

PTE Core Test Tips

Be fully prepared for PTE Core with the best strategies and advice for test day success

V1 October 2023

Introduction to PTE Core Test Tips

This resource provides a wealth of test tips for anyone preparing for PTE Core.

You can use the information to help develop useful strategies to answer the 19 question types in PTE Core.

At least two tips are included for all question types, and they are presented in the order in which they appear in the test.

You will also find a study tip for each question type, which will help you bring practice for that skill into your everyday life.

Use the PTE Core Test Tips resource in conjunction with PTE Core Offline Practice Test for even more practice.

Speaking

Read Aloud
Repeat Sentence
Describe Image
Respond to a Situation
Answer Short Question

Writing

Summarize Written Text
Write Email

Reading

Reading and Writing: Fill in the Blanks
Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers
Reorder Paragraph
Fill in the Blanks
Multiple Choice, Single Answer

Listening

Summarize Spoken Text
Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers
Fill in the Blanks
Multiple Choice, Single Answer
Select Missing Word
Highlight Incorrect Words
Write from Dictation

Important Test Tips

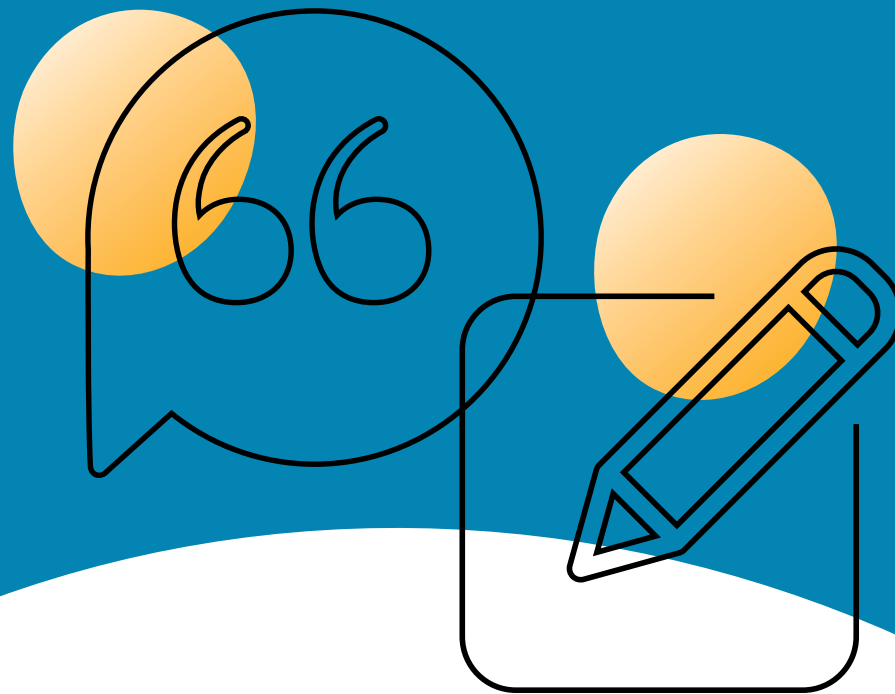
Do

- ✔ Use correct punctuation for writing tasks: full stops, capital letters, commas, etc.
- ✔ Provide a relevant answer. If the question asks you to write or speak about sport, write or speak about 'sport' NOT 'science'.
- ✔ Keep strictly within the word limit given for writing tasks.
- ✔ Respond quickly and keep speaking during speaking tasks. The microphone will close after 3 seconds of silence and stop recording.

Don't

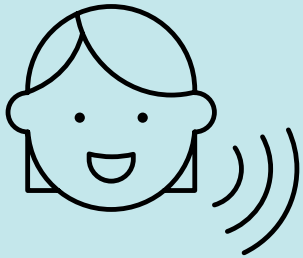
- ✘ Write entirely in capital letters. Only use capitals when needed: at the beginning of sentences, names, etc.
- ✘ Create or memorize responses prior to test day. Responses should always be created on test day in response to the question presented.
- ✘ Click Next (N) before you have completed a task and are ready to move on. You cannot go back to incomplete questions.

