

International Certificate

**Test tips guide for
test-takers & teachers**



Computer-based test tips guide

This resource has been designed for test-takers and teachers to view examples of International Certificate item types and gain some useful tips to aid preparation.

The information can be used to help develop useful strategies for test day.

Tips are included for every item type and are presented in the order in which they appear in the test as follows:

Item type	Skill
Read Aloud	Speaking & Reading
Describe Image	Speaking
Listen and Repeat	Listening & Speaking
Listen to the Conversation	Listening & Speaking
Passage Comprehension	Listening / Listening & Speaking
Listen and Read	Listening & Reading
Listen and then Write	Listening & Writing
Passage Comprehension: Choose the Right Picture (A1/A2)	Reading
Short Answer Questions (B1+)	Reading
Choose the Right Word or Phrase (Gap fill)	Reading
Read and then Write	Reading & Writing
Short Writing Task	Writing

Speaking and Reading *Read Aloud*

Look at the text below. You have 40 seconds to prepare. After the beep, read the text aloud in a clear voice. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 29 seconds.

Many businesses now pay students to do small, easy jobs in the holidays. It is cheap for them and helps young people to make money.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to read aloud a sentence or short text.

What is being tested?

This question tests accurate pronunciation and how fluent the learner is at speaking. It tests if the words in the text are understood and repeated accurately.

Speaking and Reading *Read Aloud*

Look at the text below. You have 40 seconds to prepare. After the beep, read the text aloud in a clear voice. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

Recorded Answer

Current Status:

Beginning in 29 seconds.

This hotel is perfect for families with children. Its facilities include rooms with sea views, a restaurant with a special menu designed for kids, a huge swimming pool, and a kids' club which provides a wide range of fun activities. What's more, the hotel is just a few minutes' walk away from a beautiful beach.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to read aloud a sentence or short text.

What is being tested?

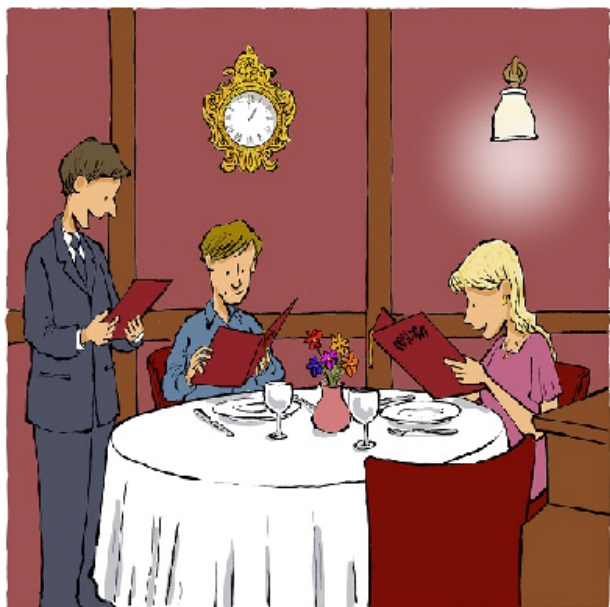
This question tests accurate pronunciation and how fluent the learner is at speaking. It tests if the words in the text are understood and repeated accurately.

Read aloud tips

- Use the 40 seconds to skim and understand the topic.
- Break the text into chunks and pause slightly between each one as you read.
- When reading, stress the words that carry important information, this makes it easier to understand what you are saying.
- Use rising intonation patterns to show a contrast, and falling to show you have finished a point.

Speaking *Describe the image*

Look at the picture. You have 25 seconds to prepare. After the beep, speak into the microphone and describe the picture. You have 25/40 seconds to give your response.



Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 22 seconds.

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to look at a photograph or picture and describe what they see.

What is being tested?

This question tests the learner's ability to speak in an extended way linking concepts and ideas. It tests the accuracy of speech including accurate grammar, pronunciation and stress as well as the fluency of the speech.

