

PTE Academic

Preparation

Test preparation

Test preparation includes familiarizing yourself with the test format, evaluating your proficiency level, making decisions about when to take the test, creating a study plan to improve knowledge and skills in English, and studying test-taking tips.

Test format

If you know exactly what to expect in advance, you will approach the test with greater confidence. The test format includes features such as:

- **Length and timing:** How long does each part of PTE Academic last? How much time is allowed for each section and each item type?
- **Quantity:** How many parts are included in the test? How many sections are included in each part? How many items are included in one section?
- **Layout:** How is each item type presented on screen?
- **Instructions:** What task needs to be completed for each item type? How are responses recorded?
- **Item types:** How are different item types presented on screen? What tasks need to be completed? What skills are assessed? How are responses scored?

Information about the test format of PTE Academic and item type practice are included in Chapters 3–6. The CD-ROM included with this guide offers a lot of additional practice materials. You can also refer to “Resources” in this chapter for information on other test preparation resources.

Evaluating your English proficiency

Before taking PTE Academic, you should determine whether you are ready to take the test. There are two points to consider:

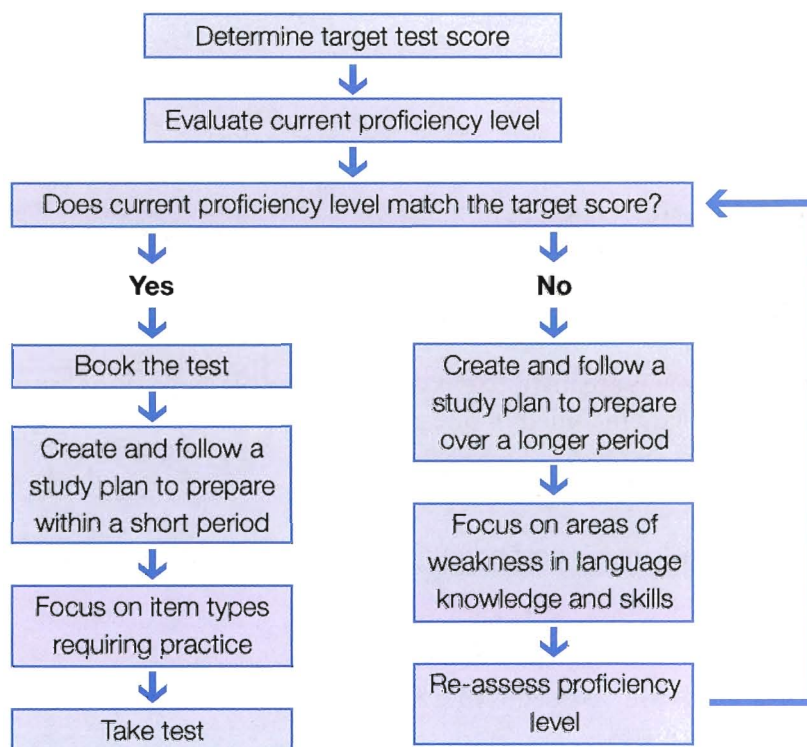
- the target or minimum test score required for your purposes
- your current English proficiency level

To find out the minimum test score you must achieve, consult the college or institution that you are applying to, as well as your sponsor if relevant.

To find out your current English proficiency level and whether you are ready to take PTE Academic, you can take a PTE Academic practice test at www.pearsonpte.com.

Deciding when to take the test

If you attain your target score in a practice test, or if you believe that your proficiency level matches the score you require, you can register to take PTE Academic at your earliest convenience. However, if there is a considerable gap between your score in a practice test and your target score, you should take the test at a later stage. A summary of the steps to help you decide when to take the test is shown below.



Creating a study plan

When you decide to take the test, you should plan carefully so that you can make the most profitable use of the time available to prepare. In other words, you should create a study plan.

Preparing within a short period

If you decide to take the test within a short period, your preparation should be test-focused rather than general. You should produce a study plan accordingly.

- **Use all the test-related resources** listed in “Resources” in this chapter.
- **Familiarize yourself with the test format** using the resources you have obtained.
- **Do the item practice in the guide and on the CD-ROM** as recommended on page xi and in the CD-ROM Introduction.
- **Make a list of the item types** which you find difficult.
- **Plan to do selective practice**, focusing on each of the item types in the list.
- **Try to increase your use of test-taking strategies.** Strategies for responding to each item type in the test are included in Chapters 3–6.
- **Create a study schedule.** This could be daily or weekly, depending on how much time you have before the test.
- **Make a commitment** and follow your study schedule.
- **Review your progress regularly** and adjust your schedule accordingly.
- **Take another practice test** to assess your performance, and repeat the steps above until you feel confident in your ability to handle all item types in the test.

Preparing over a longer period

If you decide to take the test at a later stage, you should aim to improve your general and academic English proficiency over a longer period. You can do this by self-study, or by taking a taught English course, or a mixture of the two.

