What is Aptis for Teens?

Aptis for Teens is a new global English test from the British Council. It is an English test designed for 13-17 year olds, which can be used to assess ability in all four English skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.

It also allows you to develop specific English skills, with the ability to test just one skill or a combination of skills. Your teacher, school or tutor will help you decide which mix of skills is best for you to assess yourself in.

This guide will help you understand each of the five components of Aptis and what they do. The five parts of Aptis are the core components, Grammar and Vocabulary, Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking.

If you would like to try an online-version of the Aptis test, visit: britishcouncil.org/aptis/what-aptis/try to see what it looks like and how to navigate it!

If you like using Apps to learn English, try the LearnEnglish app available on iTunes: itunes.apple.com/app/learnenglish-audio-video/id529480955?mt=8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Vocabulary</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoring</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Aptis for Teens test

This is the Aptis for Teens learning guide. In this guide you can find information about the test and examples of the questions, some tips on what to study and also things to do in the test to help you make sure you get the best results. So make sure you read everything as you prepare for the test.

This Aptis for Teens test has 5 components. First, you take the grammar and vocabulary test and then you take the skills tests. Your teacher or school will decide which skills you will take. The skills are Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking.

The next section will tell you more about the questions you will get in each of these skills and how you can prepare for them.
Grammar and vocabulary
The grammar and vocabulary component tests your knowledge of these skills.
Grammar

For the grammar section you complete a sentence or phrase with one word. Each sentence will give you a choice of 3 possible answers. Select one answer for each sentence. There are 25 questions, and you have about 12 minutes to complete this section.

Make sure you read the sentence carefully and all the possible answers before you make your final choice. Look carefully at the whole sentence and then the words either side of the gap to help you make your choice. Remember, sometimes only certain words will go with ‘to’, for example, so looking at the words around the gap could be a lot of help. Reading the whole sentence before reading the options helps because it might be that your brain already knows the answer and will tell you when you read it. Then all you have to do is check the options and if what you think is the answer is one of the options, you will know you are right.

Here is an example of a grammar question.

Tip
During the test: You can flag questions you don’t know and go back to them later.
Try practicing on the Aptis online grammar and vocabulary practice test to learn how to do it. Visit britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisGrammarVocabDemo/

Practice link:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/exams/grammar-and-vocabulary-exams/choose-correct
Vocabulary

There are five different parts to the vocabulary section with five questions each. You have about 12 minutes to answer all the questions.

1. Synonym matching – Word matching
Synonyms are words with the same, or similar, meaning. For example, speak is a synonym of talk but it is not a synonym of walk. In this task, you have to match two words with the same or very similar meanings (5 words to be selected from 10 options). Select the word that has a similar meaning in the drop down list. Reveal the words by clicking on the green arrow.

Tip
This part is testing your knowledge of words that have nearly identical or very similar meanings.

Developing a curiosity about language and finding synonyms online or in a dictionary will help you learn more vocabulary and avoid using the same old words. A thesaurus for example, (thesaurus.com) which you can find online or in your library means you can look up a new word and learn the words with the same meaning or even the opposite meaning. This is a great way to help not only prepare for the test but also improve your range of vocabulary. Don’t forget to use all these words in the writing section too to demonstrate your range. The examiners like to see creative writing with a variety of words and not just the same phrase over and over again.

Practice links:
learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/vocabulary-games
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary/vocabulary-exercises/beach
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary/vocabulary-exercises/living-room
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary/vocabulary-exercises/places-town
2. Meaning in context – Sentence completion
Select the best word to fill a gap in a short sentence. The meaning of words can be understood from the context (5 words to be selected from 10 options). Select the word that fits the gap in the drop down list.

Tip
There will be many words you can choose from that make a grammatically correct sentence. You will have to choose the word that not only fits grammatically but also makes the most sense when reading it. Reading many different types of books, newspapers and magazines will help you improve your overall understanding of how words fit into the context of a sentence.

