Paper 1: Reading and Writing

Paper Format

The Reading component contains 5 parts. The Writing component contains 3 parts.

Number of questions

Reading has 35 questions; Writing has 7 questions.

Task Types

Matching, multiple choice, true/false, transformational sentences, guided writing and extended writing.

Sources

Authentic and adapted-authentic real world notices; newspapers and magazines; simplified encyclopedias; brochures and leaflets; websites.

Answering

Candidates indicate answers by shading lozenges (Reading), or writing answers (Writing) on an answer sheet.

Timing

1 hour 30 minutes.

Marks

Reading: Each of the 35 questions carry one mark. This is weighted so that this comprises 25% of total marks for the whole examination.
Writing: Questions 1–5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of 5; and question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25 which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Reading			
Part	**Task Type and Format**	**Task Focus**	**Number of questions**
1	Three-option multiple choice. Five very short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, e-mails, labels etc., plus one example.	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.	5
2	Matching. Five items in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.	5
3	True/False. Ten items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Processing a factual text. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	10
4	Four-option multiple choice. Five items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	5
5	Four-option multiple-choice cloze. Ten items, plus an integrated example, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexico-structural patterns in the text.	10

Preparing for the Reading Component

Introduction

Paper 1 lasts one and a half hours and contains two components, Reading and Writing. The Reading component consists of 35 questions, with five separate reading tasks in all, Parts 1–5. Together, these parts are designed to test a broad range of reading skills. Texts are drawn wherever possible from the real world and are adapted as necessary to the level of the PET examination. To this end, item writers work with a grammatical syllabus and a vocabulary list, which is updated annually to reflect common usage.

The topics of the texts fall within the list of topics given on page 8. Every effort is made to ensure that all texts used in PET are accessible worldwide and of interest to different age groups. Each exam task is pretested on large numbers of students before going live, to monitor its suitability and level.

To prepare for the Reading component, students should be exposed to a variety of authentic texts, drawn from newspapers and magazines, non-fiction books, and other sources of factual material, such as leaflets, brochures and websites. It is also recommended that students practise reading (and writing) short communicative messages, including notes, cards and e-mails.

As the Reading component places some emphasis on skimming and scanning skills, it is important for students to be given practice in these skills, working with texts of different lengths to obtain specific information. It should be stressed to students that they do not need to process every

word of the text: they may read an article on history purely to find particular dates or a brochure to check on different locations.

It is essential that candidates familiarise themselves with the instructions on the front page of the question paper and read the individual instructions for each part very carefully. Where an example is given, it is advisable to study it before embarking on the task. Candidates should also know how to mark their answers on the separate answer sheet, so that in the examination they can do this quickly and accurately. No extra time is allowed for the transfer of answers on Paper 1 and candidates may prefer to transfer their answers at the end of each part.

When doing final preparation for the examination, it is helpful to discuss timing with students and to get them to consider how to divide up the time between the various parts of the paper. Broadly speaking, it is envisaged that candidates will spend approximately 50 minutes on the Reading component and 40 minutes on the Writing component.

Part 1

Part 1 tests the candidate's understanding of various kinds of short texts: authentic notices and signs, packaging information (for example, instructions on a food package or a label on a medicine bottle), and communicative messages (notes, e-mails, cards and postcards). Accompanying the text is one multiple-choice question with three options, A, B and C.

When candidates attempt a question in this part, they should first read the text carefully and think about the situation in which it would appear. A text is often accompanied by visual information as to its context, for example showing its location, and this may also help candidates to guess the purpose of the text. After thinking about the general meaning in this way, candidates should read all three options and compare each one with the text before choosing their answer. As a final check, candidates should re-read both text and their choice of answer, to decide whether the chosen option is really 'what the text says'.

Part 2

Part 2 tests the candidate's detailed comprehension of factual material. Candidates are presented with five short descriptions of people and have to match this content to five of eight short texts on a particular topic. The topic is usually to do with goods and services of some kind, for example purchasing books, visiting museums, staying in hotels or choosing holidays. Candidates should begin Part 2 by reading through the five descriptions of the people. They should then read through all eight texts carefully, underlining any matches within them. In order to choose the correct text, candidates will need to check that all the requirements given in the description are met by it. Candidates should be warned against 'wordspotting' – that is, they should avoid making quick matches at word level and instead read each

text carefully, thinking about alternative ways of saying the same thing, i.e. paraphrasing.