All
Levels


Describe the image tips

- You have 25 seconds before the microphone opens to look carefully at the image.
- Think of any implications or conclusions that can be drawn.
- Make notes of the main points and decide the order in which you will describe the information.
- After the tone, start with a general statement of what the image is about, then describe the details.

Speaking and listening *Listen and repeat*

Listen to the recording. Repeat the sentence exactly as you hear it. You will hear the sentence only once.

Status: Beginning in 1 seconds.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 3 seconds.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and then repeat it.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests pronunciation and fluency. It tests if the words heard are understood and repeated accurately.

Speaking and listening *Listen and repeat*

Listen to the recording. Repeat the sentence exactly as you hear it. You will hear the sentence only once.

Status: Beginning in 1 seconds.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 3 seconds.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and then repeat it.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests pronunciation and fluency. It tests if the words heard are understood and repeated accurately.

Listen and repeat tips

- Listen to the way the speaker groups words into meaningful phrases.
- Listen for the speaker's intonation and aim to copy it.
- Note how the speaker uses word stress to highlight important information and try to do the same.
- Don't try to copy the accent, just speak naturally, being mindful of pace and volume.

Listening and speaking *Listen to the conversation*

Listen to the conversation. Give a short, simple answer to the question.

Status: Stopped
No audio file has been selected.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 5 seconds.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short conversation and then answer a question about the conversation.


What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the accuracy of the listening comprehension of the learner.

Listening and speaking *Listen to the conversation*

Listen to the conversation. Give a short, simple answer to the question.

Status: Stopped
No audio file has been selected.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 5 seconds.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short conversation and then answer a question about the conversation.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests the accuracy of the listening comprehension of the learner.

Listen to the conversation tips

- Listen for the general flow of ideas and don't worry if you miss individual words.
- Take short notes of key words as you listen.
- Listen for the question word: e.g. who, what, how to focus your response.
- Speak clearly and remember a short, simple answer is satisfactory.

Passage comprehension *Choose the right picture*

First, listen to a story. Then, you will hear three questions. Please choose one picture for each question.

Status: Beginning in 5 seconds.

Volume 

Levels
A1 & A2

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions by choosing the correct image

What is being tested?

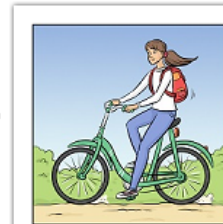
This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension *Choose the right picture*

Listen to the question and choose the correct picture.

Status: Beginning in 8 seconds.

Volume



Levels
A1 & A2

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions by choosing the correct image

What is being tested?

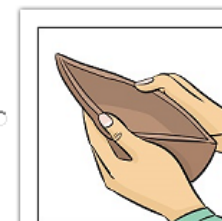
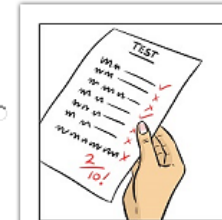
This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension *Choose the right picture*

Listen to the question and choose the correct picture.

Status: Beginning in 8 seconds.

Volume



Levels
A1 & A2

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions by choosing the correct image

What is being tested?

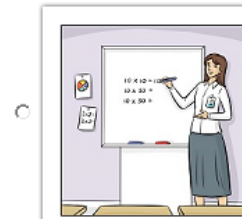
This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension *Choose the right picture*

Listen to the question and choose the correct picture.

Status: Beginning in 8 seconds.

Volume



Levels
A1 & A2

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions by choosing the correct image

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage Comprehension: Choose the Right Picture tips

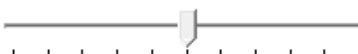
- Listen for the general flow of ideas and don't worry if you miss individual words.
- Take short notes of key words as you listen.
- Listen for the question word: e.g. who, what, how
- Keep your eyes hovering over the pictures when listening to the question, noticing any key differences.

