

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

Reading & Writing | Speaking & Listening

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 will:

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

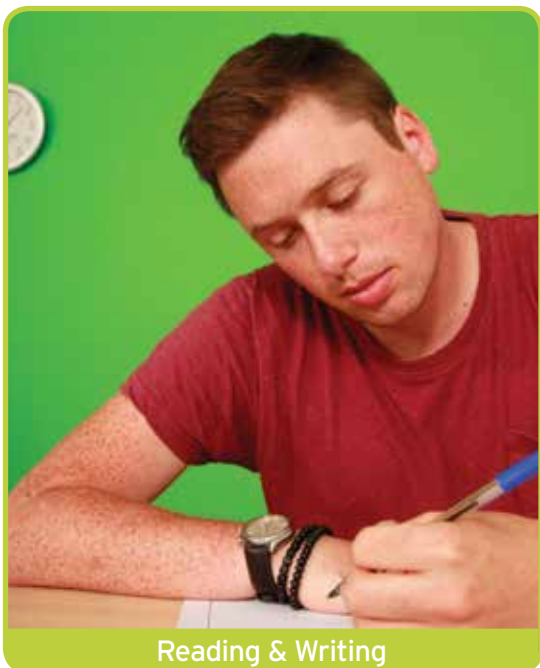
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What is ISE Foundation?

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.



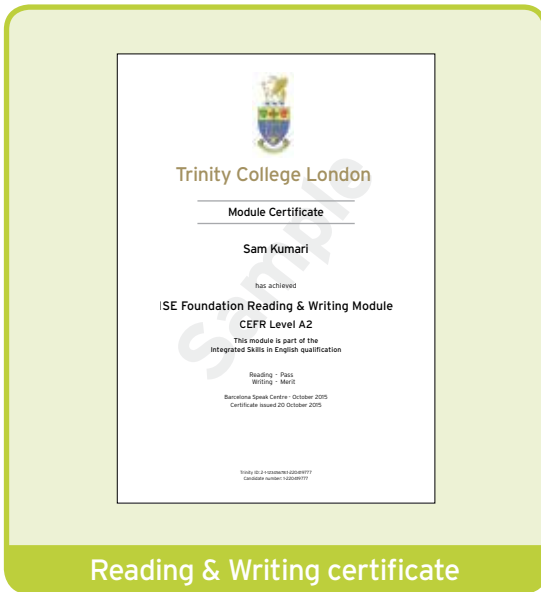
Who recognises ISE?

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

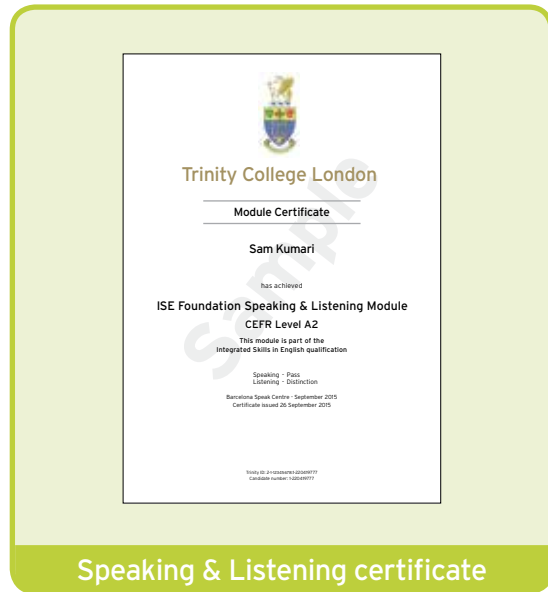
www.trinitycollege.com/recognition

What do I get when I pass a module?

When you pass an ISE module, you get a module certificate:



Reading & Writing certificate



Speaking & Listening 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 will receive the ISE Foundation qualification certificate, which shows your results in all four skills.



ISE qualification certificate

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, understanding the main ideas of a text.

Which skills do the writing tasks test? How you organise a text, your range of grammar and vocabulary, how well you answer the question, 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 heading 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
- ▶ questions 11-15 – complete sentences with 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 a graphic or diagram with some short text.