Speaking and Writing



This part of the test contains seven different question types. It is the longest section of the test. You will be tested on your speaking and writing skills, using English you might hear in an everyday environment.

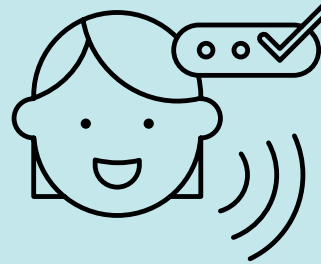
Advice for speaking



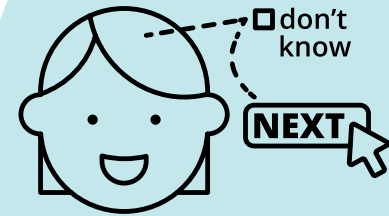
Speak at a normal pace and volume as if talking on the phone. There is no need to shout or whisper.



Make sure the microphone is placed to the side of your face and a few centimeters away from your mouth.



The test is designed to detect periods of silence. During speaking questions, your microphone will close if you are silent for 3 seconds or more.



If you don't know an answer, try to provide a response as best as you can, or say "I don't know" and move on to the next question.

Read Aloud

Remember to take pauses

Using appropriate pauses helps you to read more fluently and give full meaning to the text you are reading. Use punctuation to help you decide where to pause when you read.

Stress key words

Be sure to emphasise or stress the words that carry important information by reading them a little louder. The words to stress are content words such as nouns, adjectives, adverbs and main verbs.

Speak normally

Do not speak too quietly or too loudly. You should speak as if talking on the phone or to a friend.

Practice Read Aloud text

Join our book club and enjoy a world of great literature! / Every month, / we will send you a selection of our most popular titles to read and discuss on our website. / All club members also receive free gifts on their birthday and members discounts in our online store. / To join, / simply click on the link below.



STUDY TIP

Develop the habit of reading aloud, starting with menus, and short sentences from leaflets, signs, and other simple materials. Gradually increase the difficulty of the sentences you read. It's important to read each word carefully. You can practice with a friend, taking turns reading sentences aloud and checking for accuracy.

Repeat Sentence

Listen to the phrasing of the sentence as it is said

Sentences are often said as groups of words or phrases. Identifying the grouping can help you recall the sentence.



**You don't have to accept /
this job offer / if you don't want to.**

Copy the stress and intonation patterns of the sentence you hear

Note how the speaker uses word stress to highlight important information and try to do the same. When does their voice rise and fall?

Don't try to copy the accent

You do not need to mimic the accent of the speaker, just try to speak naturally, being mindful of your pace (how fast or slowly you speak), and your volume.



STUDY TIP

Online clips or short videos offer great opportunities to practice repeating sentences. Find a video that matches your level. Listen to a sentence, pause the recording, and repeat the sentence you have just heard. If the sentence is challenging, rewind the recording and listen again. For lower levels, you can practice with a friend where one person reads out the sentence from a text and the other one repeats it.

Describe Image

Take time to understand the image

Use the 25 seconds to look carefully at the image and try to understand its full meaning.

Organize your description of the image

You can organize your ideas into an introduction, main points, and conclusion. After the tone, start with a general statement of what the image is about, then describe the key details before providing a statement to finish your description.

Speak confidently

Try to speak with confidence while maintaining a natural speed and volume. If you make a mistake, it is ok, just continue with your response.

Practice image



STUDY TIP

To enhance your skills, collect a variety (8–20) of images from magazines, newspapers. Then, set a timer. Take one image, spend 25 seconds preparing, and describe the image within 40 seconds. Ensure that your description includes an introduction, key points and details, and a conclusion.

Respond to a Situation

Take time to prepare a response

Make good use of the 20 seconds you have to prepare: think of the situation and the solution(s) you will present.

Think about the type of language that is appropriate

Depending on who you are responding to, your language may need to be formal or informal. Are you responding to a friend, colleague or stranger?

