



Akademeia High School
Y9 and Y10 English Language Entrance Exams: General Guidance

General Comments

- Students applying to Akademeia High School for entry to either Year 9 or Year 10 will be required to take an English test.
 - This document describes the content of the English test, and offers advice to candidates on how to approach each section. It should be read in tandem with the exemplar papers available on the Akademeia website (www.akademeia.edu.pl)
 - At each recruitment weekend there is one test for Year 9 candidates, and a separate test for Year 10 candidates. The tests use different materials, and have different questions; however both the Year 9 test and the Year 10 tests have the same format or structure.
 - Each recruitment weekend has its own set of English Language tests for each year group. No test is ever “recycled” at another recruitment weekend, even between academic sessions.
 - **In each exam there are three sections, and each is marked out of 60, as follows:**
 - **Reading Comprehension (20 marks)**
 - **Use of English (10 marks)**
 - **Writing (30 marks)**
 - Both the Y9 and Y10 entrance exams are 1 hour 15 minutes long. Those students who require extra time, as supported by the diagnosis of an educational psychologist for *e.g.* dyslexia, will be given the correct amount of extra time. We do not discriminate between students who take the exam in the standard amount of time, or with extra time; all papers will be marked the same.
 - Teachers marking the entrance exam tests are always instructed to mark positively. This means that teachers are more likely to award marks than not in a situation in which the marking result of a given question may be unclear. Marking is standardised across large cohorts to ensure fairness, and overseen by the Head of Department.
 - **The pass mark for the English Language test for both Year 9 and Year 10 is 60%.** Candidates are however encouraged to perform more highly than the bare minimum: the impression that they make in this component of the recruitment process, as in others, is of value. All candidates should aim to do their very best.
 - It is strongly recommended that candidates look over the whole exam paper before answering any questions. Candidates must be aware that as many marks are available for the Writing section, which comes towards the end, as there are for the Reading Comprehension and Use of English sections.
 - If candidates take the English test online via Microsoft Teams, then we recommend first printing the text out in order to annotate it.
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Section One: Reading & Language Analysis

Content

- This section of the exam features a short text of around 40 lines (approximately one page of A4) followed by around 10 questions of varying length.
- The value of the questions range from 1-6 marks each.
- The question will frequently state that “The number of marks available is an indication of the number of points you should make.” **This means that candidates need to make as many separate points relevant to the question and text as there are marks available.** If a question is worth 3 marks, and the candidate only writes one valid point, they will only receive one mark. To receive the full 3 marks, three valid points relevant to the question/text will need to be made by the candidate.
- All questions in the Reading Comprehension section are based on the text itself and emerge from it: **our aim is to assess candidates’ general comprehension skills.** Thus, in the Reading Comprehension section we issue questions that test:
 - a candidate's ability to read for implicit/explicit meaning
 - their ability to differentiate between fact and opinion
 - their ability to scaffold meaning from context
 - their ability to explain, describe, and paraphrase
 - their ability to think imaginatively in response to issues arising from the text
- The text upon which the exam is based will be a **non-fiction prose** text on a subject of general interest. Typically, these are selected from high quality journalism, such as *e.g.* The BBC, The Economist, The Guardian, JSTOR Daily, and similar. Great pains are taken to select texts that are engaging but also accessible to candidates from a wide range of academic backgrounds.
- Works of fiction, such as short stories, extracts from longer dramatic texts or novels, or poetry, will **never** be used.
- The complexity of language present in the exam text approximates the complexity of language that students will have to operate in during daily life at Akademeia, relevant to Year 9 and Year 10, respectively, and is thus relevant for effective assessment of their academic skills, and subsequently their potential recruitment.
- All words that we consider to be complex and outside the reasonable lexical stretch of L2 teenagers, such as subject-specific terminology, historical events/figures *etc.*, are explained in footnotes. This may happen a few times in a given paper, but need not happen extensively, if at all: it depends on the chosen text in question.
- It is expected that candidates are able to bring a reasonable portion of age-appropriate general knowledge to bear on the test, where relevant, *e.g.* an understanding of what climate change is, and what reasonable strategies we might be able to pursue to stop it.



