

STRATEGIES TO HELP YOU PASS THE PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH (PIE) EXAMINATION

Passing an exam requires you to answer a sufficient number of questions correctly. However, in order to be successful in achieving this, the journey to a successful examination result starts a long time before the actual exam. There are many tips for you to learn throughout your time studying, which will ultimately lead you to be more successful in examinations. Therefore, you should read the following tips carefully and practice them many times before the day of the actual examination.

The chart below shows the different elements in the PIE examination, and the type and number of tasks you will be asked to complete.

SECTION	WEIGHTING	TIMING	ITEMS	TASK TYPE&FORMAT	OTHER INFO
Listening	15	35	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PART 1 : Matching (with one extra option) 5 items • PART 2: Multiple Choice (4 options) 5 items • PART 3: Multiple Choice (4 options) 5 items 	Part 1: radio programme or interviews with multiple number of speakers giving information Part 2: More formal lecture/monologue Part 3: 2 informal dialogues/conversations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each text listened to twice • Clearly articulated
Use of English	25	60	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PART 1: 2 Cloze Tests (with 4 options) (10 items) • PART 2: Vocabulary (with 4 options) (5 items) • PART 3: Word Formation (with 4 options) (5 items) • PART 4: Closest in Meaning (4 options) (5 items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic texts taken from authentic sources.
Reading	30	70	30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PART 1: Matching (2 extra options) (6 items) • PART 2: Insertion (2 extra options) (5 items) • PART 3: Multiple Choice (4 options) (8 items) • PART 4: Multiple Choice (4 options) (11 items) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic or semi-academic authentic texts taken from authentic sources.
Writing	30	80	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PART A: Filling in a table while reading (1 text) • PART B: Filling in a table while listening (2 lectures) • PART C: Writing an essay (275 – 350 words) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authentic academic texts taken from authentic sources • Each text listened to twice (Part B).
TOTAL	100	4h 05 mins	71		

SECTION	WEIGHTING	TIMING	TASK TYPE & FORMAT	OTHER INFO
Speaking	100	Part 1: 2 mins Part 2: 2 mins Part 3: 3 mins Part 4: 3 mins	PART 1: Question & Answer PART 2: Role-play PART 3: Decision making PART 4: Extended Individual long turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 candidate • 1 interlocutor • video taped
TOTAL	100	10 mins/student		

Note: The Total PIE Grade is calculated by taking 80% of the written component and 20% of the spoken component.

SESSION I: INTEGRATED WRITING

Objectives:

- To assess the candidate's ability to read a text and find the main and supporting ideas while simultaneously completing a table with relevant notes on the text.
- To assess the candidate's ability to follow and comprehend spoken input while at the same time taking notes to complete a given table recognizing the main and key points in the listening.
- To assess the candidate's ability to produce an academic style essay using the correct and appropriate language structures, discourse, and lexis in order to produce a coherent and cohesive piece of writing.

This part of the exam is **80 minutes** long.

- a. Students read a text and fill in the first column of the table in the Integrated Writing Booklet. Students have only 5 minutes to read and take notes then the reading text is collected.
- b. Students listen to two tracks and fill in the second and third columns of the table in the Integrated Writing Booklet.
- c. Students write an essay to answer the question given using the notes they have taken during the reading and listening sections.

Developing Strategies for the Integrated Writing Tasks

Why is integrated writing important?

When you start your departments, your professors will assign reading for homework as preparation for the lecture on the following day. Naturally, what you should expect from this reading is to give you background info about the topic that will be discussed in class the next day. The professor will discuss the reading and elaborate on it further - perhaps by providing an example to illustrate a point or by offering a different view of the same topic. You can also expect that you will eventually have to show that you understand the material in the reading and the lecture. You will do this by connecting information from the two sources. This type of activity is common in university study: you will read the course material, listen to a professor talk about the material, and then demonstrate that you understand the material.

What is being tested?

The integrated skills writing task measures your ability to understand key ideas from an academic reading passage and short lectures, and to write a response to a question about them. You must organize and compose a response in a written form.

In your response, you must demonstrate your ability to:

- draw ideas effectively in answering the question.
- draw connections between the listening parts and the reading.
- develop ideas with appropriate examples and explanation.
- display unity and coherence.

