

Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Guide for Students – ISE Foundation (A2)

Reading & Writing | Speaking & Listening

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Foreword

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams assess all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – in a way that reflects real-life communication in English.

This guide:

- ▶ gives a summary of both modules of the ISE Foundation exam – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening
- ▶ gives you some ideas on how to prepare for the ISE Foundation exam
- ▶ tells you what the examiner is looking for
- ▶ tells you about results and certificates.

Please check trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation for the latest information about Trinity's ISE exams, and to make sure you are using the latest version of the related documents.

What is ISE Foundation?

ISE Foundation is an English language exam for learners of English who are at level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). You take ISE Foundation in two parts – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening.



Reading & Writing



Speaking & Listening

What do I get when I pass a module?

You need to pass both skills in a module in order to pass the module and receive your module certificate.

When do I receive the ISE Foundation qualification certificate?

After you have passed both ISE Foundation Reading & Writing and ISE Foundation Speaking & Listening, you receive the ISE Foundation qualification certificate. The certificate shows your results for each separate skill – reading, writing, speaking and listening (Pass, Merit or Distinction).

Who recognises ISE?

Many institutions recognise ISE as proof that you can read, write, speak and listen in English. To find out more visit:

trinitycollege.com/recognition

ISE Foundation summary

Reading & Writing

How long is the Reading & Writing exam? Two hours.

Which skills do the reading tasks test? Reading for gist, reading for details, reading comprehension, and understanding the main ideas of a text.

Which skills do the writing tasks test? How you organise a text, your range of language functions, grammar and vocabulary, how well you answer the question, and how you transform reading texts into a writing text.

The Reading & Writing exam has four parts:

Task 1 – Long reading

How many texts? One text.

How long is the text? About 300 words.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 1-5 – choose the right title for each paragraph of the reading text
- ▶ questions 6-10 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the text – three are false
- ▶ questions 11-15 – complete sentences with exact words from the reading text.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

How many texts? Three short texts.

How long are the texts? In total, the three texts are about 300 words. One of the texts is an infographic.

How many questions? 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 16-20 – choose which text matches a description – there are five questions that describe the main idea or purpose of the texts
- ▶ questions 21-25 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the texts – three are false
- ▶ questions 26-30 – complete notes with exact words from the texts (you choose the words from a list).

Task 3 – Reading into writing

How many texts do I read? You use the three texts from task 2.

What do I write? A descriptive essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal or neutral email or letter, or a review.

How many words do I write? 70-100 words. You can **only** use information from the texts in task 2 in your answer. Your answer must be in your own words and not copied from the texts.

Task 4 – Extended writing

What do I write? A descriptive essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal or neutral email or letter, or a review.

How many words do I write? 70-100 words.

To see sample Reading & Writing exams, please go to:

trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation

Speaking & Listening

The Speaking & Listening exam is a one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner. The exam is in three parts:



Topic task (4 minutes)

To prepare for the exam, prepare to talk about a topic. You can choose what you want to talk about, for example, a place or an activity.

How do you choose a topic?

Think of three different possible topics that you can talk to the examiner about.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What can you say about each topic? Which one shows your English skills the best? Which one do you want to talk about with the examiner?

Before the exam, you must complete a topic form with four points you want to discuss. You may use the Trinity topic form available at trinitycollege.com/ISEtopicform or you may create your own form with four points for discussion. You may also bring a small item such as a picture, an event ticket or medal into the exam room to support the topic discussion. However, mobile phones must not be brought into the exam room.

You take the topic form into your exam. The examiner uses this to start the discussion.

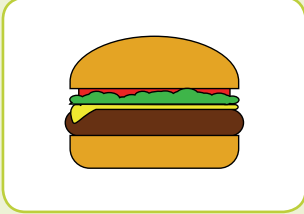
Can you think of some possible ideas for your topic form?

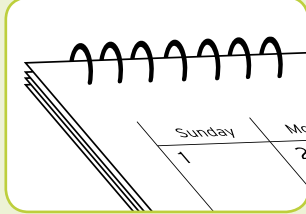
During the exam, you discuss your topic and your topic points with the examiner.



Conversation task (2 minutes)

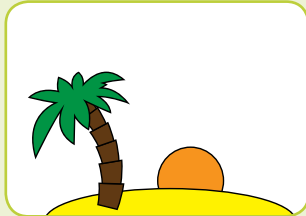
In this part of the exam, you have a conversation with the examiner on one of these subject areas. Can you label each of the pictures using the subjects in the box below?

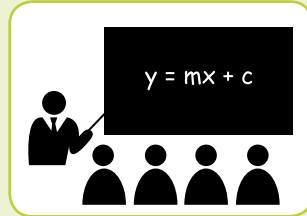












Holidays

Shopping

School and work

Hobbies and sports

Food

Weekend and seasonal activities

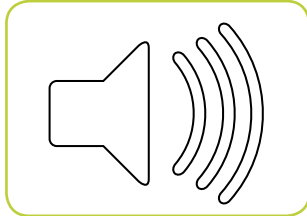
Think about each subject area. What can you say about each one? Try to talk about your personal experience.