If you choose to do self-study, your study plan may include the following:

- **Identify your general strengths and weaknesses** in language knowledge and skills.
- **Make a list of language knowledge and skills** that you want to improve, in order of priority.
- **Identify and obtain the learning and practice materials** you need.
- **Create a study schedule.** This could be daily or weekly, depending on how much time you have for study.
- **Study and practice**, focusing on the language skills that you want to improve.
- **Make a commitment** and follow your study schedule.
- **Review your progress regularly** and adjust your schedule accordingly.
- **Use general proficiency tests and PTE Academic practice tests** to regularly review your progress.
- **Follow the steps for “Preparing within a short period”** when you determine that your proficiency level matches your target score.

General test-taking tips

In addition to the test-taking strategies included in Chapters 3–6, there are some general pieces of advice which apply to all test situations:

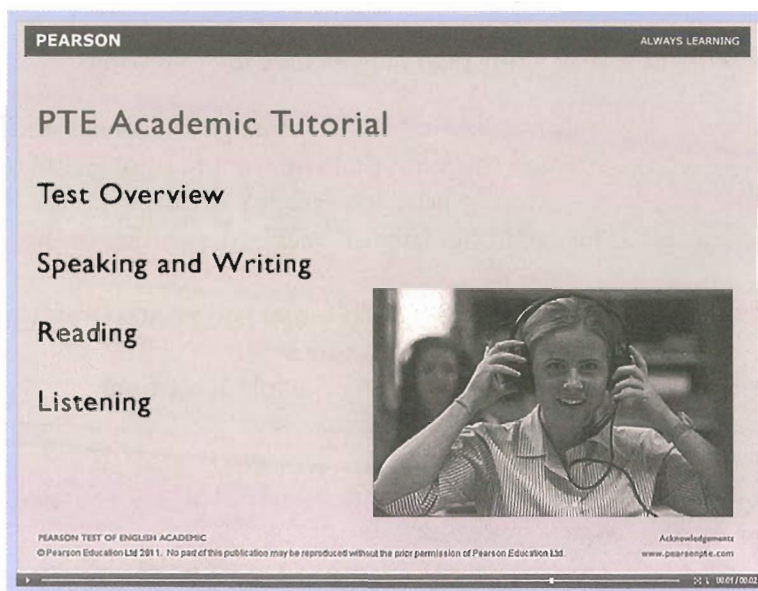
- **Get a good night's sleep the night before the test.** It is better to go to bed early than to do last-minute studying.
- **Make sure you have the correct documentation and ID** to take to the test center as listed in the *Test Taker Handbook*.
- **Allow yourself plenty of time to reach the test center.** There may be unavoidable delays. If you have to rush to get to the test center, you might feel anxious when taking the test.
- **Read the test instructions carefully**, and follow them exactly.
- **Read ahead if possible.** For example, while you are waiting for a recording to start, read the questions to get an idea of what you are going to hear.
- **Do not spend too much time on a single item.**
- **Stay focused.** Do not worry about other items that you have already responded to or will answer later in the test.
- **Spend any available time checking your answers.** Remember, you cannot navigate back in the test to check answers later.

Resources

In addition to this guide, there are a number of resources available at www.pearsonpte.com to help you learn about and prepare for PTE Academic.

► Test Tutorial

The *PTE Academic Tutorial* (available in Flash and PDF formats) is a free resource that provides you with a detailed overview of the test, guidance on how to navigate through it, and instructions on answering the different item types.



PTE Academic Tutorial

► Test taking strategies

Test taking strategies is a set of self-study lessons that give you a three-step approach to successfully answering each of the 20 item types in the test.

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PTE Academic Test Taking Strategies

Read aloud

This is a long-answer item type that integrates speaking and reading skills, and requires you to read a short text aloud, using correct pronunciation and intonation.

Look at the text below. In 40 seconds, you must read this text aloud as naturally and clearly as possible. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

Recorded Answer

Current Status
 Beginning in 40 seconds

Analysts were impressed by the improvement in margins reported across all regions, apart from the United Kingdom, and said that this reflected a clear effort to improve profitability across the business. Although the turnaround is still in its early stages and the valuation looks full, given the challenge of turning around such a large and complex business, this is certainly an impressive start.

Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

 You have 30–40 seconds to go through the text. Read it silently and try to figure out any words you do not know using context and word structure clues.

Strategy 2

 When you speak into the microphone, read every single word. Do not miss out words or rush through. Apply your letter-sound knowledge or phonemic awareness to pronounce unfamiliar words.

Strategy 3

 When you speak, try to link the words within phrases and do not emphasize grammar words such as prepositions and articles. This will help you achieve native-like rhythm and phrasing, and sound more fluent.

