BRITISH COUNCIL

Aptis

Forward thinking
English testing

Aptis Candidate Guide

September 2019

Introducing the Aptis test

Aptis is an innovative global English assessment tool from the British Council. It is an English test for adults and young adults, which can be used to assess English language ability in all four skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.

Aptis doesn't test at a single level. Instead, it includes a range of questions, which are designed to allow you to show your best ability. The test results are reported either on a numerical scale (0–50) or as a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level.

There are two tests to choose from. Aptis tests from A1-C on the CEFR and is suitable for most test-takers. There is also an Aptis Advanced test which assesses English language ability from B1-C2 and is for higher level test-takers. If you are taking the Aptis Advanced test, you will find further details on page 38 and onwards.

It's usually taken on a computer or a tablet, but the core test, the reading test and the writing test can be taken using pen and paper. In some countries, it is possible to take the speaking and listening tests over the phone.

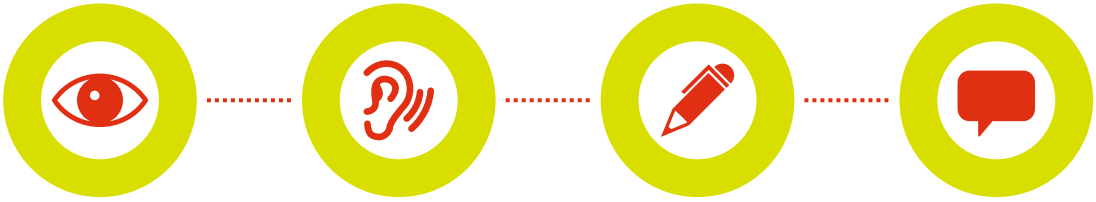
The purpose of this guide is to help you prepare for these tests. There is an overview of the tests and each component is described. There is also advice on how to prepare for the test and information on how the test is marked.

Contents

Test structure....3
Aptis core test (grammar and vocabulary)....5
Aptis reading test....9
Aptis listening test....15
Aptis writing test....17
Aptis speaking test....27
Aptis Advanced test....38
How to take the online test....45
Aptis for All....47
Final checklist....48

Test structure

Aptis consists of five components: core (grammar and vocabulary), reading, listening, writing and speaking. Clients decide which components are needed for their situation. You, the test-taker, will prepare for the core test (everyone takes the core test) and the skill components the client has chosen. You may be taking one skill component (for example, listening) or all four skill components (reading, listening, writing and speaking).



It is a good idea to take a practice test so that you fully understand what you need to do.

Here is the structure of the Aptis test:

Test	Test design		Activity	Format
Core 25 minutes	Part 1	Grammar	Sentence completion.	3-option multiple choice.
	Part 2	Vocabulary	Word matching (similar meaning). Match words to definitions. Sentence completion. Word pairs or word combinations (words commonly used together).	Sets of 5 target words with 10 options.
Reading 30 minutes	Part 1	Sentence comprehension	Choose words to complete sentences.	3-option multiple choice.
	Part 2	Text cohesion	Put sentences into the correct order to make a story.	7 sentences jumbled up.
	Part 3	Short text comprehension	Choose the best word from a list to make a sentence.	10 options and 7 empty spaces.
	Part 4	Long text comprehension	Match headings to paragraphs.	7 paragraphs and 8 headings.
Listening approximately 55 minutes	Part 1	Word and number recognition	Listen to a phone message to identify specific information.	4-option multiple choice.
	Part 2	Identifying specific information	Listen to monologues or conversation and identify specific information.	
	Part 3	Inference	Listen to monologues and conversations and identify the attitude, opinion or intention.	
Writing 50 minutes	Part 1	Word-level writing	Respond to messages using individual words.	1-5 words for each question.
	Part 2	Short text writing	Write personal information.	20-30 words.
	Part 3	Three written responses to questions	Respond to written questions on a social network-type website.	30-40 words for each question.
	Part 4	Formal and informal writing	Write an informal email to a friend and a formal email to an unknown person.	40-50 words for the informal email. 120-150 words for the formal email.
Speaking 12 minutes	Part 1	Personal information	Respond to three personal information questions.	30 seconds for each response.
	Part 2	Describe, express opinion and provide reasons and explanations	Describe a picture and answer two additional questions of increasing difficulty.	45 seconds for each response.
	Part 3	Describe, compare and provide reasons and explanations	Describe two contrasting pictures and answer two additional questions of increasing difficulty.	45 seconds for each response.
	Part 4	Discuss personal experience and opinion on an abstract topic	Answer three questions on an abstract topic.	1-minute preparation time. 2-minutes response time.

Aptis Advanced test structure

The Aptis Advanced test includes the Aptis core test, the more difficult reading, listening, writing and speaking tasks from the Aptis test described above and additional tasks which are more demanding. More information about the Aptis Advanced test can be found towards the end of this guide.

Aptis core test (grammar and vocabulary)

The core test is the same for Aptis and Aptis Advanced. It consists of two parts. The first part assesses your knowledge of English grammar. The second part assesses your knowledge of English vocabulary.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Grammar	In this part of the test, you will answer 25 questions. Most of the questions test formal written English. A small number of questions test spoken English such as knowing the appropriate grammar to use in a particular situation (formal or informal situations, for example). All 25 questions are in the format of a 3-option multiple choice. Complete a sentence by choosing the correct word.	To know which parts of grammar are tested, see the British Council / EAQUALS core inventory. This is free and available online at: http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/books-british-council-eaquals-core-inventory.pdf One great way to prepare for the grammar test is to use the British Council's LearnEnglish Grammar App: http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-and-vocabulary
Part 2 Vocabulary	In this part of the test, you have 25 questions. These are presented in sets of five words (the words we are testing) with ten options from which to choose. There are a number of question types: **Word matching:** find a word with a meaning similar to the target word. **Word definition:** match a definition to the correct word. **Word usage:** complete a sentence by choosing the correct word. **Word pairs or word combinations:** these are usually the most difficult questions, as you need to know what word (from a list) is most commonly found with the target word (e.g. birthday card is common but blue card is not).	To help you prepare for this part of the test, the LearnEnglish website has games and activities to help you improve your vocabulary. http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/grammar-and-vocabulary There are also many useful websites, for example: www.englishclub.com Another useful tip is to take note of interesting words or word combinations when you read English texts.

Sample grammar questions

There are two question types. The first focuses on written English grammar and the second focuses on the use of English grammar when speaking.

Here are some examples:

1. Written grammar

He _____ me that the machine was broken.

- told
- spoke
- said

My boss says that I _____ to finish the report by Friday.

- must
- have
- should

My new computer works _____ faster than my old one.

- many
- more
- much

I have worked for this company _____ I left university.

- since
- after
- from

2. Spoken grammar

John: She's French, isn't she?
Ahmed: No, _____ she's from Belgium.

- exactly
- actually
- anyway

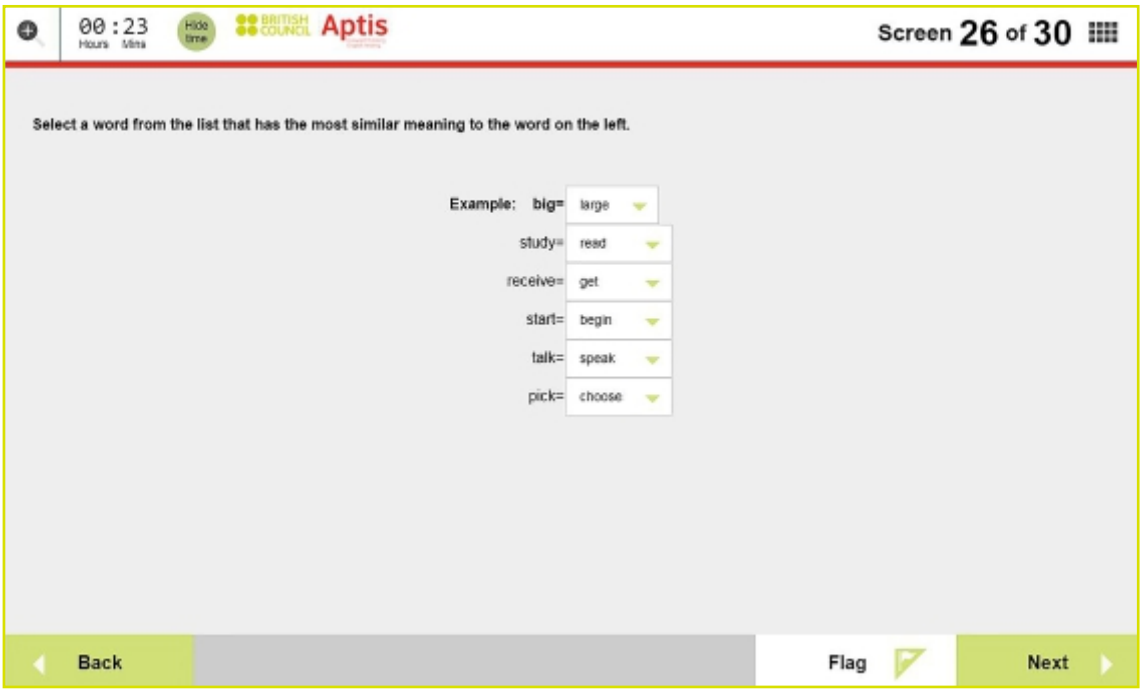
Zeynep: I really don't feel like going to see that movie tonight.
Peter: Ok. _____ we can go next week instead.

- Maybe
- However
- Nevertheless

Sample vocabulary questions

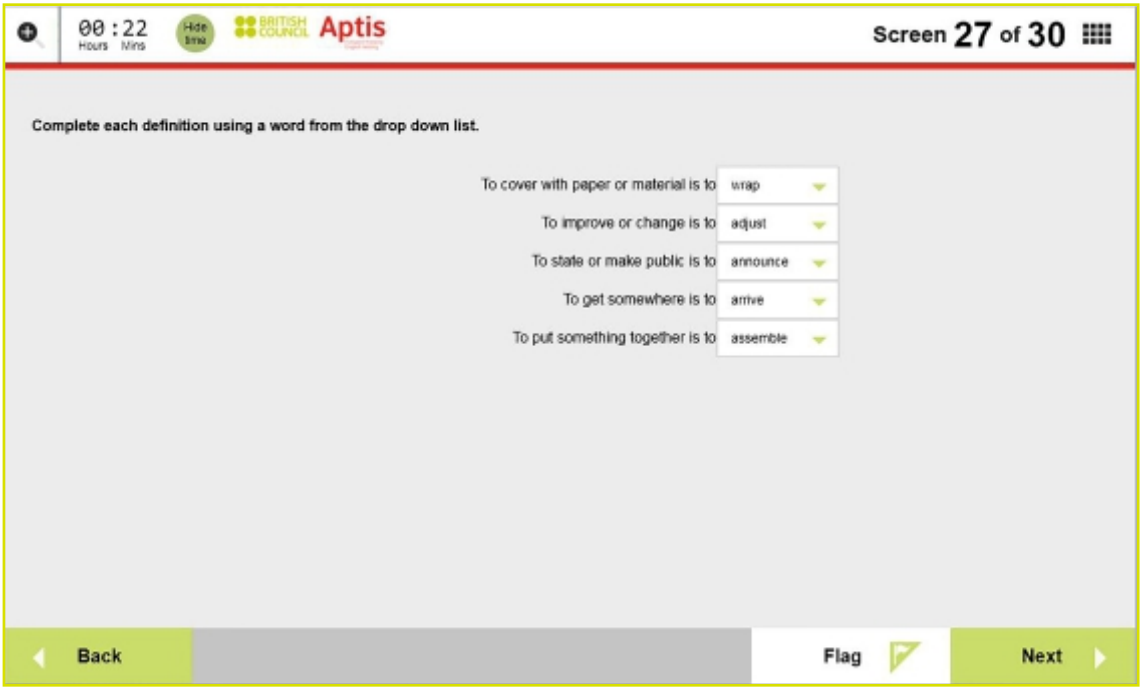
The first question type tests your ability to match words with similar meanings from a list of options. You need to click on the arrows and choose the similar word.

Here is an example:

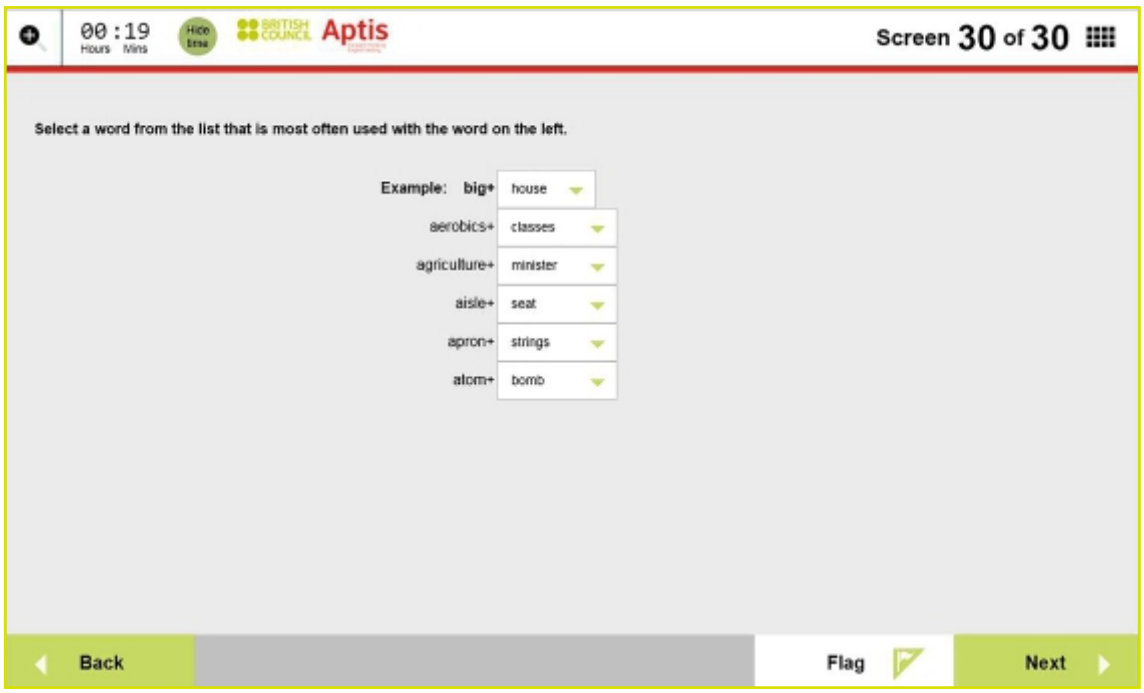


For the next question type you need to match a definition to a word. Click on the arrow and choose the word that matches the definition.

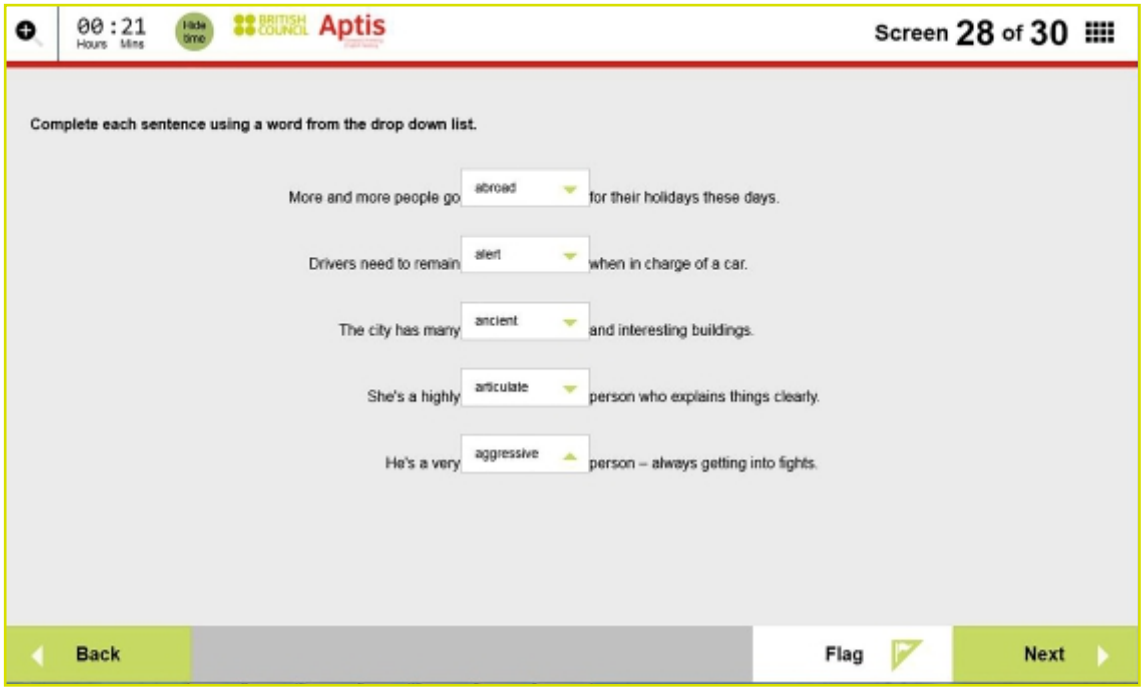
Here is an example:



The next question type asks you to identify a word from a list that is commonly used with the given word.