Speak confidently

Focus on the information you need to cover and speak confidently, making sure to maintain natural speed and volume.

Practice situation

You own a flat that you have rented out to four university students. You are there to check everything's OK. You notice that the flat is very dirty and messy, and the carpet is damaged. You are extremely unhappy about this and want to remind the student of their responsibilities.

What would you say to the students?



STUDY TIP

Develop a habit of using real-life scenarios to practice this item type. As you respond to various situations in your life, assign extra time to translate your ideas into English. Say it out loud or record yourself so that you can listen and make improvements if necessary. Use a timer to finish your speaking within 40 seconds.

Answer Short Question

Answering in one or a few words is enough

There is no need to provide a full sentence in response to this question. There are no extra marks for additional words so one or a few words is enough.

Don't wait too long before answering the question

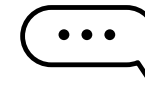
Be sure to start answering the question when the information in the status box changes to 'recording'.

After answering the question, move straight on to the next rather than waiting for the count down timer to complete.



Example question

What do we call a test by scientists to prove if their idea is correct?



Answer

(an) experiment.



STUDY TIP

Work with a friend to come up with 20 general knowledge questions to ask each other. Practice asking and answering the questions and keep the responses brief. If you are working alone, you can find questions online to practice answering out loud.

Summarize Written Text

Identify the important information

Remember the best responses will clearly summarize the main idea and include only the essential supporting ideas. Try to paraphrase (restate the information in different words).

Check word count

Try to keep your summary to between 25 and 50 words.

Course Information – Changes to the Business degree programme

Barr Green University has always led the way with the quality of its courses and teaching. One reason our programmes are so popular is because we understand the needs of students and society and are able to make changes when we see a way to improve our degrees.

Therefore, we have decided that it is now time to update our Business degree programme. We plan to reduce the number of financial courses that we offer in the Business programme in order to focus more on subjects such as management. Our aim is to create a world-class Business programme that covers the content that is so important to employers and companies. We are confident that our new Business degree will open many professional doors for our graduates.

If you'd like to know more about the course, [click here](#).



STUDY TIP

A helpful habit to develop is summarizing short texts from books or magazines. Look for texts with 2-5 paragraphs and identify the main point the author is trying to convey. Ensure that your summary clearly reflects this main message, as if you were explaining it to a friend who hasn't read the text. Use a timer and keep track of your word count to practice effectively.

Write Email

Understand the prompt

Read the prompt carefully and make sure you email addresses all the required areas.

Remember to use common email conventions

- It's important to use common email conventions such as a greeting and sign off. The email may require formal or informal language depending on the person you are writing to.
- When writing, focus on the main message and supporting your points. Using clear and concise language will help you effectively convey your points.

Review your work

- Proofread and edit your email before moving on. Review your message, check for any grammatical errors, typos, or unclear sentences.
- Check your word count. Your response should be no more than 120 words and no less than 50 words. Try to write approximately 100 words.



STUDY TIP

To enhance your writing skills, it's advisable to read well-written emails, articles, or blog posts. Take note of their structure, tone, and language. Observe how the writer conveys their message efficiently and try to incorporate their strategies into your own writing.