Passage comprehension

First, listen to a story. Then, you will hear three questions. Please answer each question in turn.

Status: Beginning in 6 seconds.

Volume



Levels
B1 &
above

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions with a short, spoken response.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension

Listen to the question and give a short, simple answer. Your answer could be a few words or a very short sentence.

Status: Beginning in 2 seconds.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 9 seconds.

Levels
B1 &
above

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions with a short, spoken response.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension

Listen to the question and give a short, simple answer. Your answer could be a few words or a very short sentence.

Status: Beginning in 2 seconds.

Volume 

Levels
B1 &
above

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 9 seconds.

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions with a short, spoken response.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage comprehension

Listen to the question and give a short, simple answer. Your answer could be a few words or a very short sentence.

Status: Beginning in 2 seconds.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 9 seconds.

Levels
B1 &
above

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a short passage and answer three comprehension questions with a short, spoken response.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension. It tests understanding of a short passage.

Passage Comprehension tips

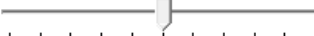
- Listen for the general flow of ideas and don't worry if you miss individual words.
- Take short notes of key words as you listen.
- Listen for the question word: e.g. who, what, how
- Speak clearly and remember a short, simple response is satisfactory for all 3 questions.

Listening and reading

Listen and read (Hotspots)

Listen to the recording. Click on the words in the text that are different from what you hear.

Status: Beginning in 6 seconds.

Volume 

Sam is a young boy. He lives in a small house in a big town. Every day he goes to work by car. He works in a hotel. In the evening he likes to play football in the park with his friends.

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to read a text and at the same time listen to the text. The learner has to find the differences between the written text and the spoken text.

What is being tested?

This question tests reading and listening comprehension. It tests the ability to recognise individual words in a text.

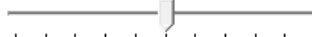
All
Levels

Listening and reading

Listen and read (Hotspots)

Listen to the recording. Click on the words in the text that are different from what you hear.

Status: Beginning in 6 seconds.

Volume 

Greenhill Park is open early until night every day of the year, including national holidays. Opening hours are clearly shown at most entrances. Music is played 15 minutes before the park is shut. Please note you may not enter the park after opening hours.

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to read a text and at the same time listen to the text. The learner has to find the differences between the written text and the spoken text.

What is being tested?

This question tests reading and listening comprehension. It tests the ability to recognise individual words in a text.


Listen and read tips

- Use the 10 seconds before the recording begins to skim the transcript and familiarise yourself with the topic.
- Move your cursor to the start of the transcript to get ready, then follow each word to the pace of the speaker's voice, being careful to keep up.
- Think how each word you are reading will sound and as soon as you hear a different word, click on the incorrect word.

Listening and writing Dictation

Listen to the recording and type what you hear. You will hear the sentence only once.

Status: Beginning in 4 seconds.

Volume 

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Total Word Count: 0

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and write what they have heard.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.

Listening and writing Dictation

All
Levels

Listen to the recording and type what you hear. You will hear the sentence only once.

Status: Beginning in 4 seconds.

Volume

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Total Word Count: 0

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to listen to a sentence or short text and write what they have heard.

What is being tested?

This question tests listening comprehension at the word and sentence level. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.

Listening and writing tips

- When the audio begins, focus on the meaning of the sentence. This will help you to remember it.
- Write or type the content words, leave minor words (prepositions, articles) for now.
- Write or type as quickly as you can, don't worry about spelling at this point.
- After the recording stops, go over the sentence and check your knowledge of grammar to add any words you missed out.

