A guide to IELTS Reading Test

The reading test

The reading test has 40 questions to answer in total. All questions are equally important: you get one mark for each correct answer. The test lasts for 60 minutes. This includes time to copy your answers onto the answer sheet.

No additional time is given to transfer your answers at the end of 60 minutes.

The content of the test will depend on whether you are taking the Academic or General Training modules.

Academic module overview

This module contains three reading texts. Texts come from magazines, journals, books, and newspapers and are written for a general or non-specialist audience. Texts may include diagrams, graphs, and illustrations.

General Training Module Overview

This module contains three sections of progressively more difficult content.

What kind of tasks to expect

Expect to find a variety of task types and answer formats in both test modules. Here are examples of the main task types. You may also find short-answer questions, summary completion, and table completion as well as various forms of multiple choice.
Any of the following (though not all) may appear in any section:

- Sentence completion
- Various kinds of matching
- Labelling flow charts or other kinds of diagram
- Identifying the writer's claims or views
- Identifying information

Section	Focus
1	may contain two or three short texts relevant to basic linguistic survival in English, such as public notices, advertisements and timetables
2	contains two texts which focus on the workplace environment, such as job descriptions, contracts, and staff development and training materials
3	one long text designed to test your ability to cope with longer, more complex passages found in newspapers, magazines, and fiction and non-fiction book extracts

Sentence completion

This completion task is linked to a text in the test about emergency procedures on a school campus.

Questions 1–8

Complete the sentences below.

*Choose **NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS** from the text for each answer.*

Write your answers in boxes 1–8 on your answer sheet.
1 In an emergency, a teacher will either phone the office or **……...**
2 The signal for evacuation will normally be several **……..**
3 If possible, students should leave the building by the **…….. .**

Various kinds of matching

This matching task is linked to a text in the test which gives a list of beneficial work practices for keyboard operators.

Questions 15–21

The text on the next page has seven sections, **A–G**.

Choose the correct heading for each section from the list of headings below.

Write the correct number, **i–x**, in boxes 15–21 on your answer sheet.

15 Section **A**
16 Section **B**
17 Section **C**

List of Headings

i	How can reflection problems be avoided?
ii	How long should I work without a break?
iii	What if I experience any problems?
iv	When is the best time to do filing chores?
v	What makes a good seat?
vi	What are the common health problems?
vii	What is the best kind of lighting to have?
viii	What are the roles of management and workers?
ix	Why does a VDU create eye fatigue?
x	Where should I place the documents?

18 Section **D**
19 Section **E**
20 Section **F**
21 Section **G**

Labelling flow charts or other kinds of diagram

This labeling task is linked to a text in the test about how animals use electric signals to detect location.
Questions 7–9
Label the diagram.
*Choose **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from the passage for each answer.*
Write your answers in boxes 7–9 on your answer sheet.
Shark's **7 ……** alert the young ray to its presence.
Embryo moves its **8 ……** in order to breathe.
Embryo stops sending **9 ……** when predator close by.

Identifying the writer's claims or views

This task is linked to a text in the test describing different kinds of short business courses.

Questions 9–12
Do the following statements agree with the information given in the text?

In boxes 9–12 on your answer sheet, write

TRUE	*if the statement agrees with the information*
FALSE	*if the statement contradicts the information*
NOT GIVEN	*if there is no information on this*

9 *Business Basics* is appropriate for beginners.
10 *Bookkeeping* has no practical component.
11 *Bookkeeping* is intended for advanced students only.
12 The *New Enterprise Module* can help your business become more profitable.

Identifying information
This task is linked to a text in the test describing different kinds of callisthenic physical training activities.

Questions 29–35
*The text has eight paragraphs, **A–H**.*
Which paragraph contains the following information?
*Write the correct letter, **A–H**, in boxes, 29–35 on your answer sheet.*

29 the origin of the word 'callisthenics'
30 the last popular supporter of calisthenics
31 The first use of calisthenics as a training method
32 A multidisciplinary approach to all-round health and strength
33 reasons for the survival of calisthenics throughout the ages
34 The use of a medical substance to increase muscle mass and strength
35 a reference to traveling showmen who displayed their strength for audiences

Tips and advice for getting the score you need How to approach the task

- Look carefully at any text title, subtitles or diagrams. This will give you a quick overview of what the text is about.
- Read the instructions for each task carefully. Check the maximum number of words allowed.
- Set yourself a time limit to tackle each section.

How to read the texts

- Keep in mind that your main aim is to locate the answers to the questions. You do not need to read the text slowly and carefully; do not stop to think about every unknown word.
- If a text is organized into paragraphs, a good way to get the general meaning and to familiarise yourself with the overall content is to spend the first 2-3 minutes reading only the first and last sentence of each paragraph.
- Some text types are suited to scan-reading: looking quickly for specific details such as a fact or particular vocabulary item, e.g. reading a train timetable to find a particular departure time.

How to approach the different task types

- Make sure that your answers keep to the word limit stated in the test paper. For example, if you are asked for “NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS”, then do not write more.
- With multiple choice questions, try and use common sense to eliminate some of the answer options.
- When matching headings to paragraphs, read the headings first. Then read the first and last sentence of each paragraph. This is often enough to match headings correctly.
- When gap-filling, read the gapped text carefully and think about both the meaning and grammar of suitable words to fill the gaps. Note down your ideas in the gap on the question paper so that when you read the text you are then reading to check your ideas.
- Never leave a gap blank. You do not lose marks for incorrect answers.

In the test…

- Do not forget that you must write your answers directly on your answer sheet. You will not be given extra time to do this at the end of the 60-minute reading test.
- Remember that your written answers need to be grammatically accurate and spelled correctly. You will lose marks for incorrect spelling.
- Think about skipping difficult questions and coming back to them later. If you do this, make sure you highlight the questions you skip so that you can find them again.

Good luck in your reading test!