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

- ▶ questions 16-20 – choose which text matches a description – there are five questions which 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
- ▶ questions 26-30 – complete summary notes with words from the texts (you choose the words from a list) – the notes are a summary of the three texts.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

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

What do I write? An essay or article.

How many words do I write? 70-100 words. You can **only** use information from the texts in task 2 in your answer.

Task 4 – Extended writing

What do I write? An essay, article, letter or email in response to a question.

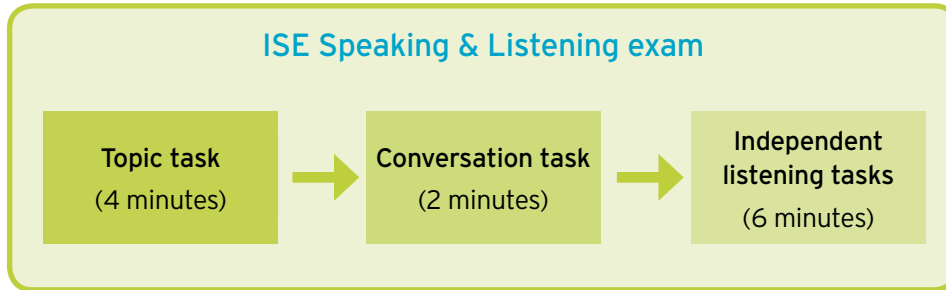
How many words do I write? 70-100 words.

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

www.trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation

Speaking & Listening

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



Topic task (4 minutes)

To prepare for the exam, you prepare to talk about a topic. You can choose what you want to talk about – for example: a regular activity, a favourite place, a club or a toy that you have.

How do you choose a topic?

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

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What can you say about each possible topic? Which one demonstrates your English skills the best? Which one would you like to discuss with the examiner?

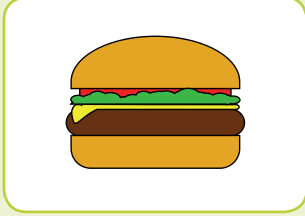
Before the exam, you must complete a topic form with some of the points you want to discuss. You take the topic form into your exam. The examiner uses this as the starting point for the discussion.

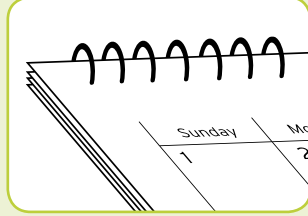
Can you think of some possible ideas for your topic form?

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

Conversation task (2 minutes)

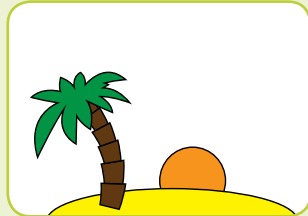
In this part of the exam, you and the examiner have a conversation on one of these subjects. Can you label each of the pictures using the subjects in the box below?

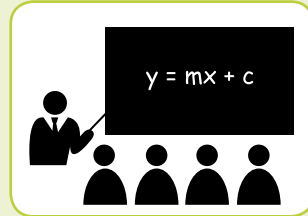












Shopping

School and work

Holidays

Hobbies and sports

Food

Weekend and seasonal activities

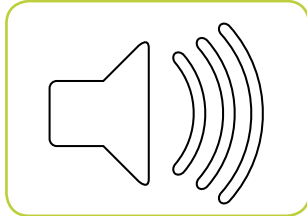
Think about each subject. What can you say about each one? Try to talk about your personal experience.

Independent listening tasks (6 minutes)

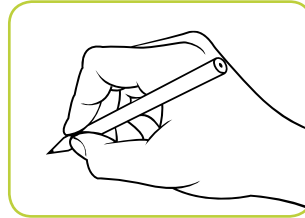
In this part of the exam there are two tasks.

