

MSM
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MINI EBOOK: ALL ABOUT STANDARDISED ENGLISH TESTS (IELTS | TOEFL | CAMBRIDGE)

+ BONUS CHEAT SHEET

**TOP TIPS & TRICKS TO
CRACKING THESE TESTS
LIKE A PRO**

EDITION |

**2024
2025 |**



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Let's Crack It!

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Standardised English tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge English Test, play a crucial role in assessing language proficiency for various purposes, including academic admissions, job placements, and immigration. This mini eBook serves as a comprehensive guide to understanding standardised English tests, their formats, procedures, and application processes. Whether you're a student planning to study abroad, a professional seeking career opportunities, or an individual aiming to enhance language skills, this guide will provide valuable insights to help you navigate through the world of standardised English testing.

So what are you waiting for?



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Chapter 1: Understanding Standardised English Tests



Let's delve into the realm of standardised English tests. These assessments serve as comprehensive measures of one's proficiency in the English language.

Standardised across the board, these tests encompass uniform content, format, scoring, and administration protocols. This standardisation ensures equity and impartiality in assessment for all participants.

The evaluations of these tests holds paramount importance, especially if you want to excel in academia, land that killer job, or jet off abroad where English is the talk of the town.

What Are Standardised English Tests?

Standardised English tests are standardised assessments that evaluate your ability to understand, speak, read, and write in English. They assess language skills in various contexts, such as academic, professional, or everyday communication, and provide a standardised measure of English proficiency. These tests typically consist of multiple-choice questions, essays, speaking tasks, and listening exercises, covering a range of language competencies.

The Importance & Significance of Standardised English Tests

“
Language
is
the dress
of thought.”

SAMUEL
JOHNSON

Standardised English tests hold immense importance for individuals seeking opportunities in English-speaking environments. Here's why they are significant:

Academic Admissions: Many universities and colleges require standardised English test scores as part of their admissions criteria, especially for international students applying to English-medium programs.

Professional Certification: Certain professions, such as nursing or teaching, may require proof of English proficiency through standardised tests for licensure or certification purposes.

Employment Opportunities: Employers often use standardised English tests to assess the language skills of job applicants, particularly in multinational corporations or industries where English is the primary language of communication.

Immigration and Visa Applications: Immigration authorities in English-speaking countries may require standardised English test scores as evidence of language proficiency for visa applications and residency permits.

The Core Types of Standardised English Tests

TOEFL

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): Developed by ETS (Educational Testing Service), TOEFL measures the English proficiency of non-native speakers intending to study or work in English-speaking environments.

IELTS

IELTS (International English Language Testing System): Administered jointly by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia, and Cambridge Assessment English, IELTS assesses the language ability of candidates seeking to study, work, or migrate to English-speaking countries.

Cambridge English Exam

Cambridge English Exams: Offered by Cambridge Assessment English, these exams include a range of tests tailored to different proficiency levels, such as Cambridge English: First (FCE), Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE), and Cambridge English: Proficiency (CPE).

Key Differences Between These Standardised Tests



Test Format: Each test has its unique format, including the number and type of sections, question types, and duration.

Scoring System: Tests may use different scoring scales, such as TOEFL's score range of 0-120 or IELTS' band score system ranging from 0 to 9.

Test Delivery: Tests like TOEFL and IELTS are administered through both computer and paper-based formats while Cambridge Exams are administered through paper-based formats. The digital versions are available from March 2024. *(according to the organization's website)*

Acceptance: The acceptance of test scores may vary depending on the institution or organization. Some universities or employers may prefer one test over another.

