

Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Guide for Students – ISE II (B2)

Reading & Writing | Speaking & Listening

Foreword

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams assess all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – in a way that reflects real-life communication in English.

This guide will:

- ▶ give a summary of both modules of the ISE II exam – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening
- ▶ give you some ideas on how to prepare for the ISE II exam
- ▶ tell you what the examiner is looking for
- ▶ tell you about results and certificates.

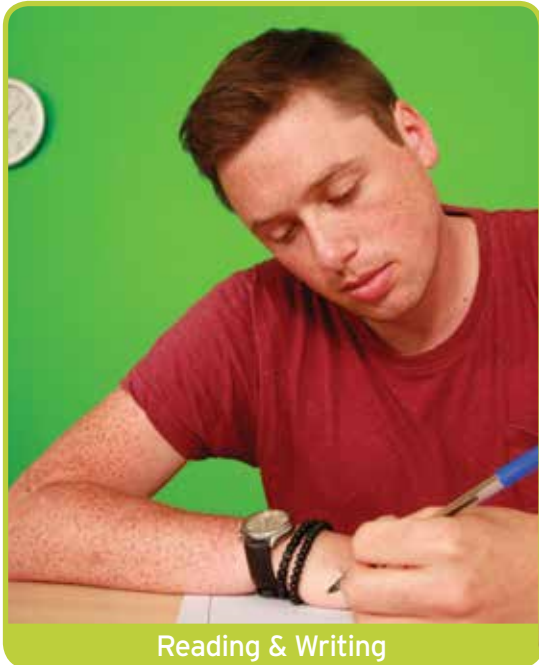
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What is ISE II?

What is ISE II?

ISE II is an English language exam for learners of English who are at level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference. You take ISE II in two parts – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening.



Who recognises ISE?

Many institutions recognise ISE as proof that you can read, write, speak and listen in English. To find out more visit:

www.trinitycollege.com/recognition

ISE II summary

Reading & Writing

How long is the Reading & Writing exam? Two hours.

Which skills do the reading tasks test? Reading for gist, reading for details, reading comprehension, understanding the main ideas of a text and inferring.

Which skills do the writing tasks test? How you organise a text, your range of grammar and vocabulary, how well you answer the question, how you transform reading texts into a writing text.

The Reading & Writing exam has four parts:

Task 1 – Long reading

How many texts? One text.

How long is the text? About 500 words.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 1-5 – choose the right heading for each paragraph of the reading text
- ▶ questions 6-10 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the text
- ▶ questions 11-15 – complete sentences with words from the reading text.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

How many texts? Four short texts.

How long are the texts? In total, the four texts are about 500 words. One of the texts is a graphic or diagram with some short text.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 16-20 – choose which text matches a description – there are five questions which describe the main idea or purpose of the texts
- ▶ questions 21-25 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the texts
- ▶ questions 26-30 – complete summary notes with words from the texts – the notes are a summary of the four texts.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

How many texts do I read? You use the four texts from task 2.

What do I write? An essay or article.

How many words do I write? 150-180 words. You can **only** use information from the texts in task 2 in your answer.

Task 4 – Extended writing

What do I write? An essay, article, letter, review or email in response to a question.

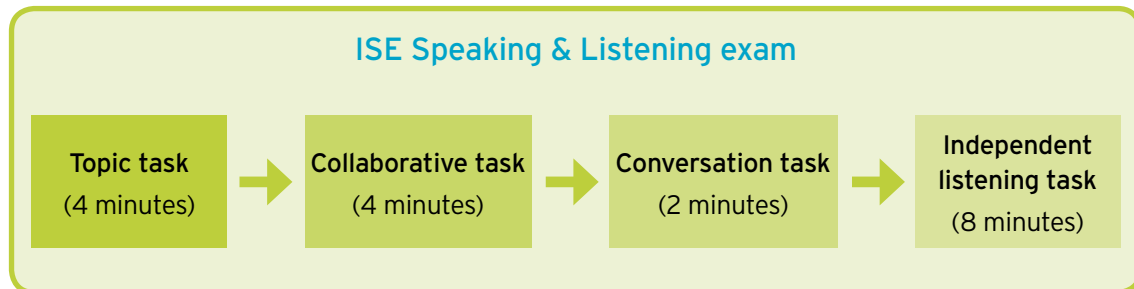
How many words do I write? 150-180 words.

