

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY TEST PREPARATION

PTE Academic

Complete Course & Preparation Guide

23

scored tasks

4

skills assessed

2h 15m

total test time

10–90

score scale

Updated for the August 2026 test format

What this course covers



The 2026 test, decoded

Format, the August update, timing, and how scoring actually works



Part 1: Speaking & Writing

All 10 tasks, including the two new for 2026, task by task



Part 2: Reading

All 5 task types and how to move fast without losing accuracy



Part 3: Listening

All 8 task types, from Summarize Spoken Text to Write from Dictation



Study plan & test day

An 8-week plan, the mistakes that cost the most points, and a test-day checklist

What is PTE Academic?

PTE Academic is a fully computer-based English test used for university admissions and skilled-migration visa applications worldwide. It's taken in a single sitting at a test centre, is scored primarily by AI with human oversight on key tasks, and results are typically released within 48 hours.

WHY IT'S DIFFERENT FROM A PAPER TEST

- ✓ One continuous session: no separate day for Speaking, unlike some other English tests.
- ✓ Every task type is scored by machine, with selected tasks cross-checked by human raters.
- ✓ Real-time item difficulty means no two candidates see an identical test.

**23**

scored task types

**2h 15m**

typical total time

**10–90**

score scale, per skill

**48 hrs**

until results

Who takes it: applicants to universities, colleges, and skilled-migration visa programs across Australia, the UK, Canada, New Zealand, and beyond.

What's new in the August 2026 update

The exam pattern was revised on 7 August 2026. Total task count rose from 20 to 22 scored types, maximum test time extended slightly to 2 hours 15 minutes, and two new Speaking tasks were added to reflect more realistic, real-world communication.



NEW SPEAKING TASK

Respond to a Situation

Read a real-life scenario and speak an appropriate response. 10s prep, 40s response.



NEW SPEAKING TASK

Summarize Group Discussion

Listen to three speakers, then summarize the discussion's ideas, opinions, and conclusion. 10s prep, 120s response.

SCORING ALSO CHANGED

Content on selected tasks (Describe Image, Re-tell Lecture, both new Speaking tasks, both summary tasks, and Write Essay) is now scored by AI and cross-checked by human raters. If the two disagree, a second human rater makes the final call.

Test structure & timing

All three parts run back to back in one sitting, and there is no break between Reading and Listening.

 PART 1 Speaking & Writing 76–84 min 10 tasks · 57–77 items	 PART 2 Reading 22–30 min 5 task types · 14–19 items	 PART 3 Listening 31–39 min 8 task types · 17–24 items
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Total: approximately 2 hours (129–153 minutes of active tasks) · allow 2.5–3 hours including check-in.

How scoring works

COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Your four headline scores, one per skill, each on the 10–90 scale.



Speaking



Writing



Reading



Listening

THE 10–90 SCALE



10

90

Lower proficiency → Higher proficiency

ENABLING SKILLS

Sub-scores that feed into the skills above, drawn from your integrated task responses.

- Grammar
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Oral Fluency
- Spelling
- Written Discourse

AI + HUMAN SCORING

Objective tasks (multiple choice, fill in the blanks) are scored entirely by AI. Content on open-response tasks, Describe Image, Re-tell Lecture, both new Speaking tasks, both summary tasks, and Write Essay, is scored by AI and checked by a human rater; a second human decides any disagreement.

Score bands & what they typically mean

79–90

SUPERIOR

Often accepted for the highest-requirement university programs and skilled-migration categories.

65–78

COMPETENT

The band most commonly requested for general university admission.

50–64

DEVELOPING

Often sufficient for foundation or pathway programs; below most direct-entry requirements.

10–49

FOUNDATION

Below typical academic admission thresholds; indicates basic-to-limited proficiency.



These bands are illustrative, not official cutoffs. Score requirements vary by institution, course, and visa category, and change over time, so always confirm the current requirement with your specific university or visa authority before relying on any number here.



PART 1

Speaking & Writing

10 tasks, back to back, opening the test

≈ 76–84 minutes · 57–77 scored items · 4 of 10 tasks feed both Speaking and Listening



TASK 01 · UNSCORED

Personal Introduction

Not scored

WHAT YOU DO

Read a short prompt about yourself, then record a 30-second self-introduction. Not scored: it exists purely so institutions receiving your score report can match your voice to your identity.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Say your name, where you're from, and why you're taking the test.
- ✓ Treat it as a warm-up: it settles your nerves before scored items begin.
- ✓ Speak at a natural pace, since this recording is never marked for language.



Timing

25s

Prep time

30s

Response time



TASK 02

Read Aloud

Speaking

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

A short text (up to 60 words) appears on screen. Read it aloud clearly and naturally within the response window.



