

Introduction

General

The tests have been devised to help teachers to decide whether their students are ready to enjoy the next level of Penguin Readers.

There are six levels of test, corresponding to Levels 1–6 of the Readers, and two versions of test at each level, the B test provided as follow-up for retesting in the event of the majority of a class not obtaining the requisite score of 18/30 at the first attempt.

The tests have been thoroughly pretested with students at the appropriate levels. They each contain 30 structural and lexical items in multiple-choice format selected from the structures and lexis introduced at the given level.

The tests can be administered and corrected very quickly to aid a prompt decision, following the instructions given below. Within 30 minutes, including the time that it takes for the students to do a test, teachers should have sufficient information to reach a decision.

Content of the tests

Each test consists of 30 multiple-choice items. There are three choices (A, B, C) at levels 1–3, and four choices (A, B, C, D) at levels 4–6.

Items testing the same structure and/or lexis are not repeated within a test but in almost every case, the Test B at a given level is based on the same items as Test A to ensure an equal level of difficulty. Items never appear, however, in the same order. This minimises the possibility of students guessing the correct answers from memory.

The pass mark of 18/30 (or 60%) is valid for all levels. It is important to note that for the class as a whole to benefit from studying a Reader at a given level, it is not necessary for everyone to obtain this mark or even for the students' average to be above 18, but only for the majority of students to score 18 or more. It must be remembered that, as is appropriate in tests devised to determine whether students are capable of following a text, these tests measure recognition of correct language, not the ability to produce it.

Procedures for conducting the tests

In all cases, photocopy the Answer Sheet on page 26 in sufficient numbers for each student to have one. Note that for tests at levels 1–3, students will need to use the left-hand column (A, B, C) for their answers, and for levels 4–6, the right-hand column (A, B, C, D).

Photocopy the test for the level you have selected – for example, Test 1A on pages 2–3 for Level 1, in sufficient numbers for each student to have a copy. Always use the A test in the first instance. The B test, as explained above, testing knowledge of the same structures and lexis, is for use for retesting at a later date, in the event of the class proving to be not yet quite ready to attempt a Reader.

Photocopy the Answer key relevant to the test you have selected – for example, for Test 1A, page 27. Cut out the answers given there to make a mask. On no account cut the page in the book, as this will prevent you from making a mask for a test on another page.

Allow 20 minutes for students to complete the test. Ask them not to leave questions unanswered or to spend too long on any one question, which may prevent them from completing the test in the time available.

Collect students' answers and mark them by placing the mask you have made over the relevant column on the Answer Sheet. While it may be of interest to you to calculate students' marks individually or later on to analyse the papers to see which structures or lexis have caused problems so you can bear these in mind for remedial work before beginning a Reader, this is an additional benefit to be derived from the tests, but does not affect their main purpose.

By calculating each student's score out of 30, it should be possible within a few minutes to see whether more than half of the class have obtained the target score of 18 or more. In many cases, it will be possible with a mask to see at a glance whether a student has passed or failed.

Unless this initial calculation gives a marginal result, no further action is necessary at this point. If the majority have passed, the class will be able to follow the Reader satisfactorily. If the majority have clearly failed, allow at least 20 hours of class tuition to pass before retesting with Test B to prevent the result being falsified by students remembering answers if they were explained after the first attempt.

Only if the result remains doubtful – for example, if exactly half the class have obtained a score of 18 or more – will it be necessary to examine the marks in more detail. It is then a matter of common sense to decide whether the class are ready to begin a Reader at the level – for example, if a number came close to passing with a score of 16 or 17/30. As an insurance policy if you decide to proceed, it would be worthwhile seeing which items had caused difficulty, and revising them before beginning the Reader selected.