Explanation and Practice of Each Strategy

Strategy 1

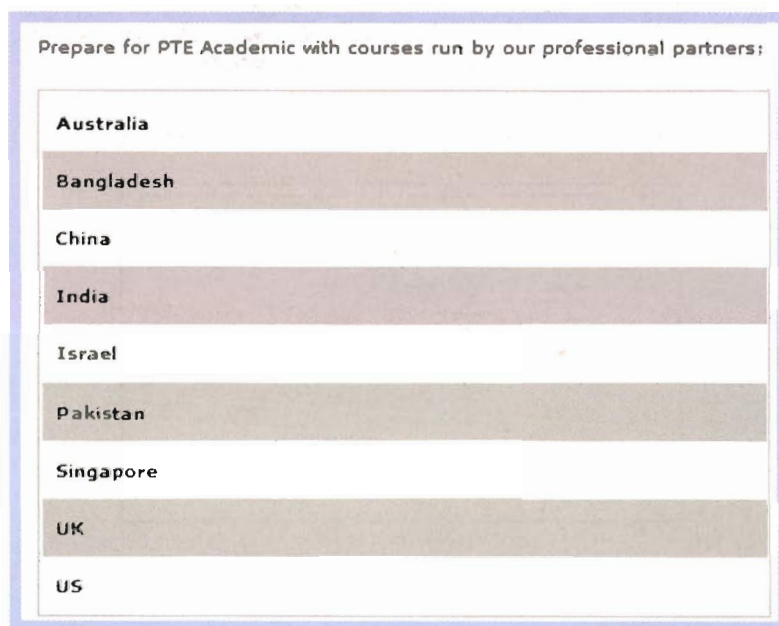
You will have 30–40 seconds to prepare and familiarize yourself with the text before the microphone opens. Use the time to try to figure out and understand any unfamiliar words, as well as the content of the text.

Context clues are usually any surrounding words that will give you hints about the words you do not know. Word structure clues are groups of letters that occur frequently in words. These are prefixes (*un-*, *re-*, *in-*), suffixes (*-ful*, *-ness*, *-est*), and inflectional endings (*-ed*, *-ing*, *-es*). Associating meaning and sounds to these groups of letters will lead to quicker and efficient word identification.

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1

➤ Test preparation courses

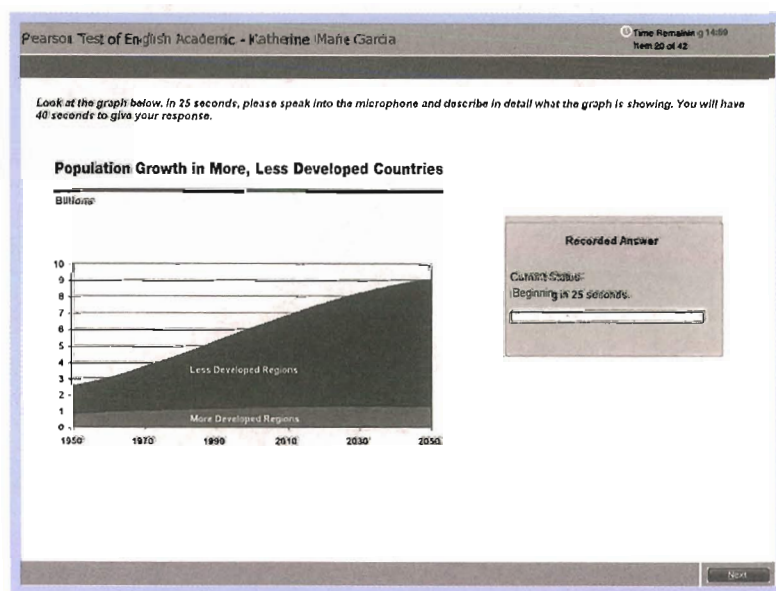
If you want some help studying for the test, you can contact one of our professional partners who offer PTE Academic preparation courses.



Preparation courses

➤ Practice tests

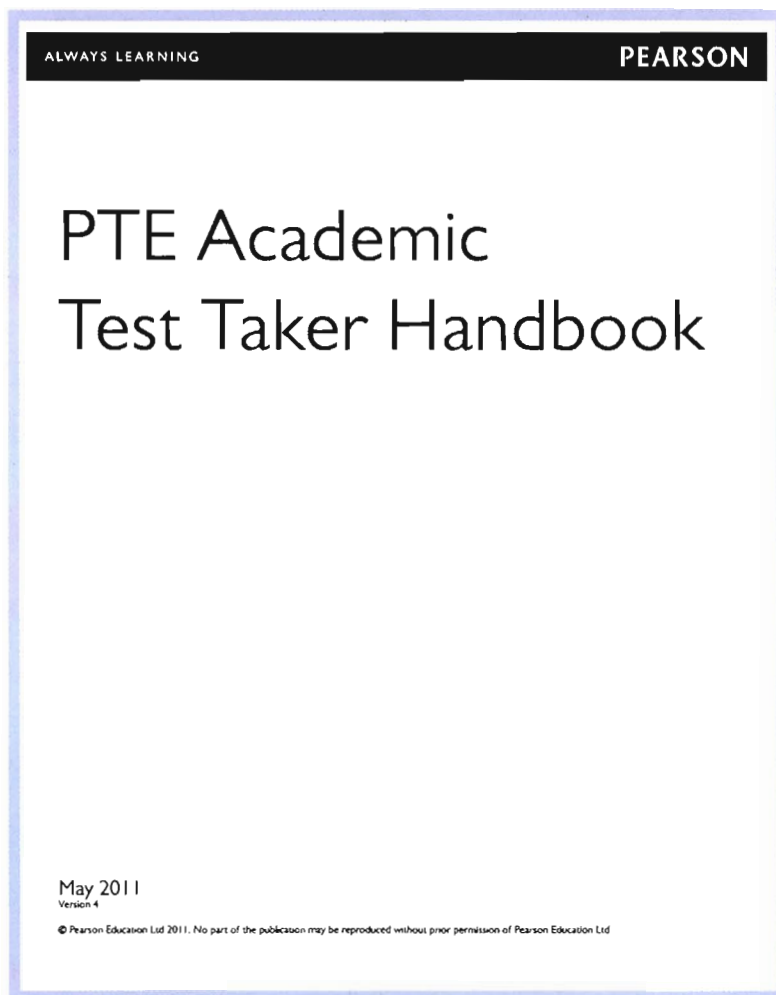
On- and offline practice tests give you the opportunity to practice all your skills, gain full experience of the test format and items, and assess your progress.