Timing

30–40s

Prep time

30–40s

Response time

STRATEGY

- ✓ Use the prep time to scan for hard words and mark natural pause points.
- ✓ Keep a steady pace: rushing hurts pronunciation and oral fluency scores together.
- ✓ If you stumble, keep going. Restarting costs more than one dropped word.



TASK 03

Repeat Sentence

Speaking

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Hear a sentence once through headphones, then repeat it exactly as spoken, word for word.



Timing

N/A

Prep time

15s

Response time

STRATEGY

- ✓ Start speaking the instant the beep sounds, because silence is scored against you.
- ✓ If you miss a word, say what you remember rather than stopping entirely.
- ✓ Shadow the speaker's rhythm and stress, not just the words.



TASK 04

Describe Image

Speaking

WHAT YOU DO

A chart, graph, map, or photo appears. Describe it in full sentences, covering what it shows and any notable trend or detail.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Open with one sentence naming the image type and overall subject.
- ✓ For graphs, describe the trend first, then call out the highest and lowest points.
- ✓ Close with a one-line summary, since it signals a complete, structured answer.



Timing

25s

Prep time

40s

Response time



TASK 05

Re-tell Lecture

Speaking

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Watch or hear a short academic lecture (up to 90 seconds), then summarize its content in your own words.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Jot 4–6 keywords while listening: topic, two or three main points, conclusion.
- ✓ Open with the lecture's overall topic before adding supporting detail.
- ✓ Paraphrase rather than quote: examiners reward your own wording.



Timing

10s

Prep time

40s

Response time



TASK 06

Answer Short Question

Speaking

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Hear a simple factual question and answer it in one or two words: general knowledge, not specialist trivia.



Timing

N/A

Prep time

10s

Response time

STRATEGY

- ✓ Answer immediately with the shortest correct word: no full sentences needed.
- ✓ If unsure, give your best guess rather than staying silent.
- ✓ These are general-knowledge questions; don't overthink for a hidden trick.



TASK 07

Respond to a Situation

NEW FOR 2026

Speaking

WHAT YOU DO

Read a short real-life scenario (e.g. asking a colleague for help, declining an invitation) and speak an appropriate spoken response.



Timing

10s

Prep time

40s

Response time

STRATEGY

- ✓ Match tone to context: a message to a professor reads differently than one to a friend.
- ✓ State your point in the first sentence, then add one or two supporting details.
- ✓ This task is new for 2026: it rewards natural, situationally appropriate English over rehearsed phrasing.



TASK 08

Summarize Group Discussion

NEW FOR 2026

Speaking

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Listen to three speakers discussing a topic (up to 3 minutes), then summarize the discussion in your own words: main ideas, key opinions, and overall conclusion.



Timing

10s

Prep time

120s

Response time

STRATEGY

- ✓ Track speakers by initial or position ("Speaker 1 argued... Speaker 2 disagreed...").
- ✓ Structure your summary in three parts: topic, the range of opinions, then the conclusion.
- ✓ New for 2026 and the longest speaking response, so pace yourself across the full two minutes.



TASK 09

Summarize Written Text

Writing

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

Read a passage of 200–300 words and condense it into a single sentence of 5–75 words that captures the main idea.

STRATEGY

- ✓ One sentence only: use a semicolon or subordinate clause if you need to link ideas.
- ✓ Include the passage's main argument and its strongest supporting point.
- ✓ Check word count before submitting: under 5 or over 75 words scores zero for content.



Timing

10 min per item

One time budget for the whole task



TASK 10

Write Essay

Writing

WHAT YOU DO

Write a 200–300 word academic essay responding to a prompt, arguing a clear position with supporting reasoning.



Timing

20 min per item

One time budget for the whole task

STRATEGY

- ✓ Plan for two minutes: thesis, two supporting paragraphs, conclusion, then write.
- ✓ State your position in the opening paragraph and don't drift from it.
- ✓ Leave two minutes to proofread for grammar, spelling, and paragraph structure.

Speaking & Writing: what's actually being scored

Every Speaking response is scored on three dimensions at once. Strong content read in a monotone, or fluent delivery with thin content, both cap your score the same way.



Content

Does the response answer the prompt, accurately and completely?



Oral fluency

Smooth, natural rhythm and phrasing, without long pauses or hesitation.



Pronunciation

Individual sounds and word stress clear enough for a listener to follow easily.