Task 1 (2 minutes 15 seconds)

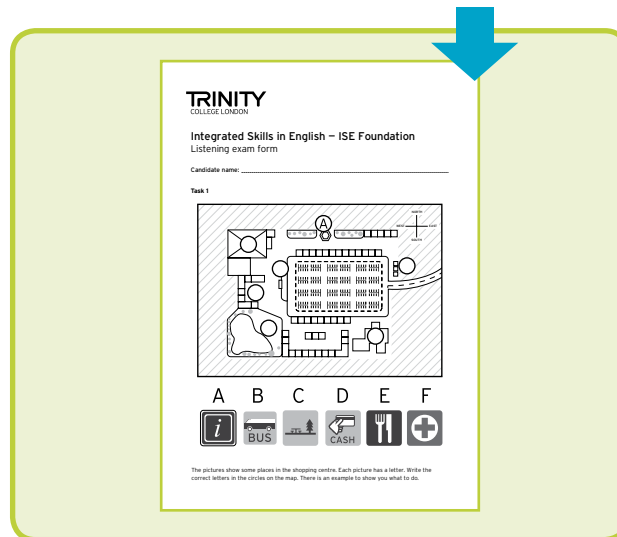
You listen to a recording twice and write letters on a diagram. The recording will tell you where to write the letters.



Listen to a recording (twice)

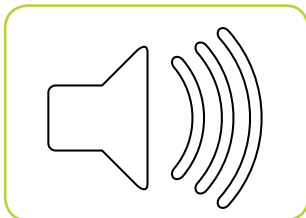


Write your answers on a listening exam form



Task 2 (3 minutes 45 seconds)

You listen twice to a recording and take some notes on paper. You do not have to take notes if you don't want to. You then talk to the examiner about the facts and information you heard in the recording. After this, the examiner asks you some questions about the recording.



Listen to a recording (twice)



You tell the examiner five things you heard



The examiner asks you some questions

If you would like to watch a video of an ISE Foundation Speaking & Listening exam, please go to:

www.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.

Don't

- ▶ Don't look in the dictionary for every new word – instead look at the whole sentence, the paragraph and the context and try to imagine possible meanings of the word. After you finish reading the paragraph or the whole text, you can check the meanings of the words in the dictionary.

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 a three-stage process:
 - plan what you want to write
 - write your answer
 - check what you have written.
- ▶ 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?).
- ▶ Practise doing sample exams from the Trinity website www.trinitycollege.com/ISEfoundation
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside class – for example, write reviews of films or books you have enjoyed, 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 which 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 from the level.
- ▶ Think of the language you will need and the questions the examiner might ask you.

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 sound natural.

Conversation task

Do

- ▶ Be prepared to talk about all of the conversation areas.
- ▶ Think about what questions the examiner might ask about the different conversation areas.
- ▶ Think about how you can use the language of ISE Foundation to talk about the different subjects.

Don't

- ▶ Don't forget to think of a question to ask the examiner about each subject area.

Independent listening task

Do

- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on listening in the speaking exam and how well you respond to the examiner, so practise having conversations in English.
- ▶ Practise listening to recorded English – you are also 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 that much information!



What happens on the day of the exam?

What happens on the day of the exam?



Reading & Writing

You will take the exam at your school or language 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.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task, and make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Top tip!

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

Task 2 – Multi-text reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ Write your answers on the exam paper.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task and make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

Task 3 – Reading into writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write. Your plan will not be 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.

Top 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 will not be 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 will come to your school or language centre for the Speaking & Listening module. This is how the exam runs:

Introductions

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



Top 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, it's fine to ask the examiner to repeat what he/she said.

Topic task

The examiner asks you for your topic form and he/she asks you what you want to talk about. The examiner uses your topic form to ask you questions about your topic. Be ready to speak about your topic and try to listen to what the examiner asks.

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 to what the examiner says and think about what language you need to answer the question. Remember, it's a discussion!

Independent listening task

The examiner plays the recordings and tells you what you need to do. In task 1 you will be writing letters on a diagram. In task 2 you will need to speak to the examiner about what you have heard.

Top tip!

In task 2 you can take notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed.