To see sample Reading & Writing exams, please go to:

www.trinitycollege.com/ISEII

Speaking & Listening

The Speaking & Listening exam is a one-to-one interview with a Trinity examiner. The exam is in four parts:



Topic task (4 minutes)

To prepare for the exam, you prepare to talk about a topic. You can choose what you want to talk about.

How do you choose a topic?

Think of three different possible topics that you could talk to the examiner about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What can you say about each possible topic? Which one demonstrates your English skills the best? Which one would you like to discuss with the examiner?

It is a good idea to bring some notes or a mind map with you to the exam. During the exam, you discuss your topic with the examiner. Remember to plan your topic as a discussion, thinking of questions that you can ask the examiner and also questions that the examiner might ask you.



Collaborative task (4 minutes)

1. The examiner will read a short prompt. The prompt will have some information about a situation or opinion. You need to listen carefully to what the examiner says.
2. When the examiner finishes reading the prompt to you, he/she will stop talking. It's then your responsibility to start the conversation. Try asking the examiner for more information or details and then respond to what they say.
3. For the rest of the task, it's your responsibility to keep the conversation going by responding to what the examiner says, adding to the conversation and encouraging the examiner to tell you more information.

Remember, it's a discussion and it's your role to collaborate with the examiner, working together to build the conversation. But if you say nothing, the examiner says nothing!

Conversation task (2 minutes)

In this part of the exam, you and the examiner have a conversation on one of these subjects.

Society and living standards

Personal values and ideas

The world of work

Public figures past and present

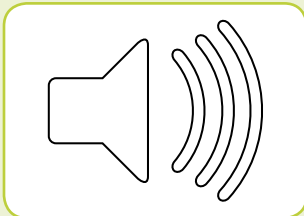
National environmental concerns

Think about each subject. What can you say about each one? Try to talk about your personal experience.

Independent listening task (8 minutes)

In this part of the exam there is one task.

You listen to a recording twice and take some notes. You do not have to take notes if you don't want to. You need to listen for more than just basic information, for example, listen for what arguments are given for a particular opinion, or for the advantages and disadvantages of a situation or proposal.



Listen to a recording (twice)



The examiner asks you some questions



You tell the examiner your answers

If you would like to watch a video of an ISE II Speaking & Listening exam, please go to:

www.trinitycollege.com/ISEII

How to prepare for ISE II

Below are some tips for preparing for each part of the ISE II exam:

Reading & Writing

Reading

Do

- ▶ Practise reading in English by, for example, reading English websites, newspapers or magazines – look for subjects in English that interest you and subjects that you are studying in school or college.
- ▶ Use graded readers, which are books specially written for B2 level learners of English.

Don't

- ▶ Don't look in the dictionary for every new word – instead look at the whole sentence, the paragraph and the context and try to imagine possible meanings of the word. After you finish reading the paragraph or the whole text, you can check the meanings of the words in the dictionary.

Writing

Do

- ▶ Look at the question carefully (How many different ideas are there in the question? How many ideas do you have to write in your answer?).
- ▶ Practise writing in a three-stage process:
 - plan what you want to write
 - write your answer
 - check what you have written.
- ▶ Check your work to see if it is:
 - organised (Have you used paragraphs? Does it have a conclusion?)
 - appropriate (Have you answered the question? Have you thought about who will read your writing?)
 - accurate (Is your spelling correct? Have you used capital letters and full stops?).
- ▶ Practise doing sample exams from the Trinity website www.trinitycollege.com/ISEII
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside class – for example, write reviews of films or books you have enjoyed, take part in discussions on the internet in English or write emails or messages to friends in English.

Speaking & Listening

Topic task

Do

- ▶ Spend time choosing and preparing your topic. Choose a topic that interests you and that you can spend up to four minutes talking about.
- ▶ Try to think of a topic which includes lots of language of ISE II. For example, a topic in which you can talk about advantages and disadvantages, speculate or ask for opinions.
- ▶ Use a range of different language from the level.
- ▶ Think of the language you will need and the questions the examiner might ask you.
- ▶ Use a diagram or mind map to help you plan your topic.

Don't

- ▶ Don't choose a technical topic – it's difficult to remember technical vocabulary in the exam.
- ▶ Don't memorise a script – you can plan ideas and phrases for your topic, but remember that the topic is a discussion and it is important to sound natural.