PTE Academic practice tests

► Test Taker Handbook

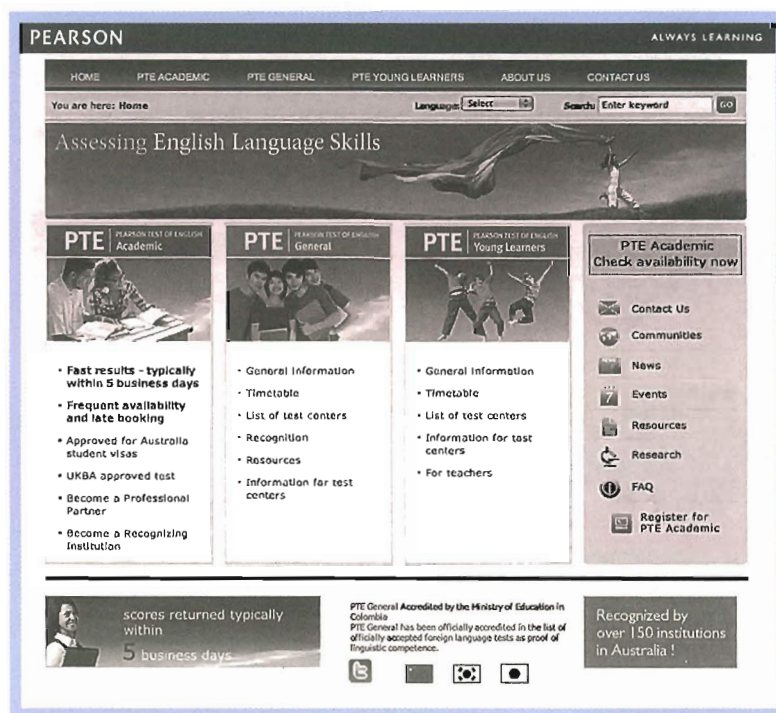
The *Test Taker Handbook* gives you all the information you need about registering for and booking a test, payment, ID requirements, and what to expect on the day of your test. It is available in eight different languages.



New resources and information are regularly added to the Pearson website at www.pearsonpte.com.

Registration and scheduling

The first step towards taking PTE Academic is registration. Before you can book a test, you must create a web account by registering your details on the Pearson Tests of English website. This can be done online 24 hours a day, seven days a week, or by calling one of Pearson's customer service teams during working hours. For contact details, refer to the *Test Taker Handbook*, which can be downloaded at www.pearsonpte.com. After you have registered, you will receive a user name and password which can be used to sign in and schedule your test. Start the registration process by visiting the Pearson Tests of English website at www.pearsonpte.com.



On test day

You need to arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes before your scheduled test time. This will allow enough time to sign in and follow all the necessary procedures at the test center.

Arriving at the test center

Upon arriving at the test center, you will need to sign in at the main reception desk. A Test Administrator will confirm your details, check your identification, collect necessary biometrics and explain the test center rules and regulations.

► ID requirements

You are required to present one valid, unexpired form of identification before taking the test. Acceptable ID varies by country, and full details can be found in the *Test Taker Handbook*, which can be downloaded at www.pearsonpte.com.

► Biometrics

Due to the high levels of security at Pearson test centers, test taker biometrics will be collected. Biometrics may include, but are not limited to, photographs, signatures, fingerprints and palm vein scans.

► Rules and regulations

Before entering the testing room, you will be asked to read and agree to the PTE Academic Test Taker Rules Agreement. This outlines the procedures and rules you need to follow while taking your test at the test center. Non-disclosure of information is included as part of the agreement, which means that you agree not to publish, reproduce or transmit the test (in whole or in part). You will be reminded about this agreement when you log in to a test delivery workstation and begin the test. Unacceptable behavior or failure to follow any of the rules and regulations may result in you not being allowed into the testing room, or being expelled from the test center. If you are not able to take your test due to a breach of the test taker rules, your test will be marked as a “No Show,” and no refund will be given.