There is a final question type that asks you to complete a sentence using a word from a list.



Aptis reading test

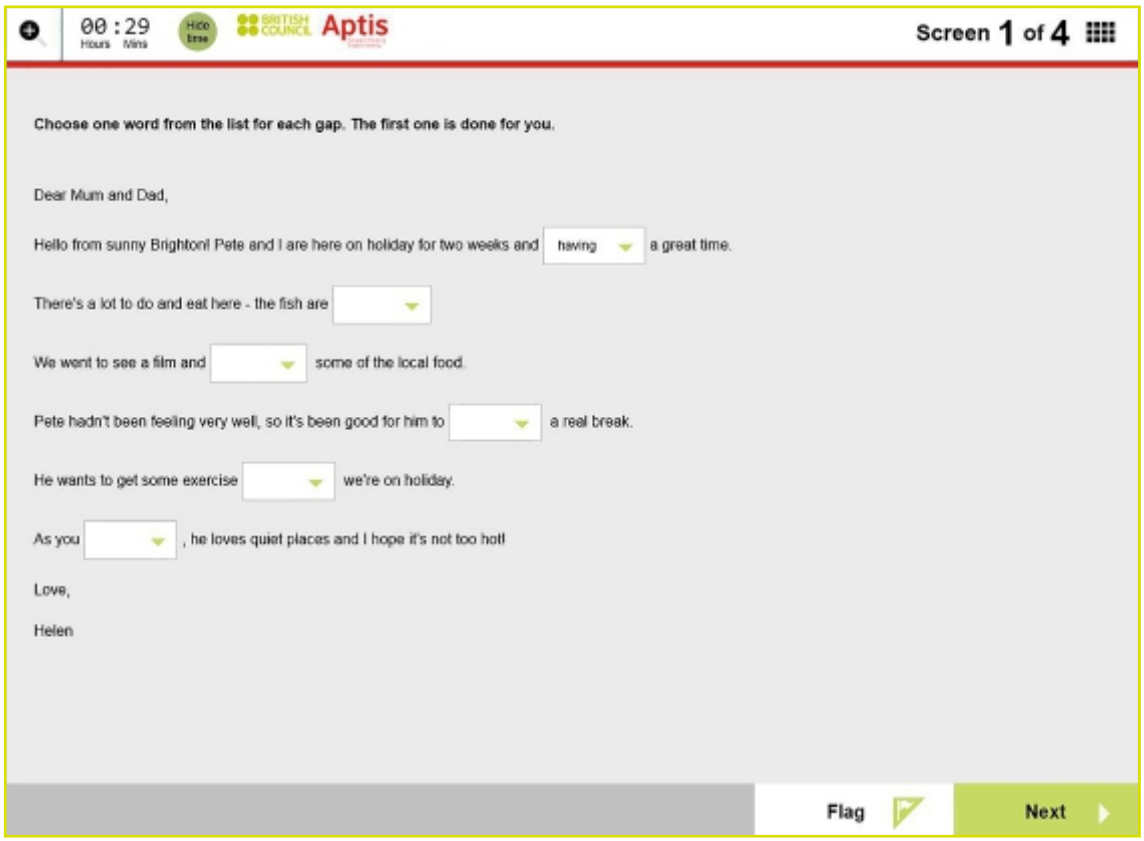
The test assesses your reading ability. The tasks become more difficult as the test progresses.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Sentence comprehension	In this part, you need to choose a word (choice of three) to complete the sentence. There are five sentences to complete. Each sentence in the text is free-standing which means that it is not necessary to understand all of the sentences to complete individual sentences. This part assesses your ability to read a sentence and to complete the sentence with an appropriate word.	Make sure you read each sentence fully and the options before trying to answer this question. The best way to become a better reader is to practise. A number of publishers produce graded readers that might be of use. For example, try: • Cambridge Bookworms Starter / Stage 1 • Cambridge Readers – Level 1 • Penguin Readers – Level 1 • Macmillan Readers – Starter / Beginner • Headway Skills series.
Part 2 Text cohesion	In this part you will see seven sentences. They belong to a single story that has been jumbled up. There is only one way that the sentences go together to form the story and your task is to click on the sentences and drag them to the correct position in the story. This part assesses your knowledge of the cohesion of a text. You are looking for clues in each sentence that show how it links to other sentences.	Read all of the sentences carefully first. Then, decide on the order (the first sentence is identified for you). Appropriate readers for this level are: • Cambridge Bookworms Stage 1 and 2 • Cambridge Readers – Level 2 • Penguin Readers – Level 3 • Macmillan Readers – Elementary.
Part 3 Short text comprehension	In this part you will need to read a text (about 150 words). The task is to complete the text by selecting the appropriate words (from a list) to fill in the gaps. To complete all of the text you need to understand more than just a sentence. This part tests your ability to read and understand short texts.	Read over the whole text before attempting the questions. Appropriate readers for this level are: • Cambridge Bookworms Stage 2 and 3 • Cambridge Readers – Level 3, 4 and 5 • Penguin Readers – Level 4 • Macmillan Readers – Pre Intermediate.
Part 4 Long text comprehension	This part consists of a long text (about 750 words) with a series of headings. The task is to match the headings to paragraphs in the text (there are seven to be done). There is always an extra heading that does not fit with any paragraph. This part is designed to test your ability to read and understand a long text. In addition, you need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of how the headings reflect the paragraphs in different ways (sometimes using similar words, sometimes similar ideas, or by sharing a topic).	Read the main text carefully but as quickly as you can. Then carefully read the headings. Do all this before starting the task. Look for clues to connect the headings to the paragraphs; these might be similar words, ideas or topics. Appropriate readers for this level are: • Cambridge Bookworms Stage 4, 5 and 6 • Cambridge Readers – Level 4, 5 and 6 • Penguin Readers – Level 5 and 6 • Macmillan Readers – Intermediate and Upper Intermediate.

Sample reading questions

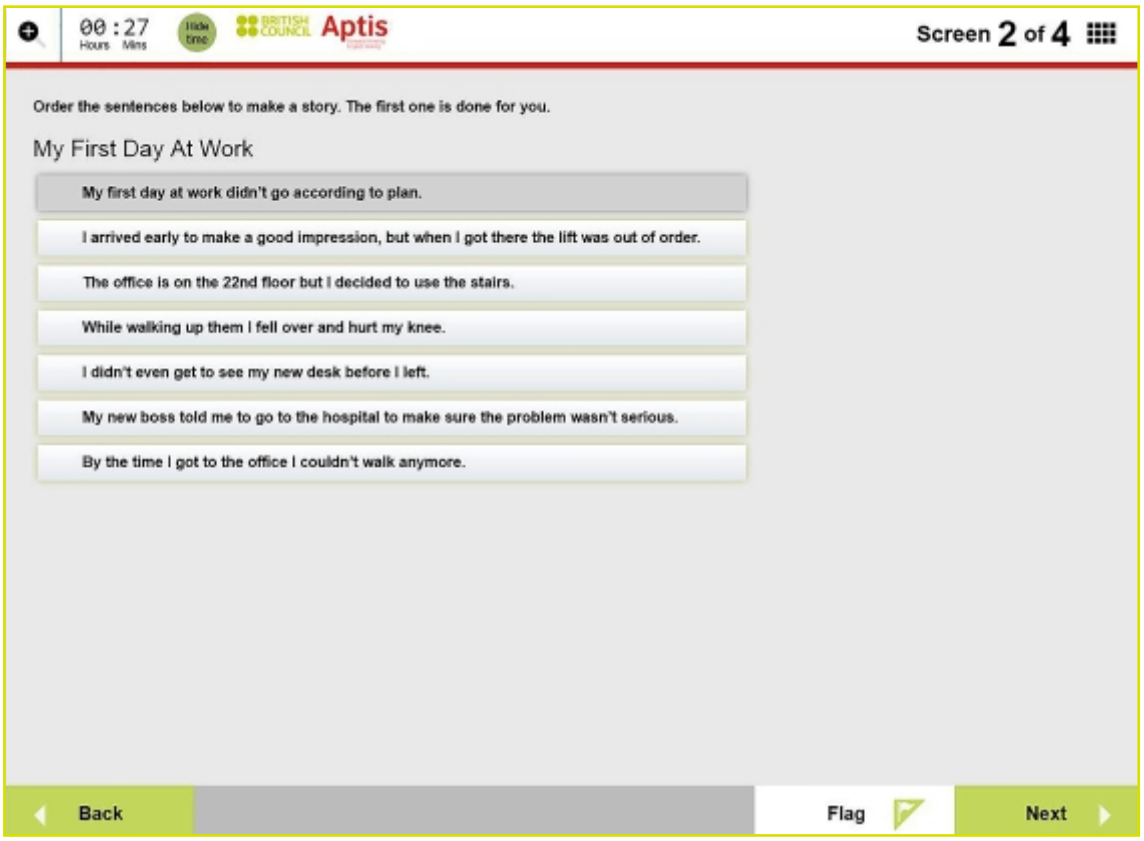
Reading part 1

In this part, you must select the appropriate word from a drop-down list. You should complete this part in about three minutes.



Reading part 2

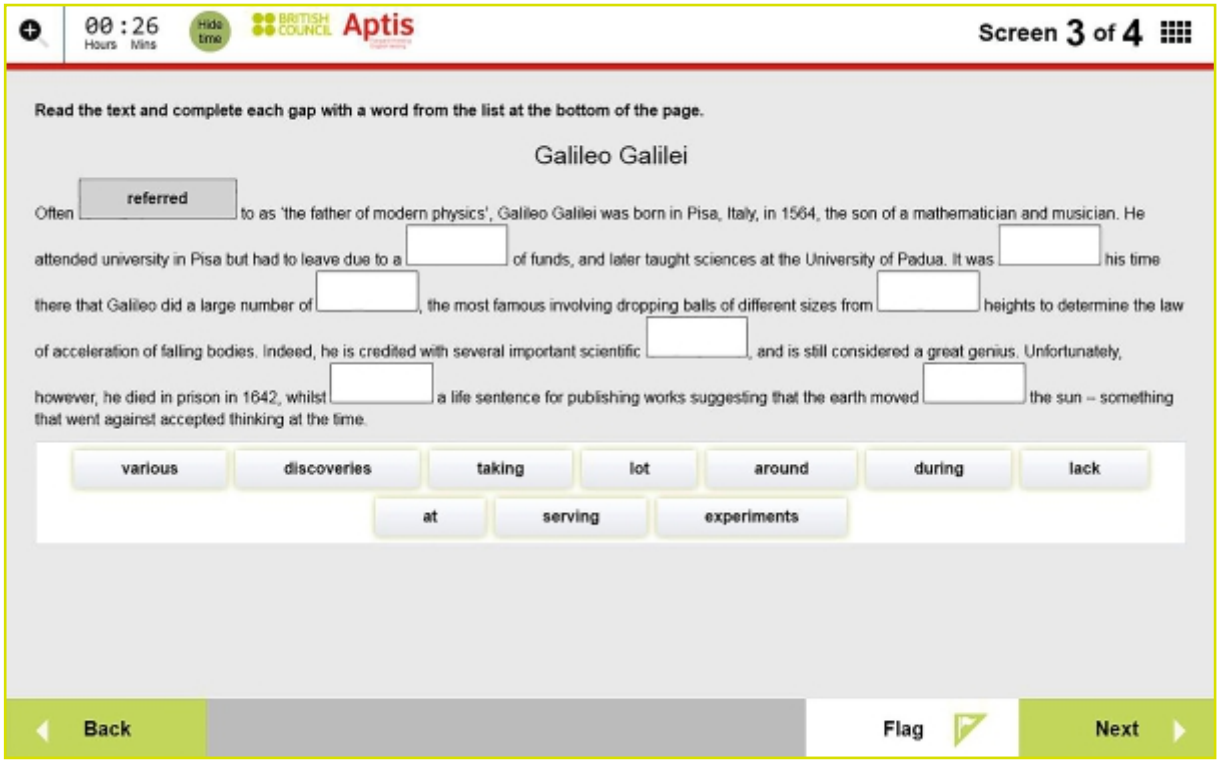
In the second part, you must sort the sentences into the correct order to make a story. Do this by clicking on a sentence and dragging it to its correct position.



Reading part 3

In the third part, you must select the word from the group at the bottom of the screen and drag a word into each of the seven empty boxes. There are ten word options and only seven spaces.

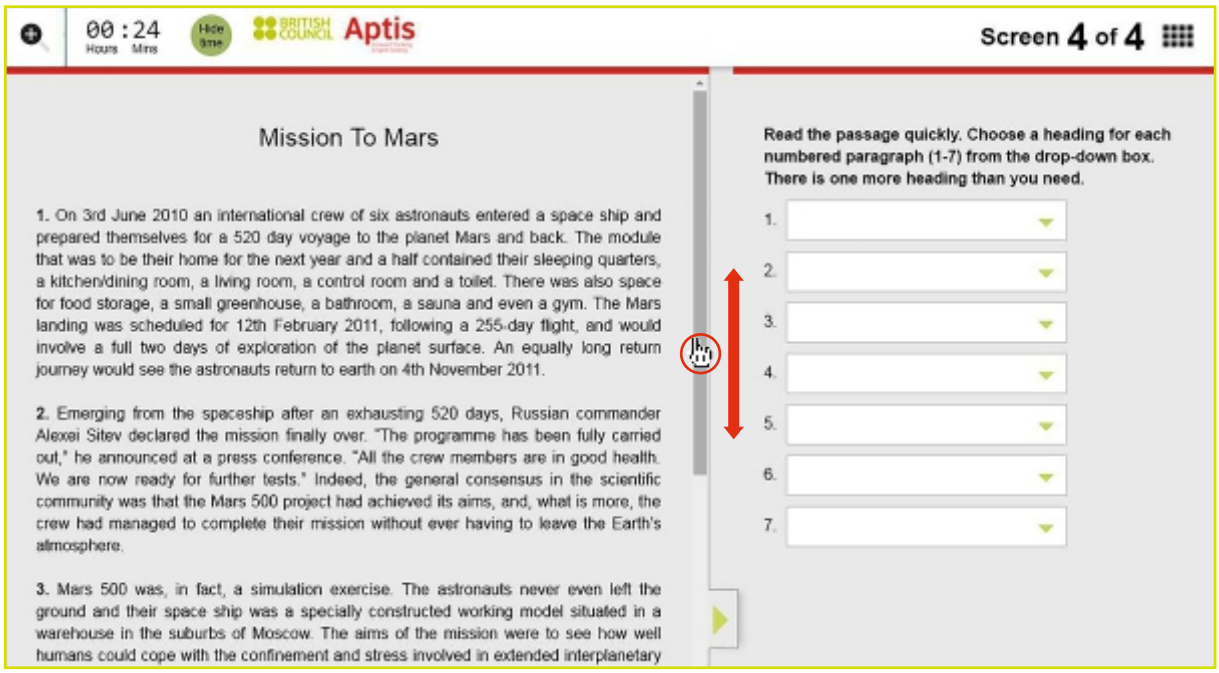
If you change your mind, that's not a problem as you can move the words around until you make you final decision.



Reading part 4

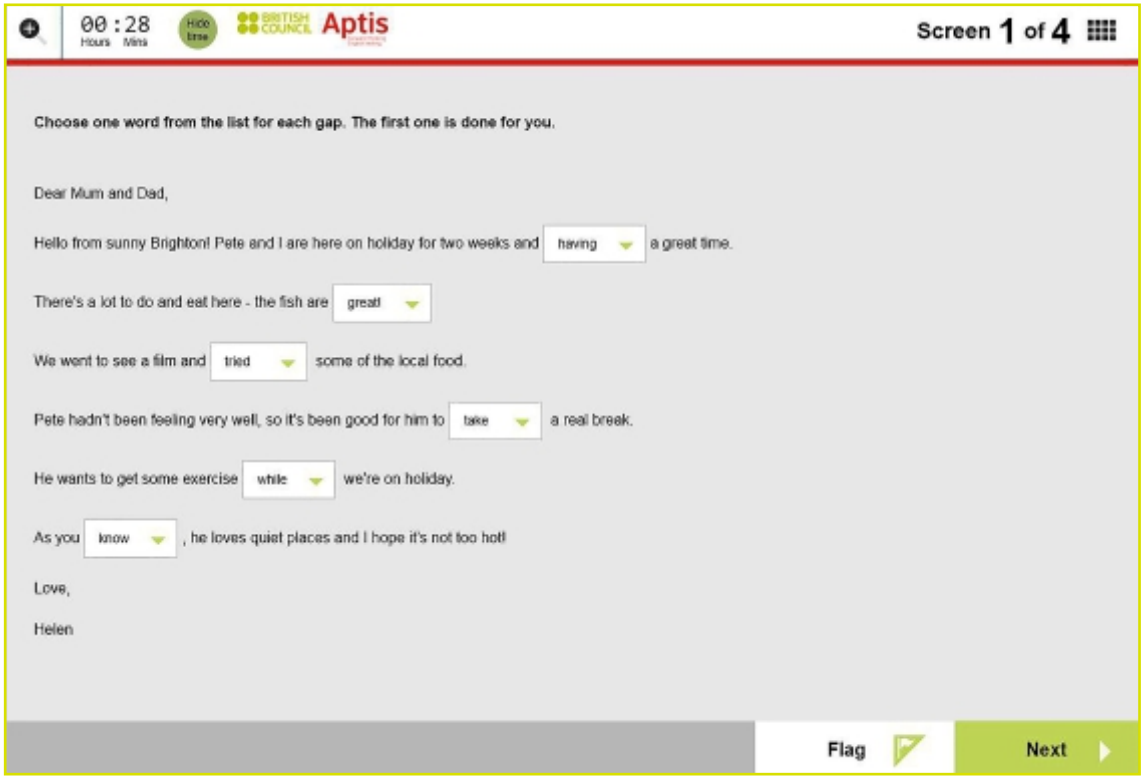
For the final part, it is necessary to scroll the reading text to see all of it. Do this by clicking on the side bar (as shown) and move the bar up and down.