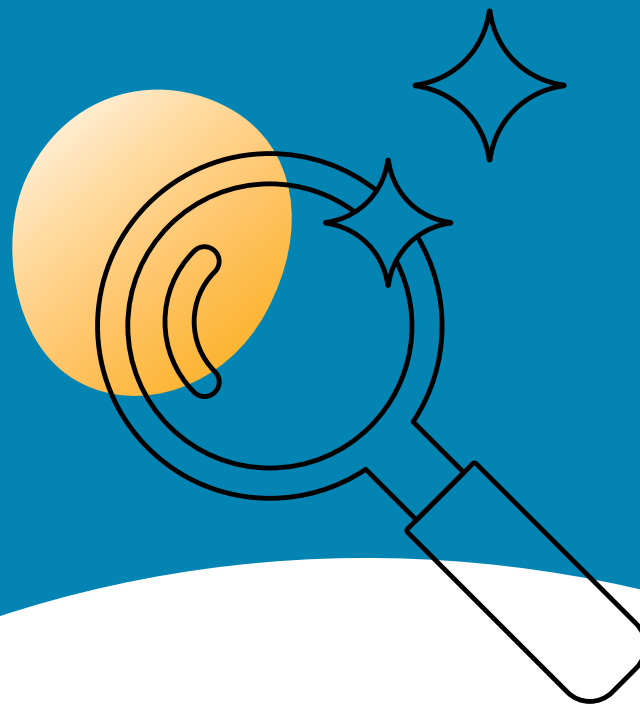
Common email greetings

- ▶ Dear (name)
- ▶ To (name)
- ▶ Greetings
- ▶ To whom it may concern

Common email sign-offs

- ▶ Kind regards
- ▶ Best wishes
- ▶ Thank you
- ▶ Sincerely

Reading



This part of the test contains five different question types. You will be tested on your reading skills, using English you might come across in an everyday environment.

Reading and Writing: Fill in the Blanks

Try to understand the general idea of the text before selecting words

Skim read the text first. This means reading it quickly to understand general meaning of the text. Look for key words or ideas as this will help you understand the text and choose the correct word for each blank.

Example question prompt

The email below is from a student to a friend about renting accommodation. Some words are missing from the text. Click on each blank. A list of choices will appear. Select the appropriate answer choice for each blank.



STUDY TIP

To improve your reading skills, it's important to practice reading short texts from books, articles, and magazines. While reading, pay attention not only to the meaning of the text, but also to the grammar choices, collocations, and fixed phrases used by the writer. Be sure to select readings that are slightly above your current level of English.

Reading and Writing: Fill in the Blanks

Use your grammatical knowledge

When you click on the drop-down arrows, some words may seem right but remember there is only one correct answer. Check that the word is grammatically correct. Is it in the right tense, or part of speech? Is it a noun, adjective, adverb, verb or a preposition? Does it fit the overall meaning of the text?

Don't leave empty blanks

If you're unsure of the answer, you can make a guess as you don't lose points for incorrect responses for this question type.

'still' in the present perfect shows something hasn't happened, and appears between the subject and auxiliary verb.

'already' is used in the present perfect to emphasise something happened before something else or earlier than expected. It comes between the auxiliary verb and main verb. It isn't used with a negative.

'ever' in present perfect shows unidentified time before now. It is usually used in the question form or between the auxiliary verb and main verb.

Fill in the Blanks example

How is your search for accommodation going. I've started but haven't found anything yet.

- ▶ still
- ▶ already
- ▶ ever
- yet

'yet' in a negative present perfect sentence shows that something hasn't happened but we think it should happen soon.

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers

Read the instructions and question carefully

- The question prompt will provide you with information on the text topic and indicate what information you need to find for your answer.
- Remember that more than one option is correct in this type of multiple choice task.

Quickly read through the response options and note any words that are repeated

- If the same noun phrase occurs in a lot of the options, the answer could be related to this phrase.
- Scan the text for repeated words. Read around them to find the answer more quickly.

Don't guess if you are not sure

- You will lose points for choosing an incorrect option.



STUDY TIP

To enhance your vocabulary, consider creating a list of words along with their corresponding synonyms. Additionally, it can be beneficial to document instances of how each new word is used in a sentence.

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers

Dear Staff,

As you know, this is an exciting period for our company. Customer feedback on our new products has been extremely positive, and soon we're going to enter the Asian market for the first time. We're confident that our products and excellent service will be just as popular there as they have been in other regions.

However, we need to adapt as we get bigger, and one way we can do that is by moving our head office to a more central location. For five years, our head office has been in Oakhedge because it was a cheaper place to do business, but now's the time to relocate to the capital.

This move will have several benefits. It will of course be more convenient because most of our products are manufactured in our Greenbridge factory which is just 15 km from the capital. Being nearer to our main factory is something the company needs. In addition, there are also environmental issues to think about. An exciting benefit of moving is that our new building is much more eco-friendly than our current one. It will help us cut waste and achieve our target of using 100% green energy, which is an important factor in our decision.