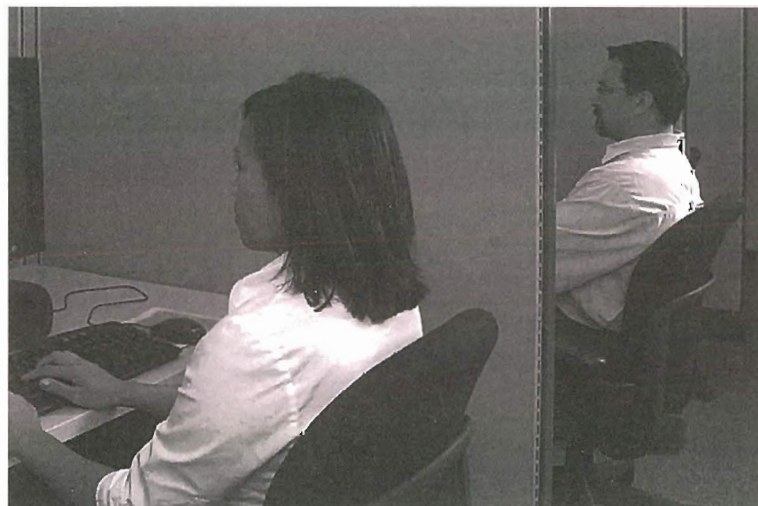
You are not allowed to bring any personal belongings (such as mobile phones, pagers, coats, watches, wallets, MP3 players, etc.) into the testing room. The test center will provide secure storage facilities where you can keep your belongings during the test. You may prefer to leave some of these items at home.

The Test Administrator will provide you with an Erasable Noteboard Booklet and pen so that you can take notes during the test. When you enter the testing room, you will not be allowed to take any notes until the test has started.

Taking the test

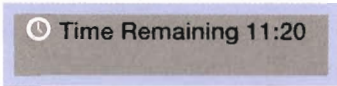
The testing room will contain several test delivery workstations separated by partitions and monitored by closed circuit television. When it is time to begin your test, the Test Administrator will assign you a workstation.

The photo below shows test takers in a testing room at a Pearson test center.



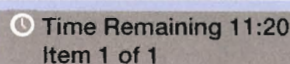
Timing

The amount of time given for completing PTE Academic is approximately three hours. There is a timer in the upper right-hand corner of the computer screen, which shows the time remaining on a given section of the test.



Time Remaining 11:20

The timer will change to red when there are fewer than five minutes remaining for that section. The timer can be hidden by clicking on the clock icon with the mouse. Click on the icon again to bring it back.



Time Remaining 11:20
Item 1 of 1

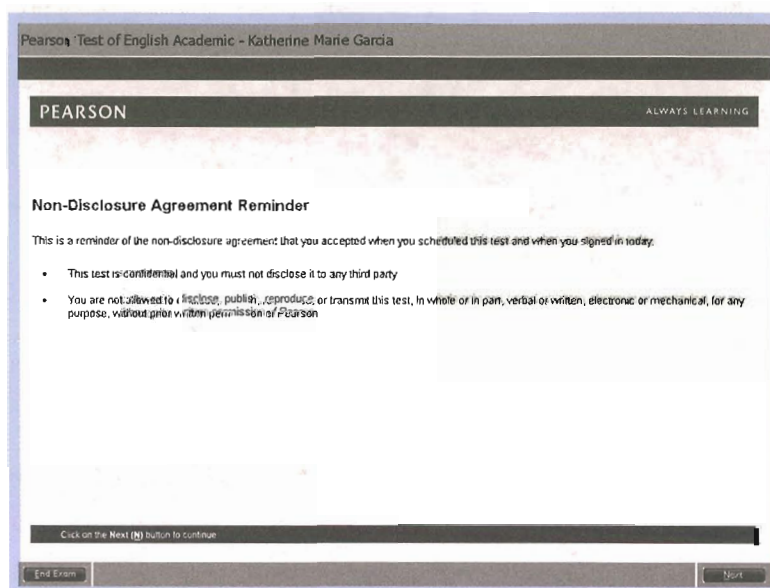
The item counter shows you the number of items in that section.

Pre-test checks

There are a few procedures that you need to go through on screen before starting the test, such as the Non-Disclosure Agreement Reminder and equipment checks.