Independent listening tasks (6 minutes)

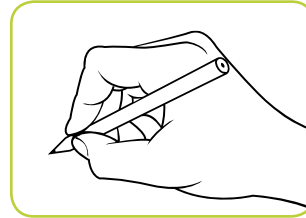
In this part of the exam there are two tasks.

Task 1 (2 minutes 15 seconds)

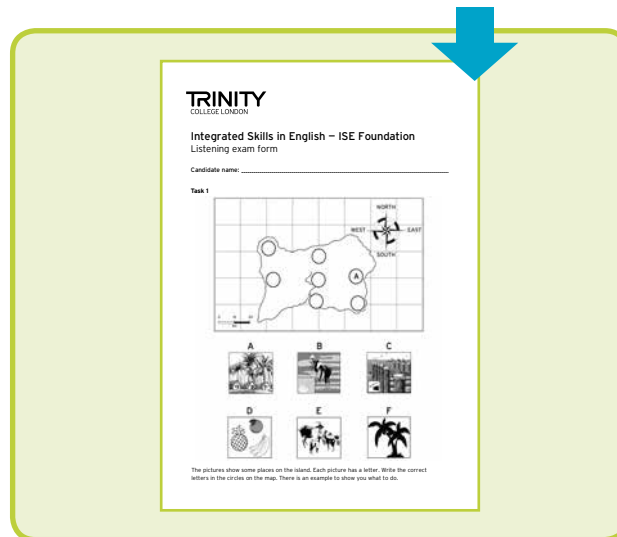
You listen to a recording (45 seconds) twice and write letters on a diagram. The recording tells you where to write the letters.



Listen to a recording (twice)



Write your answers on a diagram

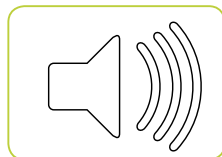


Task 2 (3 minutes 45 seconds)

You listen to a recording (1 minute) twice and take some notes on paper. You do not have to take notes if you don't want to. You then tell the examiner five facts you heard in the recording. After this, the examiner asks you three questions about the recording.



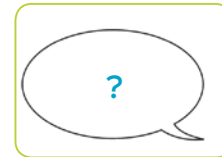
The examiner tells you what you have to do



Listen to a recording (twice)



You tell the examiner five things you heard



The examiner asks you three questions

To watch a video of an ISE Foundation Speaking & Listening exam, please go to:

trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation

How to prepare for ISE Foundation

Below are some tips for preparing for each part of the ISE Foundation exam:

Reading & Writing

Reading

Do

- ▶ Practise reading in English by, for example, reading English websites, newspapers or magazines – look for subjects in English that interest you and subjects that you are studying in school or college.
- ▶ Use graded readers, which are books specially written for A2 level learners of English.
- ▶ Try to understand the meaning of words you don't know. Look at the whole sentence, the paragraph and the context and try to think of possible meanings of the word. After you finish reading the paragraph or the whole text, check the meanings of the words in the dictionary.
- ▶ Practise highlighting words or phrases that you think are important for your answer. You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions in the exam, if you want to.

Writing

Do

- ▶ Look at the question carefully (How many different ideas are there in the question? How many ideas do you have to write in your answer?).
- ▶ Practise writing in three stages:
 - plan what you want to write
 - write your answer
 - check your writing/answer.
- ▶ Check your work to see if it is:
 - organised (Have you used paragraphs? Does it have a conclusion?)
 - appropriate (Have you answered the question? Have you thought about who will read your writing?)
 - accurate (Is your spelling correct? Have you used capital letters and full stops?)
 - legible (Is it easy to read?).
- ▶ Practise doing sample exams from the Trinity website trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside class – for example, write reviews of films you have seen or books you have read, take part in discussions on the internet in English or write emails or messages to friends in English.



Speaking & Listening

Topic task

Do

- ▶ Spend time choosing and preparing your topic. Choose a topic that interests you and that you can spend up to four minutes talking about.
- ▶ Try to think of a topic that includes lots of language of ISE Foundation. For example, a topic that helps you talk about your likes and dislikes and the past and future.
- ▶ Use a range of different language functions from the level (see page 14).
- ▶ Think of the language you will need and the questions the examiner might ask you.
- ▶ Think of a question you can ask the examiner about your topic.
- ▶ Practise listening to English in addition to speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

Don't

- ▶ Don't choose a technical topic – it's difficult to remember technical vocabulary in the exam.
- ▶ Don't memorise a script – you can plan ideas and phrases for your topic, but remember that the topic is a discussion and it is important to be natural.