Practice link:
learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/grammar-and-vocabulary-exams/what-does-it-mean
3. Definition matching – Matching words to definitions
(5 words to be selected from 10 options). Select the word that fits the definition in the drop down list.

Tip
Since this part is matching definitions to words, it might be helpful to sign up to the Oxford Dictionary word-of-the-day to learn new words. Don’t forget that when you look up synonyms in a thesaurus you can also see the definitions. You can also test your friends. Why not find some new words in the dictionary and write down their definitions. Give these definitions to your friends and the new words, and see if they can guess which word matches the definition. There are lots of fun English games you can make up like this with your friends to practice. See if your teacher will help you too!
Visit: oxforddictionaries.com/words/word-of-the-day

Practice link:
learnenglish teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/grammar-and-vocabulary-exams/match-words-definitions
4. **Collocation matching** – Word matching

Match the words most commonly used together (5 words you choose from 10 options). Select the word in the drop down list that matches the word on the left.

![Vocabulary](image)

**Tip**

Collocations are words that are commonly used together. For example, it is common to say 'hard or soft cheese' but you don’t say 'liquid cheese'. Therefore, to improve your knowledge of collocations, read and listen to as much as you can in English. When you learn new words, try and learn the words which also go with these words. You can draw a map with the new word in the middle and all words related to it around it. This also helps with prefixes and suffixes, and verbs and nouns. You can learn many new words which are related. Visit [myvocabulary.com](https://myvocabulary.com) to help you explore new words, their roots and all the different words they are related to. This isn’t useful just for the vocabulary section, it will also help you with your grammar, speaking and writing.

**Practice link:**

Why don’t you try the examples shown here? Once you have tried them, check your answers at the end of this guide. How many did you get right?
Tips for Success

Many students ask how they can maximise their studying time to best improve their grammar and vocabulary abilities. One answer is reading. By reading literature and high quality stories, magazine articles and news briefs, you will be exposed to a wide range of vocabulary and correctly used grammar. Even better is to read from a variety of sources. Have a novel that you read on a consistent basis, and mix up your other sources of materials. For example, read the news one day and a magazine the next. Then read a story sometimes as well. Soon, you will recognise how much you have improved your English grammar and vocabulary knowledge, and you will improve your reading skills too! Don’t forget that if reading is not your favourite thing to do, you can also watch movies and put the subtitles on. Watch a favourite movie that you know really well in English so that you don’t have to focus on the story and can concentrate on understanding the words instead. Try it the first time with subtitles and note down any useful phrases. The second time, challenge yourself to watch it without subtitles and see how much you understand. This is great for picking up new vocabulary in context and of course, it also helps your listening skills too.

Study Tips

• To help develop your grammar and vocabulary practice for the test, visit: learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/grammar-vocabulary and learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/quick-grammar. You will find some useful games and activities you can do at home to help you practice and learn more.

• Another great site offering similar grammar and vocabulary practice can be found on the BBC learning English site. Visit: bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/language/

• Are you interested in learning a word a day? These are some of the leading online dictionary websites: dictionary.reference.com/wordoftheday merriam-webster.com/word-of-the-day

• The Oxford online dictionary will email the word of the day to you. Visit: oxforddictionaries.com/words/word-of-the-day
Reading

There are four parts to the reading test. Each part focuses on a different reading skill.

Part 1
Choose words to complete sentences. Your aim is to understand the sentence and not the whole text. Each sentence will give you a choice of 3 possible answers. Your task is to select one answer for each sentence. Select the word that fits the gap in the drop down list.

Tip
Treat each sentence as its own question. There will be hints in the sentence to help you choose the answer. Make sure you read the full sentence before choosing your answer. Sometimes the clue is towards the end and not the beginning of the sentence.

Practice link:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/exams/reading-exams/vocabulary-text
Part 2
Put sentences into the correct order to make a text. You will see seven sentences, and the first sentence is already done for you. The rest are jumbled up. There is only one way that the sentences can go together to form a text that makes sense. Your task is to click on the sentences and drag them to the correct position in the text. The green and red arrows on the example show how sentences can be dragged up or down to put them in the correct order.