Part 3

Part 3 tests the ability to work with a longer, factual text, looking for precise information. The information to be found is usually practical in nature, resembling the type of task with which people are often confronted in real life. Frequently, these texts take the form of brochure extracts, advertisements in magazines and website information.

There are ten questions, which are single-sentence statements about the text. The task is made more authentic by putting these questions before the text, in order to encourage candidates to read them first and then scan the text to find each answer. The information given in the text follows the same order as the content of the questions.

In this part, candidates may well meet some unfamiliar vocabulary. However, they will not be required to understand such vocabulary in order to answer a question correctly. When they meet an unfamiliar word or phrase, therefore, they should not be put off, and should concentrate on obtaining the specific information required from the text.

Part 4

Part 4 presents candidates with a text which goes beyond the provision of factual information, and expresses an opinion or attitude. There are five multiple-choice questions with four options, A, B, C and D. In answering these questions, candidates will demonstrate whether they have understood the writer's purpose, the writer's attitude or opinion, or an opinion quoted by the writer, and both the detailed and global meaning of the text.

This part requires candidates to read the text very carefully indeed. After a first fairly quick reading, to find out the topic and general meaning of the text, candidates should think about the writer's purpose and the meaning of the text as a whole. Having established this, candidates should read the text once again, this time much more carefully. After this second reading of the text, candidates should deal with the questions one by one, checking their choice of answer each time with the text. It may be more practical for candidates to consider the first and last questions together, in that the first focuses on writer purpose and the last on global meaning. The other three questions follow the order of information given in the text and one of the three will focus on attitude or opinion.

Part 5

In Part 5, candidates read a short text containing ten numbered spaces and an example. There is a four-option multiple-choice question for each numbered space, given after the text. The spaces are designed to test mainly vocabulary, but also grammatical points such as pronouns, modal verbs, connectives and prepositions.

Before attempting to answer the ten questions, candidates should read through the whole text to establish its topic and general meaning. After this, they should go back to the beginning of the text and consider the example. Then they should work through the ten questions, trying to select the correct word to fit in each space. It may often be necessary to read a complete sentence before settling on their choice of answer. Once candidates have decided on an answer, they should check that the remaining three options do not fit in the space. Having completed all ten questions, candidates should read the whole text again with their answers, to check that it makes sense.

Writing			
Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of questions
1	Sentence transformations. Five items, plus an integrated example, that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences using a different structural pattern so that the sentence still has the same meaning.	Control and understanding of Threshold/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.	5
2	Short communicative message. Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, e-mail etc. The prompt takes the form of a rubric to respond to.	A short piece of writing of 35–45 words focusing on communication of specific messages.	1
3	A longer piece of continuous writing. Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story. Candidates are primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.	Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.	1

Preparing for the Writing Component

Part 1

Part 1 focuses on grammatical precision and requires candidates to complete five sentences, all sharing a common theme or topic. There is an example, showing exactly what the task involves. For each question, candidates are given a complete sentence, together with a 'gapped' sentence below it. Candidates should write between one and three words to fill this gap. The second sentence, when complete, must mean the same as the first sentence. Both sentences are written within the range of grammar and structures listed on pages 7–8. There may be more than one correct answer in some cases.

As stated above, it is essential for candidates to spell correctly and no marks will be given if a word is misspelled. Candidates will also lose the mark if they produce an answer of more than three words, even if their writing includes the correct answer.

Part 2

Part 2 is a new task, introduced in March 2004 to replace the previous form-filling task. Candidates are asked to produce a short communicative message of between 35 and 45 words in length. They are told who they are writing to and why, and must include three content points, which are laid out with bullets in the question. To gain top marks, all three points must be present in the candidate's answer, so it is important that candidates read the question carefully and plan what they will include. Candidates are also assessed on the clarity of the message they produce; minor, non-impeding errors are not penalised.

