



## THE ACADEMIC READING TEST

### The Test Format

The IELTS Academic Reading Test has 3 sections. You have 60 minutes to complete the test. There is NO extra time at the end of the test to transfer your answers to the answer paper (you get 10 extra minutes in the listening test only); your answers must be on the answer paper at the end of the 60 minutes. The test has 40 questions based on a series of 3 texts. The total length of all the texts put together will be between 2000 and 2750 words. As in all the different parts of IELTS, the Academic Reading Test gets progressively harder through the paper. In each section of the Academic Reading Test there will be 1 text with 13 or maybe 14 questions to answer in 2 or 3 sets of differing formats. We will look at the types of question that you will meet later. The texts will come from magazines, books and journals and are written for general interest or for an academic though non-specialist reader. At least one text will contain a logical argument. One text may contain non-verbal materials such as a diagram, graph or illustration. If there are any words or terms of a specialist technical nature which candidates would not be expected to know, then a short glossary will be provided. To prepare properly for the reading test, you should read as widely as possible as many different types of "academic" style texts as possible and practice on good quality IELTS practice tests.

### Marking

There are 40 questions in the IELTS Academic Reading Test and 1 mark is awarded for each correct answer. There are no half marks. Your final mark out of 40 is then converted to a band from 1 - 9 using a converting table and this band is then averaged with the other 3 parts of the test to give your final IELTS band. Band scores for the reading test and the final band are given as a whole band or a half band. The converting table used to change your mark out of 40 to the band out of 9 changes with every test. However, below you can see a rough guide that you can use to assess your practice on the IELTS practice tests that you use. There is no guarantee that you will perform the same in the real test itself as the test converters vary with each test, but it can be a guide to your progress.

### IELTS Academic Reading Test Marks, Bands and Results - Rough Guide Converter

Score	Band
1	1
2-3	2
4-9	3
10-15	4
16-22	5
23-28	6



29-35	7
36-38	8
39-40	9

## **IELTS Academic Reading Test Question Types**

Below is a list of the types of question that you could meet in the IELTS Academic Reading Test. It's useful to read the list of course, but the only way to really be familiar with the types of question is through practice on good quality IELTS practice tests.

- Multiple choice questions
- Short answer questions
- Completion questions: Completing sentences
- Completing notes
- Completing a summary (no word bank)
- Completing a summary (with word bank)
- Completing a diagram
- Completing a flow chart
- Completing a table
- Matching a bank of headings to identify paragraphs or parts of text
- Matching a bank of writers' views/claims/information with the writer
- Identification of information in the text: yes/no/not given questions
- true/false/not given questions
- Matching lists/phrases
- Classification questions

## **Some Tips for the IELTS Academic Reading Test**

Don't spend too long on a single question as that will lose you time for answering questions that could be easier for you. Sometimes leaving a question and coming back later can help you answer it too. Leave any questions that you have spent too long on, and come back at the end of the test if you have time. Sometimes, if the question has a yes/no/not given answer, the answer you are looking for does not exist as it could be a not given. Be aware so you don't waste time looking for something that isn't there.

Read the questions and instructions so you don't make a silly mistake. For example, people often will mix the yes/no answers with the true/false answers and write yes as an answer instead of true or vice versa. Strictly speaking you are wrong although you have understood the question and answer.

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If the question asks for one answer then give one answer. Giving two is wrong as it asks for one and you will be marked wrong. The type of question where this could happen would be: Give one example of... Writing two examples, to show you really understand, is wrong.

If the question asks for no more than 3 words, use no more than 3 words. Writing 4 words or more is wrong. You won't be asked to do it in 3 words or less unless it is possible so don't worry; it can always be done.

One area that students don't like is that, in the reading test, good grammar and spelling are important. The grammar part is not as important as you can't make many grammar errors in 3 words (the maximum you use in the reading test) but, if you spell something wrong, it will be marked as wrong. People think, quite rightly in my opinion, that the reading should test whether you understand what you read and not how you spell something but these are the rules. So, be careful about your spelling!

One constant discussion I have had with students is whether to read the questions first and then read the passage or read the passage first and then the questions. From my experience with many students my conclusion is that there is no correct answer for this. It depends on a number of variables. It can depend on the types of question and how difficult the questions are. It can depend on how good and fast a reader you are. It can depend on the length of the text and how much time you have. Let's look at these variables.