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- We expect candidates to be able to identify BASIC parts of speech: adjectives, adverbs, nouns, verbs, synonyms, antonyms, but not anything more complex.

Advice

- **It is recommended that candidates should first spend 5-7 minutes reading the text for gist, and 23-25 minutes to answering the questions.**
- All questions in the Reading Comprehension section are guided, *e.g.* "look at lines X to Y and....."
- After reading each question the candidate should then read the portion of the text they are directed to in greater depth, to help them focus on the material that will help them answer the question.
- Multiple choice questions may occasionally feature, but will never exceed more than three questions worth one mark each in a given paper.
- Almost all questions will require the candidates to respond in **complete sentences**. Candidates should actively avoid one or two word answers, unless directly specified by the question (as with multiple choice).

Section Two: Use of English

Content

- This section of the exam features 10 grammar-related questions, each worth a single mark.
- Some of these questions involve multiple choice (between four options) where a student has to select the correct word to fill in the gap of a given sentence.
- Other questions require students to transform a given word into a different type of word, sometimes with prefixes, *e.g.* the given word may be "transform" but the student needs to change it into "transformation to fit the given sentence.
- At least one question will assess students' ability to correctly use indefinite and definite articles (a/an/the).
- In the Use of English section we issue questions that test:
 - Correct spelling in standard English (both British and American spelling conventions are accepted).
 - Use of phrasal verbs
 - Use of modal verbs
 - An awareness of how prefixes and suffixes can modify adjectives
 - An ability to transform one type of word into another, *e.g.* from a verb into a noun
 - An awareness of the correct use, or not, of how use indefinite and definite articles (a/an/the).



Advice

- It is recommended that candidates spend up to 15 minutes on this part of the exam.
- Candidates should read each question carefully before making their selection/writing their answer. Some of the available options for multiple choice will be deliberately similar.

Section Three: Writing

Content

- This final section of the exam features one extended writing question, worth 30 marks.
- Assessment of candidates' skills in the Writing section is divided into two criteria: Communicative Effectiveness (how appropriately/accurately candidates respond to the question) and Language Accuracy (spelling, punctuation and grammar).
- 20 marks are available for Communicative Effectiveness and 10 marks are available for Language Accuracy.
- **This part of the exam carries the most marks. We recommend that candidates spend around 30 minutes on the Writing Section**, and that they check their answer before submitting the test.
- The question will typically require students to reflect or comment upon events that either they have experienced personally, or which constitute current events.
- The question will always have three bullets with further information that candidates should use to help them structure their responses.
- Writing section are thematically linked to the text featured in the Reading Comprehension section, *e.g.* if the text was about climate change, the question may require students to write a response about the importance of communicating climate change to a general audience, and the strategies that might be employed in doing so.
- **We will never stipulate that candidates write an essay**, with its appropriate generic features, as it's our experience that candidates applying from non-British educational contexts tend to be unfamiliar with this writing format, which puts them at a disadvantage. Those candidates with prior training who may write what we recognise as a standard essay form/approximation thereof **will not** automatically receive higher marks for doing so, or any other preferential treatment.
- **Instead, we will issue questions with command words such as "describe/explain/outline/convey/comment upon" etc.**
- Please see the following page for the marking criteria



Level	Mark	Communicative Effectiveness
0	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is at a basic level, and limited in clarity. • Little awareness is shown of the purpose of the writing and the intended reader. • Little awareness of form, tone and register.
Level 2	5-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates in a broadly appropriate way. • Shows some grasp of the purpose and of the expectations/requirements of the intended reader. • Straightforward use of form, tone and register.
Level 3	9-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates clearly. • Shows a clear sense of purpose and understanding of the expectations/requirements of the intended reader. • Appropriate use of form, tone and register.
Level 4	13-16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates effectively. • A secure realisation of the writing task according to the writer's purpose and the expectations/requirements of the intended reader is shown. • Effective use of form, tone and register.
Level 5	17-20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication is perceptive and subtle. • Task is sharply focused on purpose and the expectations/requirements of the intended reader. • Sophisticated use of form, tone and register.