Tip
This question requires you to read across the sentences. You will have to use logic and look at the clues such as linking words, pronouns and other ways that the information from one sentence links with the next. Make sure you read the whole text once you think you have put it in the correct order to check before you move on to the next task.

Practice link:
learnenglish teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading-skills-practice/films-and-entertainment
Part 3
In this task you read four separate paragraphs giving information about four people’s opinions on a similar topic. Your task is to match the four people with the statements. Make sure you read all four paragraphs first, then read the options and then start to match who said what. Remember, there are 7 questions here and 4 speakers, so that means the same person can have more than one opinion. It is important that you can identify who said what by reading the details as all 4 people are talking about the same thing so they may have similar views.

Tip
The exact words in the question usually won’t be included in the text, so you will have to understand what each person thinks and answer the questions accordingly.

Practice link:
learnenglish-teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading-skills-practice/phone-chat
Part 4
Read a longer text of about 750 words and match the headings to the paragraphs. The first one is done for you. There is always an extra heading that does not fit with any paragraph. Your task is to match the headings to the seven other paragraphs in the text.

Tip
The words from the heading usually won’t be in the text. Therefore, you should use your reading skills such as skimming and scanning before quickly reading through the text and choosing your answers. Make sure you read the whole text before you start trying to match the headings. You will not be able to guess the order of the headings just by reading them alone. You will need to look for clues in each paragraph to help you.

Practice Link:
britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisReadingDemo/
Try this!

Guess the meaning of the words in the three sentences below and don’t look at the next page yet.

Read these 3 sentences quickly and then try and guess the meaning of the words from the sentence alone.

You have 30 seconds!

1. He was a very frugal man, spending money only when he really had to.

2. Although he was typically unkempt, he looked really smart in the office.

3. The pilot was surprised when the authorities revoked his license. Consequently, he couldn’t fly any longer.

(See answers on page 35 at the back of this guide).

Did you get them right?

Remember that you do not need to understand every word. Not every word is important for understanding the text. If you waste too much time trying to understand every word in the reading test you may run out of time and miss out on valuable points. Make sure you try and understand the meaning of the paragraph rather than every single word.
Tips for success

Each part of the reading exam requires you to use different skills in reading.

- Part 1 requires you to use information within the sentence to choose the correct answer.
- Part 2 requires you to understand how the sentences fit together as a complete and correct text by reading across the sentences.
- Part 3 requires you to understand the full meaning of four short texts.
- Part 4 requires you to understand the overall meaning of each of seven paragraphs.
- It will be helpful to practice each of these skills in preparation for your exam. Things that can help you when guessing the meaning of words in context:
  - The surrounding words
  - A definition or examples that explain unfamiliar words
  - Words used before or after the unfamiliar words that express similarity or contrast

Links to additional reading activities and sources of quality literature, newspapers, and articles can be found in the “study tips” section. Try visiting them to get more practice in improving your reading skills.

Make sure you read a lot of English before sitting the test and especially make sure you read in English the day before and the day of the test. This will help in getting you thinking in English. Choose books and articles that are neither too easy nor too difficult for you to understand. Practice guessing words from the context as this is an important skill you will need to demonstrate in the exam. Remember that you can use Penguin graded readers to help you. These are famous stories that have been adapted to your level to help you improve your reading. Ask your teacher or local library or book shop about them.

While there are no easy ways to become a good reader, there are many things you can do to improve your English reading abilities. The first thing is to practice reading. Read as much as you can from different sources by different writers. This will help give you a good understanding of different styles. It can help improve your grammar, vocabulary and writing skills too!

Study Tips

To help develop your reading skills for the test, visit: learnenglish teas.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading-skills-practice.

