

Exploring Skills for English Tests

Reading Part 1: B2 Level

Format of the task

There are three parts to the B2 Reading test. In **Part 1** candidates will read 5 short texts (250 words max for each text). The text types can include film reviews, news reports, informational web pages and so on. This will be appropriate to B2 candidates.

There will be 10 questions in total for Part 1, two for each text. The type of questions found in this part are 3-option multiple choice questions (MCQs) which will follow the order of the text. The focus of these questions can be on detailed understanding, or on vocabulary or phrases.

The language of the texts and questions is accessible and appropriate to candidates at B2 level. Candidates should spend approximately 20-25 minutes on Part 1.

Skills/functions being assessed

- Understanding of main point being communicated in short concise texts
- Comprehension of complex texts
- Comprehension of stated and inferred information
- Comprehension of vocabulary in context by using contextual clues

Tips for teachers

Provide candidates with:

- Opportunities to read a variety of short texts written for different purposes
- Practice of multiple-choice questions which ask for the main points, gist or opinions
- An awareness of the test format and layout through the use of practice tests
- Skills in time management by setting timed activities
- Skills to identify meaning (implied and inferred) within the contexts of the text

Tips for learners

- Read the questions carefully and think about what is being assessed. Note key points and identify where they are in the text
- Don't expect to understand every word – use the context of the text to help with comprehension, many words will be synonyms or implied
- Keep your eye on the timer and try to leave some time to check your answers
- Prepare by using the online Skills for English (SfE) practice tests

Sample B2 Reading Part 1 Task

This is a short example extract from the type of text and questions a candidate may encounter in Part 1.

Read each short text and answer the questions that follow. For each question, choose, A, B, or C.

All questions progress chronologically in the text, but the options can fall in any order.

John Graham's latest film explores one woman's attempt to reject all forms of modern living in favour of a self-dependent lifestyle. Set in the UK, 'Modern Life' follows Jean Forbes as she leaves her well paid job in the city to live 'off-grid' in an abandoned farmhouse **miles from the nearest person**. To the surprise of her family, Forbes not only gives up her phone, resulting in **months without being heard from**, but she also **refuses their financial support** as she attempts to live entirely off the land. This film is certainly worth leaving the comfort of your own cosy house for, even if it is just to sit in an even more comfortable cinema for an evening. The **acting is of a high standard with performances that will make you both laugh out loud and shock you to the bone**. While the **script is a little clumsy and unrealistic** at times, the humour remains sharp and thought provoking. Due to the inclusion of some early 90's hits, **the film's soundtrack seemed a little dated for my liking**, but definitely worth seeing – I give it four stars out of five!

Q1

Q2

1) Which of the following is true about Jean Forbes?

- a. She lives close to her family.
- b. She contacts her family regularly.
- c. **Her family offer her money.**

Note that each option is mentioned in the text. You should therefore read the whole text and think about what is being communicated to answer the question.

2) Which aspect of the film does the writer speak most positively about?

- a. The music.
- b. **The performances.**
- c. The script.

Text and questions will appear side by side in the exam. You will be able to go back and change answers if you need to.

Answers:

1. c
2. b

Q2 – B is correct because the music and script for the film are referred to negatively in the text, while the performances are praised.

Note: this sample task is for guidance purposes only. For examples of level-specific reading tasks, please refer to the Skills for English Practice Tests available through the Skills for English website: <https://skillsforenglish.com/language-learning/>