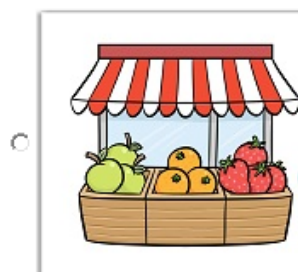
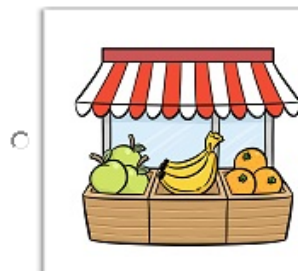
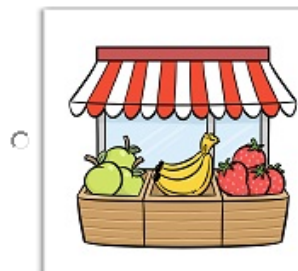
Reading Choose the right picture

Read the text. Choose a picture to answer the question.

Donna's Fruits.

The best apples, bananas and strawberries in town!

What is the correct picture for the shop?



Level
A1 & A2

What is being asked?

This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best picture to match with the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests the holistic understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.

Choose the right picture tips

- Read the question first, this will tell you what information you are looking for in the pictures.
- Pay attention to key words in the text and the question asked.
- Remember key vocabulary items should be visible in the correct picture. This will help you to eliminate those that do not contain the specified items or that contain items that have not been mentioned.

Reading Short answer questions

Read the information from a website below and answer the questions. Use no more than three words for each answer.

Achoo! The Oxgate Research Centre needs you!

Do you suffer from hay fever? Whether you have severe or mild symptoms, the Oxgate Research Centre is looking for your help with their medical research. The researchers are using social sensing, a new investigative technique through which large data sets are collected by asking people to track their own behaviours and input information into a mobile phone app. After downloading the app, you will be asked to press a button every time you sneeze. Over time, it is also possible that the app might be able to recognise the sound of your sneeze. Using location data sent through the app, researchers will then be able to detect the presence of pollen in particular areas. Participants in the research project will only be contributing to important research, but will also be able to avoid irritation by using the app to see where others have been experiencing symptoms.

You can find more information about this research project by visiting www.orc-hfproject.org

Example: Who is looking for help? Oxgate Research Centre

Question 1. What research method is being used?

Question 2. What device must participants have?

Question 3. What are researchers trying to locate?

Question 4. What condition is being studied?

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to read a longer text and answer questions on the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests the reading comprehension of the learner. It tests specific information included in the text.

**Levels
B1 &
above**

Short answer questions tips

- Skim the text quickly to understand the topic first.
- Focus on key words in the questions and use these to scan the text for details.
- Write only the word/s that answer the question and use content from the text where appropriate, this will ensure your responses are brief and accurate.

Reading Choose the right word or phrase (Gapfill)

Read the text. Choose a word or phrase to fill the gap.

Coffee Machine

Guest Feedback

Was the machine easy to use? Yes No

Did you enjoy your drink? Yes No

Was the drink good ____? Yes No

☐ quality for price

☐ value for money

☐ strength for cost

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best word or phrase to complete the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests the learner's holistic understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.

Reading Choose the right word or phrase (Gapfill)

Read the text. Choose a word or phrase to fill the gap.

Stairs closed.

Use the _____ to go to the second floor.

☐ Gate

☐ Stairs

☐ Elevator

All
Levels

What is being asked?

This question asks learners to read a short text and select the best word or phrase to complete the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests the learner's holistic understanding of short messages, notes and short pieces of writing.

Choose the right word or phrase tips

- First read the gapped text first and decide it's purpose. This can help to eliminate wrong options in terms of tone, grammar and meaning.
- Note key words in the text, this will help to understand the main message.
- Look at the words either side of the gap and use knowledge of grammar and vocabulary to predict the type of word or phrase that is missing.

