



# Skills for Life

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## Reading Entry 3 Examination Report

2008 – Test 077

## Skills for Life Reading Examination Report: Entry 3

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This report is based on candidate performance on one version of the Skills for Life Reading Entry 3 tests in 2007/8.

The report is intended as an aid to teachers and colleges in preparing candidates for future Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life Reading tests.

### Test 077

The topic of this paper is studying at college.

There were 43 marks available on the paper, 11 for Part 1, 12 for Part 2 and 20 for Part 3. The number of marks for each individual question is provided on the question paper. The breakdown of marks available for each assessment focus (Text, Sentence and Word) is shown below:

|               | Text | Sentence | Word | Total |
|---------------|------|----------|------|-------|
| <b>Part 1</b> | 6    | 2        | 3    | 11    |
| <b>Part 2</b> | 6    | 5        | 1    | 12    |
| <b>Part 3</b> | 5    | 9        | 6    | 20    |
| <b>Total</b>  | 17   | 16       | 10   | 43    |

Overall candidates who took this test performed well. Part 2 was slightly harder than Parts 1 and 3 and candidates performed best on Text focus questions and least well on Word focus questions. This is mainly because the weaker candidates have a tendency to leave questions on spelling and deduction of meaning blank. Students should be encouraged to attempt all the questions as marks are not deducted for incorrect answers.

### Part 1

Part 1 consists of an email asking for help in finding a college course followed by some information about a college.

Question 1 proved to be very straightforward but for question 2 almost a quarter of all candidates ticked only one box. Students should be reminded to read the rubric for all questions. 'Worried about making new friends' was a popular wrong answer to this question indicating that candidates had not read the appropriate sentence carefully enough. 'Tired because of problems with her baby' was by far the easiest of the two correct answers. Question 3 was left blank by 20% of weaker candidates. Wrong answers included 'part-time', 'suggestions', 'got', 'sociable', 'advise', 'probably' and 'mornings'.

Question 5 was fairly well done with the stronger candidates having no problems at all and around 50% of the weaker candidates getting the answers correct. Some candidates wrote the headings in the spaces in the task and they were given the marks for this but they wasted valuable time copying. C was a fairly popular wrong answer for paragraph 3, possibly because they were matching 'abroad' with 'overseas' in the text. Students still need to be warned of the dangers of word-spotting.

Questions 6 and 7 were attempted by a higher proportion of the weaker candidates than the other open ended Word focus questions on this paper but wrong answers for question 6 included 'workplace', 'career', 'mature' and 'encourage' indicating that candidates may not have understood the question. Question 7 proved slightly easier than question 6 although 'available' was a popular choice.

## Part 2

Part 2 consists of an extract from a college prospectus giving guidance on how to apply for courses.

Question 8 proved quite difficult with 'to fill in the application form' being chosen by over a third of all candidates. Although 'application' and 'application form' appear several times in the text, it does not say how to fill it in. The weaker candidates were also attracted by 'to choose your course at the college' possibly being swayed by the first sentence of the text but not considering the tenses in this sentence.

Question 9 was mainly done well but 58% of the weaker candidates answered 'Yes' to 9E. They may be answering the question based on their own experience and not from reading the text. For question 10, 45% of all candidates and 72% of the weaker ones chose 'in December or January', maybe because they appear in the same sentence as 'interview'.

For question 11, a third of all candidates chose 'their interests and hobbies' in spite of the fact that the use of 'interest' in 'statement of interest' is explained in the text. Also 43% chose 'their previous work experience' not appreciating the difference between this and 'previous study experience' in the text.

'Their reasons for doing the course' was the easiest correct answer with 80% of all candidates choosing this. Question 12 was done well but question 13 was problematic for the weaker candidates, 25% of whom did not write anything. Wrong answers included 'done', 'alternatively' and 'needed' indicating that candidates were not necessarily looking for a noun. 'Writing proficiency' was given no marks as one word was asked for.

## Part 3

This part consists of three articles by students in the college magazine. Questions 14 and 15 were done well as was question 16 overall but 30% of the weaker candidates chose John maybe because his text includes information about earning money. They have not read the question fully. Question 18 was also well done, apart from 18A where almost half of all candidates said 'True'. They had not worked out the time references in the question and in the text.

Question 19 did not prove to be difficult but candidates who wrote two letters against one name did not get the mark.

The open ended questions 22-24 were again not answered by 19, 27 and 24% of the weaker candidates respectively. The wrong answers to question 22 indicate that candidates were not taking on board the fact that they should be looking for a verb in the '...ing' form. Some chose words that were not in the correct paragraph e.g. 'retirement'. Question 23 was quite difficult for all except the stronger candidates. They seemed to overlook the simpler words in the text. Question 24 was the most difficult of the three with several wrong answers coming from elsewhere in the text, including from paragraph 3 of Asmara's text.

Most candidates had no problem with question 25, although some of the weaker candidates ran out of time. Some confused the order in the list with the order in the phone book e.g. some wrote 'Bracknell' for 25C as it comes after Hatfield College in the list. Others had difficulty with second letter ordering, choosing 'Bracknell' for 25A, for example.

## **Recommendations for candidate preparation**

All Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life tests are based on the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum* and cover all the Basic Skills Standards in each mode at each level. Therefore, by following the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum*, teachers will be preparing their students for the tests. Candidates can benefit from following the Dos and Don'ts from the Skills for Life Teaching Resource website: [http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/SfL/levels1\\_2\\_reading/About%20the%20paper/dos\\_donts.htm](http://www.cambridgeesol.org/teach/SfL/levels1_2_reading/About%20the%20paper/dos_donts.htm)