

Use the *Essential English* Placement Test as an indication of a new student's level in English. It covers all levels up to upper-intermediate.

## Marking guide

In marking the test, consider the difference between SS' passive skills (the Grammar and Language and the Listening skills) as opposed to their active productive skills (the Writing and the Speaking). Many SS do worse in the speaking test than they should, for a variety of factors. If SS are studying in an English-speaking country, their language course might be their first trip abroad. They might be dealing with a large number of new experiences all at once (staying with a host family, eating strange food, meeting large numbers of people from other countries, speaking to native speakers for the first time). All of this can make SS very tired and confused when the speaking test comes around. SS who have come from further afield may also be suffering from jet lag when the course begins.

All of this means that you need to be very careful in grading their spoken abilities. It is not unknown for SS to jump one or even two levels upwards once their main lessons begin. The writing part of the test can help here to give you a guide to SS' real abilities.

Note *that if* SS are scoring around 80pts they are possibly too high even for *Essential English 5*, and should move into an advanced level class.

Score	Suggested Student's Book
0-16	<i>Essential English 1</i>
17-32	<i>Essential English 2</i>
33-48	<i>Essential English 3</i>
49-64	<i>Essential English 4</i>
65-80	<i>Essential English 5</i>

## Answer key

### Grammar and language

Give 1pt for each correct answer.

1 b	8 a	15 c	22 b	29 b	36 c
2 a	9 b	16 a	23 b	30 a	37 c
3 c	10 a	17 b	24 a	31 a	38 a
4 c	11 a	18 c	25 c	32 b	39 b
5 b	12 c	19 a	26 b	33 a	40 c
6 a	13 b	20 b	27 a	34 c	
7 b	14 c	21 a	28 c	35 c	

### Listening

Give 1pt for each correct answer. Play the recording twice for SS.

- 1 double
- 2 husband
- 3 Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August
- 4 £50
- 5 big music festival
- 6 credit card number
- 7 0151 496 0842
- 8 a spa and a sauna
- 9 one-way street
- 10 a special bus

### Writing

SS write an email blog about their English learning up to this point and in the future. The task gives SS plenty of opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in using a range of tenses.

Give 15pts for the written work, divided like this:

5pts for spelling, paragraphing and punctuation, awarded like this:

- Award 1pt if SS use paragraphs and topic sentences to structure their work.
- Award 2pts for correct use of spelling of most lexical items.
- Award 3pts if SS also punctuate their work accurately using capital letters, commas, full stops etc.
- Award 4pts if SS avoid the main spelling mistakes (carefull, heigth, etc.) even if they still make errors on more complicated lexical items (necessary, etc.)
- Award the full 5pts if SS use accurate spelling throughout, and also punctuate their work accurately using more complicated punctuation such as apostrophes.

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## Placement Test key and teacher's notes

5pts for use and range of vocabulary, awarded like this:

- Award 1pt if SS only use very basic words such as sad, happy etc.
- Award 2pts if SS use a slightly broader range of vocabulary, such as worried, excited.
- Award 3pts if SS are starting to use more advanced features of the language, such as phrasal verbs.
- Award 4pts if SS demonstrate the ability to use linking words such as however, while, although, to organise their text.
- Award 5pts if SS demonstrate an ability to use advanced, natural chunks of language such as On the other hand...

5pts for use and range of grammar, awarded like this:

- Award 1pt if SS only use very basic grammar such as Present simple, *there is/are* etc.
- Award 2pts if SS are also able to use the Past simple, Future simple and Present continuous.
- Award 3pts if SS are able to use further past tenses such as the Past continuous, and are able to use the Present perfect. This might also be awarded for SS who show an ability to use a range of future forms (*going to*, Present continuous) instead of *will*. SS should also be able to use basic modal verbs (*can, would, etc.*) at this stage.

- Award 4pts if SS are able to use all the tenses with reasonable accuracy (including the Past perfect) and also demonstrate an ability to use a range of modal verbs in their writing.
- Award 5pts if SS demonstrate an ability to use advanced, sophisticated grammatical structures, such as Future continuous, relative clauses and the more advanced conditional structures.

Note that SS are only writing a short piece of work here, under exam conditions, and with limited time available. Although it should be relatively straightforward to identify weaker SS at this stage, stronger SS might not always have the opportunity to shine at this task. To this end, mark the writing generously, especially if the work exhibits few errors and they do not impede overall understanding.

### Speaking

The speaking test is marked between 1-15pts. Please see the guidelines in the *Essential English* Placement Test speaking script for the marking scheme.