- Here you will find some useful games and activities you can do at home to help you practice and learn more.
- Visit Lit2go: etc.usf.edu/lit2go/authors/. This site hosts classic literature that can be read or downloaded for free!
- Story of the Week is a website created by the Library of America. Here you will find many stories at different levels to practice your reading skills. Visit: storyoftheweek.loa.org/p/stories-sorted-by-author.html
- Project Gutenberg in Australia also has an online database of free short stories and books that can be read online or downloaded to be read later. Visit: gutenberg.net.au
- Visit the British Council’s Stories and Poems website: learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/stories-poems. Here you will find many different topics and at many different levels. For the teens version visit: learnenglish teas.britishcouncil.org/uk-now/stories-and-poems-uk.
- The LearnEnglish Teens Study Break website is another great resource. Visit: learnenglish teas. britishcouncil.org/study-break/easy-reading. Here you will find many interesting stories of varying lengths and levels.
Listening

Try to listen to as much English as you can before the exam. This could be TV, music, films, or online videos. The more you hear English in the weeks before the exam, the easier it will be for you to understand what you hear during the exam.

In the Listening test there are 25 questions, with 3 multiple-choice answers for each question. The questions appear in the same format and you will have up to 50 minutes to complete all the questions.

The listening tasks get more difficult as the test progresses. In the beginning you listen for key words in the listening text, whereas later the test moves towards the higher level skill of listening for inference. Each question is presented in the same way. You will hear the context and see the questions and then hear the text. You can listen twice.

All listening tasks look like the one below. You always have the option to listen twice and you will always see the question before you hear the text. As the test progresses, the questions will get more difficult. At first you are listening for very specific concrete information like the example below.

In this example, you listen to someone talking and choose one answer (e.g. phone number, time, or word). Your task is to recognise numbers and/or particular words.

Listen to a teacher speaking. What day is the lunch room closed?

1. Monday
2. Tuesday
3. Wednesday
To select your response, simply click the bubble to make it look like this:

![Listening activity image]

**Tip**

Make sure you read the options before you try and answer the question so you know what you are listening for.

**Practice link:**

[learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/inviting-someone-cinema](learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/inviting-someone-cinema)
As the test progresses, the tasks get more difficult and you are not just listening for one word but maybe an opinion or an idea expressed by someone. The first tasks are always monologues and as you progress through the test, you will also get monologues. The final task is different and contains two questions for one listening text.

In this task, you listen to monologues or dialogues and choose one answer (e.g. problems, solutions or recommendations expressed by the speaker/s). There are 2 questions for each discussion. Your task is to identify abstract ideas that are inferred rather than directly stated.

**Tip**

In this task you will have to listen closely to the details since all the information in each of the possible answers will likely be discussed. However, the answer won’t be directly stated, so you will have to get an overall understanding as well as understand the details in order to select the correct answers.

**Practice links:**
learnenglishteen.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/travelling-abroad
learnenglishteen.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/ordering-food-cafe
learnenglishteen.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice/work
Success Tips

- You should listen to the whole recording before choosing your answer. It is possible all options may be mentioned, so you will need to listen for clues, such as phrases used to say the same thing as the options given, or opinions expressed that are the opposite of those options.
- Read the questions carefully before listening, identify key words and understand what it is you need to listen for.
- Watch for synonyms – you may see a word in a question and hear a different word with a similar meaning in the audio.
- Use the second listening to check or confirm your answer.
- Listen to as much English as possible. You can easily find materials online and we’ve created a short list in the “Study Tips” section to help guide you in finding some of the best.

Study Tips

- To help develop your listening skills for the test, visit: learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/listening-skills-practice. Here you will find some useful games and activities you can do at home to help you practice and learn more.
- BBC World Service offers live radio, podcasts and audio on demand to practice your listening skills on current events, sports, weather, travel and much, much more. Visit: bbc.co.uk/worldserviceradio
- National Public Radio is another great resource with listening material covering current events, arts, life and music. Visit: npr.org
- TED Talks hosts speeches and presentations about thousands of different topics and best of all, most are videos! Visit: ted.com
Speaking

There are four parts to the speaking test.