ENABLING SKILLS CARRIED INTO WRITING

- Grammar
- Spelling
- Oral Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Written Discourse



PART 2

Reading

5 task types under one shared section timer

≈ 22–30 minutes · 14–19 scored items · 3 of 5 tasks also feed your Writing score



TASK 11

Reading & Writing: Fill in the Blanks

Reading

Writing

WHAT YOU DO

A 200–300 word passage has several blanks. Drag the correct word from a bank into each gap.

☰ On the test

5–6 items

on this section, shared timer

STRATEGY

- ✓ Read the full sentence around each blank before choosing: context decides the answer.
- ✓ Watch for collocations: words that habitually pair together ("make a decision", not "do a decision").
- ✓ Fill the blanks you're sure of first, then use elimination on the rest.



TASK 12

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

Read a passage and select all correct answers from the options given: there's no fixed number of correct choices.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Negative marking applies: a wrong selection cancels out a correct one, so skip options you're unsure of.
- ✓ Match each option against the text directly rather than relying on general knowledge of the topic.
- ✓ Selecting nothing scores zero but avoids a penalty, so never guess to fill quota.

 On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



Negative marking applies



TASK 13

Re-order Paragraphs

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

Several text boxes appear in random order. Drag them into the sequence that reconstructs the original passage logically.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Find the topic sentence first: the box that introduces the subject with no back-reference.
- ✓ Look for linking words ("however", "this", "therefore") that point to the previous box.
- ✓ Pronouns are your strongest clue: a box starting with "it" or "they" needs an antecedent before it.

☰ On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 14

Reading: Fill in the Blanks

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

A passage has several blanks, each with its own dropdown of word choices. Select the correct word for each gap.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Unlike the drag-and-drop version, each blank has its own separate option list.
- ✓ Eliminate choices that are the wrong part of speech before considering meaning.
- ✓ Re-read the completed sentence once chosen: it should sound natural, not just grammatically legal.

☰ On the test

4–5 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 15

Multiple Choice, Single Answer

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

Read a short passage and choose the one correct answer to a question about it.

☰ On the test

1–2 items

on this section, shared timer

STRATEGY

- ✓ Answer from the passage, not prior knowledge: the correct option is always directly supported by the text.
- ✓ Beware options that are true in general but not stated in this specific passage.
- ✓ Eliminate obviously wrong answers first to narrow a guess if you're short on time.

Reading: the strategy that matters most

Reading runs on one shared timer across all five task types: there's no per-question clock. That makes pacing, not just accuracy, the skill this section actually tests.

- ✓ Don't let one hard Re-order Paragraphs item eat the time three easier items need.
- ✓ Two task types carry negative marking, Multiple Choice Multiple Answer, so only select what you're sure of.
- ✓ Fill-in-the-blank tasks reward reading the whole sentence, not just the words next to the gap.
- ✓ Move on if an answer isn't coming after your first careful pass, since you can't flag items for review.



PART 3

Listening

8 task types, the longest section of the test

≈ 31–39 minutes · 17–24 scored items · each recording plays once only



TASK 16

Summarize Spoken Text

Listening

Writing

WHAT YOU DO

Listen to a lecture of 60–90 seconds, then write a 50–70 word summary covering its key points.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Note the topic, three supporting points, and the conclusion while listening.
- ✓ Write in full sentences, not a bullet list, since this is scored as writing too.
- ✓ Stay within 50–70 words; both too short and too long lose content marks.

⋮ On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 17

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Listen to a recording and select all correct answers to a question about it.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Negative marking applies here too: only select an option you actually heard confirmed.
- ✓ Take brief notes while listening; you can't replay the audio.
- ✓ Answer immediately after listening, while detail is still fresh.

 **On the test**

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



Negative marking applies



TASK 18

Fill in the Blanks (Listening)

Listening

Writing

WHAT YOU DO

A transcript appears with several words missing. Type the missing words exactly as you hear them while the audio plays.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Read the visible transcript first: it tells you what topic and register to expect.
- ✓ Spelling counts: a correctly heard but misspelled word scores zero.
- ✓ Type immediately as you hear each word rather than waiting for the sentence to end.

⋮ On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 19

Highlight Correct Summary

Listening

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

Listen to a recording, then choose the paragraph (from several options) that best summarizes it.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Listen for the speaker's main claim, not just the topic they mention first.
- ✓ Eliminate summaries that focus on one detail rather than the whole recording.
- ✓ The correct option is usually the most balanced, not the most detailed.

☰ On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 20

Multiple Choice, Single Answer

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

Listen to a short recording and select the one correct answer to a question about it.

 **On the test**

1–2 items

on this section, shared timer

STRATEGY

- ✓ Read the question and options before playback starts, if the interface allows it.
- ✓ Listen for the specific detail the question asks about rather than answering from the general gist.
- ✓ Trust your first clear impression; second-guessing after a single playback rarely helps.