Select the appropriate heading from the drop-down list on the right-hand side.

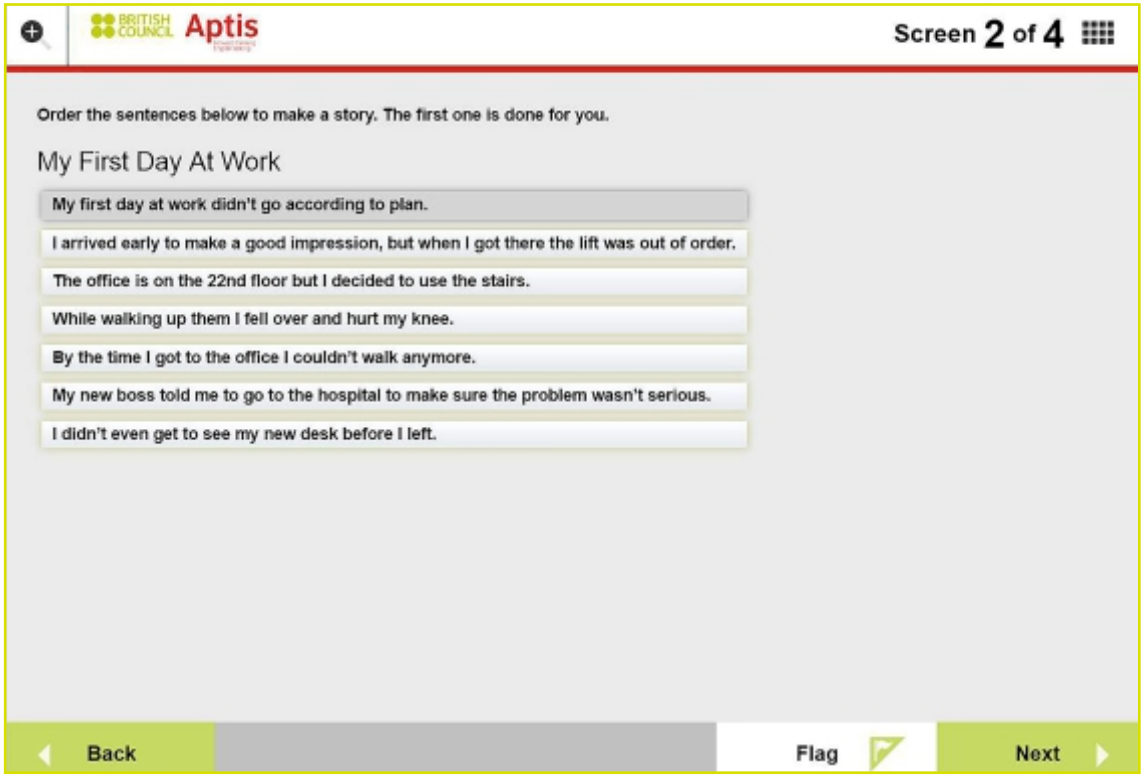


Reading answer key

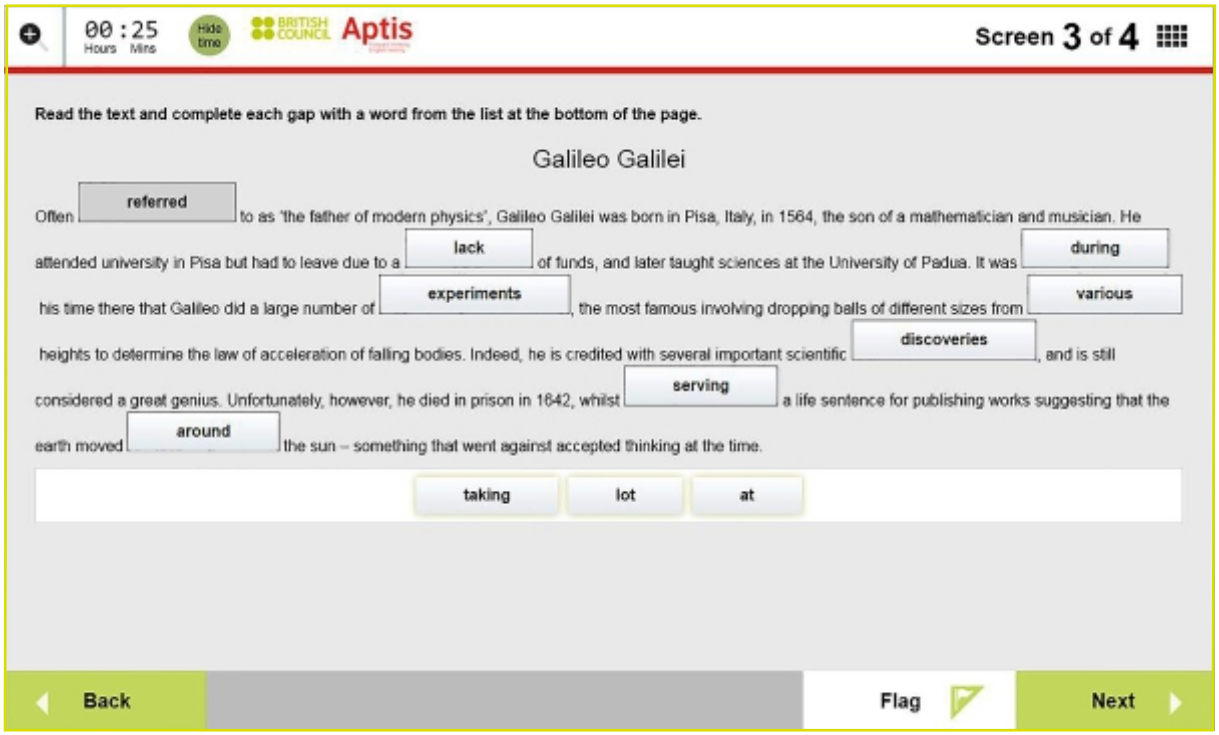
Reading part 1



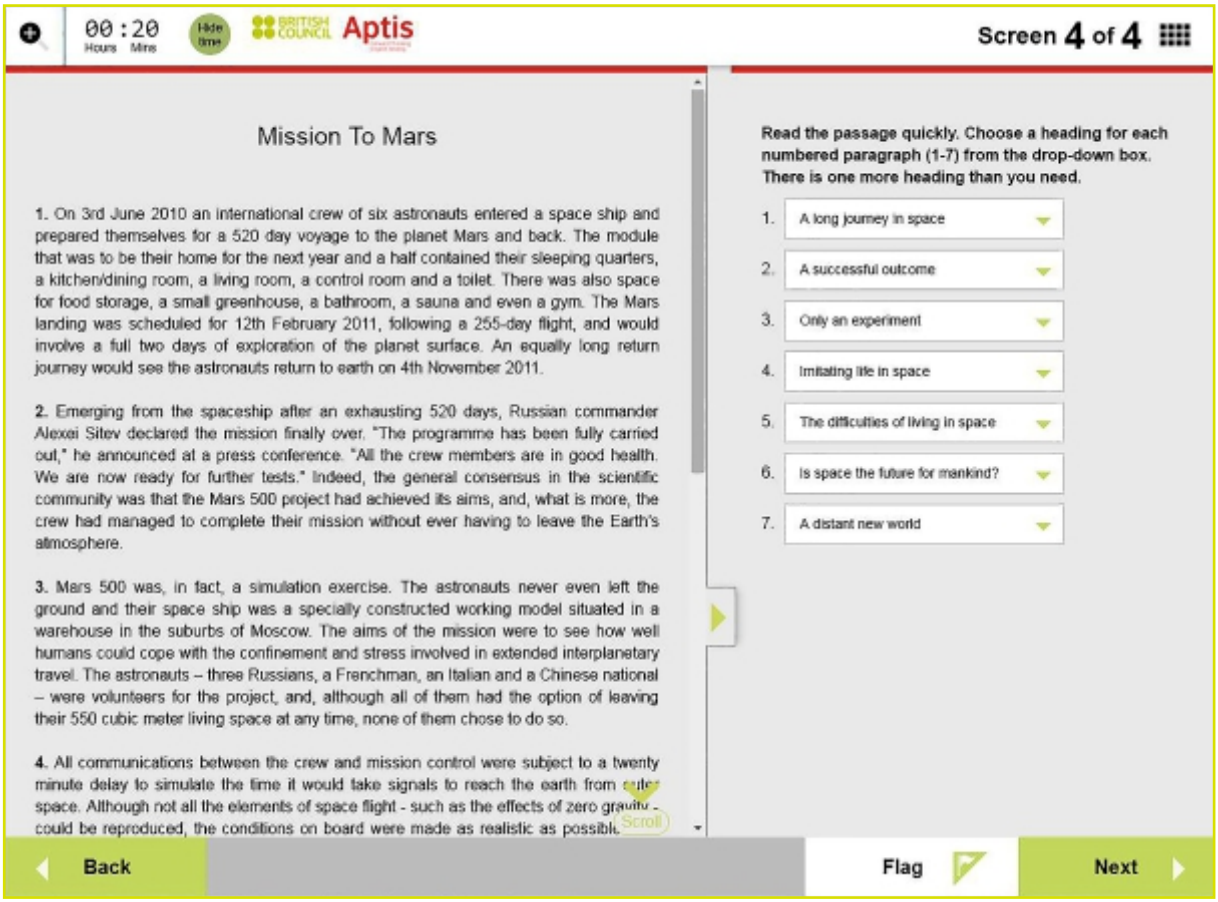
Reading part 2



Reading part 3



Reading part 4



Aptis listening test

The listening test has 25 questions. There are a number of things to remember about the listening test:

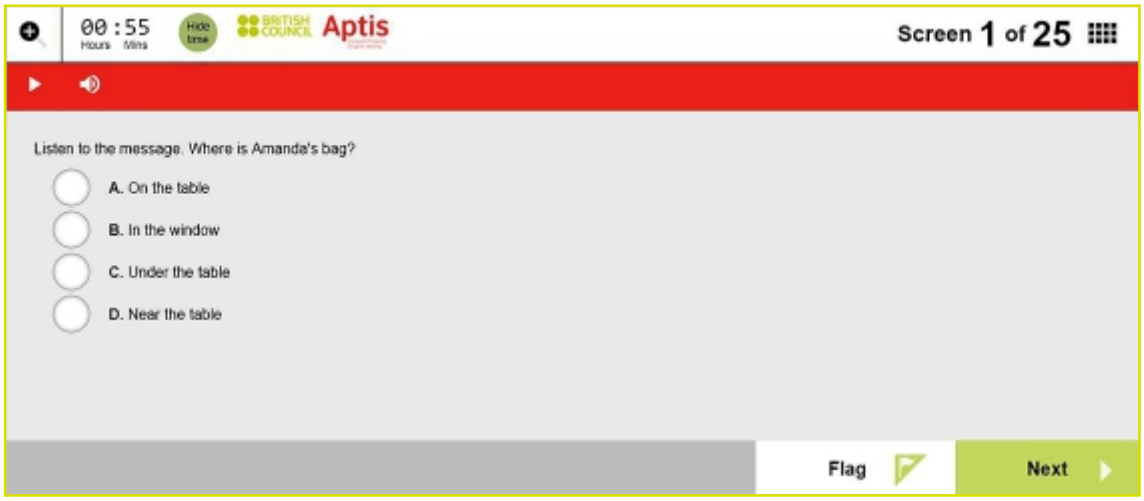
1. All 25 questions use the 4-option multiple choice format.
2. Each listening input has a single question.
3. You may listen to the question a second time if you want, but you don't have to.
4. The three types of questions are described below. In the test, these types of questions may not appear in this sequence.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Word and number recognition	In these questions you listen to a short phone message and you need to identify specific information such as a number (e.g. phone number, time) or a word.	Visit the British Council's LearnEnglish website for lots of very useful activities, tips, Apps and podcasts: http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en The elementary podcasts are useful preparation for these questions.
Part 2 Identifying specific, factual information	In these questions you listen to short conversations with two speakers or to a monologue and you need to identify specific information. For example, where do they want to go? What do they want to buy?	There are quite a few useful practice videos and podcasts on the LearnEnglish website, so that's a very good starting point. In addition, it may be useful to try to listen to as much English as possible (e.g. films, television or radio). If you have access to the internet, you can easily find materials, for example the BBC World Service radio (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldserviceradio).
Part 3 Inference	In these questions you again listen to short conversations with two speakers or to a monologue. The focus here is not on understanding the meaning of what the speakers are saying, but on identifying clues in their language or tone to help identify the attitude of the speaker, their intention or opinion.	There are a number of higher-level podcasts on the LearnEnglish website. Also try the BBC World Service radio station. The strategies you need include paying specific attention to intonation and stress when somebody is speaking. Listening to authentic speech such as television soap operas or films is a good way to practise.

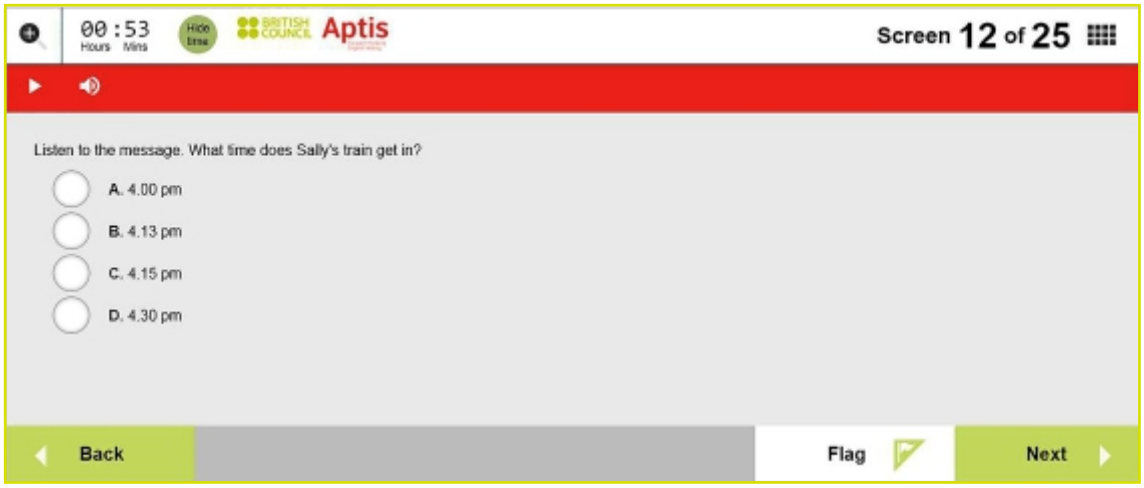
Sample listening questions

Remember that if you'd like to hear a question for a second time just click on the Play button. The system will not allow you to listen more than twice.

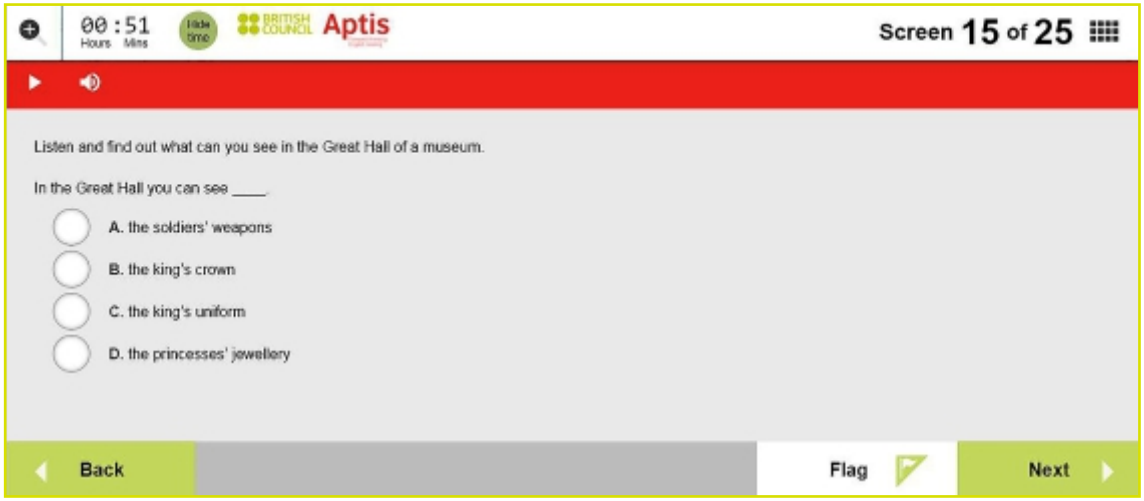
Listening part 1



Listening part 2



Listening part 3



Aptis writing test

There are four parts to the writing test. You will fill in forms, interact in a social media-type written conversation and write emails. All writing tasks are marked by an examiner.