Conversation task

Do

- ▶ Be prepared to talk about all the conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about what questions the examiner could ask about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about how you can use the language of ISE Foundation to talk about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Remember to think of a question to ask the examiner about each conversation subject area.
- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

Independent listening task

Do

- ▶ Practise listening to recorded English – you are tested on listening to recordings, so watch films and television in English, listen to English podcasts or news programmes, watch English videos on the internet and practise in class.
- ▶ Practise taking notes while you listen – try to only write the most important information like dates, names, places and facts.

Don't

- ▶ Don't try to write down everything you hear – you don't need 100% of the information.

What happens on the day of the exam?



Reading & Writing

You take the exam at a Trinity centre or at a registered exam centre. It is a written exam and it takes two hours.

Here is the format of the exam and some tips on each part.

Task 1 – Long reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task.
- ▶ Make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Tip

If you make a mistake, cross out your answer ~~like this~~ and write a new answer next to it.

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task.
- ▶ Make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write. Your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Make sure you use information from the texts in task 2 to answer the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Tip

Don't just copy from the texts – always try to use your own words.

Task 4 – Extended writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write. Your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Speaking & Listening

A Trinity examiner comes to your centre for the Speaking & Listening module. This is what happens:

Introductions

- ▶ The examiner says 'Hello' and asks your name. The examiner uses some simple greetings like 'How are you?'.
- ▶ You are not tested during the introduction part of the exam.



Tip

It is natural to be nervous when taking an exam, but try to think of the Speaking & Listening exam as an opportunity to talk about things that interest you. It's a chance to show the examiner what you can do in English.

If you don't understand something, ask the examiner to repeat what he or she said.

Topic task

The examiner asks you for your topic form and he or she asks you what you want to talk about. The examiner uses the form to ask you questions about your topic. Listen carefully and answer the examiner's questions. Don't forget to ask questions too.

Conversation task The examiner tells you which subject you are going to talk about and then asks you a question to start the conversation. Listen carefully and answer the examiner's questions. Don't forget to ask questions too.

Independent listening tasks

For both tasks the examiner tells you what you need to do and then plays a recording. In task 1 you write letters on a diagram. In task 2 you tell the examiner five facts about the recording you hear and then answer three questions about it. In task 2 you can take notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed. You listen to the recording twice.

End of the exam

The examiner tells you that the exam has finished and says goodbye. You are not marked on this part of the exam.

What is the examiner assessing in ISE Foundation?

What is the examiner assessing in ISE Foundation?

Language functions for ISE Foundation

Study and practise the language functions before the exam.

- ▶ Giving personal information about present and past circumstances/activities
- ▶ Describing routines
- ▶ Expressing ability and inability
- ▶ Describing future plans
- ▶ Expressing likes and dislikes
- ▶ Describing people, objects and places
- ▶ Expressing simple comparisons
- ▶ Asking for information (eg simple questions about everyday life)
- ▶ Asking for clarification
- ▶ Responding to requests for clarification

Reading

There are 30 questions in the reading section. Depending on the number of correct answers you give, your Reading result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

Writing

Here are the four skills that the examiner assesses:

Task fulfilment: How well you answer the question.

Organisation and structure: How well you organise your writing, use paragraphs and sentences and link your ideas together.

Language control: How well you use the language functions of ISE Foundation and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling that you use.

Reading for writing (task 3 only): How well you use the reading texts from task 2 to write answers using your own words in task 3.

For the writing tasks your scores in the four scales are combined. Your Writing result is Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the reading part and the writing part, you will pass the Reading & Writing module. If you fail either the reading part or the writing part, or both, you will not pass the Reading & Writing module.

Reading result:

Writing result:

Reading & Writing module result:

Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

Speaking

The examiner assesses these four abilities:

Communicative effectiveness: How well you complete each task. For example, discussing your topic or having a conversation.

How well you respond to the examiner and how you cope with problems. For example, can you ask the examiner to repeat when you don't understand?

Interactive listening: How well you follow the conversation and understand the examiner.

Language control: How well you use the language functions of ISE Foundation (see page 14) and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar that you use.

Delivery: Your pronunciation and fluency, and how well the examiner understands you.

Your Speaking result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.



Listening

In Independent listening task 1 you receive a score from 1 to 5. In Independent listening task 2 the examiner awards a score based on how well you understand the recording.

Your speaking and writing are not assessed in the Independent listening tasks.

Your scores in task 1 and task 2 are combined to give your overall Listening result, which will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the speaking part and the listening part, you will pass the Speaking & Listening module. If you fail either the speaking part or the listening part, or both, you will not pass the Speaking & Listening module.

Speaking result:		Listening result:*		Speaking & Listening module result:
Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

*Independent listening tasks

Your ISE Foundation qualification certificate

Your ISE Foundation qualification certificate

When you pass both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you receive your ISE Foundation qualification certificate. This certificate shows that you have passed ISE Foundation and gives your results in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

ISE Foundation: Pass

Reading: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Writing: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Speaking: Pass or Merit or Distinction

Listening: Pass or Merit or Distinction

You also receive a report showing your strengths and areas for future improvement in each skill. You get this report if you pass or fail.

