

STRATEGIES

Overall test-taking strategies :

- Make sure that you are **familiar with the instructions** for each section of the test before you take it so that you **save the time** of the instructions to read the questions in parts 3 and 4 and to answer the questions in the reading parts.
- **Don't panic** if you don't understand a word ; the **general context** will usually help you find the right answer.
- **Don't panic** and **remain focused** if you don't find the answer to a question especially in the listening part ; choose an answer at random and **focus on the following question**.
- **Answer all the questions** even if you're not sure about your answer ; you are not penalised for incorrect answers.
- When you don't know the right answer, try to **eliminate the wrong answer(s)** that increases your chance of success.
- **Avoid distractors** (pièges) in all the test
- Bring a **good quality pencil and eraser**

Listening

part 1 Photographs

- Listen to the **complete** statement
- listen to **all the statements** even if you think you have found the right answer because there may be a better description ; be careful some statements are **only partially true**.
- watch out **similar sounding words** having different meanings used as distractors; eg: "training" and "raining"
- watch out reasonable answers but in the wrong context ; eg. You see a picture of a plate on a table and an answer choice indicates that the plate is being washed)
- Don't anticipate the descriptions as you may expect a description of something which is in the foreground, as soon as you hear this description you choose it while a wrong detail is intruded to trap you.

part 2 Questions/Responses

- listen carefully to the beginning of the question ; the « wh » word
- In part 2 **distractors** are often used in the wrong responses. For instance, a **word** in the question is sometimes **repeated in a wrong answer**. So, if you hear **the same word** in the question and an answer it is more **likely to be a distractor** ; **avoid that answer choice**.
- **words having different meaning** are often used in the question and in a wrong answer choice ;

Examples:

- “Minutes” (referring to time or referring to the written report of a meeting = le procès verbal)
- “coat” (what we wear in winter or coat of paint = couche de peinture)

- **Words related to the key word in the question** can be used as distractors too.

Example:

Using the word « bank » in the question then « money » or « cheque » in a wrong response.

part 3 Short conversations

- **Always read the questions before you hear the conversations** but don't read the answers , they may distract you.
- When the instructor gives directions, skim read the questions
- **while you are listening to the conversation spot the right answers** so that you can use the time spared for answering to read the questions of the following conversation.
- **The type of questions often asked** are about
 - **where** the conversation took place,
 - **who** the speakers are,
 - **what** they are talking about.
 - For details, **when/ what time** will the man leave the office? **Why** couldn't the woman help him...
- **Avoid time distractors.**

Example:

in the conversation you hear that the man came to the meeting at 10:00 and he was one hour late.

The question is “what time did the meeting start?”

a- 10:00

b- 11:00

c- 9:00

The right answer is c although you heard 10:00 in the conversation, but he was **one hour late**.

Another example:

in the conversation you hear a man saying “the meeting **was supposed to take place in the manager’s office**” and a woman replies “Andrew and Jessica will be joining us, so, **we’ll meet in the conference room**.”

The question: where will the meeting take place?

Answers: a- in the manager’s office
b- in the conference room
c- in the cafeteria
d- in Andrew and Jessica’s office

As you hear “the manager’s office”, you may think it’s answer “a” but the right answer is “b”

part 4 Short talks

- short talks often consist in **announcements, weather reports, travel advisories** etc.
- the type of questions in this part:
 - **Who** is the **speaker**,
 - **who** is he speaking **to**,
 - **what** is the **objective**?
 - **Where** is the talk most likely **taking place**?
 - What is **the reason** for the announcement?
 - **What will probably happen** next week?
- **Always read the questions before** you hear the short talk but don’t read the answers.
- while you are listening to the talk spot the right answer so that you can use the time spared for answering to read the questions of the following short talk.
- Focus on **the first part** of the talk to determine **the context**.

- If it is a **voice mail** very often you hear “to reach press 1 to ... press 2” etc... So, if the question is about what number to press or which department can be reached if you press 1... get ready, **you may hear the information in the reverse order**, that is you hear “press 1 to reach...” or vice versa not necessarily in the same order as in the question.

Reading

part 5

- **don't waste time** in the reading section ; **manage your time carefully** not to run out of time at the end. You'd better spend 12 **mn** on this part,
- Ask yourself **what the question is testing**.
- Try to **identify the part of speech** it's testing and the part of speech needed in the blank that helps you find the answer quickly.
- You **don't always need to read or understand the whole sentence** to find the answer.
- **Read the different alternatives** to decide whether to read the whole sentences or not:
 - If they are **conjunctions** you **have to understand all the sentence** and the relation between the two clauses : **cause/effect, contrast...**
 - but **if they are prepositions**, in most of the cases you **don't need to read the whole sentence**, which makes you **save time**
- prefixes and suffixes can help you identify the meaning of the words.
- One of the main pitfalls is to **think the question is about tenses while it is about countable/uncountable and subject-verb matching or causative verbs**.

Take these examples:

- National autos ----- this factory

A- owns B- are owning C- have owned D- have been owing

The right answer is A and it is the only one in the singular matching the singular subject « national autos » despite the « s » of « autos » ; « national autos » is a company, so it's singular

- The police ----- very conscientious about parking violations.

