



Trial Testing overview

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Purpose of this document

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is jointly owned and managed by the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia (IDP: IA) and Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

IELTS measures the language proficiency of people who want to study or work where English is used as a language of communication.

This handbook is designed to support Trial Test centres, and prospective Trial Test centres, who wish to administer Trial Tests (formerly known as Pretests). It outlines the purpose and benefits of participating in Trial Testing and provides detail on some of the processes involved in running a Trial Test session.

This handbook has been created to be used in conjunction with the IELTS Trial Test Delivery Handbook which process more detailed steps on running Trial Testing at your centre.

This handbook has been created by the cross-partner IELTS Trial Testing Project Group and is designed to support British Council, IDP and Cambridge test centres.

Support

IDP Contact - ielts.trialtesting@idp.com

British Council Contact - Laurice.Letwaba@britishcouncil.org or Saud-Al.Shams@britishcouncil.org

Cambridge Contact - IELTSPretesting@CambridgeEnglish.org

IELTS CentreNet (for live IELTS test centres) <https://www.ieltscentrenet.org/>

Cambridge English Support site (for non-live IELTS test centres)
<https://support.cambridgeenglish.org/hc/en-gb>

Please quote your four digit Trial Test Centre number in any correspondence regarding Trial Testing.

Why do we need Trial Testing?

Testing materials before they are used in live examinations allows us to make certain our exams are accurate, fair and reliable. As part of Cambridge English's commitment to quality, we submit all the material in our exams to a number of procedures, including Trial Testing, to ensure there are no questions likely to test anything but a Test Taker's language ability.

Trial Testing is a vital element in the development process of IELTS examinations. Before any questions are considered for inclusion in an IELTS examination, they go through a rigorous process that includes trialling tests with representative samples of test takers so that test validation and research activities can take place. Trial testing new items with Test Takers in real exam conditions is a crucial part of this process.

Conducting Trial Testing ensures that each individual item in a live examination is pitched at the right level and that the content is appropriate. It also ensures that people from different background, countries, cultures and gender do not widely differ in the way they perform on a test, nor they are disadvantaged in anyway.

We do this by carefully measuring the responses of Test Takers in Trial Tests using complex benchmarking processes, and by collecting and acting on feedback from both Test Takers and teachers. The data produced by Trial Testing is then analysed in detail so that exam papers are constructed with the assurance they retain high standards and difficulty to previous versions of the IELTS tests.

Benefits of Trial Testing

Trial Testing gives learners a chance to practise taking an IELTS exam using genuine questions under exam conditions.

This experience gives Test Takers the opportunity to practise their exam technique therefore building their confidence through familiarising themselves with the examination process. This will make Test Takers feel more relaxed and better prepared when they do their live exams.

Trial testing gives an indicative band score

After taking the Reading and Listening papers the Trial Testing responses are marked and raw scores (with an indicative band score) are returned to test centres within 13 days. Writing papers are marked by trained IELTS examiners and Test Takers receive an indicative band score also within 13 days from receipt of scanned materials at Cambridge English.

Trial Testing helps learners find out which areas they need most practice in and for teachers, it highlights areas where their learners need more help and shows the overall level of students in relation to the exam.

This is also an opportunity for teachers to influence the design and content of exams by feeding back to us their thoughts on the tested material. Centres and teachers taking part in Trial Testing can develop their knowledge of assessment issues and show that they are committed to excellence by being an active part of IELTS' world-renowned programme of research.

Trial Testing can also be used as a promotional tool for test centres, a value-add for existing students and can be an opportunity for further staff training and development.

By participating in Trial Testing, you are becoming part of a partnership programme developing IELTS test content.

Test Format and skills assessed

IELTS is available in two test types: **Academic** for those applying for tertiary, undergraduate, postgraduate or professional registration and **General Training** for those migrating to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the UK, or applying for secondary education, training programmes and work experience in an English-speaking environment.

The Trial Test is available for **Reading, Listening and Writing**. Listening is the same for both tests, but the subject matter of the Reading and Writing sections differ depending on which test is taken.

The Trial Test format is currently only available as a paper-based test and the number of items on a Trial Test can differ slightly to those on a live IELTS test.