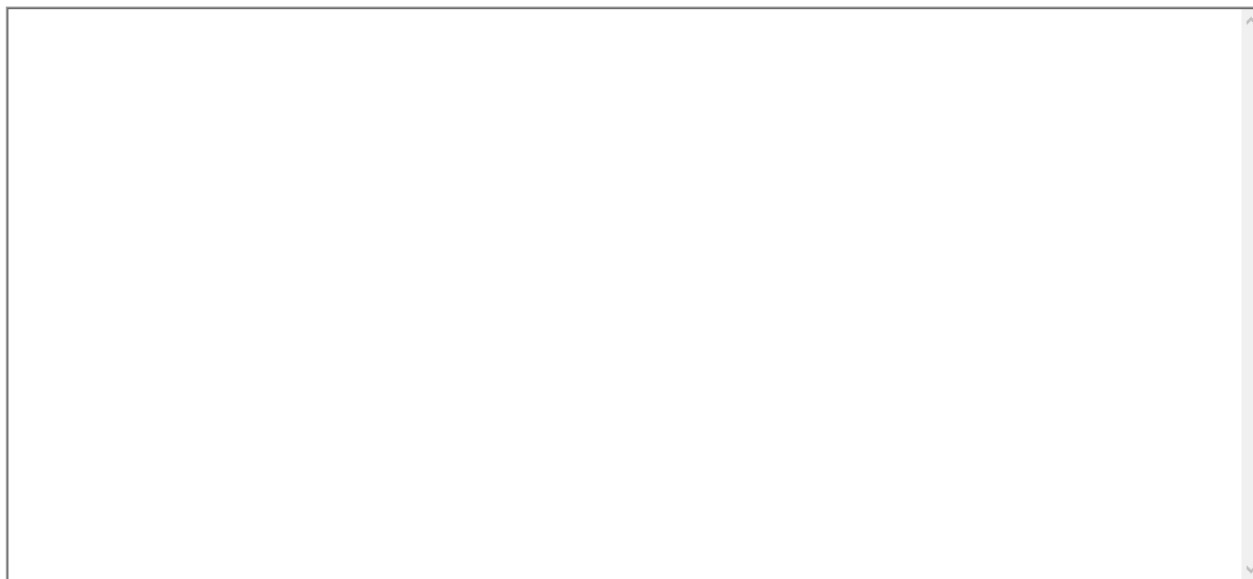
Reading and writing

Read and then write

Read the passage. After 30 seconds, the passage will disappear. Rewrite the passage in your own words. You have 90 seconds to write your answer.

Mary loves to take photographs. One day she decided to go to the park and take photographs of the birds there. But when she got there she found her camera wasn't working. She was not very happy.

Please write your answer below.



Cut

Copy

Paste

Total Word Count: 0

What is being asked?

This question asks the learners to read a short story or short piece of factual text. The text then disappears and the learner has to reconstruct the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests reading comprehension. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.