A- is B- are C- was D has been

The right answer is B because the police is plural, all the other answer choices are singular

- Another main distractor is **long, complex sentences**, and sometimes with **complex vocabulary and long names**. Again, you **don't need to understand every single word** in the sentence. So, different reading strategies can be used:

- ✗ Most importantly check if you can find the answer without reading all the sentence; for instance the question is about dependent prepositions.

Example:

SPC Sportswear's focus ----- personalized service has ensured overall customer satisfaction.

- a- for
- b- at
- c- on
- d- to

In this case you don't need to understand all the sentence because « focus » must be followed by the preposition « on » so, the right answer is c.

- ✗ don't pay attention to long complex names or replace them by a simple name or just X
- ✗ Simplify the sentence: delete parenthetical information (information between two parentheses or between two commas or two dashes)

Example:

I'll be soon completing a bachelor's degree with a major in modern languages – English and Chinese – and a minor in Business, Economics and Law.

This sentence may seem hard to understand but it can be simpler if we delete « English and Chinese » between two dashes and « Economics and law » between two commas (the second comma is deleted because it's the end of the sentence and replaced by a full stop.

So the simple sentence is :

I'll be soon completing a bachelor's degree with a major in modern languages and a minor in Business.

However, this parenthetical information can help you understand a word which is essential to answer the question: parenthetical information (coming between two dashes, or two commas or two parentheses explains the word or phrase that comes just before it

« English and Chinese » explained « modern languages »
and « Economics and Law » explained « Business »

this strategy is also useful in part 7

part 6

- the typical texts in this section are **letters**, **e-mails**, or **memos**

- in this part you often **need to read the whole text** not just the context of the blank.
- you're advised to spend about **10 mn** to 12 mn on this part.

part 7

- You should spare **45-50 mn** to this part
- Two ways of reading are needed in this part: **skimming** and **scanning**.
Skimming = fast reading of the text without paying attention to details
scanning = looking for details
- **Skim the questions before reading the text.**
- You don't always need to read or understand everything in the text. **Scan the text for the details needed.** Once you've found these details to answer the questions stop reading to save time.
 - what is the purpose of this memo? This question needs skim reading
 - How much does the man have to pay? This question needs scan reading to find the detail.
- Be familiar with the **layout** of common types of texts such as emails, memos or formal letters in order to facilitate your reading.

➤ Answer easier questions first:

- Start by **easy specific information first** (questions about “**who?**”, “**when?**” “**where?**” “**what time?**” ... you will find the information easily **without reading all the text** (you sometimes find the answer just by **having a look and spotting the figures: (8:00 pm, 15 inches...)** questions about **time or numbers... are the easiest to answer**; you need just to locate the numbers and read the sentence in which they are to answer.
- Then answer **the vocabulary questions**: Different strategies can be used to find the answer: the context, punctuation (**see the examples above about parenthetical information between two parentheses, or dashes or commas**), **morphology** can also help; **affixes** are clues to use. For example a word with the affix “en” is a verb; “**strengthen**” so it's a verb and the root is “**strength**” which is a noun from “**strong**”. Therefore, to strengthen = to make stronger (reinforcer). Similarly “to widen” is to “make wider”, “to harden” is “to make harder”, “to entitle” is “to give a title”...
- After that you can answer **inference questions** like “what is the **purpose** of this email?”, “who **might read** this report?”...

This kind of questions needs more time to answer, but as you have already answered the easy questions, you will find it easier to answer them.

- **Finally** answer the questions about **specific information (negative)** , like “which of the following is **NOT** true?” “Which of the following is **NOT** mentioned?”...

As you have already answered other questions before, you have **already come across many details**, so you can delete at least two options, it remains little to check; **the**

information you don't find is then the right answer.

- Proceeding in this way allows you to **find the answers without reading all the text.**

➤ **Strategies for double and triple texts:**

- **allow more time to double and triple passages.**

Skim the questions and decide **in which document you can find the answer; text 1 or 2 or both.**

For example if you are given an **ad and an email**; then one of the questions is “where did John find the ad?”, or “ what interested him?” for these both questions, **you can find the answer in the email only without reading the ad.**

However, if the question is about the **price of tickets** or the **number of rooms** in the flat advertised, you're more likely to find the **answer in the ad**, you may resort to the email if the detail is really not mentioned in the ad.

➤ **Charts and tables**

It is important to **get used to this kind of documents** and the first thing to do is to have an idea about **the layout and spot where you can find details;**

for instance, you can find the *days of the week in a vertical column on the left, and activities are detailed horizontally* etc... so if the question is about *what the person did on Monday* you know where to look to find the answer.

In this way you can easily **spot the information needed in the right place** without wasting your time reading all the document with all the irrelevant details.

- Being familiar with **common abbreviations** will help you identify the context:
Example:

abbreviation	What it stands for	Translation
ATM	Automatic teller machine	Distributeur automatique de billet
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	PDG
IT	Information Technology	l'informatique

Mph/kph	Miles/kilometers per hour	Kilomètres par heure
PC	Personal Computer	Ordinateur personnel
PR	Public Relations	Relations publiques
HR	Human Resources	Ressources Humaines
MBA	Master of Business Administration	Master en Administration des Entreprises
R&D	Research and Development	Recherche et développement
Asap	As soon as possible	Dès que possible
Inc.	Incorporated	Société anonyme
i.e.	« Id est » that is	c'est-à-dire
e.g.	« exempli gratia » for example	Par exemple