We know that this will involve significant changes for everyone, but we want you to know that wherever possible, we will offer you the opportunity to work from home if you cannot move to the capital.

Over the coming weeks, we will hold staff meetings to discuss the move in greater detail, and to answer any questions you may have.

Best wishes,

Andy Milton, Head of Human Resources

Read the email from a company to its employees explaining an important change. Answer the question by selecting all the correct responses. You will need to select more than one response.

Tells you about the reading topic of the text.

The company has decided to move its head office because _____

- It wants to cut its costs.
- It is growing.
- It wants to change to different activities.
- It is also moving its main factory.
- It wants to cause less pollution.

Mentions the Oakhedge office being cheap so this statement is incorrect.

Mentions new products but does not say this is the reason for the move.

The text does not mention moving the factory. But says the office is moving closer to the factory in the capital.

Reorder Paragraph

Read all the text boxes quickly before you start reordering them

Understand the main idea of the text by looking for some keywords that appear.

Find the topic sentence first

It is usually a clear statement about the topic, and all the other sentences are related in some way to this sentence.

Identify clues to link sentences

Choose a sentence that follows logically from the first sentence by using language clues such as linking words, articles (a, an, the), nouns and pronoun, (David – he), as well as the overall meaning of sentences. In this example “the main one” refers to “great advantages”

Once completed, read the whole text to check if it makes sense.

Reorder Paragraph example

However, I soon realised that there were some great advantages to this type of travel.

At the same time, it also encourages me to make the effort to talk to new people and I really enjoy that.

For instance, it was so lovely to spend the whole day relaxing on the beach instead of doing all the active things my friends and family usually want to do!

▶ When I decided to take a holiday without my family or friends, I felt a bit nervous

▶ Perhaps the main one was I could do whatever I wanted without thinking about other people’s preferences.



STUDY TIP

Practice reading short texts from websites, magazines, and coursebooks. Learn how to recognize the topic sentence and how to recognize the connections between paragraphs. Highlight all the words and phrases that are used for cohesion (i.e. to link sentences and paragraphs to each other).

Fill in the Blanks

Identify the topic

Skim the text quickly to get an idea of the topic. Try to identify the topic, keywords, and how the ideas progress across the text.

Look for words that often go together

Remember that some words often go together to form a familiar phrase. This is called 'collocation'. Using collocation can help you recognize the correct word for each blank. Read around the blank in the text and decide what part of the sentence is the missing. Could the missing word be a noun, verb, adjective, etc?

Example text

The head waiter gave us excellent menu suggestions.

noise

waiter

service

traditional

manager



STUDY TIP

Expand your vocabulary by practicing changing the form of a word (for example, agree (v) agreement (n) agreeable (adj) etc.). Work with prefixes and suffixes and increase your vocabulary range by identifying synonyms of words you already know.

Multiple Choice, Single Answer

Review the question

Before reading the full text, read the question prompt carefully as it will give you the context of the text and tell you what information to look for in the text.

Focus on key words when reading

Review the answer options and think about the differences between the options.

Eliminate incorrect options

Try to eliminate the options that are clearly wrong before selecting an option that seems most likely to be correct. If you are not sure, then take a guess.

Question prompt

Read the text from a flyer advertising a new shopping centre. Answer the multiple choice question by selecting the correct response. Only one response is correct.