Part 1
In this part you need to give personal information. Your task is to answer three questions about your everyday life. You should speak for 30 seconds to answer each question. Make sure you try and speak as much as possible and try not to be repetitive.

Tip
When practicing for the exam, record yourself with your phone or computer and then listen to it. This will help you understand how a person marking your exam will hear you, and it can help you recognise areas you need to work on. You can also ask your friends or teacher to listen and discuss what they think you can do to improve.

Practice link:
learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/speaking-exams/talk-about-yourself
Part 2
In this part, you will be asked questions about a photo. Your task is to describe the photo and then answer two more questions related to the topic illustrated in the photo. You should speak for 45 seconds to answer each question.

Tip
It is important to describe the photo and then expand on your discussion. Don’t just list everything you see in the photo. If you spend all 45 seconds simply describing every detail in the photo, you probably won’t get a very high score. Try and talk about how you think the people might feel or what it would be like to be in the photo. This will also help you with the next two questions. They will also be related to the topic.

Try to address all the questions you are asked when the photo appears. If you don’t address all the questions, you won’t be able to get a top mark. Make sure you talk about your own opinions in relation to the question.

There is no single correct way to describe the photos in the test, and the old saying of a picture is worth a thousand words really holds true. Try to say as much as you can in the time you have available. This is your opportunity to show off all your great skills in speaking English!

Practice link:
learnenglish teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/speaking-exams/describe-photo-or-picture
Part 3
In this part, you are not describing a photo, but you must compare and contrast two photos. Your task is to compare two photographs and then answer two more questions related to the topic in the photos. You will have to use your imagination to answer these last two questions. You should speak for 45 seconds to answer each question.

Tip
In this task you need to compare the photos. This means explaining how they are similar and how they are different. Make sure you listen to the question carefully before you answer. The questions are also on the screen so you can read it too if that makes you feel more comfortable. Once again you should not only describe them and discuss how they are similar and different, but you should try and connect the photos to your life. Have you been to a similar place or had a similar experience? If so, please talk about it. If you have never been to a place like that nor had a similar experience, talk about what you think it would be like. You should not limit yourself to what is in the photos, and you should not just give a list of what you see.

One good strategy for this task is to spend some of your time describing the photos or answering the question, and the rest of your time talking about how the photo connects to your life and experiences. If it doesn’t connect to your life or experiences you can discuss what you have heard about it from your friends or family or seen on TV or in a video. Remember, it is more important that you speak and demonstrate your range of English vocabulary and grammar and your fluency. Of course, you need to stay on topic. If you are asked a question about space travel and you talk about swimming, then you will not get many marks. So, make sure you use all the time you have to demonstrate your English skills and answer the question.

Practice link:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/exams/speaking-exams/discussion
Part 4
The final task is a poster presentation. Your task is to give a presentation using the information from a poster. You should speak for 2 minutes. You will have 90 seconds to think before speaking. The presentation will be on a familiar topic and you will be given some information to help you prepare.

Tip
You should give your presentation as if you were giving it to your class. Remember you mustn’t just read the words on the poster, and you must use your time wisely to prepare what you are going to say and structure your presentation well. Use the information to help you but don’t forget to be creative! Try and make your presentation interesting and use the preparation time to plan what you are going to say. Make sure there is a logical structure to your presentation and remember to use appropriate signposting such as ‘firstly’, ‘in conclusion’ and so on to help you structure it. You will hear and see the instructions on the screen and then have the poster in front of you as support. Use your time wisely and make sure you speak for the full two minutes.

Practice links:
learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/speaking-exams/oral-presentation
learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/reading-skills-practice/my-city
has a poster that you could practice presenting.
**Tips for success and common errors**

Remember to try to connect what is in the photo to your own life or tell a story about what you think about the photo.