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
- ▶ Negotiating meaning
 - 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 is assessing:

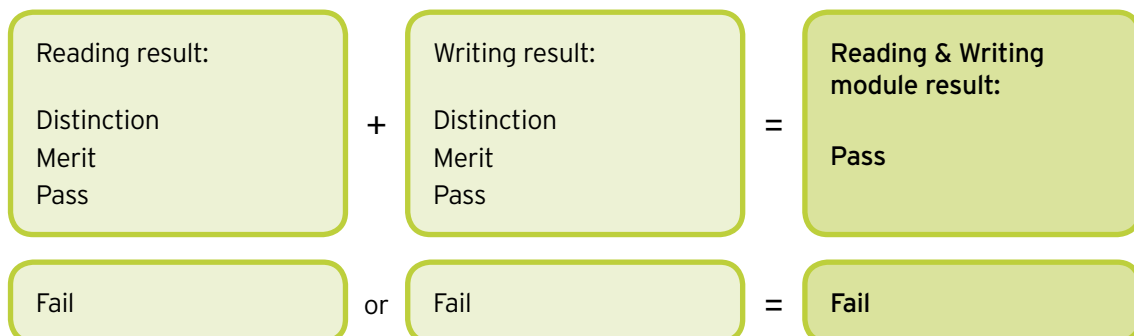
Task fulfilment: How well you answer the question.

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

Language control: Your range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammar. How well you use punctuation and your spelling.

Reading for writing (task 3 only): How well you are able to use the reading texts to write an answer to a question in task 3, using your own words.

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



If you pass the reading tasks and the writing tasks, you will pass the Reading & Writing module.

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

Speaking

The examiner will assess these four abilities:

Communicative effectiveness: How well you complete each task. For example, discussing a 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 show that you understand the examiner.

Language control: How good is the range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar that you use? For example, how well you use the language functions of ISE Foundation (see page 14).

Delivery: Can the examiner understand you? How good is your pronunciation and fluency?

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



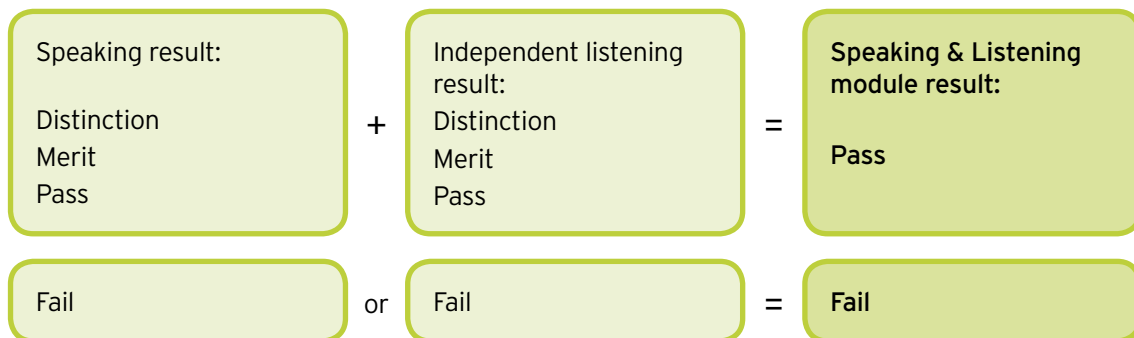
Independent listening

In the Independent listening task 1, you receive a mark from 1 to 5.

In the Independent listening task 2, the examiner will choose a mark, depending on how well you have understood the recording.

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

Your scores in task 1 and task 2 are combined to give your Independent listening mark, which will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.



If you pass the speaking tasks and the listening tasks, you will pass the Speaking & Listening module.

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

What happens after the exam?

What happens after the exam?

Reading & Writing

A few weeks after the exam, you will receive your results. If you have passed the exam, you will receive a module certificate.

The module certificate will show that you have passed the Reading & Writing module and will give your results for reading and for writing.

Speaking & Listening

Your results will be sent to your Trinity Registered Exam Centre who will tell you if you have passed or failed in two areas: speaking and listening.

A few weeks later, if you have passed the exam, you will receive your results on a module certificate. The module certificate will show that you have passed the Speaking & Listening module and will give your results for speaking and for listening.

Your ISE Foundation qualification certificate

When you have passed both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you will receive your ISE Foundation certificate. This certificate will show that you have passed ISE Foundation and will give 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