Make sure you fully understand the questions. Plan what you are going to write and then edit your writing before clicking to the next question. The most common mistakes are the following:

- Not answering the questions (going off-topic). Read the question and understand what you need to do.
- Writing too much but with poor grammar, spelling and punctuation. Keep to the word count and focus on accuracy.
- Not using a variety of sentence structures.
- Not writing in sentences or paragraphs.
- Using SMS spelling.

The total time allowed for the writing test is 50 minutes. The timings for each section below are recommendations only.

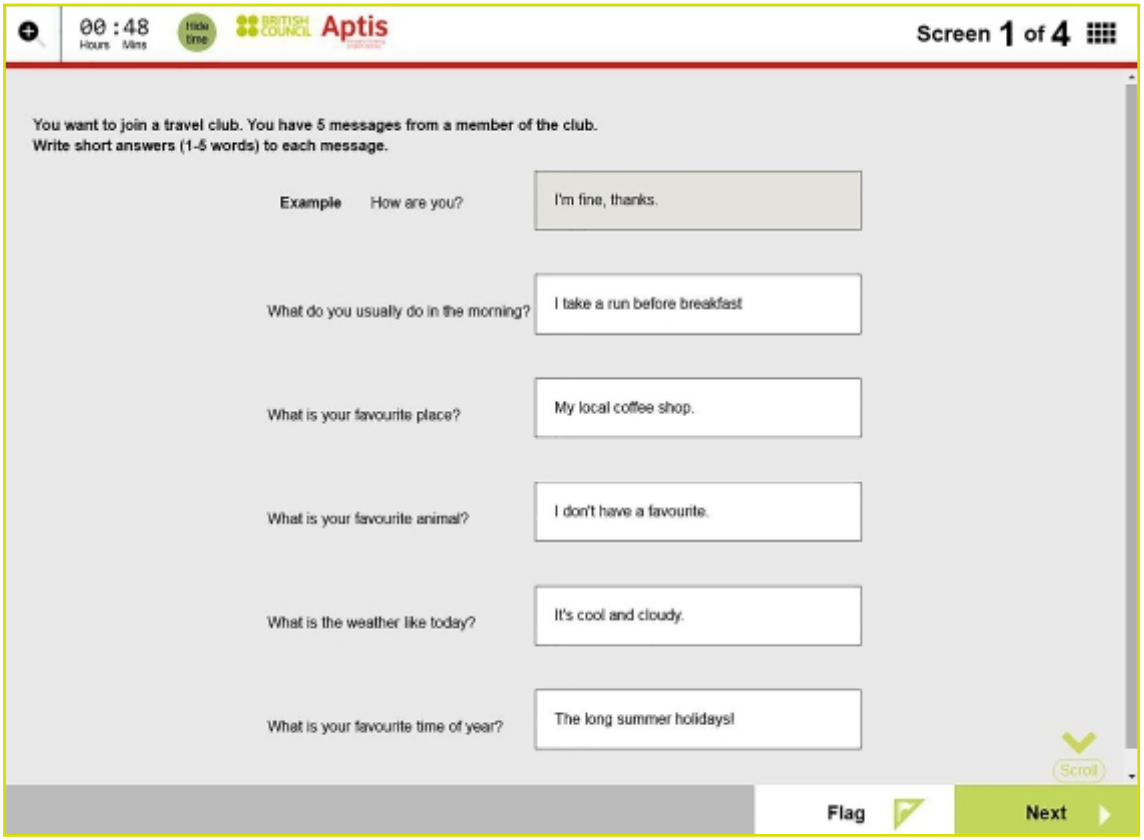
Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Word-level writing	In the first part you have joined a club, course or activity and must answer a series of five text messages from other members of the club, course or activity. There is no extended writing in this part (no sentence writing), just individual words. You should spend no more than three minutes on this part.	In this part, the focus is on communicative competence (i.e. spelling, capitalisation and grammar will not be considered).
Part 2 Short text writing	This part is about form filling – this time, you need to write in sentences. You should spend no more than seven minutes on this part.	You are asked to write 20-30 words. The focus is on writing sentences that are on-topic and have accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. A common error is to write more than 30 words and make too many mistakes. Keep to the word limit and focus on accuracy. Another common error is to write in all capital letters.
Part 3 Three written parts of text, all of which require responses	In this part you will have a social network-type interaction. You will receive three questions and need to respond. You should spend no more than ten minutes on this part.	Make sure you correctly answer all three questions and don't go off-topic. Focus on accurate spelling and punctuation and write text that is cohesive and coherent. Keep to the word count of 30-40 words per answer.
Part 4 Formal and informal writing	This part requires that you write an informal email to a friend and a more formal email to an unknown person. Both emails are in reaction to information about a change. You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this part.	For this part, make sure you keep to the word count of 40-50 words for the first email and 120-150 words for the second email. Make sure your answers are different. The first email should clearly be an informal email to a friend or close family member, while the second should clearly be a formal email to a company. You are also assessed on how broadly and accurately you can write so use a wide range of vocabulary, grammar and cohesive devices.

Sample writing questions

Writing part 1

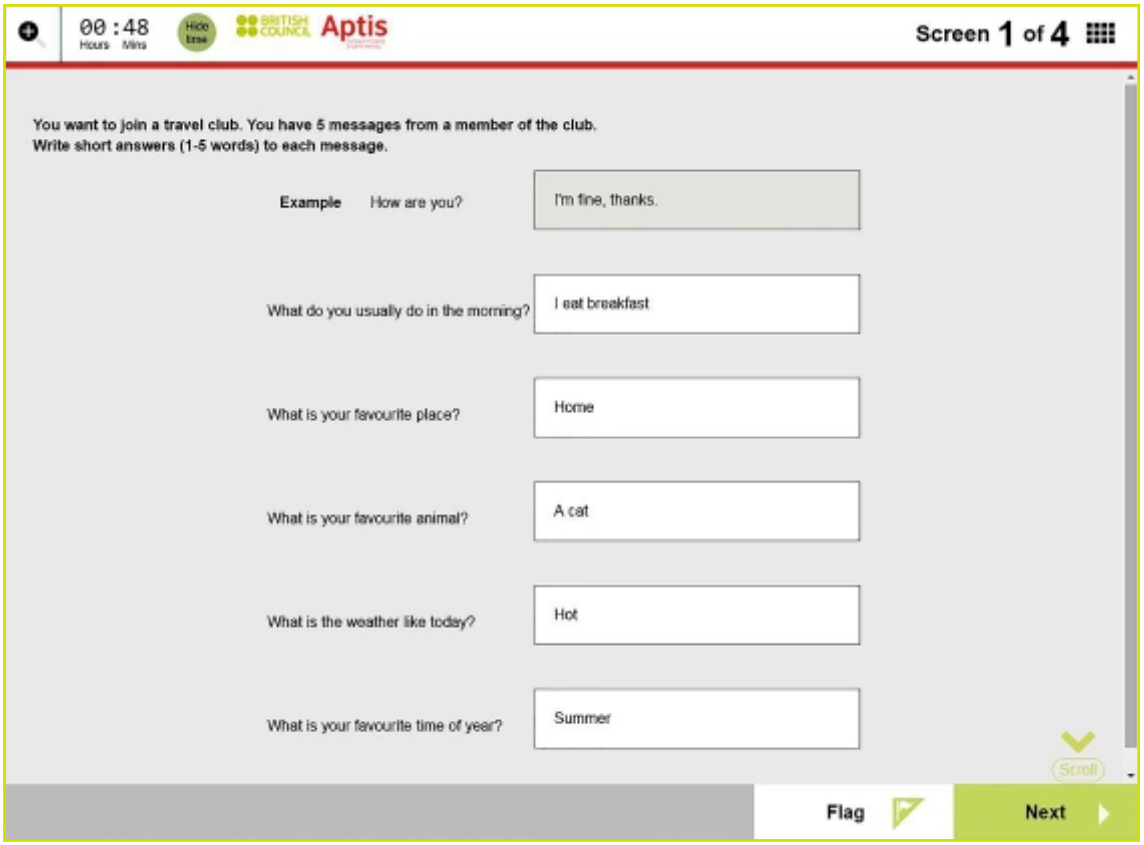
You need to write five pieces of information. This part is not worth many marks so don't spend too much time on it.

Example of a high-level answer (5/5) for Part 1:



You need to write five pieces of information. This part is not worth many marks so don't spend too much time on it.

Example of a low-level answer (1/5) for Part 1:

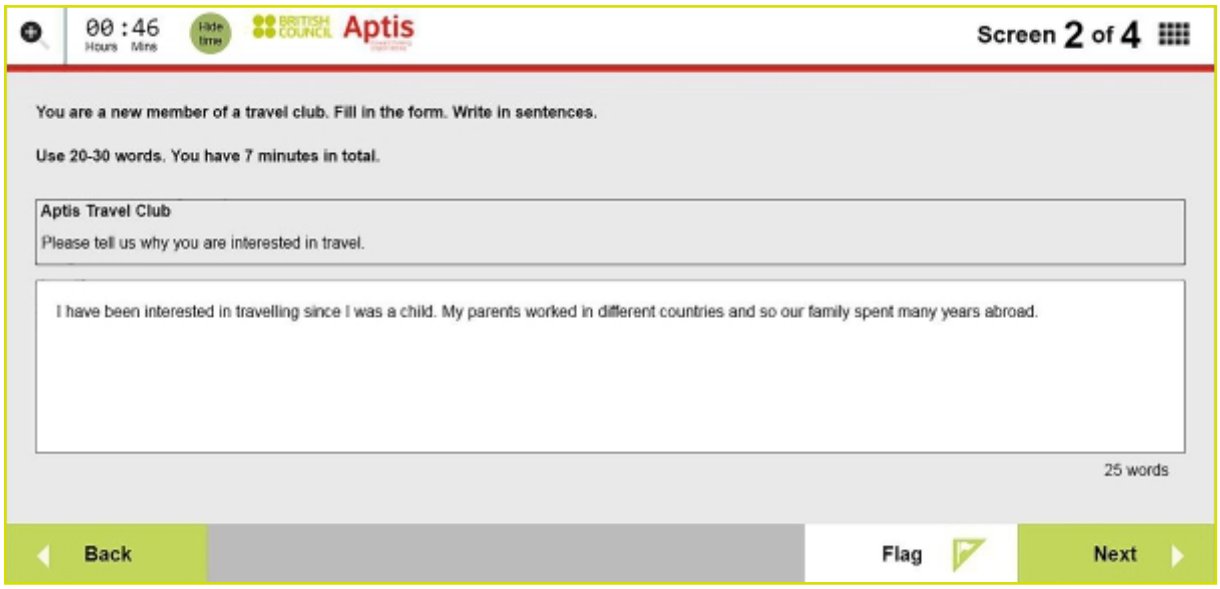


Writing part 2

There may be one or two questions. The areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, grammatical range and accuracy, punctuation, vocabulary range and accuracy, and cohesion. Here is the marking scale:

5 **B1 (or above)**	Likely to be above A2 level.
4 **A2.2**	• On-topic. • Uses simple grammatical structures to produce writing at the sentence level. Errors with basic structures common. Errors do not impede understanding of the response. • Mostly accurate punctuation and spelling. • Vocabulary is sufficient to respond to the question(s). • Some attempts at using simple connectors and cohesive devices to link sentences.
3 **A2.1**	• On-topic. • Uses simple grammatical structures to produce writing at the sentence level. Errors with basic structures common. Errors impede understanding in parts of the response. • Punctuation and spelling mistakes are noticeable. • Vocabulary is mostly sufficient to respond to the question(s) but inappropriate lexical choices are noticeable. • Response is a list of sentences with no use of connectors or cohesive devices to link sentences.
2 **A1.2**	• Not fully on-topic. • Grammatical structure is limited to words and phrases. Errors in basic patterns and simple grammar structures impede understanding. • Little or no use of accurate punctuation. Spelling mistakes common. • Vocabulary is limited to very basic words related to personal information and is not sufficient to respond to the question(s). • No use of cohesion.
1 **A1.1**	• Response limited to a few words or phrases. • Grammar and vocabulary errors so serious and frequent that meaning is unintelligible.
0 **A0**	No meaningful language or all responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

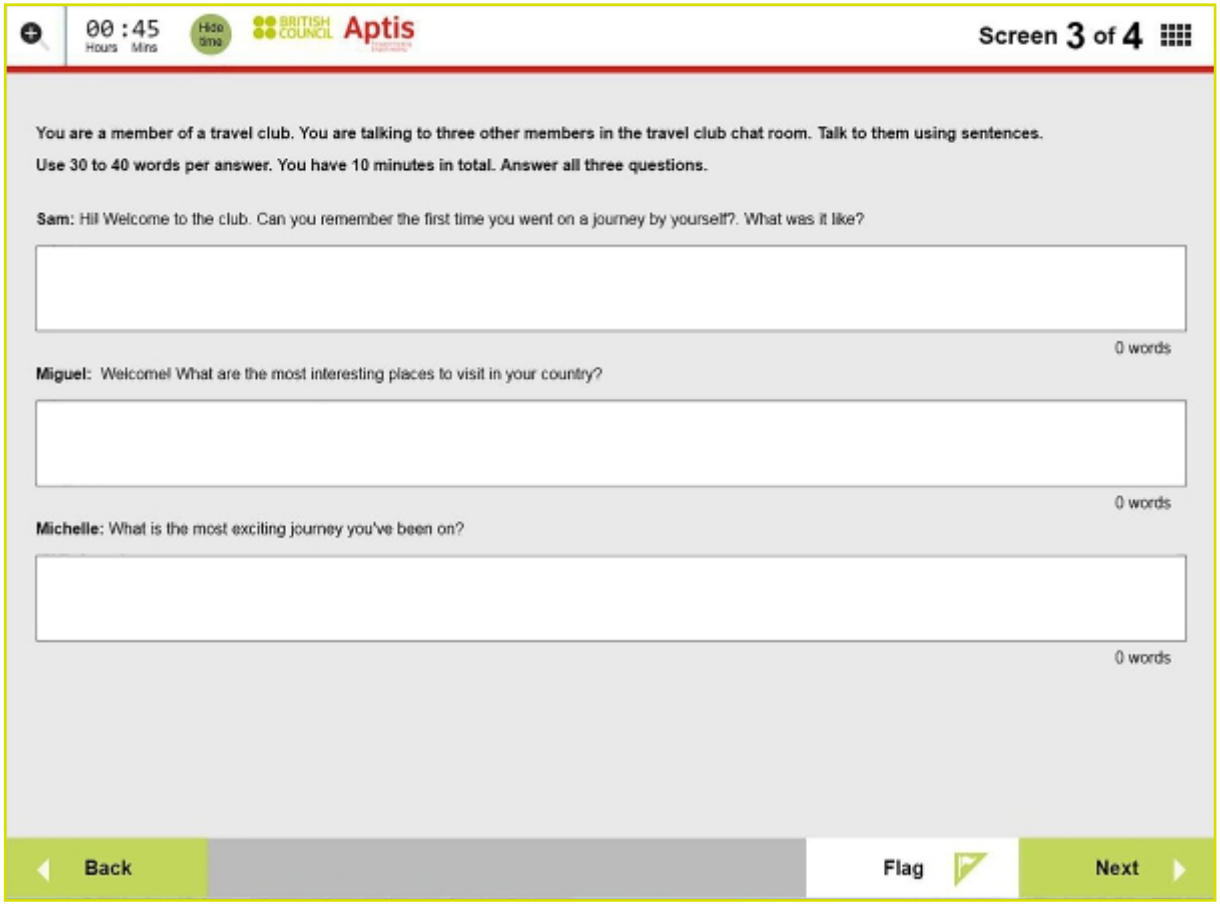
Example of a high-level (5/5) response for Part 2:



- Keeps to the word count (20-30 words).
- Clear sentences.
- Answers on-topic. Replies fully to the input.
- Accurate grammar, spelling and punctuation. It is acceptable to have grammar and spelling errors and still score 5/5 if the errors are not serious (i.e. the writing can be understood and the errors are not basic).