If you don’t know what is in the photos or what is happening it is no problem. Guess! The speaking test is not testing your knowledge about the photos; it is testing your speaking abilities. As long as the information from the photos is the theme of your discussion, you can talk about anything and you don’t have to tell the truth. This is also a great opportunity to show off your abilities to use speculative language such as, I think..., I’m not really sure, but..., I wonder if..., it could be..., it might be... and so on.

Describing a photo alone can make it difficult to show a wide range of vocabulary, sentence structures and fluency when speaking. Therefore, it will be best to spend a majority of your time:

- speaking by answering other questions than describing
- speculating on what you think about the photo
- discussing a similar experience you have had
- anything related to the photo that will help you demonstrate your higher level speaking skills.

Listen to yourself while you speak and if you make an error then try to correct it. Native speakers do this all the time and use phrases such as, ‘what I meant to say is’, ‘I’m sorry, I mean’, and so on. Keep talking and don’t worry if you make the odd mistake.

If you don’t know a word while you are speaking, don’t worry as it happens to everyone, even celebrities on camera. You can talk around it by describing what you mean, or even use hesitation strategies such as, ‘what’s the word’, ‘I can’t remember the word right now, but the idea is’, ‘it’s on the tip of my tongue’ and so on.

The best way to improve your English speaking skills is simply by practicing speaking. Don’t be afraid to make mistakes when you say things as that is the way we learn, and native speakers do it all the time. If you make a mistake try to correct it and move on.

Relax. It is not a race during the speaking exam, and one of the best strategies for success is to relax, take a deep breath and just do your best.

**Study Tips**

- To help develop your speaking skills for the test, visit learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/exams/speaking-exams. You will find some useful games and activities you can do at home to help you practice and learn more.
- Interested in improving your use of colloquialisms, slang and other informal English often used in speaking? Visit: urbandictionary.com
- UsingEnglish’s website also offers a “laundry list” of English idioms which are a great way to show off your high-level speaking abilities. Visit: usingenglish.com/reference/idioms/country/british-english.html
Writing

All parts of the writing test will share a common theme. You will sign up to a forum or online social club and every task you complete will be related to the theme of the club. There are 4 tasks in total.

Part 1
Fill in a form with personal information using single words or phrases.

Tip
Make sure to use capital letters appropriately here and be careful with spelling. Fill in all the boxes. You should try to spend less than three minutes on this task.

Visit this site to get practice with the Aptis writing test and what you can expect when you take it: britishcouncil.org/aptis-demo-tests/AptisWritingDemo

Practice links:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice/student-card-application
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice/summer-jobs
Part 2
Fill in a form with a short paragraph (20-30 words).

Tip
Write in complete sentences and try to stay within the word count. This task should take less than seven minutes, and you can use informal language (contractions, informal vocabulary, colloquialisms, etc.).

Practice link:
At the bottom of most LearnEnglish Teens activities there is a discussion with a short question to respond to. Try to find a topic that interests you and offer your opinion.
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org
Part 3

Write short paragraphs to respond to three questions. The questions are the kind of questions seen on social network sites or internet forums (30-40 words per response). Make sure you answer all three questions before you move on to the next question. You can’t go back and make changes so make sure you are happy with your three answers before you move on.

Tip

Write in complete sentences in an informal tone. Since this simulates writing in a chat room, it is acceptable but not required to use idioms and colloquial language. However, you shouldn’t use SMS language or text-speak here. You should try to spend less than 12 minutes on this task.

There are many places to practice this kind of question, most commonly at the end of a news article or activity on LearnEnglish Teens. Visit the “What is it” page on LearnEnglish Teens where students have a similar style chat: learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/what-it. This is also a great place to practice your speculative language, which will help with the speaking tasks of the exam.

The secret to success for practicing this kind of question is to get involved in as many of these chats as possible and keep the conversation going!

Practice link:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/what-it
Part 4
Write a short for/against essay (220-250 words). The essay can take one point of view (for or against) or consider both sides (for and against). You will be given a topic.