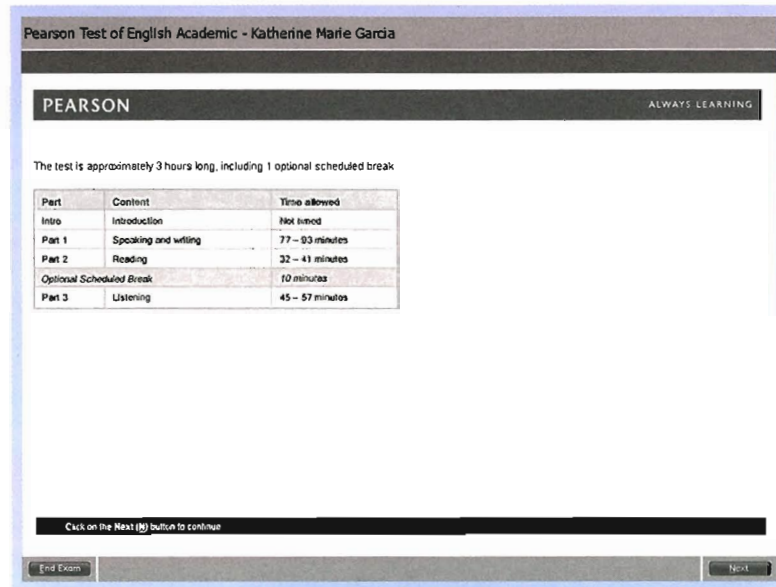
➤ Non-Disclosure Agreement Reminder

After logging in, you will be presented with a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) Reminder. The NDA states that you must not disclose, publish or transmit the test. These terms are presented to you when you book your test, and again when you sign in at the test center. The NDA is repeated to ensure that you understand and agree to the PTE Academic rules before beginning the test.



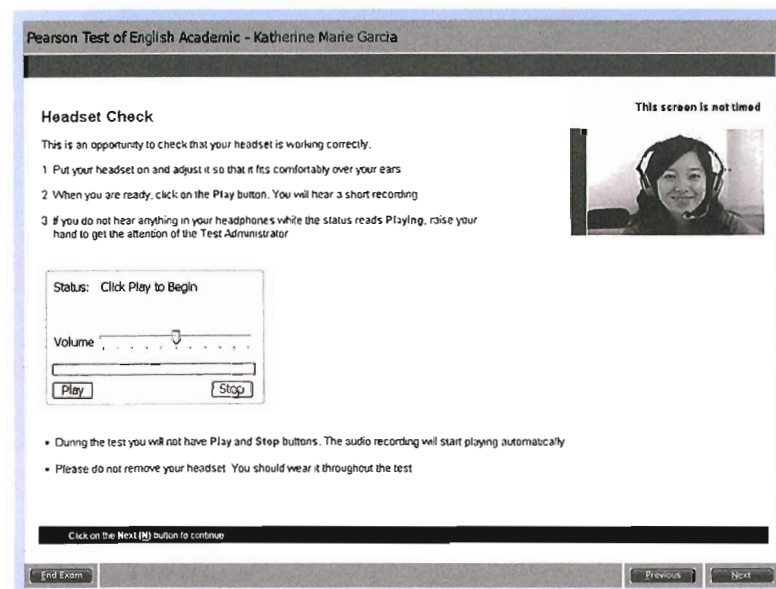
➤ Welcome and equipment check

Following the NDA reminder, you will be presented with a welcome screen showing an overview of the test structure and reminding you that the test will take approximately three hours. The image below shows an example of a welcome screen.

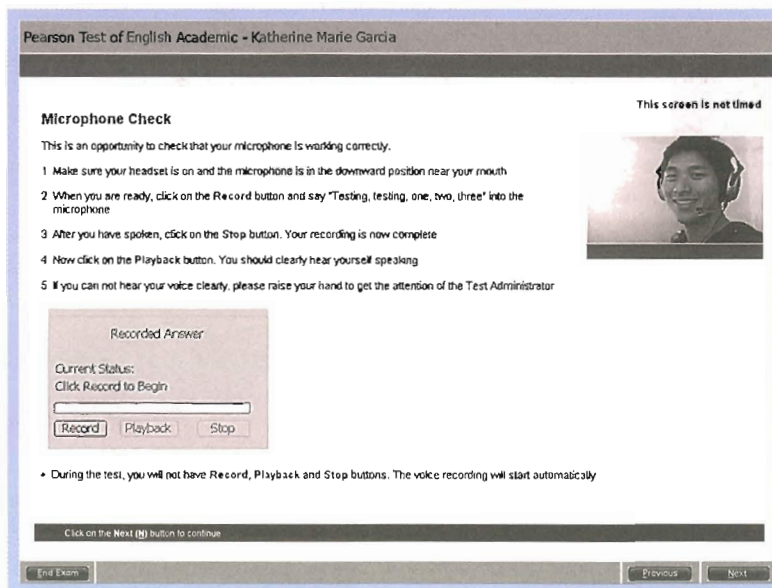


You will be given the opportunity to check the equipment before the test begins. The equipment provided includes a headset with a microphone, keyboard and mouse.