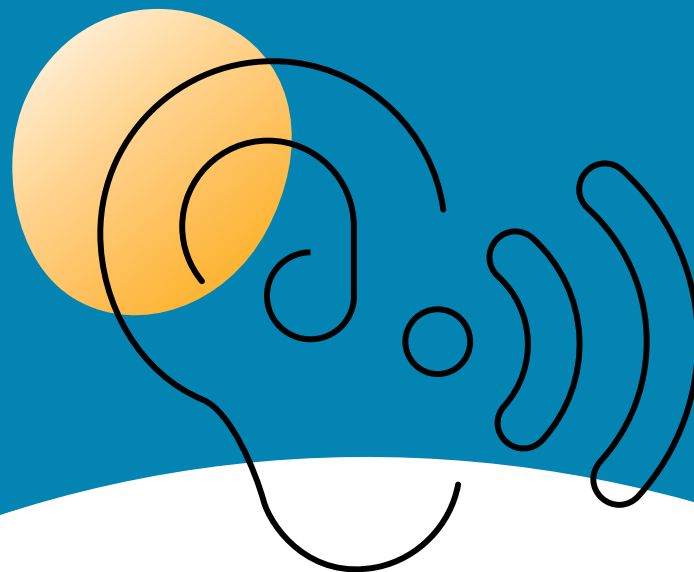
Which of these is only available during the Bay Centre's opening day event on June 1st?



STUDY TIP

One way to improve your vocabulary is by going through texts and identifying unfamiliar words. Try to guess their meanings based on the context and then verify your guesses using a dictionary.

Listening



This part of the test contains seven different question types. The questions are based on audio or video clips, which begin to play automatically during a test. You hear each audio or video clip once. You are allowed to take notes.

Summarize Spoken Text

Take notes effectively

As you listen, you will need to take notes, but do not try to write everything you hear. Note only main and supporting ideas. Use abbreviations, symbols, and arrows to show relations between them.

Be selective with your summary

In your summary only include the main point and ideas that support the main points. Imagine you are writing a summary for someone who hasn't heard the recording. Remember to keep your summary between 20 and 30 words.

Question prompt

Remember, the question prompt will provide the context of the audio.

You will hear a recording of a radio programme where the speaker is discussing a digital product.

Write between 20 and 30 words explaining the main points of the talk for someone who was not present at the talk. You have 8 minutes to finish this task.



STUDY TIP

Enhance your note-taking abilities by practicing with recordings that are approximately 90 seconds long. Focus on identifying the key ideas presented by the speaker and jot down relevant keywords. After listening, create a short summary in one sentence that captures the main message. The summary writing part should take no more than 8 minutes to complete.

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers

Review the question and take notes

- Look at the question and answer options quickly to identify keywords before the audio begins playing.
- Takes notes as you listen and keep listening until the end. Sometimes speakers change what they have said or add extra information.

Focus on meaning, not just the words said

- Select the options that best match the meaning of what you have heard. Don't just choose an option because it has the same words or phrases as the recording
- If you are not sure, then don't guess. You will lose points for every incorrect answer.

Question prompt

What skills does Cindy say she has learnt from her job?

- Writing popular blog posts.
- Managing a team.
- Creating marketing plans.
- Managing deadlines.
- Trying to solve problems with customers.
- Training staff.
- Finding new clients.



STUDY TIP

To enhance your note-taking skills, try listening to different one-minute recordings or videos and jot down important keywords as you go along. Create a system of using abbreviations to link the main concepts together for a more organized note-taking approach.

Fill in the Blanks

Read the question and skim the text

- Before the audio begins, read the question to identify the topic and skim the text to identify key words to get an overall idea of what the text is about.

Use your cursor and abbreviations

- While listening, follow the written text by moving the cursor along with the text. Try to type the missing word using abbreviations. Alternatively, you can use the erasable whiteboard provided.
- Don't stop to read what you have typed as you may miss the next word, but once the audio has stopped check all the words for grammar, spelling and that the words fit in context before moving to the next question.

Example audio transcript

Ok, lets discuss our plans for the coming months. And the first thing I'd like to say is that our new collection will be quite different, I mean, some of our current customers may be surprised when they see the items in the store. Therefore, we need to find ways to meet their needs while promoting our items to other customers.

collection

current

promoting



STUDY TIP

One way to improve your listening skills is to listen to various recordings and take notes of the last word you hear every 15 or 20 seconds by typing or writing the word. Remember to turn off your spell-checker before doing this exercise so that you can verify the accuracy of the word you wrote down by checking it against the original recording and confirming the spelling in a dictionary.