Tip
You will need to consider the vocabulary you use carefully in this task to make sure you are using appropriate language for an essay. In this situation, formal language is preferred, so idioms should not be used. Coherence and cohesion, which is the flow and linking in your writing, is important here too. Also watch your grammar, punctuation and spelling. You can practice expressing your opinion in the LearnEnglish “Photo Caption” section. Practice your language skills supporting and disagreeing with other photo captions here: learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/study-break/photo-captions. If you have managed your time well in the first three parts, you should have about 25 minutes to write your essay.

Remember that the writing tasks get more difficult as the test progresses. Think about who you are writing to: is it to friends or is it a more formal piece of writing? It is important to change your language to fit the situation. Speaking to a friend, for example, you could write, ‘why don’t we go to see the new band?’, whereas when you write in a formal essay you would write ‘I would recommend that schools support pupils more in choosing their future career’. Notice how formal writing tends to use more complex grammar, longer sentences and a different vocabulary. Like in the speaking test, always try to show a range in your grammar and vocabulary. So, instead of using the word ‘grow’ several times, you could use synonyms such as ‘mature’ or ‘ripen’ depending on what you are writing about. Remember, it is an English test and you need to show off all your skills.

Practice link:
learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice/and-against-essay
Tips for Success & Common Errors

Make sure you fully understand the question and respond appropriately. Take time to read the questions fully so you can plan. You get marks for being on topic so it’s important to understand what you have to do and answer the question fully.

Plan what you are going to write before you start.

- Remember to review your writing and correct any errors before moving to the next question. You can’t go back and make changes to what you have written so you need to be 100% confident you are happy with it before you continue.
- Manage your time wisely. You have 50 minutes for the full writing part of the exam, so be sure to leave plenty of time to write the essay in part four.
- One strategy for improving your fluency before an exam is to write as much as you can about a topic in one minute, five minutes or ten minutes. Don’t pay attention to any mistakes while you write, but write as much as you can. Then count your words at the end of the time and go back to check and fix your mistakes. Do this every day for a month and see how many more words you can write at the end of the month. This will help improve your fluency and recognition of the mistakes you commonly make in your writing.

If you need help thinking of a topic, you will be able to find one here: learnenglish.teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice

- Before writing an essay, it is helpful to consider your purpose and audience.
- The purpose is the reason why you are writing. Are you trying to write to convince, argue, inform, compare and contrast or something else? This will help you decide how to structure your essay and the kind of vocabulary you will want to use.
- The audience is the person you are writing for or the person who will read your essay. Is it your friend, family member, teacher, boss or an exam marker? Knowing this will also help you choose the tone of your essay (formal or informal).

The POWER process

When practicing or writing an essay, try using the POWER process. POWER stands for Prewrite, Organise, Write, Edit and Revise. Breaking your writing down into steps can help maximise your time and the quality of your text.

Prewriting means to think of ideas. Good ideas, bad ideas and crazy ideas are all welcome in this step. Try to write down as many ideas as you can about your topic in three minutes.

Organising means to organise your ideas from the prewriting step. Look over all your ideas and decide which ones you want to keep for this writing task. It doesn’t mean that the ideas you wrote down earlier were bad, it just means they might not fit the task you are trying to write now. After deciding which ideas you want to include in your writing, decide which order you want them to be in your essay.
Writing is the step where you just write. Try not to pay too much attention to grammar or sentence structures at this stage, but get the ideas you chose in the organising step into sentences and paragraphs. Try to use examples and details to develop your writing. Try to use topic sentences and closing sentences to help structure the paragraphs.

Editing is when you go back to what you just wrote and make it better. This is the step where you pay more attention to grammar and vocabulary, and try to help the sentences flow naturally from one to the other with coherence and cohesion devices.

Revising is when you put the finishing touches on the writing before submitting it to your reader. It is also an opportunity to move sentences and paragraphs around so they are in the most logical order for your reader. This is also the last opportunity to make changes to your text before submitting it to your audience, so make sure it shows off how good a writer you are!