Writing part 3

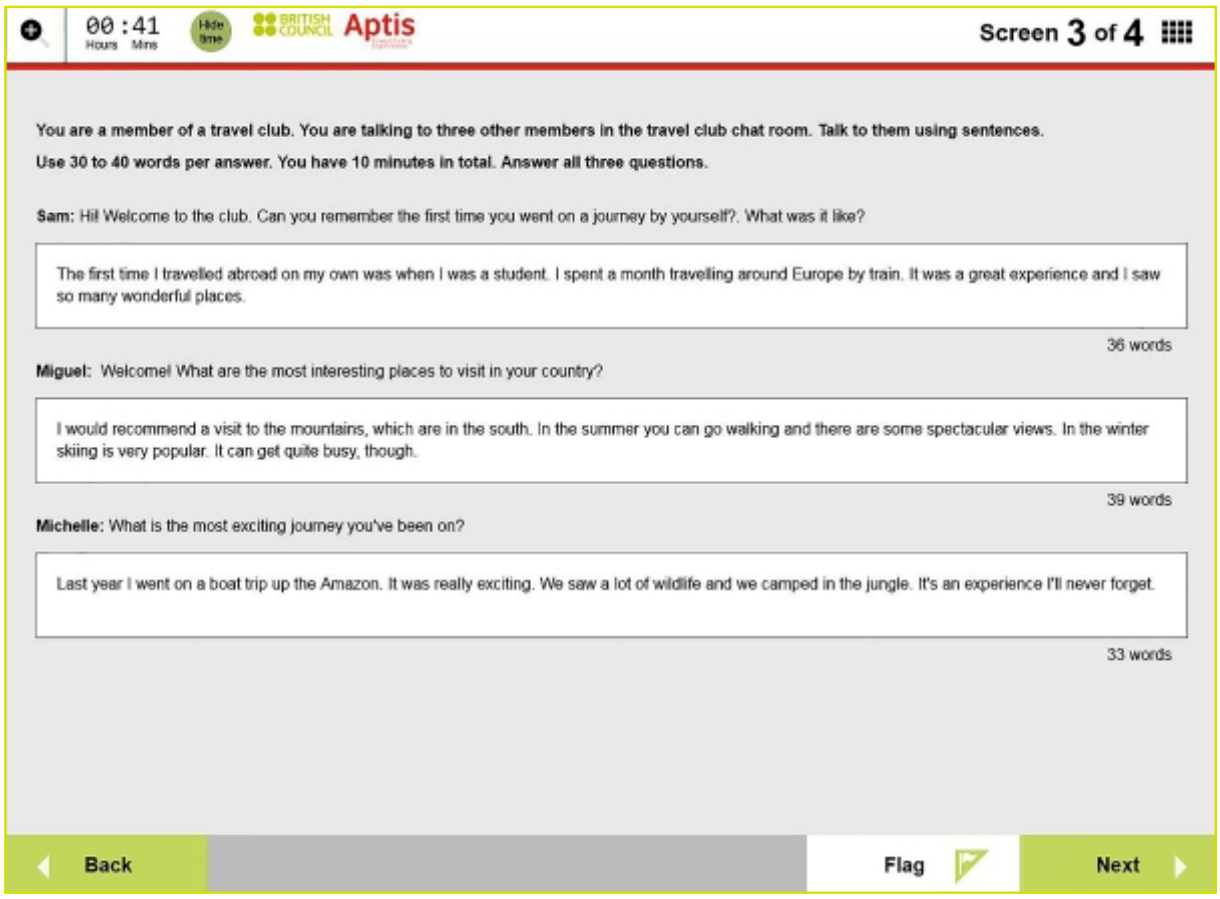
In part 3, you will answer social media-type questions which will look like the following:



The areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, punctuation, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy and cohesion. Here is the marking scale:

5 **B2 (or above)**	Likely to be above the B1 level.
4 **B1.2**	Responses to all three questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Punctuation and spelling mostly accurate. Errors do not impede understanding. • Vocabulary is sufficient to respond to the questions. • Uses simple cohesive devices to organise responses as a linear sequence of sentences.
3 **B1.1**	Responses to two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Punctuation and spelling mostly accurate. Errors do not impede understanding. • Vocabulary is sufficient to respond to the questions. • Uses simple cohesive devices to organise responses as a linear sequence of sentences.
2 **A2.2**	Responses to at least two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Uses simple grammatical structures to produce writing at the sentence level. Errors with simple structures common and sometimes impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling mistakes are noticeable. • Vocabulary is not sufficient to respond to the question(s). Inappropriate lexical choices are noticeable and sometimes impede understanding. • Responses are lists of sentences and not organised as cohesive texts.
1 **A2.1**	Response to one question is on-topic and shows the following features: • Uses simple grammatical structures to produce writing at the sentence level. Errors with simple structures common and sometimes impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling mistakes are noticeable. • Vocabulary is not sufficient to respond to the question(s). Inappropriate lexical choices are noticeable and sometimes impede understanding. • Responses are lists of sentences and not organised as cohesive texts.
0	Performance below A2, or no meaningful language or the responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

Example of a high-level (5/5) response for Part 3:



- Keeps to the word count (30-40 words for each answer).
- Replies fully to each piece of input.
- Sentences follow on from one another in a coherent manner.
- Uses a range of grammar and vocabulary.
- Accurate grammar, punctuation and spelling. It is ok to have errors but the writing must be understood.

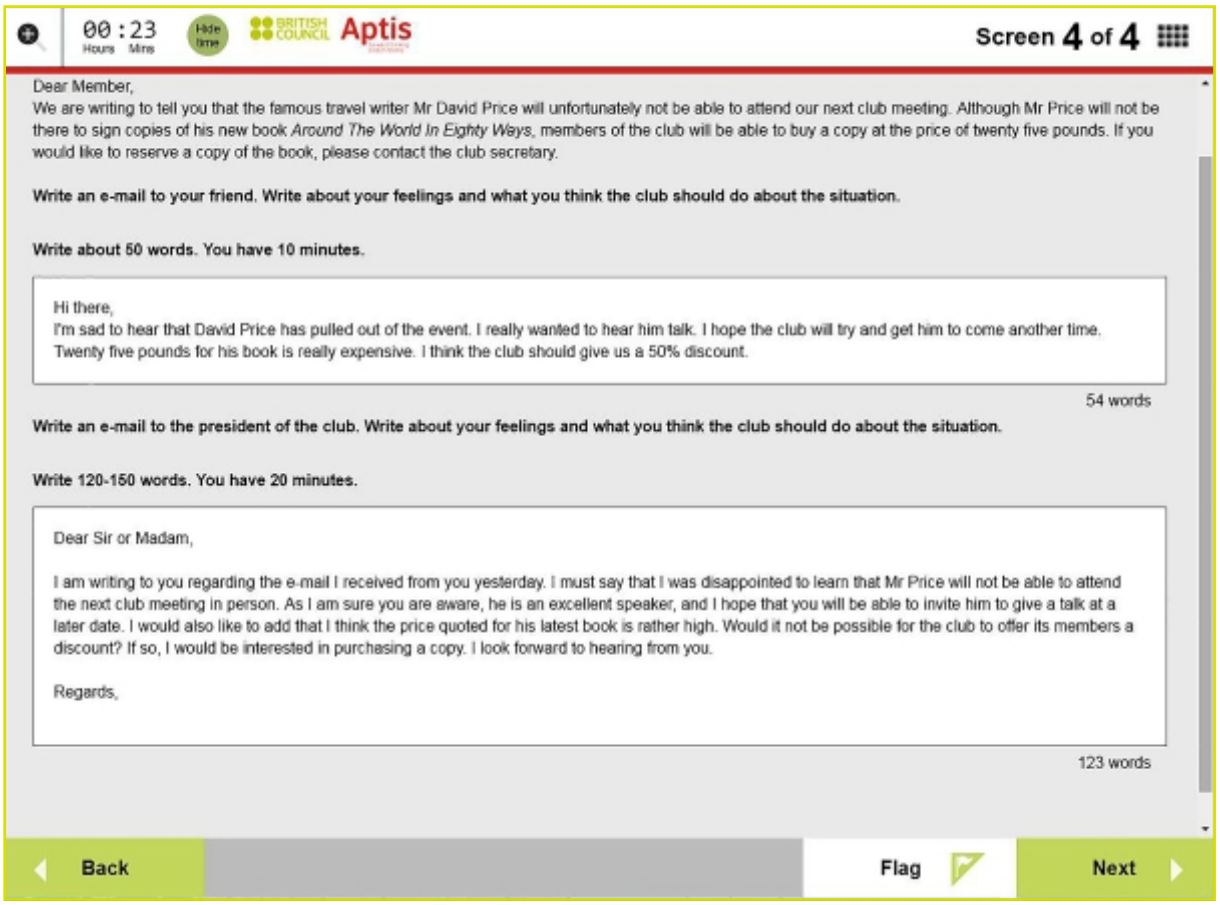
Writing part 4

The areas assessed are task fulfilment and register, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, cohesion.

6 **C2**	Likely to be above C1 level.
5 **C1**	Response shows the following features: • Response on-topic and task fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register. Two clearly different registers. • Range of complex grammar constructions used accurately. Some minor errors occur but do not impede understanding. • Range of vocabulary used to discuss the topics required by the task. Some awkward usage or slightly inappropriate lexical choices. • A range of cohesive devices is used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
4 **B2.2**	Response on-topic and task fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register: appropriate register used consistently in both responses. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not lead to misunderstanding. • Minor errors in punctuation and spelling occur but do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not lead to misunderstanding. • A limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
3 **B2.1**	Response partially on-topic and task partially fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register: appropriate register used consistently in one response. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not lead to misunderstanding. • Minor errors in punctuation and spelling occur but do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not lead to misunderstanding. • A limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
2 **B1.2**	Response partially on-topic and task not fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register: appropriate register not used consistently in either response. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Punctuation and spelling is mostly accurate. Errors do not impede understanding. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in parts of the text. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
1 **B1.1**	Response not on-topic and task not fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register. No evidence of awareness of register. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Punctuation and spelling is mostly accurate. Errors do not impede understanding. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in most of the text. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
0 **A1/A2**	Performance below B1, or no meaningful language or the responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

'Register' means adapting your language to different situations. For example, your language should be different when you are writing professionally and when you are writing to a friend. The first part is an intimate or casual register used among family members and close friends. The second part is a formal register used between strangers. You need to show that you understand the difference. In the second part you should write formally.

Example of a high-level (5/5) response for Part 4:



- Understands the difference in writing to a friend as opposed to writing to an authority. The first text is casual and the second text is formal.
- Answers the input in a coherent manner. The text makes sense.
- Writing is clear, assured and precise using a range of cohesive devices to make the writing flow.
- Grammar and vocabulary is broad and accurate.

Aptis speaking test

Each question has a maximum amount of time to speak but you can end the recording early by clicking on a stop button. If you finish early, you may not score at the highest levels.

The most common mistakes are the following:

- Not doing a proper sound check.
- Not speaking clearly.
- Not answering the questions.
- Giving under-length answers – not using the full amount of time to speak.
- Overusing words such as 'and' and 'so'.
- Speaking in simple sentence lists.
- Not using a variety of sentence structures.

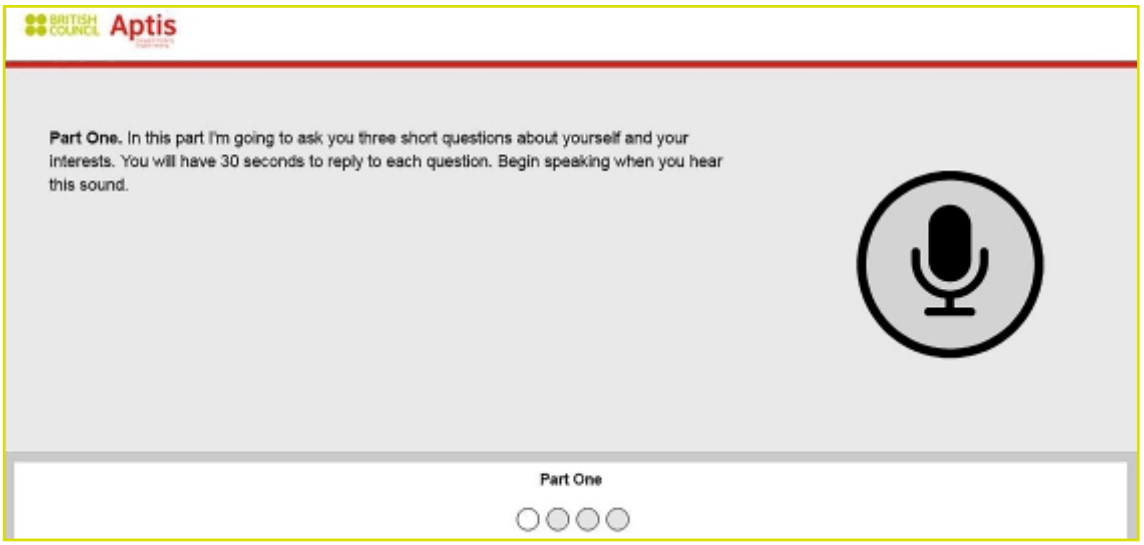
Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Personal information	In this part, you are asked to answer three questions on personal topics. You are expected to talk for 30 seconds per question.	To prepare for this task it is a good idea to practise introducing yourself and talking about your personal experiences. Think about familiar topics (e.g. holidays, weekend activities, sports) and practise giving general information. At the highest levels, try not to talk in lists but instead use connecting devices, complex sentences and a wide range of grammar.
Part 2 Describe, express opinion and provide reasons and explanations	In this part you are asked to describe a photograph and then answer two questions related to the topic illustrated in the photo. The three questions increase in complexity (from description to opinion). You are expected to talk for 45 seconds per question.	You should try to be fluent and spontaneous, showing little sign of effort. Make sure you answer all three questions.
Part 3 Describe, compare and provide reasons and explanations	In this part you are asked to compare two pictures and then answer two questions related to the topic. The three questions increase in complexity (from description to speculation). You are expected to talk for 45 seconds for each question.	To prepare for this task, it is a good idea to practise comparing two different things (e.g. two cities or two houses). Focus on describing their advantages and disadvantages. With speculation, it is important to make sure you are using the correct grammatical structures.
Part 4 Discuss personal experience and opinion on an abstract topic	In the final part you will see a picture and be asked three questions about an abstract topic. You are given one minute to prepare an answer and can take notes. You are expected to talk for two minutes.	A common error is to describe the photo. You will not receive a high score if you describe the photo. The questions are more abstract (e.g. how do you feel about something). Another common error is to go off-topic. Focus on answering each question in a clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech. To prepare for this part it is a good idea to practise speaking for two minutes on an abstract topic (e.g. How do you feel about ____?). Make sure you practise using your planning time wisely to structure what you are going to say.

Sample speaking questions

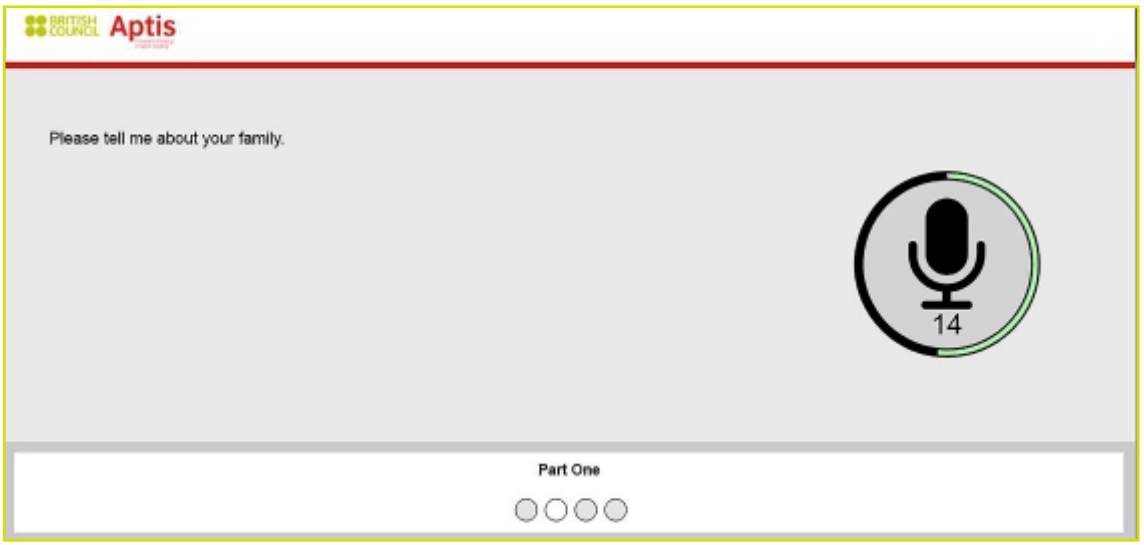
Speaking part 1

In this part you will answer some questions about yourself. Listen to the instructions and speak clearly into your microphone when you hear the signal.

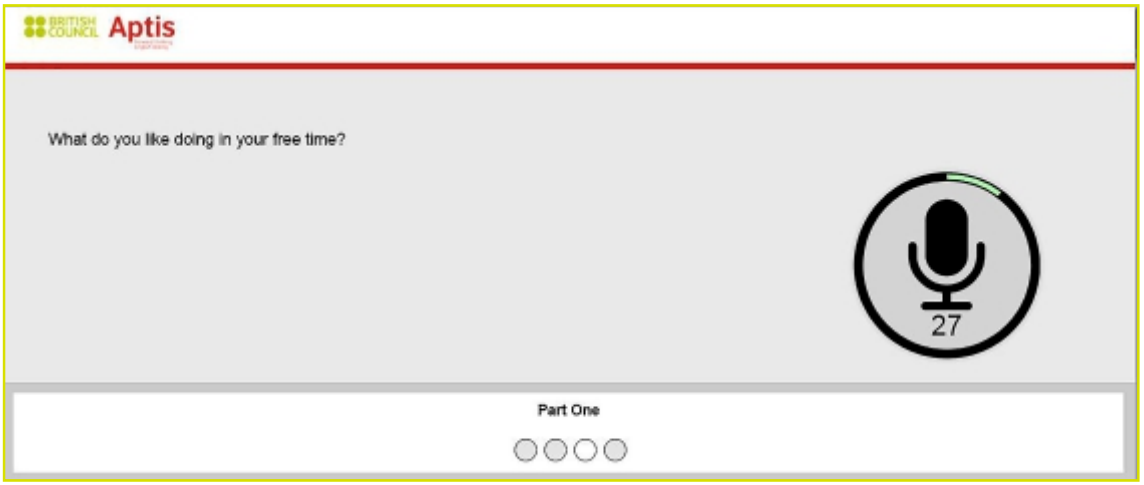
Each part of the test will appear automatically.

