

Exploring Skills for English Tests

Reading Part 3: C1 and C2 Level

Format of the task

There are three parts to the C1 and C2 Reading tests. In **Part 3** candidates will read one longer text (600-800 words). The text will explore a particular topic on some depth, can be factual or narrative. This will be appropriate to C1 and C2 candidates.

There will be 10 questions in total in Part 3. The types of questions that can be found in this part are multiple choice questions (MCQs), note completion, and matching, but only 1 or 2 of these item types will be used. The focus of these questions will be on detailed understanding, gist, inference, and global meaning, opinions, attitudes and purpose.

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 3.

Skills/functions being assessed

- Understanding of lengthy, detailed, and complex texts
- Understanding of implicit meaning and ideas
- Following an argument with supportive evidence, reasoning, and discussion
- Reading to locate information including for note-taking purposes

Tips for teachers

Provide candidates with:

- Opportunities to analyse more detailed, topic specific texts. Identifying implicit meaning, following lines of argument and reasoning
- Skimming and scanning techniques to identify specific words or phrases
- Analysing the organisation of information in texts, whether explicit or implicit
- An awareness of different test format and layout through the use of 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 where specific pieces of information are located in the text
- Don't expect to understand every word – use the context of the text to help with comprehension. Explore a variety of texts that use implicit and inferred meanings
- Identify specific details and where they occur within a text
- 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 3 Task

This is a short example extract from the type of text and questions a candidate may encounter in Part 3.

A

Easily distinguishable and with numerous structural variations, the orchid is one of the most commonly cultivated plants in the UK. Producing a fragrant scent, large green foliage and colourful blooms, one might assume that orchids would require far greater attention than most other house plants to grow successfully. The opposite is in fact true - **you could leave them for up to six weeks without watering them and they would still be perfectly happy.** However, for an orchid to truly thrive and reflower multiple times a year, there are a few actions that need to be undertaken.

B

Starting with the roots, you may have observed that orchids are ordinarily sold in transparent plastics pots, rather than the usual terracotta-coloured variety. This is because unlike most other plants, orchid roots photosynthesize, and so require access to light. In the wild, orchids are found flourishing on the branches of much larger trees. Their roots grow along the top of the bark, taking in surface moisture from the tree rather than from beneath the ground. The roots are therefore continually exposed to light allowing them to act as a second means (along with the leaves) by which the plant can photosynthesize and produce energy to grow and flower. The orchids you pick up from the garden centre are no different and so **in order to promote growth it is advised that you don't hide the roots within a large ceramic pot but opt for a glass one instead.**

C

Another important aspect of growing a healthy orchid at home is drainage. Like most plants, it is vital that you do not leave any standing water at the bottom of your orchid pot as this will effectively drown the plant. However, this is easier said than done due to the type of soil that orchids are usually planted in when sold. Rather than normal compost, orchids are **usually planted in small wood chippings to resemble the natural environment** in which wild orchids grow. These chippings do not absorb water as quickly as soil does and so when you water the orchid, most of it will simply pool in the bottom of the pot. This pool must be drained immediately to avoid rot and should occur every time the plant is watered.

D

Because of the slow water absorption by the wood chippings, a more effective watering technique is also encouraged – one that gives the wood enough time to soak up moisture. It is therefore advisable to **fully submerge an orchid pot in water for at least a few minutes. Placing them in a deep basin of tepid water is probably the most practical way to achieve this.** Once fully drained, the orchids will then only be able to access the water retained within the wood chippings which is exactly how they prefer it.

To save time in the exam, it is best to read the paragraph first and then match it with the correct option.

Option 2

Each paragraph will contain information relating to a correct option. Other options may look correct at first glance so make sure the meanings match, not just the vocabulary.

Option 4

Option 1

Option 3

Read the instructions carefully – these matching questions ask to match a single idea located in the paragraph, but others may ask you to match a summary, heading or main idea.

Match each idea (1 – 4) to the correct paragraph (A – D).

1. Wood chippings simulate growing conditions.
2. Watering sparsely is unlikely to cause any damage.
3. Wood chips are able to retain water better when they are immersed completely.
4. The type of container can affect the plant's ability to produce energy.

This is a matching exercise, but in Part 3 you could also face MCQs or note completion questions.

Answer:

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. b

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/>