While it may seem like it takes more time to write using the POWER process at first, after practice it can really reduce the amount of time you need when writing in an exam. It will also help you produce higher quality pieces of writing which will help you get higher marks on an exam and in school.

The best way to use the POWER writing process strategy is to start using it in school and in your other writing before using it in an exam. Then you will be more comfortable with the process and you will have had the opportunity to improve your writing style.

One of the most important tips for improving writing is to try to write in a way that you enjoy writing. If you like listening to music, try writing songs or poetry. If you like reading textbooks, newspapers or magazines, try writing essays. If you like reading novels, try writing stories. No matter what you write, the practice will help you become a better writer!

**Study Tips**

- To help develop your writing practice for the test, visit: [learnenglish-teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice](http://learnenglish-teens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing-skills-practice). Here you will find some useful games and activities you can do at home to help you practice and learn more.

- Visit Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL): [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/). This is a free site that assists writers at all levels and abilities in improving their English writing abilities. There are even online writing tutors available to answer questions! This is one of the leading writing lab websites on the Internet.

- The LearnEnglish writing section has tutorials, videos and activities to help improve your higher level writing skills. Visit: [learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/writing](http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/writing)
Scoring

Aptis for Teens tests English levels from A1-C on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Reading and listening are marked automatically online, while speaking and writing are marked by examiners. You will receive your results from your school or teacher within 48 hours of taking the test.

Below is a brief overview of the CEFR from the Council of Europe and a general outline of the skills considered when determining a candidate's level. This helps you identify where you are with your English. You will get a scaled score and your CEFR level per skill. Then you can see which areas you might need to improve. You can see an example of the score card in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Common Reference Levels: global scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Proficient User</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent User</td>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes &amp; ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic User</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

source: coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/elp-reg/Source/Key_reference/Overview_CEFRscales_EN
Table 2 – Example results

Candidate Report

Candidate Name: Madrid Administrator
Test Date: 23/08/2012
Organization: British Council - Madrid
Test Package: Aptis Listening Reading Speaking and Writing Package

Scale Score

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Name</th>
<th>Skill Score</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>46/50</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>38/50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>38/50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>35/50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Scale Score</td>
<td>157/200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grammar &amp; Vocab</td>
<td>41/50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VEFR Skill Profile

- Listening
- Reading
- Speaking
- Writing

Grammar & Vocab Level: B2
## Correct responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>Synonym matching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>awful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>inform</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 2</th>
<th>Meaning in context</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 3</th>
<th>Definition matching</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collocations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>jazz</td>
<td>club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peanut</td>
<td>oil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pirate</td>
<td>ship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>romantic</td>
<td>comedy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strawberry</td>
<td>plants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The British Council

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide.

We are on the ground in six continents and over 100 countries bringing international opportunity to life, every day. Each year we work with millions of people, connecting them with the United Kingdom, sharing our cultures and the UK's most attractive assets: English, the arts, education and our ways of living and organising society. We have over 75 years' experience of doing this.

In line with our Royal Charter, we aim to bring high quality English materials to every learner or teacher who wants them around the world. We work with governments to transform whole education systems to increase opportunity and employability through English. We train teachers by radio, web and broadcast in developing and post conflict countries. We also deliver English teaching and offer a wide range of exams, from English tests to school and business qualifications, in more than 90 countries worldwide.

Special needs

The British Council cares about teenagers with special needs and fairness to all candidates regardless of first language, gender, ethnicity, nationality or lifestyle. We have experience in delivering tests to candidates with special needs so that English language ability can be assessed objectively, regardless of any disability.

If you require a modified version of a test (e.g. Braille version, extended time), contact us at least four weeks before your test so we can discuss your needs and make suitable arrangements.

Feedback

We value your feedback, so after your test you will be given the opportunity to complete a survey. We thank you in advance for your useful comments.

Answers

1. Economical. The second part of the sentence describes what a 'frugal' man does.
2. Untidy. The second part contrasts with 'unkempt'.
3. Stopped. Why couldn’t he fly any longer? Because the authorities stopped his license.
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