What will you have to write about?

Among the possible types of connections between the two or three texts, you might be asked to explain how:

- the ideas in the lectures agree or disagree with ideas in the reading,
- the lectures present a different view of the reading topic,
- the lectures explain causes or effects of something in the reading, or
- points in the lectures contradict, refute, depart from or cast doubt on points in the reading.

What will be included in your writing?

While referring to your notes, you can add your opinion. Your response does not need to be based only on what you hear in the lecture and read in the passage. The integrated writing task requires you to do more than one thing. For example, it asks you to summarize key points from the lecture and show how these points relate to the information in the reading so you have to connect the inputs given. It also requires you to answer the question that is asked in the task.

What makes a good piece of writing?

Cohesion is the quality of unity and order in a piece of writing. Writing is coherent when all of the ideas are connected logically. To achieve this, you have to use transitions and other expressions that will help you express relationships between ideas and give your writing unity and coherence.

Tips for taking notes while reading

The reading text will give you vital information regarding the Integrated Writing question. The information has to be somehow connected to the information given in the listening and your own opinion to form the basis of your writing.

Read the passage carefully, and scan it for key terms and other useful information. Take notes about the reading passage carefully because the reading passage will be collected at the end of the set time. You can also find key vocabulary in the reading which may be useful when writing the essay. However, be careful not to directly copy entire sentences from the reading and copy them into your essay. You must paraphrase any lexis and structures taken from the text.

Tips for taking notes while listening

It is important to write down the key words and information that you hear. Note taking is an essential academic skill. During your university experience, you have to take notes to help you remember important details from lectures and class discussions. You then have to use these notes to study and understand the information.

In the Integrated Writing section of the PIE examination, the notes you take while listening will provide you with ideas and source material which you can use in connection with the notes you take while reading to answer the question given. However, it should be noted that your notes will not be graded.

While listening to the lecture, focus on the ideas that you think are most important and take notes about them. Do not try to write down everything. Limit your note taking to examples and reasons that illustrate the speaker's points. Do not allow your note-taking to detract from your listening.

Sometimes a speaker emphasizes certain words or repeats certain ideas throughout the lecture. Listen for key words that the speaker emphasizes or repeats. Sometimes, a speaker uses certain expressions to call your attention to important information. Listen out for these expressions as they will be an indication that the information following is of importance.

SESSION II: LISTENING AND READING

Listening Objectives:

- To assess the candidate's ability to deduce the meaning of functional and idiomatic language, vocabulary and structure in order to match a relevant statement to the specific parts of the audio track
- To assess the candidate's ability to follow and comprehend extended spoken input, to identify and follow the key ideas, to identify specific information, and to be able to infer meaning from the supporting details

- To assess the candidate's ability to follow a conversation, identify specific information, or make inferences from the information given.

Reading Objectives:

- To assess the candidate's ability to understand and identify the main ideas in the texts and match this to a given statement, to infer meaning and to guess unknown vocabulary.
- To assess the candidate's ability to recognize the relationship between ideas within a text, and discourse and vocabulary transition items which link ideas within a text.
- To assess the candidate's ability to understand the key ideas in a text and answer comprehension questions about it, to distinguish between different levels of information, to identify and understand the reason for the author writing the text, to infer meaning, and to guess word meanings.
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This part of the exam is **105 minutes** long and there are two sections: Listening and Reading. (See the chart above for task types and items.)

Developing Strategies for the Listening Tasks

Use Organizational Skills

- Before you listen to the tracks, you are given time to look at the questions. Use the time effectively.
- Skim the questions before listening to get a general idea of the listening, and at the same time, take a note of key words.
- Skim the organization of the questions as well as the language. This helps to locate answers. Remember that the listening questions will be in the order they appear in the listening.
- Use the information in the questions to help answer other questions.
- Do not choose answers that contradict the general sense of the listening.
- Use the general information you have about a listening to predict an answer about a specific detail.

Predict and Check

- Predicting is about using skills you already use in life generally, so use logic, common sense, and the organization of information to predict multiple choice questions.