Aspect	TOEFL	IELTS	Cambridge English Test
Format	Entirely computer-based	Available in Academic and General Training formats	Paper-based Digital
Sections	Reading, Listening, Speaking, Writing	Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking	Reading and Use of English, Writing, Listening, Speaking
Accents	Primarily North American accents	Accents from English-speaking countries worldwide	Variety of accents, including British, American, Australian, etc.
Scoring	Scale of 0 to 120, with separate section scores	Scale of 0 to 9 for each section, averaged for overall band score	Scale of 80 to 230 with A1 (key level) to C2 band for proficient level
Speaking Component	Responding to recorded prompts	Face-to-face interview with an examiner	Face-to-face speaking test with an examiner
Listening/Reading Content	Primarily academic content	Mix of academic and everyday content	Mix of academic and everyday content
Test Availability	Year-round at designated test centers	Available on specific dates throughout the year	Regular test dates available throughout the year

Chapter 2: Formats | Scoring Criteria | Grading Scales



An Overview of Test Sections

Reading: This section evaluates the test taker's ability to understand and interpret written English texts, including passages, articles, and essays.

Writing: Test takers are required to demonstrate their written communication skills by composing essays, reports, or responses to prompts.

Listening: This section assesses the test taker's ability to comprehend spoken English through listening to conversations, lectures, and recordings.

Speaking: Test takers participate in spoken interactions and tasks that assess their ability to communicate effectively in English.

A Breakdown of Each Section



Reading Section:

Types of passages: Academic articles, newspaper articles, essays, etc.

Question types: Multiple-choice, short-answer, summary completion, etc.

Strategies: Skimming, scanning, identifying main ideas, understanding details.



Speaking Section:

Tasks: Read aloud, describe a picture, answer questions, express opinions.

Assessment criteria: Pronunciation, fluency, coherence, vocabulary, grammar, relevance.

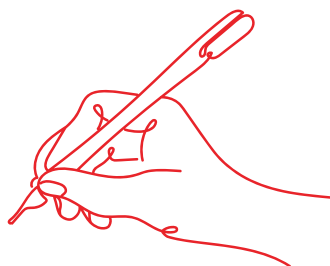


Listening Section:

Types of Recordings: Conversations, lectures, interviews, etc.

Question formats: Multiple-choice, matching, note-taking, summarising.

Listening skills: Understanding main ideas, details, inference, context.



Writing Section:

Essay prompts: Argumentative essays, opinion essays, descriptive essays, etc.

Structure: Introduction, body paragraphs, conclusion.

Evaluation criteria: Coherence, organisation, vocabulary, grammar, punctuation.