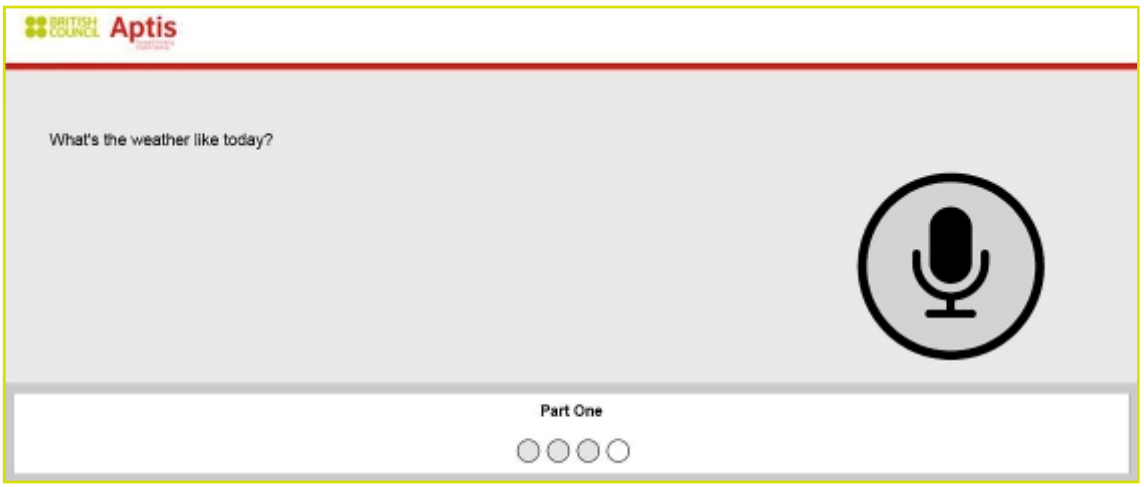


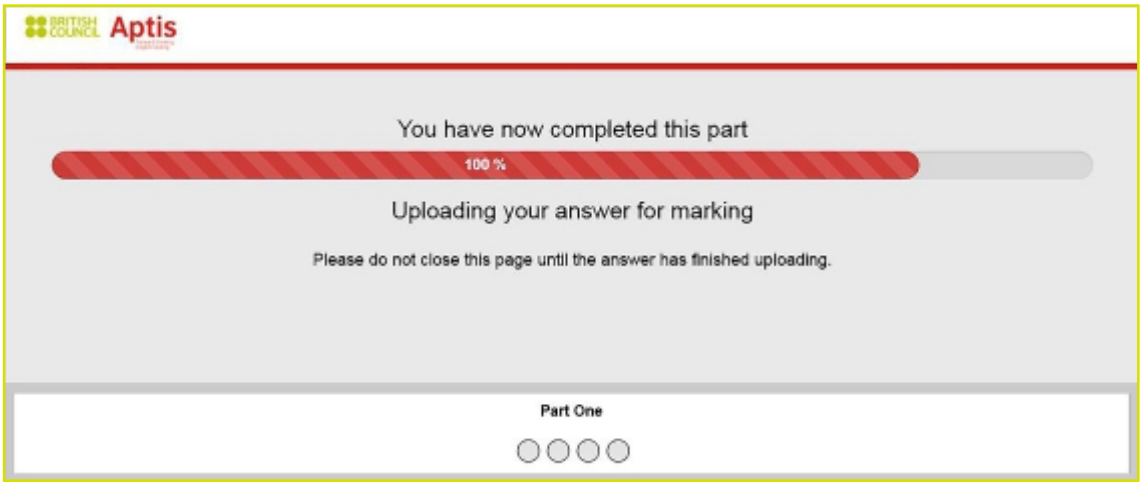
When the time to record comes, the timer begins. This tells you the amount of time you have been recording for (in this case 14 seconds).



As each new question appears, the same procedure is followed.





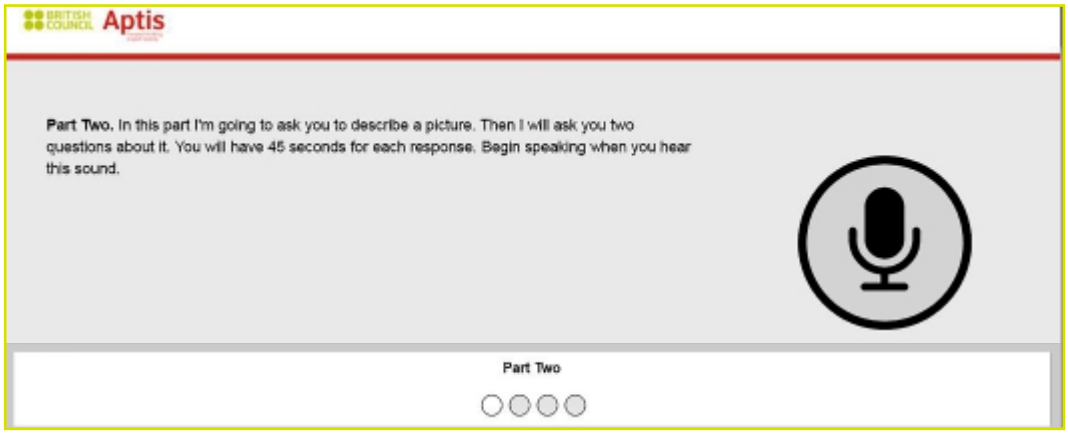


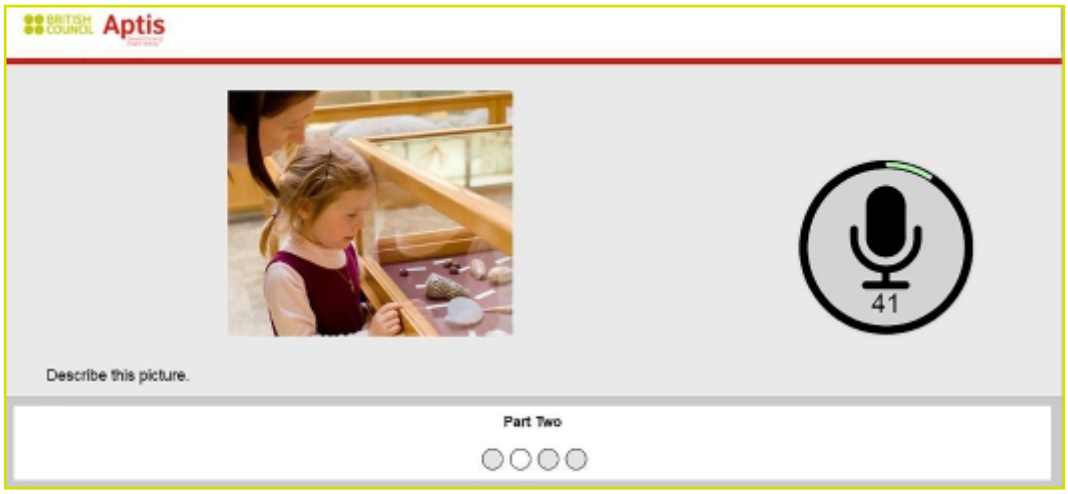
The areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, pronunciation and fluency. Here is the marking scale.

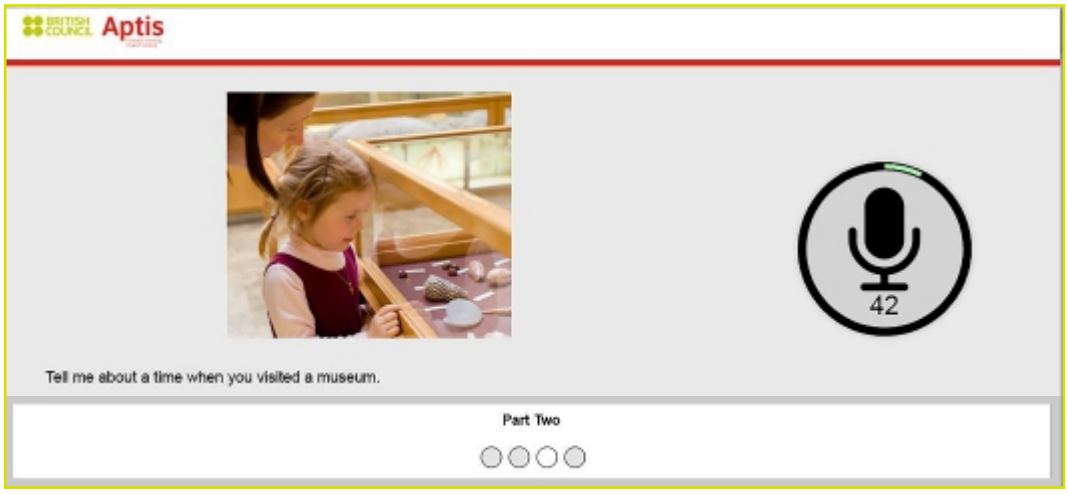
5 **B1 (or above)**	Likely to be above A2 level.
4 **A2.2**	Responses to all three questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Some simple grammatical structures used correctly but basic mistakes systematically occur. • Vocabulary is sufficient to respond to the questions, although inappropriate lexical choices are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and frequently place a strain on the listener. • Frequent pausing, false starts and reformulations but meaning is still clear.
3 **A2.1**	Responses to two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Some simple grammatical structures used correctly but basic mistakes systematically occur. • Vocabulary is sufficient to respond to the questions, although inappropriate lexical choices are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and frequently place a strain on the listener. • Frequent pausing, false starts and reformulations but meaning is still clear.
2 **A1.1**	Responses to at least two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Grammatical structure is limited to words and phrases. Errors in basic patterns and simple grammar structures impede understanding. • Vocabulary is limited to very basic words related to personal information. • Pronunciation is mostly unintelligible except for isolated words. • Frequent pausing, false starts and reformulations impede understanding.
1 **A1.1**	Response to one question is on-topic and shows the following features: • Grammatical structure is limited to words and phrases. Errors in basic patterns and simple grammar structures impede understanding. • Vocabulary is limited to very basic words related to personal information. • Pronunciation is mostly unintelligible except for isolated words. • Frequent pausing, false starts and reformulations impede understanding.
0 **A0**	No meaningful language or all responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

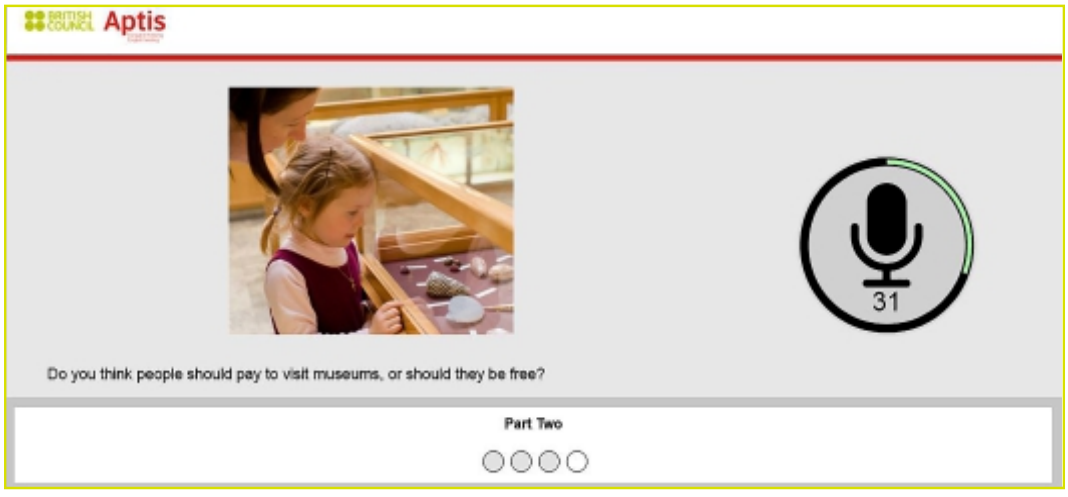
Speaking part 2

In this part you will see a photo and answer three questions. You have 45 seconds to respond to each question.







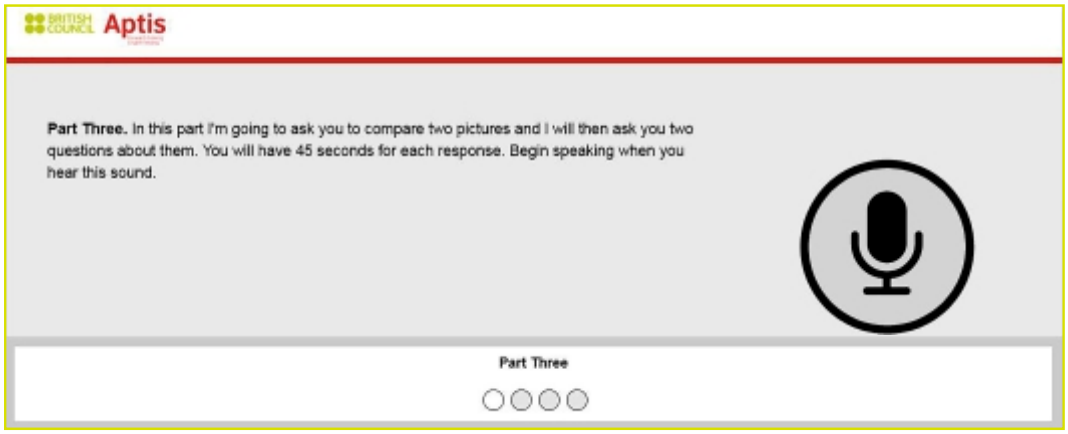


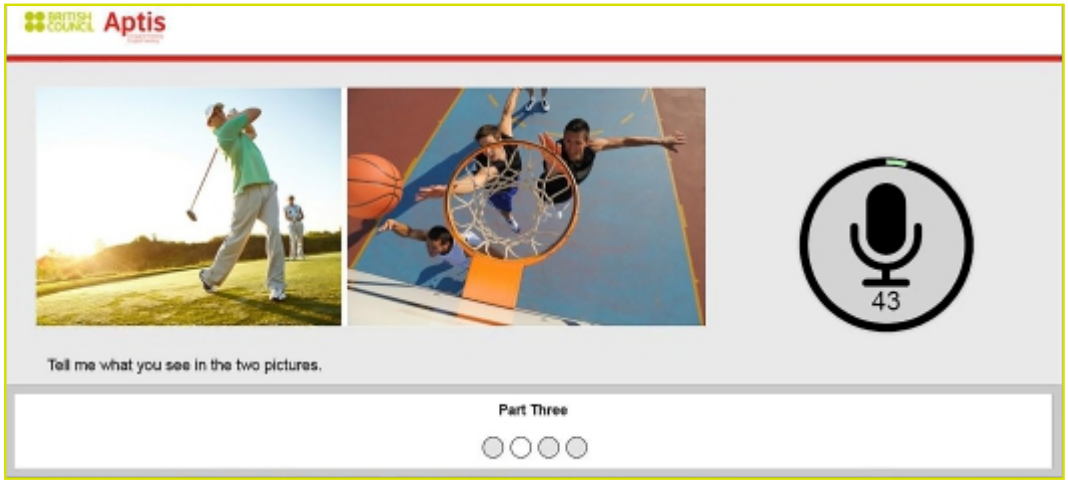
The areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and cohesion. Here is the marking scale.