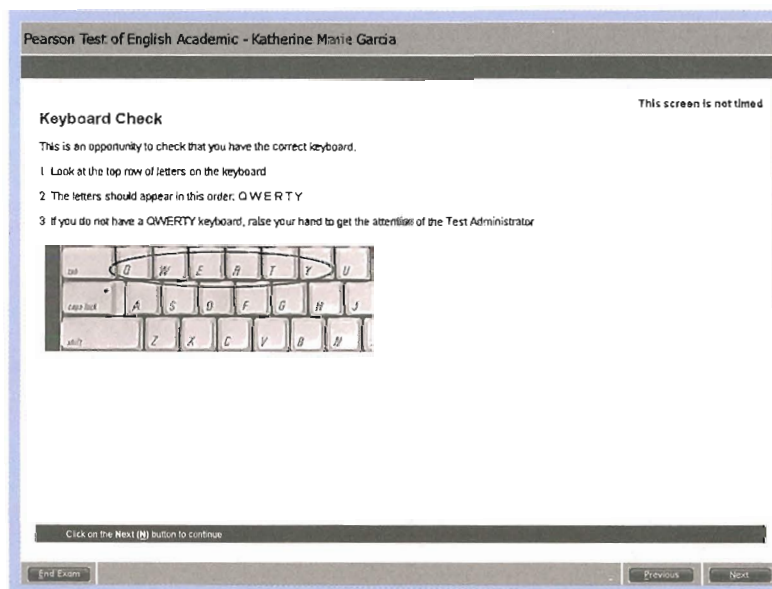
First, you will check your headset.



Then you will check your microphone.

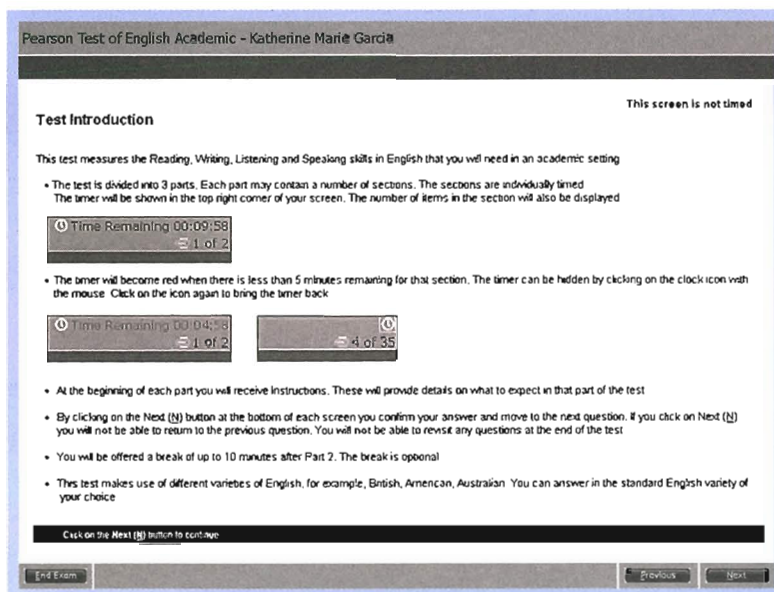


Finally, you should check that you have the correct keyboard for the test. PTE Academic tests should be taken on a QWERTY keyboard. You will check the top row of letters on the keyboard. It is recommended that you practice using a QWERTY keyboard before you take the test.

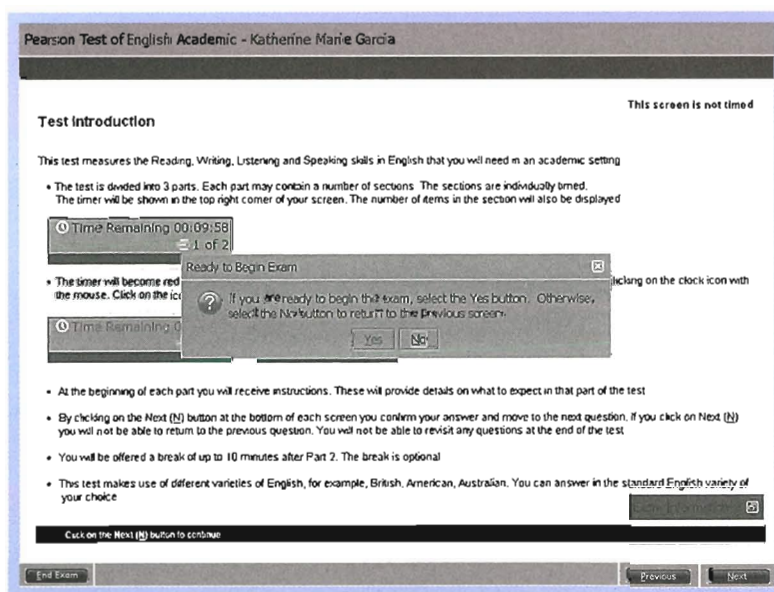


Starting the test

You will see an introduction to key information about PTE Academic. The introduction highlights the four key skills assessed and the three parts of the test. It also mentions the timing, the instructions for each part of the test and the optional break.



A final reminder warns that the test is about to begin.