- Predicting is not guessing. You guess when you do not think or know anything about an answer or when you do not have time to work it out. You predict when you use the information you have or know to give an answer – often a general word to match with a specific detail in the recording.
- Predict, and then match with the listening. Even if your prediction is different, you have something to listen for.
- You can use the collocation of words to help you predict.
- When you predict, always listen to check the answer. Your prediction may not always be right, so it is important that you check you have chosen the correct answer.

Concentrate

- Concentrate while you are answering. If you don't listen to the recording you may miss the thread of the recording.
- Use the questions to guide you through the recording.

Manage your time

- Use your time efficiently.
- When you have 30-second silences, use them for skimming and scanning the questions or checking your answers.
- If you are confident of your answers, use checking time to look ahead.
- As you listen, use the time between answers to skim/scan ahead.
- If you miss a question, leave it and go to the next one. It is better to miss one question than a whole section.

Paraphrase

- Always look out for synonyms.
- Understanding paraphrasing and different synonyms is about building your vocabulary.
- Remember that you cannot and do not have to know everything. However, you do need to know enough to be able to work out the meaning of words and phrases.
- When practicing for the exam, repeating the listenings that you have heard before will help to build up your vocabulary.
- When working out words and phrases you do not know, use the information in the questions and the recording to predict meaning and any answers.

Matching

When matching statements with parts of a listening track, you must listen carefully to each section of the listening and listen for the specific information mentioned in each of the statements to make sure that a statement is true according to the listening. Find clues (words, phrase) in each section of the listening which verify the statement.

When the listenings are about different people, the statements often include verbs or adjectives which describe a person's feelings, attitudes or opinions. When matching such statements with the listening, try to find the words/phrases in the correct section of the listening which correspond to the meaning of the verbs/adjectives included in the statements.

If you have difficulty in answering a question in the matching part, perhaps it's because you have already used the correct option in a previous question, therefore, during the second listening, go back to the previous questions to check your answers and revise your choices if necessary. Do not spend too much time on one particular question. If despite your efforts you cannot find the answer, leave it and move on to the next question. When you have answered the rest of the questions, go back to the one you haven't answered, think about it again, and if you still haven't found the answer to it, make an educated guess - that is a guess based on what you have heard. Do not leave any questions unanswered. A guess is better than no answer at all.

Multiple Choice Questions

Use the questions to help you predict what you will hear. You can get a very good idea of the content of the recording from the question and the four options given. Use your logic, knowledge of the world, common sense, and the other questions in the section to predict your answer then check as you listen.

The importance of analyzing questions

- Pay particular attention to analyzing multiple-choice questions. The techniques involved are very similar to those for the reading. However, for listening, you need to be much faster as obviously once the recording has moved in, you can become confused. Remember that if you miss an answer, move on.
- Look for patterns in the alternatives, and see how the wrong answers are created. At the beginning of the test, the questions are often short, simple items. The wrong answers can include items that are mentioned in the recording or may not be given. Be careful not to just choose an option just because it appears in the recording. Ensure the option you chose answers the question given. This will show you how the questions are created and how the questioning is organized.
- When you have finished your analysis, listen to the recording.

- You can practice this technique before the actual examination. If necessary, do the same exercises again and again until you feel comfortable with answering the questions.
- Then, when you come to questions in the exam that you have never heard before you will have a stronger foundation, and as a result, you will feel more relaxed about the exam as your understanding and speed increase.

Developing Strategies for the Reading Tasks

Matching

When matching statements with short texts you must scan each text and look for the specific information mentioned in each of the statements to make sure that a statement is true according to the text. Find clues (words, phrase) in the text which verify the statement.

When the texts are about different people, the statements often include verbs or adjectives which describe a person's feelings, attitudes or opinions. When matching such statements with the text try to find the words/phrases in the texts which correspond to the meaning of the verbs/adjectives included in the statements.

Start with the questions whose answers seem more obvious or easier to find. Then, try to answer the rest of the questions by reading the corresponding parts of the text more carefully.