Collaborative task

Do

- ▶ Practise with a friend or colleague.
- ▶ Practise asking another person about a problem, a situation that has happened, or a problem or situation that might happen in the future. Also, try asking them about their opinion on a problem or situation – ask them for more information and try to work with them to discuss the situation.

Don't

- ▶ Don't talk about yourself – the Collaborative task is about the other person's situation, not yours!



Conversation task

Do

- ▶ Be prepared to talk about all the conversation areas listed.
- ▶ Think about what questions the examiner might ask about the different conversation areas.
- ▶ Think about how you can use the language of ISE II to talk about the different subjects.

Don't

- ▶ Don't forget to think of a question to ask the examiner about each subject area.

Independent listening task

Do

- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on listening in the speaking exam and how well you respond to the examiner, so practise having conversations in English.
- ▶ Practise listening to recorded English – you are also tested on listening to recordings, so watch films and television in English, listen to English podcasts or news programmes, watch English videos on the internet and practise in class.
- ▶ Practise taking notes while you listen – try to only write the most important information like dates, names, places and facts.
- ▶ Listen to discussions and speeches where the content is more likely to be abstract and attitudes implied rather than purely informational.

Don't

- ▶ Don't try to write down everything you hear – you don't need that much information!

What happens on the day of the exam?

What happens on the day of the exam?



Reading & Writing

You will take the exam at a Trinity centre or at a registered exam centre. It is a written exam and it takes two hours.

Here is the format of the exam and some tips on each part.

Task 1 – Long reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task, and make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Top tip!

If you make a mistake, just cross out your answer ~~like this~~ and write a new answer next to it.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task, and make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write – your plan will not be marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Make sure you use information from the texts in task 2 to answer the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Top tip!

Don't just copy from the texts – always try to use your own words.

Task 4 – Extended writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write – your plan will not be marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Speaking & Listening

A Trinity examiner will come to your school or language centre for the Speaking & Listening module. This is how the exam runs:

Introductions

- ▶ The examiner says 'Hello' and asks your name. The examiner will probably use some simple greetings like 'How are you?'.
- ▶ If you're taking ISE I, II or III the examiner asks you for identification.
- ▶ You are not tested during the introductions part of the exam.



Top tip!

It is natural to be nervous when taking an exam – but try to think of the Speaking & Listening exam as an opportunity to talk about things that interest you. It's a chance to show the examiner what you can do in English!

If you don't understand something, it's fine to ask the examiner to repeat what he/she said.

Topic task

The examiner asks you what you want to talk about and then asks you questions about your topic. Be ready to speak about your topic and try to listen to what the examiner asks.

Conversation task

The examiner tells you which subject you are going to talk about and then asks you a question to start the conversation. Listen to what the examiner says and think about what language you need to answer the question. Remember, it's a discussion!

Collaborative task

The examiner will read out a short prompt. You have to ask questions and keep the conversation going. Listen carefully to what the examiner says and make sure you understand the prompt. Respond to the prompt and ask questions, offer opinions and ask the examiner what he/she thinks. Don't just talk about the subject but really try to interact with the examiner about what they have said and try to stay relevant. Build the conversation together!

Independent listening task

The examiner will play the recording and will tell you what you need to do. You will be speaking to the examiner about what you have heard and you should listen out for things like evidence of a speaker's attitude or opinion. In this task you may take notes but your notes are not assessed.

Top tip!

In the Independent listening task you can take notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed.

End of the exam

The examiner tells you that the exam has finished and says goodbye. You are not marked on this part of the exam.

What is the examiner assessing in ISE II?

What is the examiner assessing in ISE II?

Language functions for ISE II

Study and practise the language functions before the exam!

- ▶ Expressing and expanding ideas and opinions
- ▶ Highlighting advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ Speculating
- ▶ Giving advice
- ▶ Expressing agreement and disagreement
- ▶ Eliciting further information
- ▶ Negotiating meaning
 - establishing common ground



Reading

There are 30 questions in the reading section. Depending on the number of correct answers you give, your Reading result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Writing

Here are the four skills that the examiner is assessing:

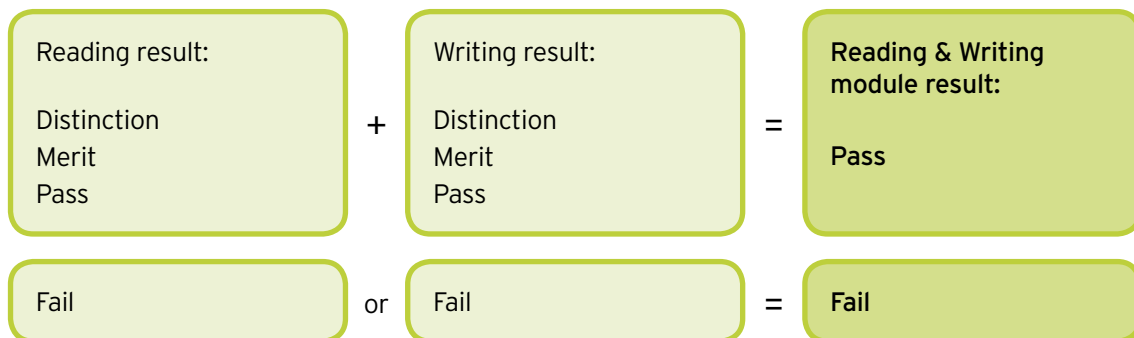
Task fulfilment: How well you answer the question.

Organisation and structure: How well you organise your writing, use paragraphs and sentences and link your ideas together.

Language control: Your range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammar. How well you use punctuation and your spelling.

Reading for writing (task 3 only): How well you are able to use the reading texts to write an answer to task 3, using your own words.

For the writing tasks, your scores in the four scales are combined. Your Writing result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.



If you pass the reading tasks and the writing tasks, you will pass the Reading & Writing module.

If you fail either reading or writing, or both, you will not pass the Reading & Writing module.

Speaking & Listening

The examiner will assess these four abilities:

Communicative effectiveness: How well you complete each task. For example, discussing a topic or having a conversation.

How well you respond to the examiner and how you cope with problems. For example, can you ask the examiner to repeat when you don't understand?

Interactive listening: How well you show that you understand the examiner.

Language control: How good is the range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar that you use? For example, how well you use the language functions of ISE II (see page 14).

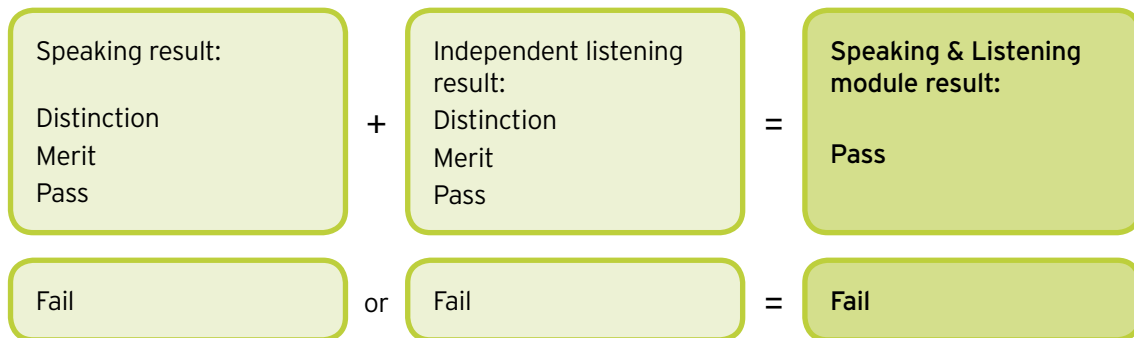
Delivery: Can the examiner understand you? How good is your pronunciation and fluency?

Your speaking result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Independent listening

In the Independent listening task the examiner will choose a mark, depending on how well you have understood the recording. Your speaking and writing are not assessed in the listening task.

Your Independent listening result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.



If you pass the speaking tasks and the listening tasks, you will pass the Speaking & Listening module.

If you fail either speaking or listening, or both, you will not pass the Speaking & Listening module.

What happens after the exam?

What happens after the exam?

Reading & Writing

A few weeks after the exam, you will receive your results. If you have passed the exam, you will receive a module certificate.

The module certificate will show that you have passed the Reading & Writing module and will give your results for reading and for writing.

Speaking & Listening

Your results will be sent to your Trinity Registered Exam Centre who will tell you if you have passed or failed in two areas: speaking and listening.

A few weeks later, if you have passed the exam, you will receive your results on a module certificate. The module certificate will show that you have passed the Speaking & Listening module and will give your results for speaking and for listening.

Your ISE II qualification certificate

When you have passed both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you will receive your ISE II certificate. This certificate will show that you have passed ISE II and will give your results in: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

ISE II: Pass

Reading: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Writing: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Speaking: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Listening: Pass or Merit or Distinction