If the question type is difficult and asking something which is hard to answer then reading the text first can help. Just a quick read through using a technique called skimming (see below for an analysis of skimming) can give you the knowledge of the text that will help you find the answer more easily.

If you are a good, fast reader, then you can read the text quickly, getting good knowledge of the contents without using up too much precious time. This can help you answer the questions better. If the texts are short then it doesn't take long to quickly read through them. On the other hand, if the texts are long it is easier to find the answers so you may not have to waste time reading the texts to find the answers quickly, especially if time is short.

If time is short then it doesn't matter how complex or long the texts are. You need to get some answers on the answer sheet as quickly as possible. So, you can see that there is not one answer to the problem of whether to read the texts or questions first. What I tell students is to experiment in your practice and see what suits you for the different types of question in different situations. As usual practising your techniques with good quality IELTS practice tests is the key.



Time management is an important thing to be aware of. You have a number of texts to read and 40 questions to answer in 1 hour. If you spend too long on one part, you may find that you have not enough time to finish all the questions and some of those questions could be ones that you could answer quite easily. As I said above, don't spend too long on a difficult answer but also keep an eye on the clock. It's a good idea to have your watch or a small clock on your desk so you know exactly how long you have left in the test at any given time. In addition to this, keep control on how long you spend on each section. Remember the test gets more difficult as it goes on so you will probably need more time for the questions at the end than for those at the start. Maybe a guideline could be:

17 minutes on section 1.

20 minutes on section 2.

23 minutes on section 3.

(If you can do things more quickly all the better as that will give you time to look at questions that you skipped and to check on your answers)

With experience and practice on realistic IELTS practice tests, you will soon know how long things take you, and be able to manage your time well.

As I just said, if you have finished the exam with time to spare, DON'T just sit there!! Check what you have done. If you have time after the check, check again. And so on....

## **Reading Techniques - Skimming and Scanning**

Skimming and scanning are the two main techniques that people use to read and answer IELTS reading tests. It's not a question of using one or the other but you will need both methods in doing the test. Let's have a look at the two techniques in turn.

### **Skimming**

Skimming is reading fast to get the "gist" or the general idea of the text. There are different techniques of doing skimming. You can run your eyes over the text getting the general meaning, not stopping at words that you don't understand as this will slow you down. The important thing with skimming is speed. Another way to skim is to just read the first and last paragraphs of a text and summaries as well. You could also just read the title, subtitles and illustrations if there are any. I prefer for IELTS the first way - reading it all quickly to get the general meaning, but of course it depends on your reading speed. If you are a slow reader in English you really need to practise to improve. You don't need IELTS specific texts for this. A good English newspaper is fine. Get one every



day and read the articles as quickly as you can. Do this with as many articles as possible every day and your speed will quickly improve. Using IELTS practice tests is of course the best way to practice.

## **Scanning**

This is another very important technique for the IELTS Reading Tests. This is the technique that you use when you are reading a telephone book or a dictionary. You are not starting at the top and reading every line back and forth as you would read a novel. You are moving your eyes around the text, back and across and up and down. You are searching for some specific information: a word or name. This is an important technique in IELTS reading as you are often searching for some specific information. You read the question and then you search for key words or ideas associated with the question. This is a bit more difficult to practise than skimming. You get long texts (from newspapers, magazines, IELTS practice tests, or other sources) and get a friend to read it and then ask you to find key ideas or words as quickly as possible. Again, if you do this frequently, your speed will quickly improve.

If you want to improve, there's no secret. Practice. Practice. Practice. You won't get better sitting and doing nothing. Even good English users need practice for the IELTS exam. Doing plenty of challenging reading and doing IELTS practice tests could make all the difference between your getting the band that you need, and getting half a band less than you need and having to do the exam again.

Finally, there are no correct answers or methods. Here I've given you some ideas to guide you and hopefully to help you but the questions can be answered well in different ways. Good luck with the IELTS Academic Listening Test! I hope that this tutorial has helped you. Below are the links to the other free Academic tutorials. We strongly recommend that you practice for the tests with good IELTS practice tests. Of course, we would like you to use ours as we believe ours are excellent and the cheapest on the market, but any good IELTS practice tests will do.