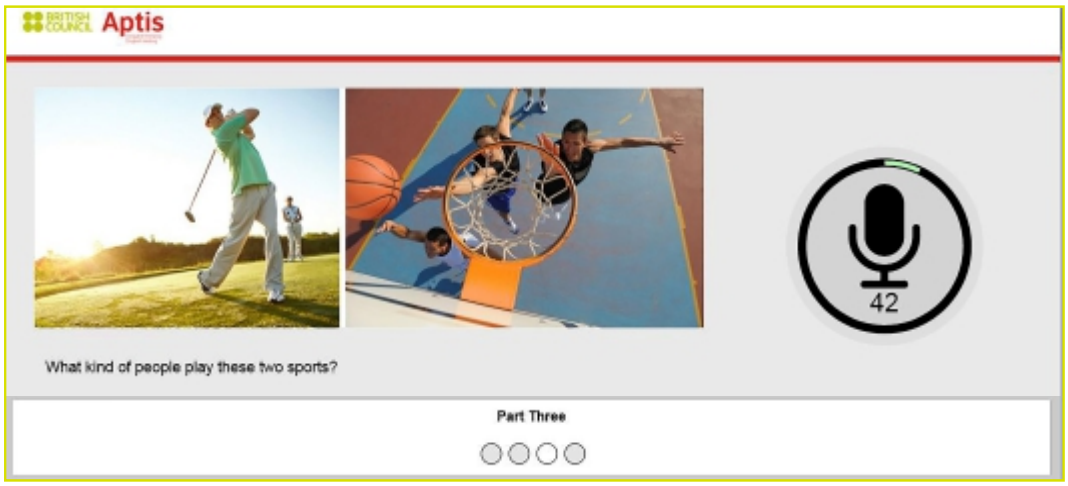
5 **B2 (or above)**	Likely to be above B1 level.
4 **B1.2**	Responses to all three questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Sufficient range and control of vocabulary for the task. Errors occur when expressing complex thoughts. • Pronunciation is intelligible but inappropriate mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Some pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
3 **B1.1**	Responses to two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Sufficient range and control of vocabulary for the task. Errors occur when expressing complex thoughts. • Pronunciation is intelligible but inappropriate mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Some pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
2 **A2.2**	Responses to at least two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Uses some simple grammatical structures correctly but systematically makes basic mistakes. • Vocabulary will be limited to concrete topics and descriptions. Inappropriate lexical choices for the task are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and put a strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Cohesion between ideas is limited. Responses tend to be a list of points.
1 **A2.1**	Response to one question is on-topic and shows the following features: • Uses some simple grammatical structures correctly but systematically makes basic mistakes. • Vocabulary will be limited to concrete topics and descriptions. Inappropriate lexical choices for the task are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and put a strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Cohesion between ideas is limited. Responses tend to be a list of points.
0	Performance below A2, or no meaningful language or the responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

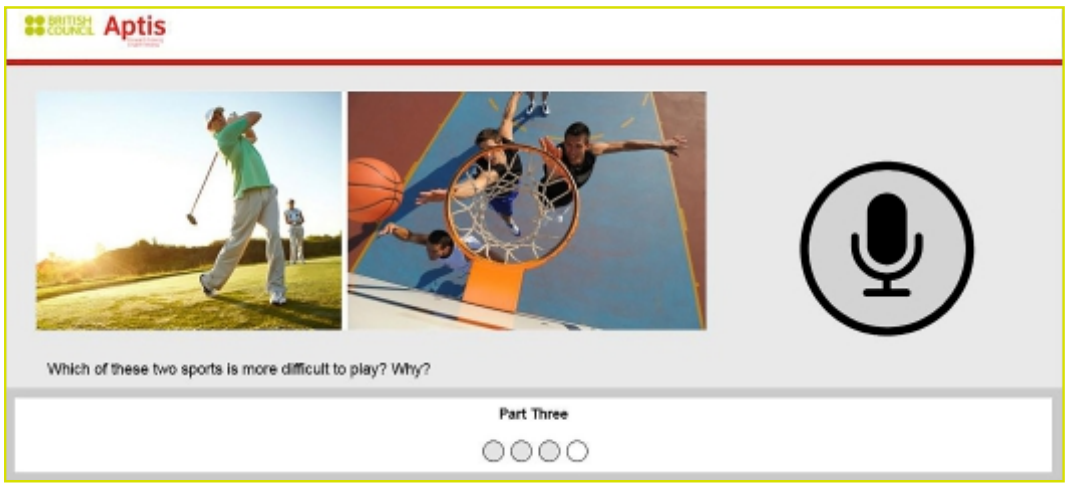
Speaking part 3

In this part you will see two photos and again answer three questions.







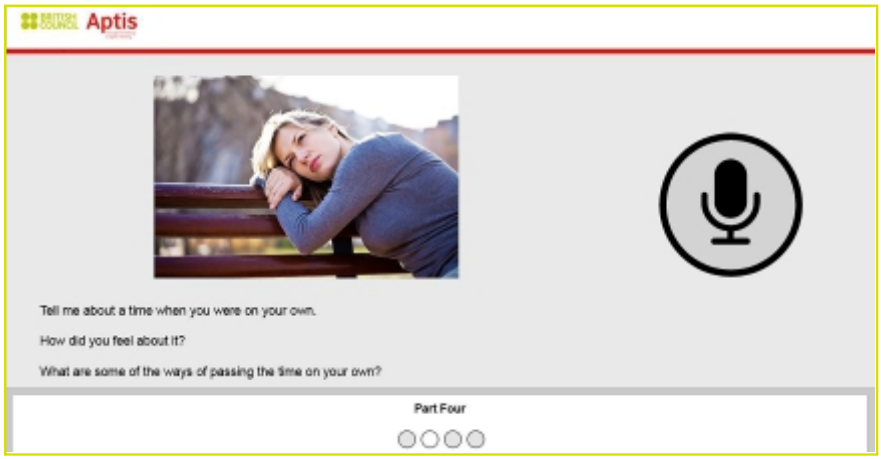


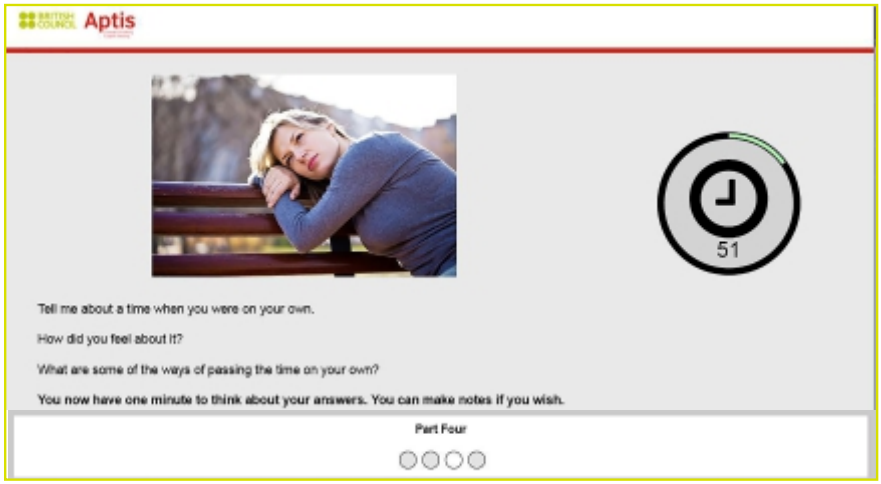
The marking scale is the same as for part 2.

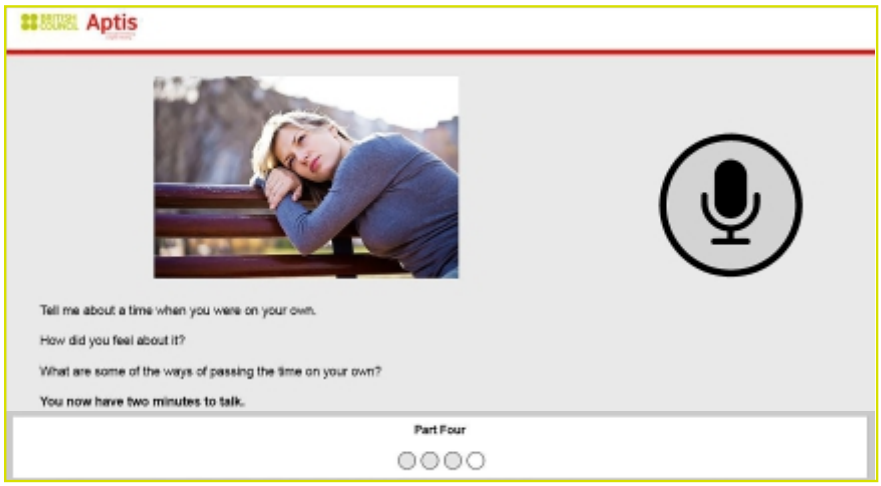
5 **B2 (or above)**	Likely to be above B1 level.
4 **B1.2**	Responses to all three questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Sufficient range and control of vocabulary for the task. Errors occur when expressing complex thoughts. • Pronunciation is intelligible but inappropriate mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Some pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
3 **B1.1**	Responses to two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Sufficient range and control of vocabulary for the task. Errors occur when expressing complex thoughts. • Pronunciation is intelligible but inappropriate mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Some pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
2 **A2.2**	Responses to at least two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Uses some simple grammatical structures correctly but systematically makes basic mistakes. • Vocabulary will be limited to concrete topics and descriptions. Inappropriate lexical choices for the task are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and put a strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Cohesion between ideas is limited. Responses tend to be a list of points.
1 **A2.1**	Response to one question is on-topic and shows the following features: • Uses some simple grammatical structures correctly but systematically makes basic mistakes. • Vocabulary will be limited to concrete topics and descriptions. Inappropriate lexical choices for the task are noticeable. • Mispronunciations are noticeable and put a strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts and reformulations. • Cohesion between ideas is limited. Responses tend to be a list of points.
0	Performance below A2, or no meaningful language or the responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

Speaking part 4

In this part, you again need to answer three questions but this time you answer them all in one response. You have one minute to prepare a structured response. A timer on the screen will indicate how long you have left. When preparation time is over, the message at the bottom ('You now have two minutes to talk') appears and you may speak until the recording automatically stops after two minutes.







During the preparation time, it is important to take notes, as it will help you organise and remember your response. Rather than writing out exactly what you want to say, make brief notes and use these to structure your speech. Here are some examples of note taking:

1. Tell me about a personal achievement or award you have received.
   - exam certificate
   - at school
   - highest score in class
   - teacher very pleased
   - parents proud

2. How did you feel about this achievement?
   - surprised
   - exam was very difficult
   - feelings of satisfaction and relief

3. Do awards encourage people to do their best?
   awards: a good thing
      - encourage excellence
      - evidence/recognition of success

   awards: a bad thing
      - make some people too competitive
      - can create disappointment if you don't win

Areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and cohesion. Here is the marking scale:

6 **C2**	Likely to be above C1 level.
5 **C1**	Response addresses all three questions and is well-structured. • Uses a range of complex grammar constructions accurately. Some minor errors occur but do not impede understanding. • Uses a range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Some awkward usage or slightly inappropriate lexical choices. • Pronunciation is clearly intelligible. • Backtracking and reformulations do not fully interrupt the flow of speech. • A range of cohesive devices are used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
4 **B2.2**	Responses to all three questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not lead to misunderstanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not lead to misunderstanding. • Pronunciation is intelligible. Mispronunciations do not put a strain on the listener or lead to misunderstanding. • Some pausing while searching for vocabulary but this does not put a strain on the listener. • A limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
3 **B2.1**	Responses to two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not lead to misunderstanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not lead to misunderstanding. • Pronunciation is intelligible. Mispronunciations do not put a strain on the listener or lead to misunderstanding • Some pausing while searching for vocabulary but this does not put a strain on the listener. • A limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
2 **B1.2**	Responses to at least two questions are on-topic and show the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. • Pronunciation is intelligible but occasional mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts, reformulations and repetition. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
1 **B1.1**	Response to one question is on-topic and shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. • Pronunciation is intelligible but occasional mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts, reformulations and repetition. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
0 **A1/A2**	Performance not sufficient for B1, or no meaningful language, or the responses are completely off-topic (memorised or guessing).

Aptis Advanced test

This section details the different tasks you will find in the Aptis Advanced test. The layout of the test and the components tested are exactly the same as the Aptis test. The grammar and vocabulary is also exactly the same so we will not cover it here. All of the tips that we share in this guide are relevant for both tests and the marking system for the speaking and writing test is also the same.

Aptis Advanced reading test

In this test you have **60 minutes** to complete the four parts. Three parts are different to those in the Aptis test.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1	In this part, you have four people's opinions on one topic. You need to read all their opinions and then choose who said what for 7 questions. You must answer each question.	Make sure you read all four opinions before trying to answer the questions. Remember, the same person can be used for more than one answer.
Part 2	Matching headings. This is the same as the Aptis test.	
Part 3	This is a short text of around 300 words with missing gaps. You must choose the right word or phrase from the drop-down to complete the gap.	Make sure you read the whole text before trying to answer. This isn't a grammar test so all the options can fit grammatically into the sentence, you need to understand the whole text to choose the right one.
Part 4	Here you have two short texts on the same topic. You need to fill in the blank with the appropriate phrase.	You definitely need to read both texts before answering as again all the options are grammatically possible so you can only choose the right one if you have read both texts.

Aptis Advanced listening test

There are three parts which are different to the Aptis test. These are aimed at the higher levels so there are more things you need to do in each part. You have **30 minutes** to complete the three parts.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1	This part is the same as the Aptis test. You will listen to five short recordings of monologues or dialogues and answer one question for each recording.	Please refer to our previous listening tips for websites and ideas.
Part 2	In this part, you will listen to three recordings of monologues or dialogues and you will have to answer two questions for each recording.	Use the fact that you can listen twice to your advantage here. Read through the questions before you listen and predict what someone might say about these things. Then, on your first listen, select your answers and listen a second time to confirm.
Part 3	In this part, you will hear a discussion between a man and a woman. On the screen you will see a number of opinions. You will need to identify who expresses which opinion: the man, the woman, or both the man and the woman. You will only **hear this once** and you have 20 seconds to read through the options.	Use your time wisely. Read the options and make notes on what you think you should listen for (e.g. numbers, synonyms.)
Part 4	In this part, you will hear two separate monologues. You will need to select the correct answers from a table. You will only hear each monologue **once**. You have 20 seconds to read the options in the table.	Make sure you use the time to read through all the options. Use this time to predict what kind of words you expect them to mention around these opinions so you can listen out for hints.

Aptis Advanced writing test

The duration of the Aptis Advanced writing test is **45 minutes**.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Three written parts of text, all of which require responses	In this part you will have a social network-type interaction. You will receive three questions and need to respond. This is the same task as the Aptis test part 3.	Make sure you correctly answer all three questions and don't go off-topic. Focus on accurate spelling and punctuation and write text that is cohesive and coherent. Keep to the word count of 30-40 words per answer.
Part 2 Email response	In this part you will read an email from an authority. You need to respond to the email in 120-150 words, using the notes provided, expressing how you feel about the situation.	Make sure you are on-topic and that you use the appropriate register for the situation (see the Aptis writing test for information about correct use of register).
Part 3 Article for website publication	In this part you will write an article for a website that is both informative and interesting. Notes about the topic are provided and you need to use the information to help write the article. The article needs to be between 180 and 220 words.	Try to make your article informative and interesting and use original text (i.e. don't just copy the notes).

Aptis Advanced writing part 2

The areas assessed are task fulfilment, register, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, punctuation and spelling and cohesion.

6 **C2**	Response fully on-topic and appropriate register used. Response shows the following features: • Range of complex grammar constructions used accurately. No grammar errors occur. • Range of vocabulary used. No awkward or inappropriate lexical choices. • No more than two minor punctuation or spelling errors occur. • Range of cohesive devices used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
5 **C1**	Response fully on-topic and appropriate register used. Response shows the following features: • Range of complex grammar constructions used accurately. Minor grammar errors occur. • Range of vocabulary used. Some awkward or slightly inappropriate lexical choices. • Minor errors in punctuation and spelling occur. • Range of cohesive devices used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
4 **B2.2**	Response fully on-topic and appropriate register used. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
3 **B2.1**	Response partially on-topic and/or appropriate register partially used. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
2 **B1.2**	Response partially on-topic and/or appropriate register partially used. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in parts of the text. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
1 **B1.1**	Response not on-topic and/or task not fulfilled in terms of appropriateness of register. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in parts of the text. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
0 **A1/A2**	Performance below B1, or no meaningful language or the response is completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

Aptis Advanced writing part 3

The areas assessed are task fulfilment, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, coherence and cohesion.

6 **C2**	Response is informative and interesting. Clever use of the input with mostly original text. Response shows the following features: • Range of complex grammar constructions used accurately. Minor errors occur. • Range of vocabulary used accurately. No awkward or inappropriate lexical choices. • Minor errors in punctuation and spelling occur. • Range of cohesive devices used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
5 **C1**	Response is not interesting. Correct use of the input with mostly original text. Response shows the following features: • Range of complex grammar constructions used accurately. Minor errors occur. • Range of vocabulary used. Some awkward or slightly inappropriate lexical choices. • Minor errors in punctuation and spelling occur. • Range of cohesive devices used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
4 **B2.2**	Response is not interesting. Correct use of the input with mostly original text. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topic required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
3 **B2.1**	Response is not interesting or informative. Key parts of the input are missing with mostly original text. Response shows the following features: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not impede understanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not impede understanding. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
2 **B1.2**	Response is not interesting or informative. Key parts of the input are missing with mostly original text. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in parts of the text. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
1 **B1.1**	Response is not interesting or informative. Input is not used correctly or text is mostly copied from the input. Response shows the following features: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. Errors impede understanding in most of the text. • Punctuation and spelling errors do not impede understanding. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
0 **A1/A2**	Performance below B1, or no meaningful language or the responses are completely off-topic (e.g. memorised script, guessing).

Aptis Advanced speaking test

The duration of the Aptis Advanced speaking test is **10 minutes**.

