

Exploring Skills for English Tests

Reading Part 1: C1 and C2 Level

Format of the task

There are three parts to the C1 and C2 Reading tests. In Part 1 candidates will read 5 short texts (300 words max for each text). The text types can include messages, signs, notices, adverts and so on. This will be appropriate to C1 and C2 candidates.

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

The language of the texts and questions is accessible and appropriate to candidates at C1 and C2 level. Candidates should spend approximately 20-25 minutes on Part 1.

Skills/functions being assessed

- Understanding of main message, implied and stated
- Comprehension of information provided in a wide variety of complex text types
- Comprehension of vocabulary in context by using contextual clues
- Comprehension of implicit and explicit attitudes, emotions, and opinions

Tips for teachers

Provide candidates with:

- Opportunities to read a variety of short texts written for different purposes. Explore feelings, gist, inferred and implied meanings
- Practice of multiple-choice questions to assess gist and detailed understanding
- An awareness of the test format and layout using practice tests
- Skills in time management by setting timed activities

Tips for learners

- Read the questions carefully and think about what is being assessed. Identify main points, gist and the opinions in the text
- Don't expect to understand every word/phrase – use the context of the text to help with comprehension. Use the text to identify implied and inferred meanings
- 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 C1 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 the Blog and answer the questions that follow. For each question, choose, A, B, or C.

The Story of My New House

Q1

I moved into my new house 3 years ago and within a day of receiving the keys, realised the huge extent of the work that was needed both inside and outside the property. **It was quite overwhelming.** I was so certain when viewing the house online prior to the sale that **there wasn't much tinkering** needed - a simple mistake to make! Nevertheless, **I couldn't wait to begin** doing what was needed to make the rooms feel like they really belonged to me. I had chosen an old property instead of a new build for that exact reason. I wanted a home with character and history and individuality...a building that has a story. This was my chance to write the next chapter.

The text highlighted in green shows how even the incorrect answers are mentioned in the text – candidates therefore need to consider each option carefully.

Q2

I began with ripping out everything I did not want. The old carpets went. The laminate flooring, gone. The awful wallpaper, no more. It was quite a gratifying process, but it certainly did not make the house look any better initially. It was bare and it felt cold, but at least it was a blank canvass with which to make my own. **Within a week I had sanded and varnished the original floorboards** throughout the house. Within a month every wall had been repainted. Progress by that point on aspects such as plumbing, and **electricity was continually delayed** but aesthetically it now looked as I wanted. Along with **new tables, chairs and lamps**, the combination of the fresh white paint and the glistening wooden flooring made the house liveable at last. All it needed was a bit of long overdue attention.

The 5 short texts in part 1 will differ in genre but will always be appropriate to C1 and C2 level candidates.

- 1) How did the homeowner feel when he first moved in?
 - a. Assured that there was minimal work needed.
 - b. Eager to start work on the property.
 - c. Undaunted by the scale of the issues.

While questions will follow the order of the text, the options are written in no particular order.

- 2) What aspect of the renovation was still outstanding after the first month?
 - a. The wiring.
 - b. The furniture.
 - c. The flooring.

The words used in the options may not be found in the text – instead, they summarize the details of what the author is saying.

Answers:

1. b
2. a

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/>