Who are the IELTS Trial Test takers?

Trial Test takers should ideally be:

- currently studying or preparing for IELTS,
- currently registered for a live IELTS exam or
- seriously considering studying overseas in the future.

Please note that IELTS Trial Testing Test Takers should be at a minimum of IELTS 4.0 (CEFR level B1) or above.

Partner colleagues at British Council or IDP may be able to take a Trial test, but they must meet the test taker criteria. Their registrations will be at their manager's discretion.

How is Trial Testing organised?

Trial Test Windows

Trial Testing is available to test centres three times a year:

- January-March,
- April-July,
- September-November.

These Trial testing windows are published in advance and are available to view on IELTS CentreNet [here](#), on the Cambridge English Support site [here](#) and on IDP iKnow [here](#).

Trial Test materials are printed and despatched to test centres normally 1-2 weeks before the opening of the Trial Testing window.

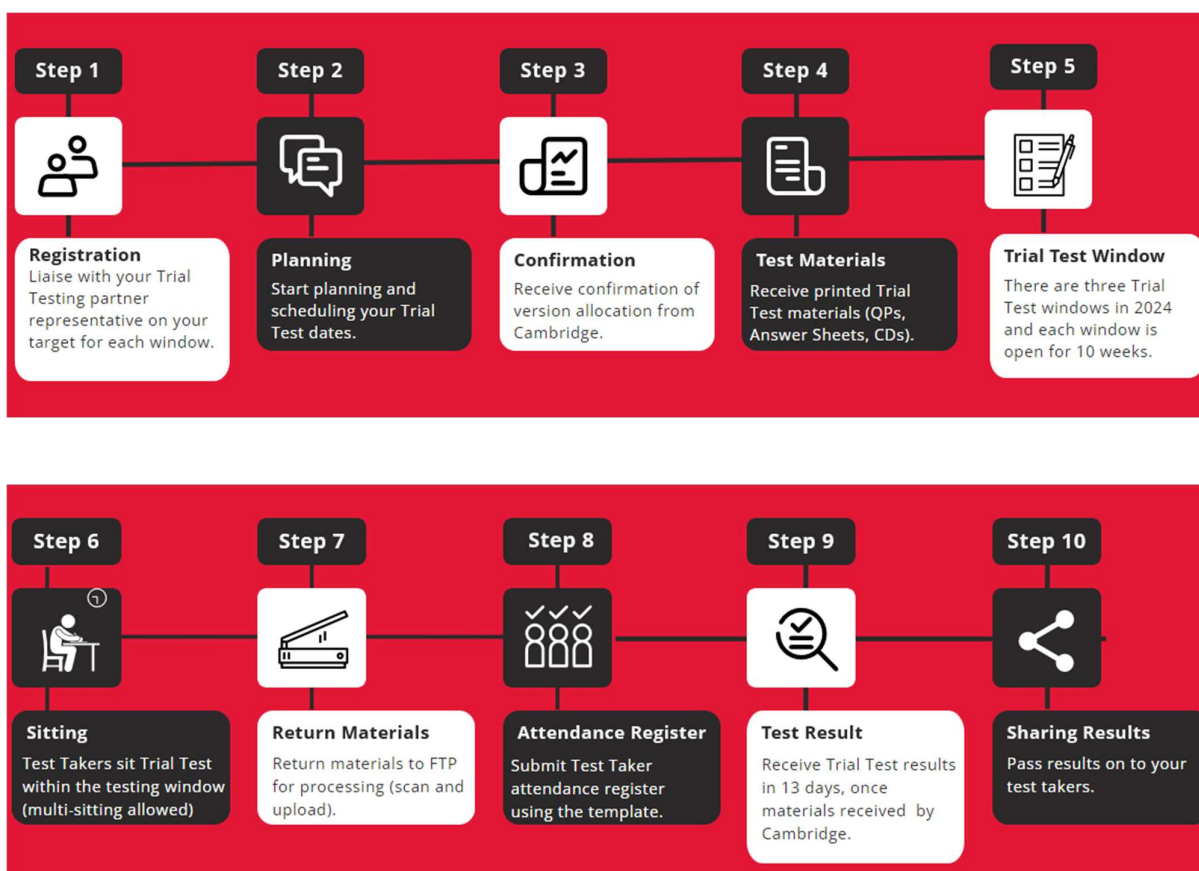
Trial Tests can be administered at any point during the window across multiple sittings and completed materials should be returned to Cambridge as soon as possible so that marking and scores processing can begin.