Test design	Description	Preparation
Part 1 Describe, compare and provide reasons and explanations	In this part you are asked to compare two pictures and then answer two questions related to the topic. The three questions increase in complexity (from description to speculation). You are expected to talk for 45 seconds for each question. This is the same as the Aptis speaking test part 3.	To prepare for this part, it is a good idea to practise comparing two different things (e.g. two cities or two houses). Focus on describing their advantages and disadvantages. With speculation, it is important to make sure you are using the correct grammatical structures.
Part 2 Discuss personal experience and opinion in relation to an abstract topic	In the part you will be asked three questions about an abstract topic. You are given one minute to prepare an answer and can take notes. You are expected to talk for two minutes. This is the same as the Aptis speaking test part 4 but there is no picture.	A common error is to go off-topic. Focus on answering each question in a clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured speech. To prepare for this part it is a good idea to practise speaking for two minutes on an abstract topic (e.g. How do you feel about ____?). Make sure you practise using your planning time wisely to structure what you are going to say.
Part 3 Presentation	In this part you need to speak on a topic for one and a half minutes. You will have one minute to prepare. After your presentation, you will be asked an additional question about the topic and asked to speak for 45 seconds. There is no preparation time for this additional question.	Structure your presentation and make sure you provide both sides of the argument. Try and speak like you are speaking to an audience or a group so make it interesting.

Aptis Advanced speaking part 1 is the same as the Aptis speaking test part 3. Aptis Advanced speaking part 2 is the same as the Aptis speaking test part 4.

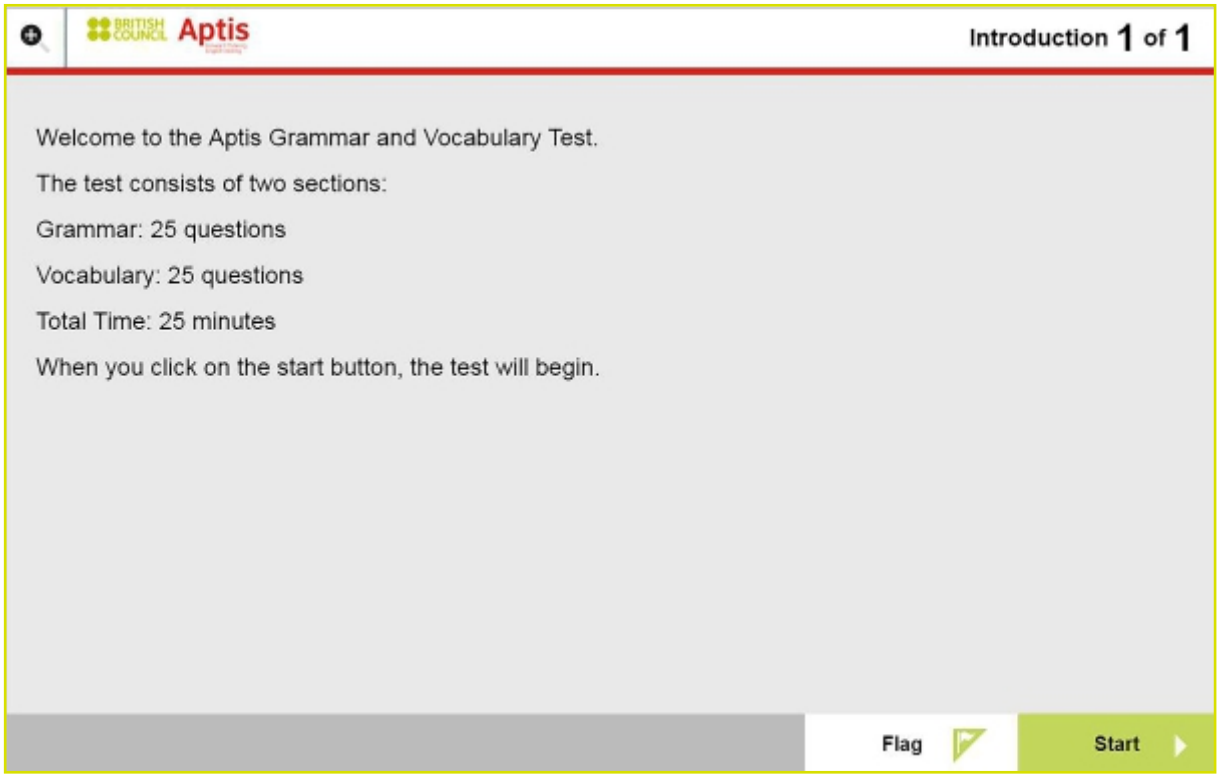
Aptis Advanced speaking part 3

The areas assessed are task fulfilment / topic relevance, grammatical range and accuracy, vocabulary range and accuracy, pronunciation, fluency and cohesion.

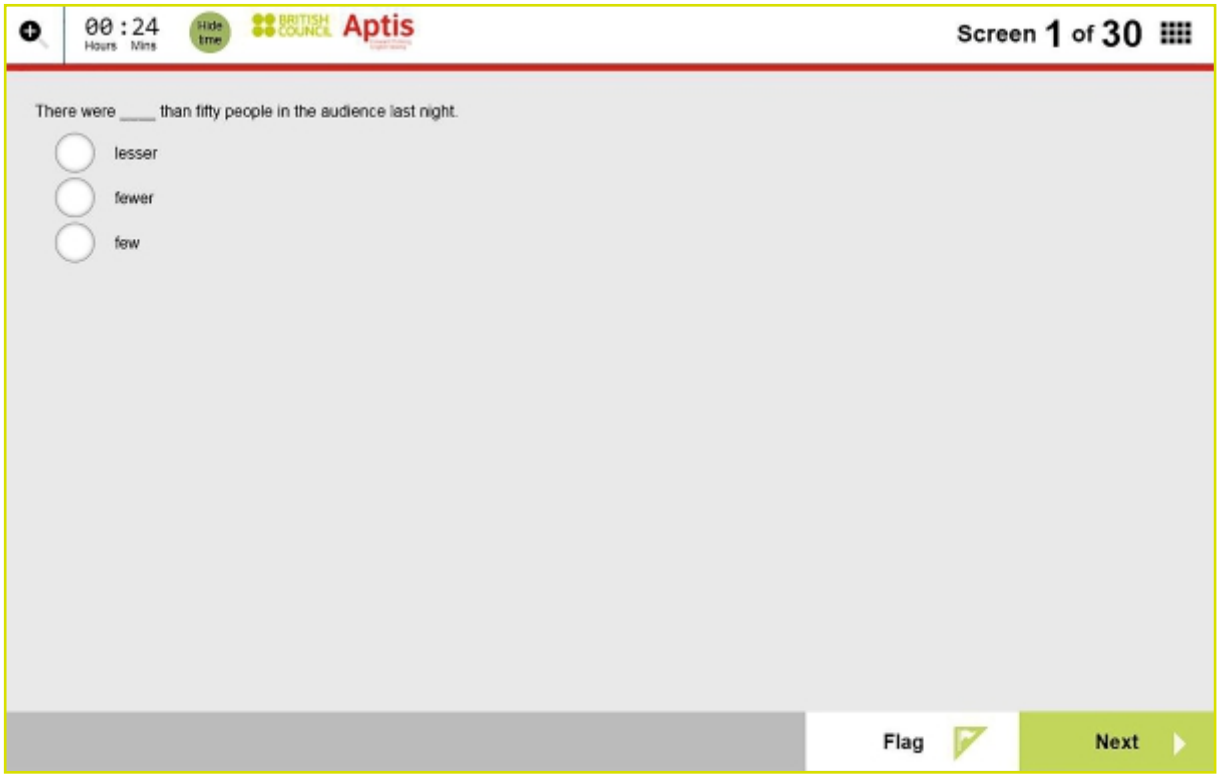
6 **C2**	• Presentation is convincingly presented and well-structured, highlighting and expanding on points from each section. • The follow-up question response is well-structured. There is a clear and coherent response. • Uses a range of complex grammar constructions accurately. Some very minor errors occur but do not impede understanding. • Uses a range of vocabulary to discuss the topic required by the task. No awkward usage or inappropriate lexical choices. • Pronunciation is clearly intelligible. • Backtracking and reformulations do not interrupt the flow of speech. • A range of cohesive devices are used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
5 **C1**	• Presentation is clear, highlighting points from each section. Gives reasons in support of or against particular points of view. • The follow-up question response is coherent. • Uses a range of complex grammar constructions accurately. Some minor errors occur but do not impede understanding. • Uses a range of vocabulary to discuss the topic in the poster in his/her own words. Some awkward usage or slightly inappropriate lexical choices. • Pronunciation is clearly intelligible. • Backtracking and reformulations do not fully interrupt the flow of speech. • A range of cohesive devices are used to clearly indicate the links between ideas.
4 **B2.2**	Response addresses points from each section, the follow-up question is on-topic and the response shows the features associated with B2 spoken production.
3 **B2.1**	Response does not address points from both sections, the follow-up question is on-topic and the response shows the features associated with B2 spoken production.
	Features associated with B2 spoken production: • Some complex grammar constructions used accurately. Errors do not lead to misunderstanding. • Sufficient range of vocabulary to discuss the topics required by the task. Inappropriate lexical choices do not lead to misunderstanding. • Pronunciation is intelligible. Mispronunciations do not put a strain on the listener or lead to misunderstanding. • Some pausing while searching for vocabulary but this does not put a strain on the listener. • A limited number of cohesive devices are used to indicate the links between ideas.
2 **B1.2**	The candidate is unable to construct a coherent and sustained response, is heavily dependent on the input prompts and is not able to address the follow-up question. The response shows the features associated with B1 spoken production.
1 **B1.1**	The candidate is unable to construct a coherent and sustained response, reads directly from the prompts and is not able to address the follow-up question. The response shows the features associated with B1 spoken production.
	Features associated with B1 spoken production: • Control of simple grammatical structures. Errors occur when attempting complex structures. • Limitations in vocabulary make it difficult to deal fully with the task. • Pronunciation is intelligible but occasional mispronunciations put an occasional strain on the listener. • Noticeable pausing, false starts, reformulations and repetition. • Uses only simple cohesive devices. Links between ideas are not always clearly indicated.
0 **A1/A2**	Performance not sufficient for B1, or no meaningful language, or the responses are completely off-topic (memorised or guessing).

How to take the online test

When you start every Aptis test, the introductory screen looks like this:



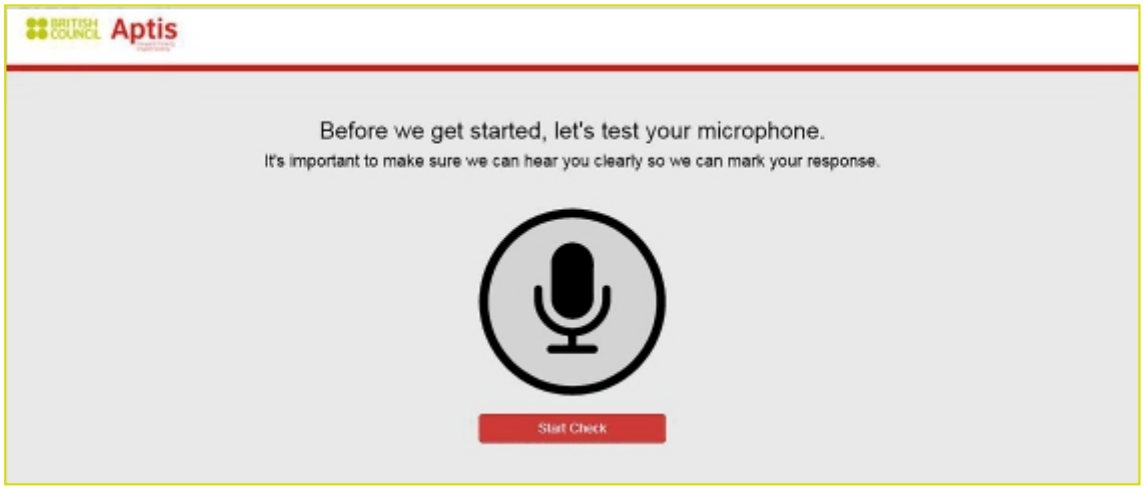
On screen, the questions will appear like this:



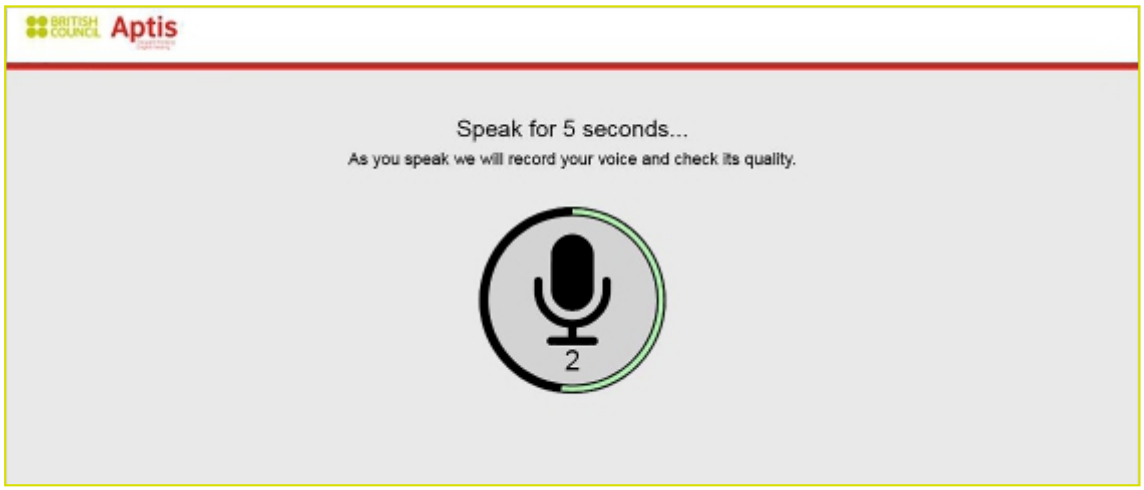
Sound recording

Make sure your test is taken in a quiet room.

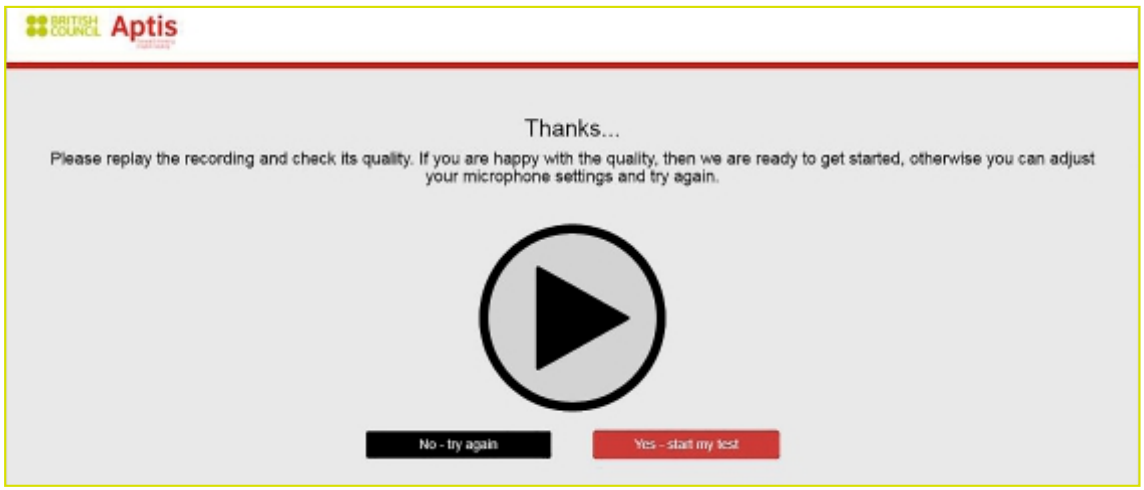
The following screen will appear. This allows you to check the sound recording system on you computer.



Once you click Start Check, the screen below appears. You will now need to record a sample of speech.



When you have finished your recording the following screen appears. You can replay the recorded sound. If you can hear it properly click on Yes (start my test), if not click on No (try again).



During the microphone check, make sure you say a whole sentence and not just one or two words. Assessing the quality of the microphone needs more than a few words.

Aptis for All

The British Council is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion in English language testing. We believe that the Aptis test should be accessible to anyone who wants to take it. We also believe that each person should have the opportunity to perform to the best of his or her ability on the Aptis test.

If you have a disability and believe that Aptis is not accessible to you, or believe that the form of the test will not allow you to show your true level of English, please contact your local British Council centre to talk about ways in which the test can be modified for your needs. We can make adjustments such as pen and paper tests, Braille and large font tests, timing, and many others.

Discuss it with us to ensure that we can support you with a test which is both fair to you and maintains the high standards and reliability of Aptis.

Final checklist

We hope that these notes have helped you prepare for your Aptis or Aptis Advanced test. Here is a checklist to make sure you are fully prepared:

- Review the different grammar parts: http://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/books-british-council-eaquals-core-inventory.pdf
- Visit the LearnEnglish website to prepare for the grammar and vocabulary test: http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en.
- Visit the English Club to prepare for the vocabulary test: www.englishclub.com.
- Review the section 'How to take an online test' and pay particular attention to the section on the sound recording.
- Practise your English skills at every opportunity. Listen to English radio (e.g. BBC World Service), watch English-language television and films and read the graded readers (e.g. Cambridge, Penguin, Macmillan and Headway).
- Read the tips in this booklet on how to prepare for each test.

For more information, please visit www.britishcouncil.org/aptis

© British Council 2019
The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide.
A registered charity: 209131 (England and Wales SC037733 (Scotland.