If you have difficulty in answering a question in the matching part perhaps it's because you have already used the correct option in a previous question; therefore, go back to the previous questions to check your answers and revise your choices if necessary. Do not spend too much time on one particular question. If despite your efforts you cannot find the answer, leave it and move on to the next question. When you have answered the rest of the questions go back to the one you have not answered, think about it again, and if you still haven't found the answer to it, make an educated guess - that is a guess based on what you have read. Do not leave any questions unanswered. A guess is better than no answer at all.

Completing a gapped text with missing sentences (Insertion)

In this part of the test, you will be asked to complete a gapped text from which parts have been removed and are presented in jumbled order. When you are presented with such a task, it is advisable to read the whole text first in order to understand its gist. Then, carefully read the sentences before and after each gap, and try to guess what each missing part is about. Before deciding which sentence fits a gap in a text, carefully read the sentences before and after the gap, and the sentences which have been removed from the text and are presented in jumbled order. Look for clues both in the text and in the options. The correct

option must logically complete the meaning that the writer is trying to communicate, and some usually include vocabulary which is relevant to word/phrases found in the sentences before and after the gap. The tenses in the correct options must also fit logically with the tenses used in the text.

There are usually some important words in a text which need to be mentioned several times. To avoid repeating these important words too many times, the writers usually replace them with other words/phrases which either describe them (e.g. the capital of France instead of Paris), or are similar in meaning (picture instead of paintings), or have a more general meaning than them (e.g. children instead of boys). There are also a number of words in a text called reference items which usually refer to other words or phrases mentioned earlier in the text. It is important to identify what such words refer to as this will help you understand the text. When completing a gapped text, pay special attention to any reference items that appear in the text and especially in the sentences immediately after the gap. Underline these reference items and keep them in mind while choosing your answers. Make sure you choose an option which includes a word or phrase that the reference item logically refers to. When completing a gapped text, pay special attention to reference items which appear not only in the text, but also in the options. If you decide to complete a gap with an option which includes a reference item, make sure that the item logically refers to a word or phrase which appears in the sentences immediately before the gap.

When completing a gapped text, you should also pay attention to sentence linkers which appear both in the text and the options. These sentence linkers, link sentences in different ways and are used to

- add, clarify, or emphasize.
- express contrast.
- express relation of reason and result.
- express time relations.

Pay attention to sentence linkers that appear in the text especially after each gap and the options. When you have completed the gaps, check that each sentence which includes a sentence linker, whether it appears in the text or as an option, makes good sense in relation to the sentence before.

Other useful tips

- Read the rubric and the title of the text carefully as they give you a general idea of what the text is about.
- Read through the text once quickly to understand its gist and what each paragraph is about.
- Read the sentence before and after each gap, and decide what the missing sentence is about.
- Read the options again and decide which of them fits the gap. Pay particular attention to the vocabulary reference items and sentence linkers both in the text and in the options. There must always be some logical connection between the sentences before and after the gap and the correct

option. After you have completed all the gaps, read through the completed text, and make sure it makes sense.

- Read the options you did not use, and make sure it does not fit any of the gaps in the text.

Multiple-Choice Questions

Multiple-choice questions focus on specific information or details. Quite often in this part of the exam there are also some questions focusing on global understanding, reading between the lines and lexical references.

When answering questions which focus on global understanding, you need to concentrate on the paragraph as a whole. In those cases, the question focusing on global understanding will be included at the end of the set of questions. It is a good idea to get a general understanding of the paragraph as you read it so as to be able to answer questions correctly. When answering multiple-choice questions which focus on global understanding, read the options carefully to see which one best suits the paragraph as a whole. Be careful with options which refer only to a part of the paragraph or include some words/phrases from the paragraph, but do not describe it globally. If necessary, read the paragraph again quickly to confirm your answer after you have finished with the rest of the questions.

Questions which focus on lexical reference require you to find what a reference item in the text refers to. Reference items can be personal pronouns (e.g. it, he, them) or demonstratives (e.g. this, that). When answering questions of this type, you need to carefully read the sentence which contains the reference item as well as a few sentences before to see what it refers to. Remember that most times you will be looking for a noun or a noun phrase. In some cases, a word may refer to a whole clause rather than a noun or noun phrase. In such cases, try replacing the word with the clause you think it refers to to test it. However, you must make sure that the option you chose is in line with the general meaning of the text.