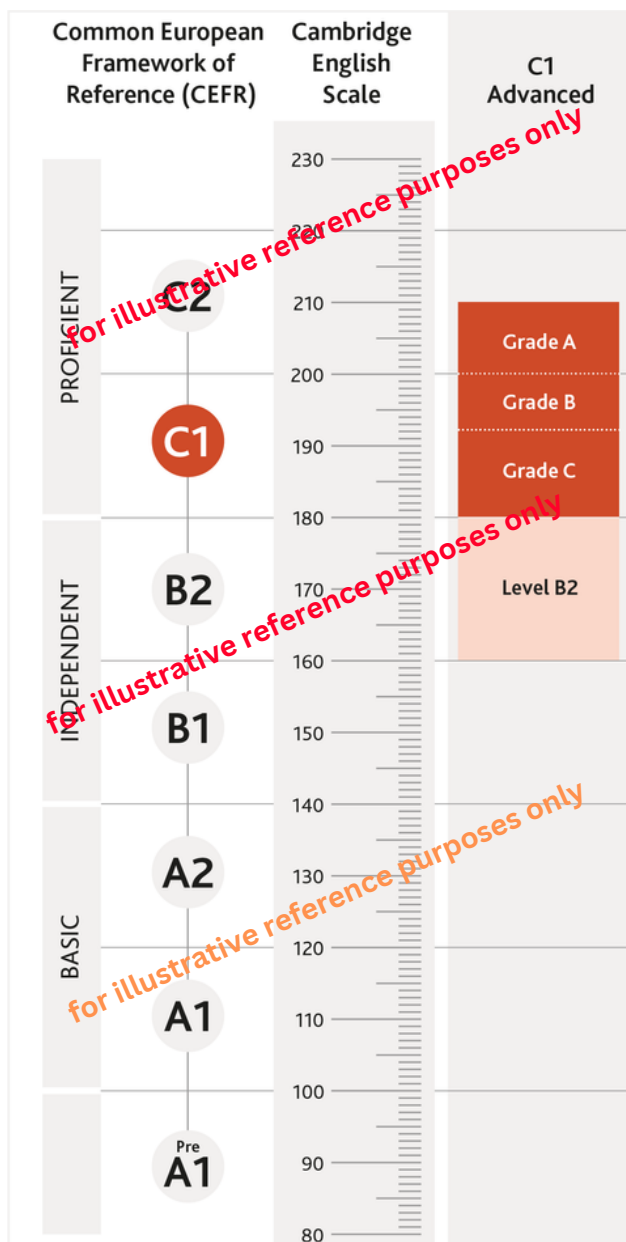
Scoring Criteria & Grading Scales

Understanding the scoring criteria and grading scales is essential for interpreting test results and identifying areas for improvement.

Each standardised English test uses its own scoring criteria and grading scales to evaluate test takers' performance. Scoring may be based on factors such as accuracy, complexity, coherence, and relevance. Common grading scales include numerical scores, band scores, or proficiency levels ranging from beginner to advanced.



Cambridge English Exams: CEFR Level System



CEFR Levels: Cambridge English exams assess proficiency across six levels, from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient), with specific language abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Score Bands: Test scores are reported in bands corresponding to CEFR levels, with ranges like 80-90 indicating proficiency at B1 and 100-110 representing proficiency at B2.

Sectional Scoring: Exams grade listening, speaking, reading, and writing sections individually on a scale of 0 to 30, contributing to a total score required for certification.

Detailed Feedback: Test takers receive feedback on strengths and areas for improvement based on CEFR descriptors, including specific section scores and study suggestions.

Adaptive Testing: Certain exams, like Linguaskill, adjust question difficulty based on responses, providing a more accurate proficiency assessment with scores ranging from 0 to 180.

TOEFL: Score Range System

TOEFL uses a score range of 0-30 for each section, with a total score of 0-120.

TOEFL SCORING		
Skill	Score (0-30)	Proficiency Level
Reading	0-3	Below Low-Intermediate
	4-17	Low-Intermediate
	18-23	High-Intermediate
	24-30	Advanced
Listening	0-8	Below Low-Intermediate
	9-16	Low-Intermediate
	17-21	High-Intermediate
	22-30	Advanced
Writing	0-6	Below Basic
	7-11	Basic
	13-16	Low-Intermediate
	17-23	High-Intermediate
Speaking	0-9	Below Basic
	10-15	Basic
	16-19	Low-Intermediate
	20-24	High-Intermediate
TOTAL	25-30	Advanced
	0-120	

IELTS : Band Range System

IELTS employs a band score system ranging from 0 to 9 for each section, with an overall band score calculated as the average of the four section scores.

IELTS Band Scores

Academic Reading		General Reading		Listening	
Score	Correct Answers	Score	Correct Answers	Score	Correct Answers
9	39 - 40	9	40	9	39 - 40
8.5	37 - 38	8.5	39	8.5	37 - 38
8	35 - 36	8	37 - 38	8	35 - 36
7.5	33 - 34	7.5	36	7.5	32 - 34
7	30 - 32	7	34 - 35	7	30 - 31
6.5	27 - 29	6.5	32 - 33	6.5	26 - 29
6	23 - 26	6	30 - 31	6	23 - 25
5.5	19 - 22	5.5	27 - 29	5.5	18 - 22
5	15 - 18	5	23 - 26	5	16 - 17
4.5	13 - 14	4.5	19 - 22	4.5	13 - 15
4	10 - 12	4	15 - 18	4	10 - 12

Please note that these scores are approximate

Chapter 3: Procedures & Processes

How To Register for The Tests?