Test each S individually. Bear in mind that SS will be very nervous at this stage of the test, so begin speaking slowly and clearly.

Note that you may have to abandon the speaking test if it is clear that the S is unable to respond to your questions or to do the task. In this case, ask the S to return to the class. The test gets progressively more difficult towards the end (only a Level 5 S would be able to handle the final questions, for example), so if SS cannot do one part of the speaking test, it is unlikely that they will be able to do any of the subsequent sections.

The speaking test should last for about 5–10 minutes for each S. Call SS out individually while they are doing the Grammar and Language section, or while they are working on the Writing section.

### Part 1

Before SS begin the test, make sure that they bring their test paper. They will need to discuss the pictures on this page during the speaking test (in Part 4).

Ask these questions. Give SS plenty of time to answer, as they may be nervous about accuracy. Give 3pts for ability in this section.

- 1 What's your name?
- 2 Where are you from?
- 3 Do you live in a house or a flat? Where is it?

### Part 2

This section tests SS' ability to use Past simple and Present perfect forms. Give 3pts for ability in this section.

- 1 What did you have for breakfast this morning?
- 2 How did you come to school today?
- 3 How long have you studied English?
- 4 Have you met the other students in the test room yet?

### Part 3

This section tests SS' vocabulary and knowledge of basic describing words. Ask either Question 1 or Question 2. Ask follow-up questions as necessary to see how much information SS can provide. Give 3pts for ability in this section.

- 1 Tell me about a friend of yours. What does he/she look like? What kind of things do you do together? What's he/she doing now?
- 2 Tell me about a member of your family. Do you think you are very similar or different to him/her? Why? What's he/she doing now?

### Part 4

This section tests SS' ability to use hypothetical language and to discuss different options. Give SS some help in this task to prompt phrases like 'I agree' or 'I'm not sure'. Give 3pts for ability in this section.

- 1 Look at the pictures in the speaking section of your test paper. They show three different holidays. Describe the differences between them.
- 2 Now say which of the holidays you prefer and why.

### Part 5

This section tests SS' ability to use advanced structures like the second and third conditional. Give 3pts for ability in this section. However, listen carefully to the language they use, and only award the full 3pts if SS are very accurate in their answers.

- 1 You've just looked at some pictures of holidays. If you had the opportunity to go anywhere in the world, where would you go? Who would you go with? What would you do?
- 2 If you hadn't come to the language class today, what would you be doing now?

**P.1**

*[fx: phone ring]*

- Receptionist Good morning. Green Garden Hotel. How can I help you?
- Isabella Oh good morning. My name's Isabella Niro. I'd like to book a room at your hotel please.
- Receptionist OK, one moment please. Now, Ms Niro. Is that a single room or a double room?
- Isabella Double please. I'm coming with my husband.
- Receptionist OK. And how many nights is it?
- Isabella Two nights.
- Receptionist When will you be arriving?
- Isabella Friday 13<sup>th</sup> August.
- Receptionist Yes, I see. OK, we have a room available. It's £150 a night.
- Isabella Oh, but your website said that you have rooms available from £100.
- Receptionist Yes, but August is high season, you see, and the hotel is almost fully booked.
- Isabella Right, OK.
- Receptionist There's also a big music festival in town that weekend and we have thousands of visitors coming.
- Isabella Yes, that's why I'm coming too, actually. OK, I'll book it.
- Receptionist Yes. OK, I'll reserve it for you. You need to confirm by fax with your credit card number.
- Isabella Right. I don't have the fax number.
- Receptionist That's OK. I'll give it to you now. Do you have a paper and pencil?
- Isabella Yes, I do.
- Receptionist OK. The number is 0151 496 0842.
- Isabella OK, I've got that. I'll send the fax this afternoon.
- Receptionist That's good. Er... Do you have any more questions, Ms Niro?
- Isabella Yes, I do, actually. Does the hotel have a spa and a sauna?
- Receptionist Yes, it does, and that's included in the room price.
- Isabella Great! That's great. Oh one more, um... I have a lot of problems sleeping. Can we have a very quiet room, if that's possible?
- Receptionist Yeah, that's fine. At the back of the hotel, there's a one way street and it gets very little traffic. I can put your room there.
- Isabella Oh lovely. Thank you very much indeed. And can you arrange a taxi transfer from the airport for us?
- Receptionist There's no need. We have a special bus which will meet your plane and take you to the hotel.
- Isabella Excellent. That's very convenient.
- Receptionist You're very welcome, Ms Niro. So ...
- Isabella Yes, I'll send you this fax this afternoon and we can confirm everything then.
- Receptionist Perfect. OK. Bye for now.