SESSION III: USE OF ENGLISH

Objectives:

- To assess the candidate's ability to comprehend simple, compound and complex sentences and to use correct, appropriate language structures.
- To assess the candidate's awareness of the essentials and details of English grammar, including tenses, prepositions, various language structures as well as the use of idiomatic expressions.
- To assess the candidate's understanding of general and academic vocabulary in context and their ability to use this vocabulary within the given context.
- To assess the candidate's ability to use vocabulary in the correct form within a given language structure, and within the context of the given text.

- To assess the candidate's ability to identify an alternative way of structuring language so that the meaning of the given sentence is not changed therefore, demonstrating their ability to recognize a variety of compound and complex language structures.

This part of the exam is **60 minutes** long. (See chart above for detail of task types and items.)

PLEASE NOTE: You get 1 point for every correct answer. You will not get a point taken off for every incorrect answer. For example, three incorrect answers WILL NOT eliminate 1 correct answer.

SESSION IV: SPEAKING

Objectives:

- To communicate personal information, opinions, feelings and ideas on various topics.
- To ask for and provide information in a variety of social situations using a range of functional language.
- To contribute points in a discussion on a familiar context and come to a conclusion.
- To narrate, describe, explain and express opinions on wide range of general or academic topics in extended speech

This session of the exam is **10 minutes** long per student, and there are four parts. (See chart above for detail of task types and items.) The standard format of the speaking exam is 1 interlocutor and 1 candidate. The PIE Speaking Exam consists of 4 parts. Each of these parts is assessed. Your partner in the exam is the interlocutor. The patterns of discourse vary within each part of the exam.

Developing Strategies for the Speaking Tasks

General Tips:

- It's OK to make few mistakes – correct yourself if you notice your mistake, but don't stop talking.
- Listen carefully and try to follow what the interlocutor is saying and respond to what's been asked.
- Ask the interlocutor to repeat if you don't understand the question.
- The interlocutor may ask you questions if you haven't said enough about the topic or if you haven't responded directly to what is being asked. This applies to all four parts of the exam.

PART 1: Question and Answer

In Part 1 of the PIE Speaking Exam, the interlocutor will ask you questions about yourself, your ideas and opinions on three familiar topics like your daily routine, the place where you live, your hobbies, or your environment.

Tips for Part 1: These questions will be about you; therefore, it will be easy to answer the questions. Make sure to give detailed answers and refrain from giving one-word answers.

PART 2: Role-play

In Part 2 of the PIE Speaking Exam, the interlocutor will give you two situations. These situations can be in restaurants, schools, at the cinema, at a friend's home, etc. Both you and the interlocutor will play the role of someone else. In one of these situations, you must respond, and in the other situation, you must start the conversation.

Tips for Part 2: Before responding to the situation, it is important to understand the situation, and what you are asked to do. Then, decide what you want to say. It is also important to know what role the interlocutor is playing as this will affect what you say, and how you say it. You may also need to consider where you are. How would you speak if you were in a shop or at a train station?

PART 3: Decision-making

In Part 3 of the PIE Speaking Exam, the interlocutor and the candidate will either plan an activity or compare their views on a topic. First, you and the interlocutor will exchange opinions on each idea given, then you and the interlocutor will come to a conclusion.

Tips for Part 3: Your exchanges should be natural and fluent at the same time. There isn't a right answer in this part. Feel free to disagree with the interlocutor as you're expected to provide your own opinion. You are also expected to talk about each idea on your task sheet, and make sure to decide on one idea together with the interlocutor.

PART 4: Extended individual long turn

In Part 4 of the PIE Speaking Exam, the interlocutor will give you a topic that you will talk about on your own. The interlocutor will give you a pencil and piece of paper to take notes, and you will prepare for your answer. You will only have 30 seconds to prepare. However, make sure not to read off the piece of paper where you have taken notes. The long turn should sound natural in every aspect. Environmental issues, family, media, famous people or the Internet are some topics that you may be asked to talk about.

Tips for Part 4: Make sure to practice giving short talks before the exam. As you practice, you will become more confident and fluent. It's a good idea to time your talk. This will help you know how much information you should or should not include in your talk.