1. Visit the official website of the testing organisation (e.g., ETS for TOEFL, British Council or IDP for IELTS, British Council or Cambridge English for Cambridge English Exam).
2. Create an account or log in to your existing account.
3. Select the test type (e.g., TOEFL iBT, IELTS Academic, Cambridge English exams) and choose your preferred test date and location. Tests like TOEFL and IELTS have introduced home editions as well and now can be taken from the privacy of your home computer. All you need is a private space and a stable internet connection along with a laptop or desktop computer.
4. Complete the registration form with personal information, including name, contact details, and identification document details.
5. Pay the registration fee using the available payment methods.
6. Receive a confirmation email with your test registration details and instructions for test day.

Study, Practice, Focus!

Tests Dates & Locations

Finding Convenient Test Centers

1. Use the testing organization's website to search for available test dates and locations.
2. Filter the search by location, date range, and test type to find options that suit your preferences.
3. Check the availability of test centers in your area and consider factors such as proximity, accessibility, and test session availability.
4. Select a test date and location that aligns with your schedule and allows ample time for preparation.
5. Register for the chosen test date and location following the registration process outlined earlier.

What To Expect on the Test Day?

For home-based editions, the experience is similar.

You need a quiet room with a webcam-enabled computer.

Keep blank sheets of A4 paper with you along with stationery for taking quick notes. You may be expected to show the belongings over the cam. Keep a bottle of water with you. The examiner provides a break in between the sections.

Test Day Procedures:

1. Arrive at the test centre at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start time.
2. Bring valid identification documents as per the test requirements (e.g., passport, national ID card).
3. Follow instructions from test administrators regarding check-in procedures, security measures, and test room protocols.
4. Store personal belongings in designated areas and ensure electronic devices are turned off or stored away.
5. Listen carefully to instructions provided during the pre-test briefing and follow all test regulations and guidelines.
6. Pace yourself during the test, manage your time effectively, and stay focused on each section.
7. Take breaks as permitted between test sections and utilize them for rest and relaxation.
8. Stay calm and confident, and approach each question with care and concentration.
9. Complete all test sections to the best of your ability and submit your responses as instructed by test administrators.
10. Receive instructions for score reporting and access your test results according to the timeline specified by the testing organization.

Chapter 4: Application for Study Abroad Purposes

How Standardised English Tests Are Used?

Academic Admissions

Many universities and colleges worldwide require applicants, especially international students, to submit standardised English test scores as part of their application process. These scores help admissions committees assess the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English, which is crucial for success in English-medium academic programs.

Visa Applications

Immigration authorities in English-speaking countries often require standardised English test scores as proof of language proficiency for visa applications and residency permits. These scores help assess the applicant's ability to integrate into an English-speaking environment and communicate effectively in academic, professional, and everyday situations.

Chapter 5: Understanding Score Validity & Reporting

TOEFL & IELTS test scores are typically valid for a certain period, usually two years, from the date of the test. Test takers should verify the score validity period with the testing organisation and ensure that their scores are still valid at the time of application submission. An important fact to note is that the Cambridge Exam Scores are valid INDEFINITELY.

Score Reporting Policies: When submitting standardised English test scores to educational institutions or immigration authorities, it is important to follow the score reporting policies established by the testing organisation. This may involve requesting official score reports to be sent directly from the testing organisation to the recipient institutions or authorities. Some testing organisations offer score reporting services for a fee, allowing test takers to send their scores to multiple institutions or authorities simultaneously.

Official Score Reports: Official score reports contain detailed information about the test taker's performance, including section scores, overall score, and score validity period. These reports are considered official documentation of the test taker's language proficiency and are accepted by educational institutions and immigration authorities as part of the application process.

Tips for a Successful Application



Plan Ahead: Research the standardised English test requirements and score validity period well in advance of your application deadlines.

Take the Test Early: Schedule your standardised English test well before your application deadlines to allow sufficient time for score reporting and any potential retakes.

