 - > Use time linkers (to indicate the sequence of events, chronological order, etc.)
 - > Try to create an appropriate atmosphere by using direct speech, questions, exclamations, a variety of adjectives and adverbs and vivid vocabulary.

Exam tips

Writing: Putting words on paper!

- When writing an essay (for or against an issue):
 - > Carefully consider the arguments for and against the issue (advantages/disadvantages).
 - > Select the arguments you have the most to say about. Try not to deal with too many points.
 - > Use topic sentences to express the main idea in the paragraph.
 - > Develop the paragraphs by expanding on the idea in the topic sentence. Justify your ideas and, when possible, use examples to illustrate them.
- When writing an informal email/letter:
 - > Use informal language.
 - > Use short forms (e.g. *I'm, didn't, etc.*).
 - > Use exclamations (e.g. *It was great!*).
 - > Use direct questions (e.g. *What are you up to?*).
 - > Use expressions (e.g. *well, of course, anyway, actually, you know, you see, etc.*).
 - > Use lively colourful language (i.e. a variety of adjectives, adverbs and phrases).
- When writing an email/letter of application:
 - > Begin and end your letter with appropriate expressions.
 - > Use formal language and write in a confident manner.
 - > Identify the qualities required for the job/scholarship, etc. (as stated in the advertisement) and explain why you consider yourself suitable for it.
- When writing a report:
 - > Keep in mind who you are writing the report for and why so that you write in an appropriate style; formal if you are writing it for a superior or semi-formal if you are writing for peers.
 - > Give your report a title or use the following layout:
 - To:**
 - From:**
 - Subject:**
 - > Select three or four of your ideas and organise them into separate paragraphs for every major point.
 - > Use headings to indicate what topic each paragraph focuses on.