

# n language tests

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gresses. Last of all, they should also know that a passage with a voice speaking in an Australian accent has also been introduced in the here has been an inclusion of Australian accent in listening module.

Next comes the reading part, and it on this



section that Pakistani students tend to lose many marks. This probably means that when they study the language in school or learn it at home, there isn't too much of an emphasis on reading English texts. There have been instances of students scoring between 6.5 and 6.0 band overall but getting as low as a

4.5 on the reading part. This section consists of three full-length passages (between 1500 and 2000 words each) and students have to answer forty questions based on what they have read within sixty minutes.

The reading portion is not as simple as some might think it is for the simple reason that here one is not reading for pleasure. Those who try and skim the passage, reading it very quickly, will not do well. They should also try reading the questions so that when they read the passage they have an idea of what to look for. Another mistake, and a costly one, is to spend too much time finding the answer to one particular question. Students should also be aware of the fact that unlike in the listening section, where ten minutes are given to transfer the answers from the answer book to the score sheet, no extra time is allowed in the reading component. This means that the 60 minutes given for this section should be used wisely.

Instead of allocating 20 minutes for each passage, one should spend between 15 and 17 minutes and the rest to transferring the answers on to the score sheet. Obviously, those who have read books all their lives will do well in this part of the test. However, certain techniques can help. One is the so-called 'SQ3R' (Surveying, Questioning, Recite, Recall and Review) method. First you read the passage quickly by skimming/scanning it. This could be done by reading the first and the last sentence of the paragraph followed by converting the topic sentence into question.

The reciting bit involves searching for the answer to the question already set (see earlier sentence), followed by recalling in one's mind the question to which the answer is

being sought. At the end of this, one can review the whole process if something is still unclear. Reading newspapers, magazines and journals helps but not really if students start doing that a few days before the test.

The third component of the test involves an exercise in academic writing. This section has two parts, each given different weight. One asks students to write an essay. In this, many of our students have a tendency to start with a quote from some 'expert'. However, this is not something desirable because this part of the test rewards students for their originality and creativity, and this cannot be shown when you begin by quoting someone else. Students are also advised to end their essay with a paragraph that summarizes all their arguments and ties up with the beginning paragraph.

The best way is to first prepare an outline. Start with putting down the point of view that you want to present and the reasons for it. Follow with supporting arguments, preferably with real-life examples, and then a discussion of the arguments that could be raised against your point of view. And finally, a conclusion that sums up everything and ends with you taking a stand.

Examiners are interested in knowing what ideas students have and how they arrive at them. Using complex jargon or big words is not going to get you high marks because that kind of writing is now archaic and obsolete. Better to use clear and straightforward language. ■

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