

EXETER SCHOOL

14+ English Entrance Examination - Guidance for Parents and Candidates



Guidance for the examination

The 14+ Entrance Examination in English is designed to give us a good sense of a candidate's ability in two key areas, as follows:

- How able is the candidate in reading and analysing non-fiction and literary texts in English?
- How able is the candidate in accurately writing for purpose and audience in English?

The Entrance Examination does not explicitly test content. For example, we will not ask candidates to identify specific grammatical features (such as nouns) or specific literary features (such as similes or metaphors). However, at this level, we would expect candidates to be familiar with – and be able to talk about the effect of - the key building blocks of both English grammar and the key literary techniques used by writers to shape deeper meanings (such as similes, metaphors etc.).

The examination itself lasts for **one and a half hours**. Some key points are as follows:

- Candidates will be provided with a single examination paper which contains the reading passage and all the questions;
- Candidates write their answers on lined paper;
- Candidates should answer all the questions.

There are two sections to the Entrance Examination.

The first section is **Section A - Reading Non-fiction and literary texts**:

- Candidates should spend **50 minutes** on this section;
- There will be **two reading texts** for Section A: one non-fiction; one literary. We may give help with some difficult vocabulary if we feel it is appropriate. If we do, such help will be in a glossary after each of the reading texts.
- Questions will answer a series of questions in which reading and analytical skills are assessed. These will be a mixture of short and longer questions.
- The question will **tell the candidate which of the reading texts to answer on** and may also **direct the candidate to a specific part of the reading text**. It is vital the candidate answers on the correct text and the correct part (e.g. a

specific paragraph of one of the texts) or it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to award marks.

- Candidates **may** be asked to compare the reading texts.
- Candidates may be told **how many points to include** in longer answers.
- We would expect **all** questions to be answered in full sentences. Longer questions (see below) should be presented as clear, coherent paragraphs.
- Candidates should write about **a half to two thirds of a side for the longer questions** (i.e. those to which 4 or more marks are awarded). Candidates who do not write very much will not attract many marks.
- If a question requires a candidate to **analyse** a text, this requires the candidate to analyse how writers use literary language and literary techniques to shape deeper meanings in texts.

The second section is **Section B - Writing**:

- Candidates should spend **40 minutes** on this section and aim to write about one to one and a half sides of A4 paper;
- It is important that candidates spend time planning their answer. Lined paper will be provided in the examination paper for this;
- Candidates will be asked to write a whole text and will be assessed on how they write for purpose and audience. We do not prescribe the kinds of texts that candidates will be asked to write but these will be within the normal range of text-types that candidates writing at (I)GCSE level would be expected to be able to write.

What are we assessing?

The first area we assess is **reading and analytical skills**. Here, we assess the candidate's ability to:

- **Read for gist and for detail.**
- **Explain the meanings of words** in the reading passage by looking at the context in which the word/phrase appears. The relevant word/phrase will be highlighted in bold in the passage.
- **Infer** implicit meanings.
- **Select** and **paraphrase** information from the reading passage.
- **Select** and **explore** key words and phrases **to analyse the writer's craft.**

The second area we will assess is **ability in writing**. In this section, we assess the candidate's ability to:

- **Write a stipulated text-type for purpose and audience.** The sorts of purpose assessed will be taken from the standard range of purposes that a candidate would be expected to know as he/she approaches (1)GCSE study. Section B may include narrative/descriptive writing;
- **Sequence facts, ideas and opinions. Candidates who only write a single paragraph – whether a long or short paragraph – cannot score highly** as they will not be demonstrating an ability to sequence and develop a text. At the same time, we would advise candidates not to include a lot of plot in the writing section (if relevant) as this will not result in effective controlled writing;
- **Use a range of appropriate, adventurous vocabulary.** We would expect secure spelling of most words. Thus, candidates should make every effort to spell correctly but should not be deterred from using more adventurous words for fear of misspelling them;
- **Write accurately.** We do not award or withhold marks based on hand-writing although hand-writing that obscures communication is self-penalising.