

Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Guide for Students – ISE A1

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 A1 exam – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening
- ▶ gives you some ideas about how to prepare for the ISE A1 exam
- ▶ tells you what the examiner is looking for
- ▶ tells you about results and certificates.

Please check trinitycollege.com/ISE-A1 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 A1?

ISE A1 is an English language exam for learners of English who are at level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). You take ISE A1 in two parts – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening.



What do I get when I pass a module?

When you pass a module, you will receive a module certificate. You need to pass both skills in a module in order to pass the module.

When do I receive the ISE A1 qualification certificate?

After you have passed both ISE A1 Reading & Writing and ISE A1 Speaking & Listening, you receive the ISE A1 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 A1 summary

Reading & Writing

How long is the Reading & Writing exam? 1 hour 30 minutes.

Which skills do the reading tasks test?

- ▶ Reading to understand the main idea of a paragraph.
- ▶ Reading to find and understand specific information, for example a word.

Which skills do the writing tasks test?

- ▶ How you use information from the reading texts in your writing.
- ▶ How well you answer the question.
- ▶ How you group information.
- ▶ Your range of language functions, grammar and vocabulary.

The Reading & Writing exam has four parts:

Task 1 – Long reading

How many texts? One text.

How long is the text? About 200 words in total. The text has five parts.

How many questions? 10 questions. There are two types of question:

- ▶ questions 1-5 – choose the right title for each paragraph of the reading text
- ▶ questions 6-10 – complete sentences with an exact word 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 200 words. One of the texts is an image with some words or short phrases.

How many questions? 10 questions. There are two types of question:

- ▶ questions 11-15 – choose which text matches a description. There are five questions that describe the main idea or purpose of the texts.
- ▶ questions 16-20 – complete notes with an exact word 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 short message to someone you know, eg a text message, a greeting card or a postcard.

How many words do I write? 40-50 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? Information and/or a description of someone or something you know, eg a hobby or your home.

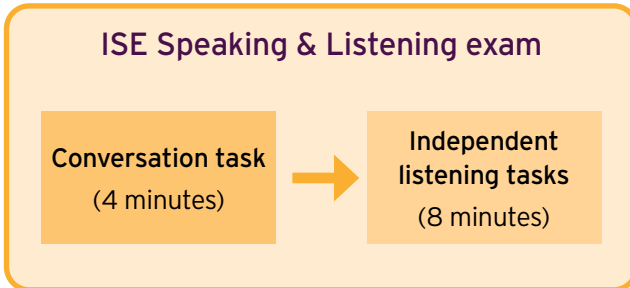
How many words do I write? 40-50 words.

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

trinitycollege.com/ISE-A1

Speaking & Listening

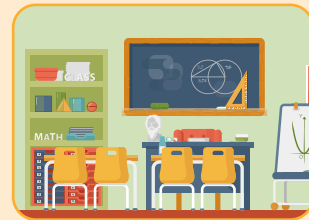
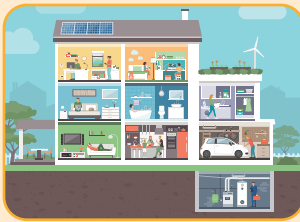
The Speaking & Listening exam is a one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner. The exam has two parts:



Conversation task (4 minutes)

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

Subject areas



Family and friends

Days of the week and months of the year; numbers to 100

Rooms in the home

Places in the local area, locations

Everyday activities; home life and routine

Familiar objects in the household, classroom, including colours and locations

ISE A1 summary

Independent listening tasks (8 minutes)

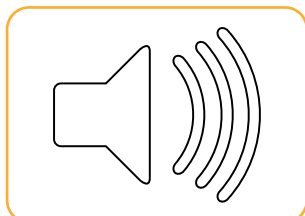
This part of the exam has two tasks.

Task 1

You listen to a recording (3 minutes) twice. You hear four conversations and answer a question on each one by selecting a picture. For each question, you choose from three pictures.



The examiner tells you what you have to do



Listen to a recording (twice)



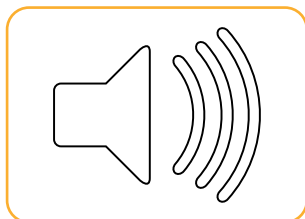
You tell the examiner the answer to each question

Task 2

You listen to a recording (2 minutes 30 seconds) twice. If you like, you can take some notes on paper – you do not have to take notes and you will not get a mark for them. You then answer three questions, based on what you heard in the recording.



The examiner tells you what you have to do



Listen to a recording (twice)



You tell the examiner the answer to each question

How to prepare for ISE A1

Below are some tips for preparing for each part of the ISE A1 exam:

Reading & Writing

Reading

Do

- ▶ Use graded readers, which are books specially written for A1 level learners of English.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ 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 a 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 (Is the information grouped in a way that makes sense?)
 - 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/ISE-A1.
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside class – for example, write emails or messages to friends in English or write descriptions of things and people you know, like rooms in your house or members of your family.

Speaking & Listening

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, and how you would answer them.
- ▶ 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 listen to practice materials on the Trinity website trinitycollege.com/ISE-A1 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

- ▶ 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 1 hour and 30 minutes. Here is the format of the exam and some tips for 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 25 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.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 25 minutes on this task.

What happens on the day of the exam?

Speaking & Listening

You take the exam at a Trinity centre or at a registered exam centre. You will speak to the examiner on a video call. The exam takes about 12 minutes.

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. You might say: 'Sorry?' or 'Pardon?'

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. You will talk about more than one subject.

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 answer four questions by choosing pictures. In task 2 you tell the examiner three facts about the recording you hear. You can take notes if you want to. You will not get a mark for your notes. You listen to the recordings 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 A1?

Language functions for ISE A1

Study and practise the language functions before the exam:

- ▶ Stating simple facts
- ▶ Understanding instructions
- ▶ Giving personal information about present circumstances
- ▶ Understanding directions and indicating locations (not giving directions)
- ▶ Understanding and expressing very basic likes/dislikes/preferences
- ▶ Asking questions, eg *How are you? Do you live here?*
- ▶ Describing familiar things, eg people, objects including colours and position
- ▶ Understanding and informing about possessions
- ▶ Repairing communication at simplest level
- ▶ Understanding short, illustrated narratives
- ▶ Linking, eg *and; then*

Reading

There are 20 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 sentences and link your ideas together.

Language control: How well you use the language functions of ISE A1 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

What is the examiner assessing in ISE A1?

Speaking

The examiner assesses these four abilities:

Communicative effectiveness: How well you complete the task of 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 A1 (see page 13) 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 out of 4. In task 2, you receive a score out of 3. Both scores are based on the number of correct responses you give.

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 A1 qualification certificate

When you pass both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you receive your ISE A1 qualification certificate. This certificate shows that you have passed ISE A1 and gives your results in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

ISE A1: 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.