Follow Submission Guidelines: Adhere to the score reporting policies and submission guidelines provided by the testing organisation and the recipient institutions or authorities.

Retake if Necessary: If you are unsatisfied with your initial test scores, consider retaking the English test to improve your scores before submitting your application. You may choose to retake a section of the test as well. Get in touch with the chosen organisation for latest updates and eligibility profile for it.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

When's the best time to take the IELTS for fall 2024?

For those aiming for the September 2024 intake, the ideal window to take the IELTS exam is between January and April. This gives you ample time to prepare and receive your results in time for your program applications.

Is it better to take TOEFL at home or at a test centre??

Opting for the TOEFL iBT Home Edition provides the same test experience as the one administered at a test centre. Scores from both formats are equally accepted by nearly all universities that require the TOEFL.

Which TOEFL section is most crucial?

The listening section holds significant weight, contributing 25% to your overall TOEFL score. It's the second most important section after reading.

Which is easier, TOEFL or IELTS?

While the difficulty level varies for each student, many find IELTS comparatively easier, especially its reading sections. IELTS passages are sourced from magazines, books, and newspapers, whereas TOEFL passages come from academic texts.

Do universities prefer TOEFL over IELTS?

In most cases, universities favour TOEFL over IELTS. However, in the UK and Australia, IELTS is widely accepted, particularly for graduate school admissions.

Is IELTS or TOEFL preferred in the USA?

In the USA, institutions primarily accept TOEFL scores, while IELTS is more common in the UK and Australia.

Is Cambridge or TOEFL better?

While TOEFL scores are valid for two years, a Cambridge certificate remains valid for life. Opting for a Cambridge English exam provides a comprehensive proof of language proficiency for your CV.

Who can appear for IELTS & TOEFL tests?

Anyone who needs to demonstrate their English language proficiency can apply for the IELTS and TOEFL tests. This includes individuals applying to study at universities or colleges where English is the language of instruction, those seeking professional certification or licensure, individuals applying for visas or immigration purposes, and anyone else who wants to assess their English language skills for personal or professional reasons.

What's the new IELTS rule in India?

In India, you can retake a single module of the IELTS exam after 60 days. The fee for an IELTS One Skill Retake in India is 16,250 INR.

What are the new changes in the 2024 IELTS exam?

Starting in 2024, candidates can retake a specific section of the IELTS test if they're dissatisfied with their score in that section.

Do IELTS essay topics repeat?

While essay questions never repeat verbatim, topics might recur. Familiar topics include issues like recycling or mandatory activities in various countries.

Which month is best for taking IELTS?

The best times to take the IELTS are before speaking topics change, typically in January, September, and May.

Is IELTS tough for Indian students?

The difficulty of the IELTS exam is uniform across countries, but many Indian students find it challenging due to various factors, though accents don't impact scoring.

What type of essay is commonly asked in IELTS?

Opinion essays, also known as 'agree or disagree' or 'argumentative' essays, are among the most frequent types of questions in the IELTS Task 2 section.

Can I retake only the IELTS writing section?

Yes, you can retake any single section of the IELTS test, including writing, listening, reading, or speaking. The format and timing for the retake remain the same as for the individual skill in a regular IELTS test, saving you time by not needing to repeat the other sections.

When are TOEFL, IELTS & Cambridge English exams conducted in India?

TOEFL, IELTS, and Cambridge English exams are conducted regularly throughout the year in India. The exact dates vary depending on the test provider and the specific test center. Generally, these exams are offered multiple times each month, allowing candidates to choose a date that fits their schedule. It's advisable to check the official websites of the respective exam providers for the most up-to-date information on exam dates and availability in India.

Bonus Cheat Sheet

Top Tips & Tricks to Cracking It Like a Pro

1

Understand the Test Format

Understand the Test Format: Familiarise yourself with the format and structure of the standardised English test you're taking. Go through sample tests as much as possible.