Level	Mark	Language Accuracy
0	0	No rewardable material
Level 1	1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses information and ideas, with limited use of structural and grammatical features. • Uses basic vocabulary, often misspelt. • Uses punctuation with basic control, creating undeveloped, often repetitive, sentence structures.
Level 2	3-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses and orders information and ideas; uses paragraphs and a range of structural and grammatical features. • Writes with some correctly spelt vocabulary, e.g. words with regular patterns such as prefixes, suffixes, double consonants. • Uses punctuation with some control, creating a range of sentence structures, including coordination and subordination.
Level 3	5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops and connects appropriate information and ideas; structural and grammatical features and paragraphing make the meaning clear. • Uses a varied vocabulary and spells words containing irregular patterns correctly.



		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Uses accurate and varied punctuation, adapting sentence structure as appropriate.
Level 4	7-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manages information and ideas, with structural and grammatical features used cohesively and deliberately across the text.• Uses a wide, selective vocabulary with only occasional spelling errors.• Positions a range of punctuation for clarity, managing sentence structures for deliberate effect.
Level 5	9-10	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manipulates complex ideas, utilising a range of structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion.• Uses extensive vocabulary strategically; rare spelling errors do not detract from overall meaning.• Punctuates writing with accuracy to aid emphasis and precision, using a range of sentence structures accurately and selectively to achieve particular effects.

Advice

- **With reference to Criterion A, Communicative Effectiveness:**
 - All candidates should seek to answer the question directly, without going off topic; direct communication on the topic at hand is essential.
 - All candidates should demonstrate an awareness of the expectations of their reader. *i.e.* that they should seek to respond to the question in a logical manner, with a beginning, middle and end, clearly supporting their writing with relevant examples (rather than writing chaotically in an abbreviated form).
 - Candidates should use an appropriate level of vocabulary, and seek to write in a formal manner avoiding colloquialisms and slang.
- These requirements are reflected in the three bullet points described in each mark band.
- **With reference to Criterion B, Language Accuracy:**
 - Candidates should demonstrate the ability to structure their writing appropriately, sentence by sentence, with appropriate grammatical forms.
 - Candidates should demonstrate a breadth of vocabulary relevant to the task, avoiding spelling mistakes as much as possible.
 - Candidates should use a variety of punctuation items appropriately and without error.
- These requirements are reflected in the three bullet points described in each mark band.

Further Advice

- Candidates who demonstrate a varied and sophisticated lexical and grammatical range in response to the Writing task are likely to score highly. Candidates who



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appear to be stuck in the present simple tense, who repetitively describe something as "interesting" and otherwise demonstrate an A2 vocabulary level, who write sentences without any clear sense of subordination, and as a result fail to build a compelling response to the task, will not do well.

- We are interested in assessing whether the student has control over the appropriate deployment of different linguistic features. Items that we will look for include, amongst others:
 - the appropriate selection of tenses *e.g.* present simple vs. present continuous
 - the correct use of modal verbs (can/can not, would, should, could) and semi-modals (bound to be, *etc.*)
 - the correct use of auxiliaries, infinitives, and past participles
 - variety of language, including diversity of vocabulary *etc.*
 - appropriate use of sentence and paragraph length and structure, including instances of the correct use of subordinate clauses, inversion, *etc.*
 - the correct syntax (word order) in all sentences
 - the correct use of punctuation, including commas, apostrophes, semi-colons, colons, and full stops.
 - Correct and **sustained** use of definite/indefinite articles in every instance is obviously desirable, but is unrealistic for candidates operating in their second or third languages. Therefore, this is overlooked in the marking process. However, a total and consistent absence of any kind of definite/indefinite article usage would be penalised.
 - Persistent spelling and grammatical mistakes, such as "egzample" or missing the "s" from third person singular verbs, or careless presentation (*e.g.* "i'm" as opposed to "I'm" or ideally "I am") would be penalised. Candidates who take the test using a computer should be particularly aware of this, as typing errors may be overlooked when writing in haste.
 - When marking scripts, examiners read for "implicit demonstrable intelligence" in the work of all candidates. Candidates with mediocre English but good ideas would be credited as such. Candidates of this nature *may* be flagged for conditional acceptance, with the requirement that they take a further English test at a later date to confirm their place.
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