



Switching to Skills for English (UKVI)

A guide for helping prepare SELT test takers for a Skills for English (UKVI) test

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Skills for English (UKVI)

Switching to Skills for English (UKVI)

Skills for English (UKVI) is a new UK Home Office-approved Secure English Language Test (SELT) that can be used as part of a UK Visa application.

It is now available to be booked via an online portal and can be taken in more than 120 test centres across the world (excluding the UK).

Skills for English (UKVI) has been created to include distinctive characteristics and advantages over other available SELT tests:

- **Test takers choose the test types that best fit their needs.** *Skills for English (UKVI)*, test takers can choose the SELT level to take based on the visa types that fit their needs. Such detailed differentiation of the test enables the test takers to study English based on personal situations, and the pass rate of the test can be significantly improved.
- **Computer Based Testing improves the security and the testing experience.** The reading and listening parts of the *Skills for English (UKVI)* test are automatically scored, and the speaking and writing are anonymously scored by experts to avoid any risk of bias, but all sections of the test are computer based without the sometimes-intimidating presence of a live examiner.

Computer Based Testing also means that *Skills for English (UKVI)* tests are easier to schedule and quicker to take; more flexible and convenient all round.

- ***Skills for English (UKVI)* adopts a Pass/No Pass scoring method.** Test takers are required to pass each part of the test to achieve the final test score. This is intended to make the scoring method as simple and clear as possible. In the past, test takers may have needed to take *their SELT* multiple times to achieve a high enough passing grade. By taking *Skills for English (UKVI)*, test takers only need to get a 'Pass' result, which saves time and money during the visa application process.

The launch of *Skills for English (UKVI)* has provided a more simple, convenient, and affordable test option for UK visa test takers, but for test takers who have already trained to take a different SELT test and are having difficulty finding a test session, we have created this guide to help channel that learning into the successful completion of a *Skills for English (UKVI)* test.

Preparing test takers for Skills for English (UKVI) tests

Coursebooks

Any general well-established ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) coursebook can be used to support language development. Our topics are general in nature and applicable to all test takers – the focus is on everyday life, work and study without any reliance on a given industry or subject area.

Exam preparation

Speaking

Part 1: In this part of the test, test takers answer five questions which aim to get them using the system and learning how to record their responses. The question asks for their personal details, and are the same for all test takers across all levels. Part 1 is removed, and markers do not hear the candidate responses or mark Part 1.

Part 2: Test takers should be given lots of preparation to consider a given topic (e.g. hobbies) from a variety of angles and be prepared to answer questions on these. So, lots of practice on responding and recording their answers will be helpful.

This kind of element would be familiar in any ESOL test including IELTS, ESOL Skills for Life - UK and other similar tests.

What is different? There is no interlocutor – the test is entirely computer-based, so there's no invigilator present in the test centre which some test takers can find intimidating.

Part 3: The Scenario. At lower levels each of the bullets that explore a given scenario are presented to the test takers individually and they have to respond to each in turn – rather like part 2.

At levels B1 and above, *Skills for English (UKVI)* is very similar to the IELTS long turn, where test takers are presented with a scenario and are given thinking time and then have to speak at length (several minutes) about their scenario, covering all the bullets points in terms of content. So, any practice activities that encourage test takers to speak about a scenario, present their ideas, talk about advantages and disadvantages, put an argument forward etc. would be good practice.

In some English tests test takers can work with a partner as part of the test. Please note that there is no working in pairs in Skills for English (UKVI) tests.

Writing

Part 1: an interactional piece of writing (with audience, purpose, and indication of content). Format can be email, forum post, blog or similar. This is very similar to the general writing tasks format in other ESOL tests.

Part 2: a discursive piece of writing. This is also a very familiar approach and will be similar to the tasks in both Academic and General Training modules in most providers' tests.

Test takers should be given practice in writing within the word count as well as within the time limit.

Reading

Text length: Test takers should be made to read a variety of text types – all on general everyday topics – of varying lengths.

Item types: These are mostly selection – 3-option Multiple Choice Questions, Matching, Drag and Drop, True/false/not given – with some productive types – Sentence Completion and Note Taking – at higher levels. These task types appear in the majority of ESOL tests. The focus is on general reading skills: comprehension of general message, specific meaning, inference etc.

Test takers should be given practice in reading texts of varying lengths and complexity, relevant to each CEFR level and work through a variety of selection and production item types. At B2 level and above, test takers should also be given practice in writing responses and spelling common words correctly.

Listening

Script length: Test takers should be made to listen a variety of recordings – all on general everyday topics – of varying lengths. This would be similar to the IELTS listening though all topics at Skills for English (UKVI) will be of general interest.

Interaction: Test takers should get practice at listening to short and long monologues, dialogues, and guided interviews with a variety of voices, where the answers are given by one or both speakers.

Item types: These are mostly selection – 3-option Multiple Choice Questions, Matching, Drag and Drop – with some productive types – Sentence Completion and Note Taking – at higher levels. All task types appear in IELTS GT and AC reading tests as well as other ESOL tests. The focus is on general listening skills: comprehension of

general message, specific meaning, inference, agreement/disagreement between speakers, negotiation of meaning etc.

Test takers should be given practice in listening to recordings of varying lengths and complexity, relevant to each CEFR level and work through a variety of selection and production item types. At B2 level and above, test takers should also be given practice in writing responses and spelling common words correctly.

Every aspect of *Skills for English (UKVI)* has been designed to be straightforward, fair and convenient, from the booking process to the design of the test. With the use of this guide we hope it will be equally uncomplicated to help test takers direct their training for other tests into a successful *Skills for English (UKVI)* pass and an approved UK Visa process.

For more information visit www.skillsforenglish.com.