2

Practice Time Management

Practice Time Management: Practice completing each section within the allotted time. Pace yourself during the test to ensure you have enough time to answer all questions. Put someone else in charge of timing you.

3

Read Instructions

Read Instructions Carefully: Pay close attention to instructions provided before each section of the test. Understand what is expected before beginning each task.

4

Use Process of Elimination

Use Process of Elimination: When answering multiple-choice questions, eliminate obviously incorrect options to narrow down your choices and improve your chances of selecting the correct answer more swiftly.

5

Scim & Scan

Skim and Scan: When reading passages, skim through for main ideas and scan for specific details. Focus on understanding the overall meaning rather than getting bogged down in every word.

6 Take Educated Guesses

7 Foster Active Listening Skills

8 Organize Your Ideas

9 Add Variety to Vocabulary

10 Pay Attention to Grammar

Take Educated Guesses: If you're unsure of an answer, make an educated guess rather than leaving it blank. Use context clues or eliminate unlikely options to increase your chances of guessing correctly.

Foster Active Listening: Listen to the key information and main ideas during the listening section of the test. Take notes to help you remember important details.

Organise Your Ideas: Through rationale and logic, organise your thoughts and connect them with appropriate linking words.

Add More Variety to Your Vocabulary: Make use of a more varied vocabulary accurately and appropriately. Avoid repeating the same words. Use synonyms instead.

Focus on Grammar & Sentence: Pay attention to grammar and sentence structure. Use a mix of simple and complex sentences.

11

Clear Pronunciation

Aim at Clear and Intelligible Pronunciation: Practice stress and intonation for better expression. For this, try listening to native speakers and observe how they use tone, stress and pitch as they speak.

12

Identify the Keywords

Identify the Keywords Look for keywords in questions and find them in the passage to locate answers efficiently and more quickly.

13

Paraphrase Words

Paraphrase: Pay attention to paraphrased words and phrases in both questions and passages. Try swapping nouns into verbs and verbs into adjectives for quick paraphrasing.

14

Start Active Journaling

Maintain an Active Journal / Take Notes: Practice effective note-taking techniques to capture key points and details. Maintain a journal and start capturing your reflections in English.

15

Listen and Predict

Listen Predictively: Predict possible answers based on questions before listening to the audio. Listen for keywords and synonyms in questions and use them to identify relevant information in the audio.

Practical Tips for Improving English Language Skills

IMMERSE

Surround yourself with English-language media such as movies, TV shows, books, and podcasts to improve your listening and comprehension skills.

PRACTICE

Set aside dedicated time each day to practice reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English. Consistent practice is key to improvement.

EXPAND

Make a habit of learning new words and phrases regularly. Use flashcards, vocabulary apps, or language learning websites to build your vocabulary.

ENGAGE

Practice speaking English with native speakers or language partners. Join conversation groups, language exchange programs, or online forums to practice speaking in real-life situations.

SEEK FEEDBACK

Solicit feedback from teachers, tutors, or language partners to identify areas for improvement and receive guidance on how to strengthen your language skills.

What To Avoid During Test Preparation & on the Test Day?

Procrastination: Avoid waiting until the last minute to start preparing for the test. Begin studying early to give yourself ample time to review and practice.

Overconfidence: While confidence is essential, overconfidence can lead to complacency. Stay focused and continue practicing even if you feel confident in your abilities.

Ignoring Weaknesses: Identify your weaknesses and areas for improvement early on in your preparation. Devote extra time and effort to strengthening these areas.

Not Following Directions: Failure to follow instructions can result in lost points. Take the time to read and understand all instructions provided before starting each section of the test.

Test Anxiety: Manage test anxiety by practicing relaxation techniques such as deep breathing or visualization. Remind yourself of your preparation and focus on the task at hand.

#LETS CRACK IT

NEED EXPERT ASSISTANCE?

with complete preparation and application procedure for
TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge English, SAT, GRE and more along
with end-to-end support on selection and application to the
global university of your dreams.

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