All
Levels

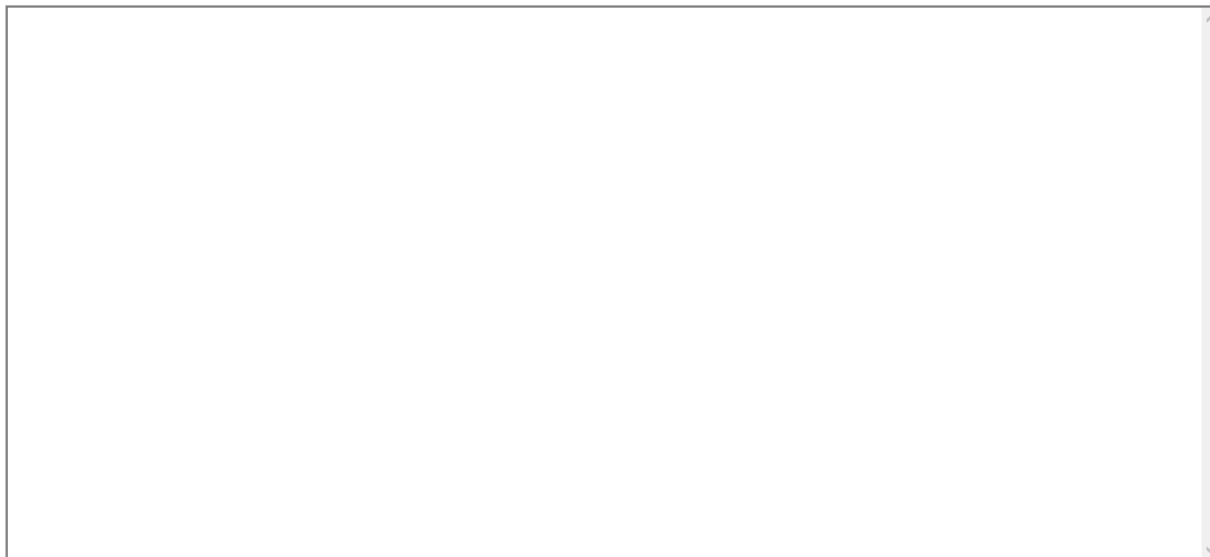
Reading and writing

Read and then write

Read the passage. After 30 seconds, the passage will disappear. Rewrite the passage in your own words. You have 120 seconds to write your answer.

Sarah's line manager at the biotechnology company where she worked had asked her to finalise her report by Friday. First thing on Thursday morning, the department head stopped by Sarah's desk and asked for the report. When Sarah explained that she hadn't expected to deliver it until the next day, the director apologised for alarming her, as she had got her days mixed up. Sarah felt very relieved.

Please write your answer below.



Cut

Copy

Paste

Total Word Count: 0

What is being asked?

This question asks the learners to read a short story or short piece of factual text. The text then disappears and the learner has to reconstruct the text.

What is being tested?

This question tests reading comprehension. It tests the ability to write accurately and understand sentence structure, word order and connectors.

All
Levels

Read and then write tips

- In the 30 seconds before the text disappears, read the passage calmly. First skim for general topic, then read carefully for main ideas.
- Aim to develop your own techniques for rapid note-taking so they become automatic.
- Remember best responses will clearly summarize the main idea and condense essential supporting ideas.
- Check grammar before submitting your response.

Short writing task Describe image

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. You must write at least 25 words.



Levels
A1 & A2
Describe
image

Levels
B1 & above
Write essay

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to write a short essay in response to a prompt. For lower levels, test takers need to write a short description of an image.

What is being tested?

This question tests writing skills. It tests paragraph and sentence structure, the range and accuracy of the language used, the ability to structure an argument or discussion in a written context. It tests grammar and vocabulary as an essential part of writing.

Cut

Copy

Paste

Total Word Count: 0


Short writing task (Describe image) tips

- Look carefully at the image. Spend the first few minutes planning: what is happening in the image, what tense/s are required.
- Consider the vocabulary needed and make sure you know enough words to write your answer.
- Start with a general statement of what the image is about, then describe the details.
- Write at least 25 words.

Short writing task Write essay

Read the question. You have 10 minutes to write your response. You must write at least 100 words.

More and more people are taking holidays to unusual destinations, for example to Antarctica or the Sahara Desert. What is your opinion of taking holidays in these types of places?



Cut

Copy

Paste

Total Word Count: 0

Levels
A1 & A2
Describe
image

Levels
B1 & above
Write essay

What is being asked?

This question asks the learner to write a short essay in response to a prompt. For lower levels, test takers need to write a short description of an image.

What is being tested?

This question tests writing skills. It tests paragraph and sentence structure, the range and accuracy of the language used, the ability to structure an argument or discussion in a written context. It tests grammar and vocabulary as an essential part of writing.

Short writing task (Write essay) tips

- Read the prompt carefully and highlight all the content points to be covered. Use these to build the content of the response and organize your answer.
- Use the prompt to decide what type of text you need to write in terms of form and tone; the essay might agree or disagree with the prompt, persuade etc
- Use linkers and discourse markers to help your writing flow: e.g. after that, however, on the other hand.
- Check your work at the end for spelling and punctuation errors