TASK 21

Select Missing Word

Listening

WHAT YOU DO

A recording ends mid-sentence, replaced by a beep. Choose the word or phrase that logically completes it.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Focus on the final few words before the beep: that's where the logical link lives.
- ✓ The correct option always fits the meaning, not just the grammar, of the sentence.
- ✓ Don't be misled by options that merely rhyme or sound similar to what you heard.

☰ On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



TASK 22

Highlight Incorrect Words

Listening

Reading

WHAT YOU DO

A transcript appears on screen as the audio plays, but some words differ from what's spoken. Click every word that doesn't match.

STRATEGY

- ✓ Negative marking applies: only click words you're confident are genuinely different.
- ✓ Follow the transcript with your eyes word by word, and don't skim ahead.
- ✓ Mismatches are usually single words, not whole phrases, so stay alert through the entire clip.

 On the test

2–3 items

on this section, shared timer



Negative marking applies



TASK 23

Write from Dictation

Listening

Writing

WHAT YOU DO

Hear a short sentence (10–20 words) once, then type it exactly as spoken.

☰ On the test

3–4 items

on this section, shared timer

STRATEGY

- ✓ Write down keywords as you listen, then reconstruct the full sentence around them.
- ✓ Grammar and spelling both count: a perfect-sounding sentence with a typo still loses marks.
- ✓ This is the single highest-leverage task for your Listening score: it feeds grammar, vocabulary and spelling too.

Listening: the strategy that matters most

Nothing replays. Every task in this section is won or lost in the moment of listening, not afterward.

- ✓ Build one consistent shorthand for notes, and use it on every lecture and discussion task.
- ✓ Write from Dictation is the single highest-leverage task: it feeds Listening, Writing, grammar and spelling together.
- ✓ Three task types carry negative marking, only mark what you actually heard confirmed.
- ✓ Keep your eyes on the transcript for Highlight Incorrect Words; don't try to listen ahead of it.

Six mistakes that cost the most points



Silence during Speaking

Any pause longer than three seconds is scored as if you'd stopped. Keep talking, even through an imperfect sentence.



Ignoring negative marking

Guessing on every option in Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer and Highlight Incorrect Words actively lowers your score.



Over-length summaries

Summarize Written Text has a hard 75-word ceiling. Going over scores zero for content, no matter how good the writing is.



Copying the passage verbatim

Fill in the Blanks and summary tasks reward your own phrasing. Heavy copying is penalized under written discourse.



Skipping the prep window

The few seconds before Read Aloud and Describe Image are there to plan: using them to relax instead costs fluency later.



Neglecting the two new tasks

Respond to a Situation and Summarize Group Discussion are unfamiliar to most candidates and are exactly where scores are lost first.

An 8-week study plan

Adjust the pace to however long you actually have; the sequence matters more than the exact week count.

Week 1–2	Diagnose & orient	Take a full timed mock test. Identify your weakest of the four skills and read through every task format once.
Week 3–4	Speaking & Listening drills	Daily Read Aloud and Repeat Sentence practice; record yourself. Build a shorthand system for lecture and dictation note-taking.
Week 5	Writing foundations	Master the one-sentence summary format and a reusable essay template. Write one Summarize Written Text and one essay daily.
Week 6	Reading strategy	Drill Re-order Paragraphs and Fill in the Blanks for pattern recognition. Time every passage strictly.
Week 7	New 2026 tasks	Dedicate focused sessions to Respond to a Situation and Summarize Group Discussion, the least-practiced tasks for most candidates.
Week 8	Full mocks & review	Two full timed mock tests under real conditions. Review every wrong answer and re-drill only your weak task types.

Test day checklist

BEFORE YOU ARRIVE



Valid ID matching your booking exactly, passport for most test centres.



Arrive at least 30 minutes early; late arrival can forfeit your seat.



No notes, phones, or watches permitted in the test room.



Confirm your test centre address and route the day before.

DURING THE TEST



Headset and microphone are checked before Speaking begins; ask staff if either seems faulty.



You cannot pause the test or leave the room once it starts, except for a permitted scheduled break.



Keep talking through Speaking tasks; long silences are scored as if you'd stopped.



Pace yourself on Reading and Listening; there's no way to flag an item and return to it later.

COURSE COMPLETE

You've now covered all 23 tasks

across Speaking, Writing, Reading, and Listening, exactly as they appear in the 2026 test.

- ✓ Sit a full timed mock test before you drill individual tasks further; it tells you where to focus.
- ✓ Give the two new 2026 tasks real practice time; most candidates under-prepare for both.
- ✓ Revisit the Strategy line on each task slide the night before your test.

Good luck.