Candidates will need practice in writing to the word length required. They will lose marks if their answers fall outside the limits: a short answer is likely to be missing at least one content point, an overlong one will lack clarity, by containing superfluous information. Practice should be given in class, with students comparing answers with each other and redrafting what they have written as a result. The General Mark Scheme below is used in conjunction with a Task Specific Mark Scheme (see pages 28 and 29).

General Mark Scheme for Writing Part 2

Mark	Criteria
5	All content elements covered appropriately. Message clearly communicated to reader.
4	All content elements adequately dealt with. Message communicated successfully, on the whole.
3	All content elements attempted. Message requires some effort by the reader. **or** One content element omitted but others clearly communicated.
2	Two content elements omitted, or unsuccessfully dealt with. Message only partly communicated to reader. **or** Script may be slightly short (20–25 words)
1	Little relevant content and/or message requires excessive effort by the reader, or short (10–19 words).
0	Totally irrelevant or totally incomprehensible or too short (under 10 words).

Part 3

Part 3 now offers candidates a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter may be written. Both tasks require an answer of about 100 words. For answers that are below length (fewer than 80 words), the examiner adjusts the maximum mark and the mark given proportionately. Longer answers are not automatically penalised, but may contain some irrelevant material. Candidates should be advised to keep to the task set, rather than include 'pre-learned' text, which may well not fit as part of their answer.

For the story, candidates are given either a short title or the first sentence. The answer must be recognisably linked in content to the question and candidates should pay particular attention to any names or pronouns given in the title or sentence. If, for example, the sentence is written in the third person, the candidate will need to construct his or her story accordingly.

To gain practice and confidence in story-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write short pieces for homework on a regular basis. They will also benefit from reading simplified readers in English, which will give them ideas for how to develop and end a story.

For the informal letter, candidates are given an extract of a letter from a friend of theirs, which provides the topic they must write about: for example, a couple of questions may be included, to focus their ideas. Candidates must keep to the topic or they will lose marks.

To practise their letter-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write to penfriends or 'e-pals' on a regular basis. In addition, they should have opportunities in class to think about the language and organisation of such a letter, with examples of appropriate opening and closing formulae provided, as well as useful phrases of greeting and leave-taking.

As already stressed, it is important for candidates to show ambition. They could gain top marks by including a range of tenses, appropriate expressions and different vocabulary, even if their answer is not flawless. Non-impeding errors, whether in spelling, grammar or punctuation, will not

necessarily affect a candidate's mark, whereas errors which interfere with communication or cause a breakdown in communication are treated more seriously.

In order to help teachers to assess the standards required, there are several sample answers to the Writing Part 3 questions on pages 30–33, with marks and examiner comments. Marks for Part 3 are given according to the Mark Scheme below. The band score is translated to a mark out of 15.

Band	Criteria
5	Very good attempt: • Confident and ambitious use of language • Wide range of structures and vocabulary within the task set • Well organised and coherent, through use of simple linking devices • Errors are minor, due to ambition and non-impeding Requires no effort by the reader.
4	Good attempt: • Fairly ambitious use of language • More than adequate range of structures and vocabulary within the task set • Evidence of organisation and some linking of sentences • Some errors, generally non-impeding Requires only a little effort by the reader.
3	Adequate attempt: • Language is unambitious, or if ambitious, flawed • Adequate range of structures and vocabulary • Some attempt at organisation; linking of sentences not always maintained • A number of errors may be present, but are mostly non-impeding Requires some effort by the reader.
2	Inadequate attempt: • Language is simplistic/limited/repetitive • Inadequate range of structures and vocabulary • Some incoherence; erratic punctuation • Numerous errors, which sometimes impede communication Requires considerable effort by the reader.
1	Poor attempt: • Severely restricted command of language • No evidence of range of structures and vocabulary • Seriously incoherent; absence of punctuation • Very poor control; difficult to understand Requires excessive effort by the reader.
0	Achieves nothing: language impossible to understand, or totally irrelevant to task.