Multiple Choice, Single Answer

Identify the topic before the audio begins

Read the question carefully to understand the topic and look over the answer options quickly to identify keywords.

Eliminate incorrect options

When choosing the right answer, think about why an option is correct or incorrect. Incorrect options may not match what the speaker says, disagrees with what the speaker says or doesn't answer the question.

You could be listening for:

The main idea

What was the main purpose of the meeting?

Supporting information or details

How did the fire impact the theatre's production?

The conclusion you can draw or inference from the speaker

How does the speaker feel about the outcome?

The speaker's purpose

Why has the speaker contacted the insurance company?



STUDY TIP

To enhance your vocabulary, it's important to consistently expand your range of words. You can create lists of words and make use of a thesaurus to find words with similar meanings. It's also helpful to use these new words in context by writing a sentence that includes them. If necessary, a dictionary can be used to find example sentences.

Select Missing Word

Understand the topic

- Read the instructions and skim all the options quickly to get an understanding of the topic of the audio.
- There are three to five response options to select from. The options may all relate to the audio in some way, but only ONE option is correct.

Listen to the very end before selecting an option

- Listen carefully for the main points and flow of ideas in the talk. Pay extra attention to the last part of the recording so that you hear the words surrounding the beep.

Example audio transcript

Let me give you some advice when making small talk. Number one: choose your topic carefully and don't be too negative. Don't talk about personal finances, politics or religion, or more personal topics. Be prepared to listen and remember to show interest in the other person and their opinions. Showing interest is simple. If you're sitting down, move your body forward a little, use eye contact and of course, smile as you speak. Watch the other person's body language and if they start to look bored, change the subject.

tell the truth

change the subject

speak more slowly

repeat what you said



STUDY TIP

To improve your vocabulary, try practicing brainstorming before listening to a recording. Start by reading the title and description of a recording if it is available. Then spend around 30-40 seconds coming up with all the words you think you might hear in the recording. Once you've brainstormed, listen to the recording and see if any of the words you came up with were used.

Highlight Incorrect Words

Skim the text quickly

- Before the audio starts, quickly look over the transcript to get a general idea of the topic.

Follow along with the audio

- Place your cursor at the beginning of the transcript before the audio status box counter reaches zero. As soon as the recording starts, follow the words in the transcript as you listen.
- When you hear an incorrect word, click on it immediately.

Regular listeners of this show will know that I prefer watching serious films because they offer viewers the chance to understand some very interesting themes. For that reason, I wasn't expecting much when I went to see a cartoon last week. However, I'm happy to say that Animal Palace actually changed my mind! Firstly, the exciting plot kept me guessing what was going to happen next. In fact, I was surprised about how complicated the story was. But I don't mean that as a negative thing. I just mean that the film **involved** a discussion of lots of ideas that were new to me, and that encouraged me to want to learn more. I'd highly recommend this film.



STUDY TIP

It's important to practice listening to various accents to improve your comprehension skills. It's recommended that you expose yourself to both American and British English, as well as other regional variations, as some words may have different pronunciations.

Write from Dictation

Be prepared

- Get ready and take notes of the main words as you listen, either by typing on screen or handwriting the sentence on the erasable whiteboard.
- Type the complete sentence into the response box.

Review the sentence before submitting

- After completing the sentence, go back and check the grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Always start with a capital letter and finish with a full stop.

Some materials are more comfortable to wear than others.

Cut

Copy

Paste



Hmmm...I heard 'material' but the sentence starts with 'some' and 'are' which means the noun is a plural or uncountable so it should have an 's'.



STUDY TIP

In English, native speakers do not always pronounce every word with clarity. Instead, they emphasize important words. It is helpful to practice recognizing these emphasized words in different recordings. Make a habit of jotting down only the stressed words and then constructing the complete sentence from them. Verify the accuracy of the sentence by cross-checking it with the recording.

PTE Core Test Tips

There's so much more to learn.



Discover more preparation resources at: pearsonpte.com/preparation