During the test

If you click on the “Next” button without giving a response, a warning will appear. Click “No” to return and complete the item. Click “Yes” to skip the item and move to the next screen. You will not be able to return to it later and you will receive zero points for the item.

Items with an audio or video prompt require you to listen to the whole recording. If you click “Next” while the audio or video is playing, you will see a warning message. Click “OK” to return to the item. The audio will continue to play while the message/warning is displayed.

Some very important things to remember whilst doing the test are:

- Use correct punctuation for writing tasks: full stops, capital letters, commas, etc.
- Answer the question. If the question asks you to write or speak about sport, write or speak about sport NOT science.
- Keep strictly within the word limit given for writing tasks.
- Respond quickly and keep speaking during speaking tasks. The microphone will close after three seconds of silence and stop recording.

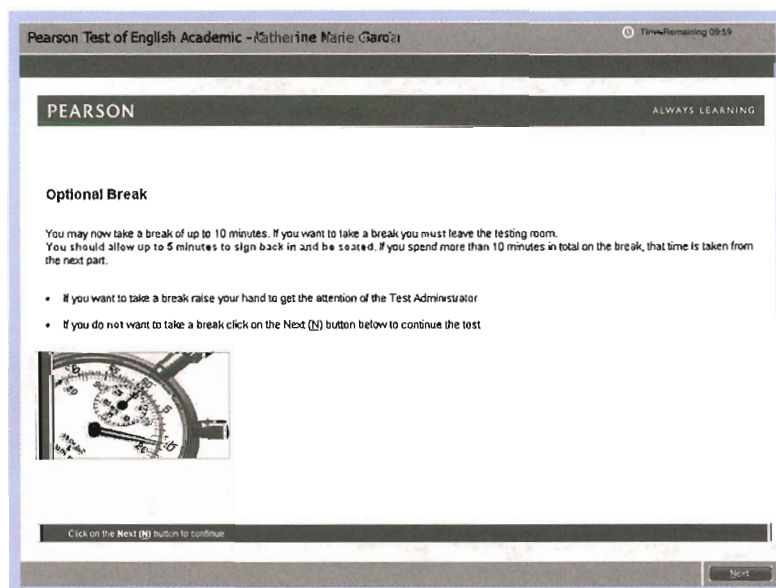
However, don't:

- write ENTIRELY in capital letters. Only use capitals when needed; at the beginning of sentences, names, etc.
- click "Next" before you have completed the task and are ready to move on.

Taking a break

During the test there is one optional break, which can be taken after you have completed Part 2 of the test. If you decide to take the break, you must leave the testing room for the duration of the break.

Allow yourself about five minutes to return and resume the test before the end of the 10-minute break. Any additional time taken will be deducted from the time provided for Part 3 of the test. You are not allowed to access study guides, make phone calls or speak to any other test takers while taking the break.

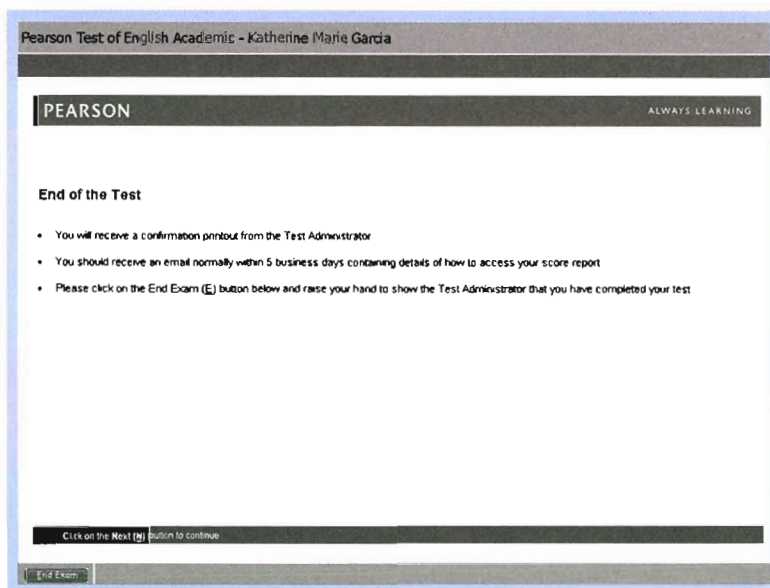


Problems during the test

If you experience any problems during the test, remain in your seat and raise your hand for assistance. The Test Administrator will come to you. The Test Administrator cannot answer any questions relating to the content of the test.

Finishing the test

At the end of the test you will be asked to click on the “End Exam” button on screen and raise your hand to inform the Test Administrator that you have completed the test.



Once you have completed the test, leave the testing room and return to the main reception desk. The Test Administrator will provide you with an End of Test Confirmation printout. This is not a score report or certificate, but a confirmation that you have completed PTE Academic with information on how and when you will receive your score report.

Before leaving the test center, make sure that you have your End of Test Confirmation printout and have collected all your personal belongings from the storage facilities.