The results turnaround time begins from the date that materials are received by Cambridge for processing.

All Trial Tests must be administered during the scheduled window. You may conduct as many sessions as you require during the window to use all the materials received. Please ensure there are no repeat Test Takers (Test Takers can only take one trial test once per window), or Test Taker numbers in the same window. If it is not possible to administer the Trial Tests during the scheduled Trial Testing window, please let us know so that we can update our records. Unfortunately, it is not possible to administer Trial tests outside the published Trial Testing windows.

Trial Test Process Overview

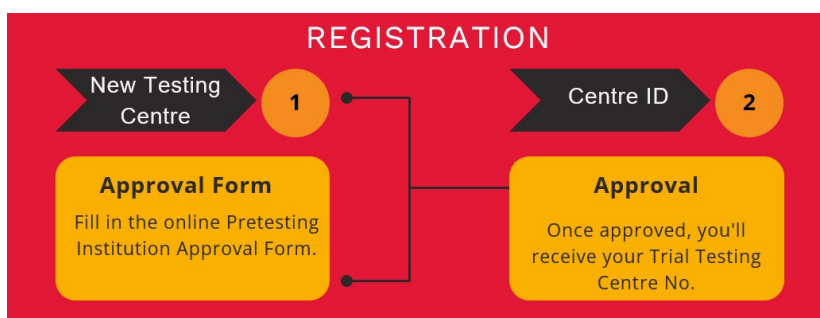
The process flow diagram below outlines the key processes for Trial Test centres.



Trial Test Institution Approval

Please note that if you are a British Council or IDP IELTS test centre your Trial Testing Partner Support representative will be in contact with you to collect your central registration details and to ask for details of your Trial Testing schedule in advance of the window. You do not need to complete the approval process outlined below.

Test centres who are not already registered for IELTS Trial Testing will need to complete an approval process before they can begin their Trial Testing journey with Cambridge. The process diagram below outlines the process.



If you are new to Trial Testing, you will need to complete the Trial Testing centre institution approval form [here](#). Existing live IELTS test centres will automatically be approved as a Trial Testing centre. Independent schools or institutions that do not currently run live IELTS or Cambridge English exams will need to provide the name of a referee as part of their approval (these are non-affiliated IELTS test partner centres).

Once approved, institutions will be provided with a four-digit Trial Test Centre number. This is separate to the live IELTS Test Centre number. The approval process is free and turnaround time is normally within 2-3 days from receipt of the approval form for live centres. For non-live centres, the process can take slightly longer as we need to contact the referee regarding the approval.

Trial Test Requests

Once approved, test centres should complete the [online order form](#) to request IELTS Academic and IELTS General Training Trial Tests.

Make sure to submit your requests before the request deadline which is included on the Trial Testing window dates.

Once you have submitted the form, you will be contacted by a member of the IELTS Trial Testing team to confirm arrangements. Our normal limit for Trial Test requests is 200 test takers per component, 400 test takers in total (200 AC and 200 GT).

If your Trial Test request is more than 50% of your monthly live testing figure, please get in touch so we can discuss what will work best for you.

Please note that if you are a British Council or IDP test centre your Trial Testing Partner Support representative will be in contact with you to collect your central registration details and to ask for details of your Trial Testing schedule in advance of the window.

While we endeavour to match Trial Testing requirements, we are not always able to fulfil all requests received as we need to ensure the fairness of the sample and therefore restrict the proportion of students for each Trial Test from each first language group.

IELTS Trial Testing Test Takers should be at a minimum of IELTS 4.0 (CEFR level B1) or above.

Once your request is received and processed Cambridge will contact you to confirm your EPD number for the session – this is your individual request/despatch number which you should quote in any correspondence you have with us about your Trial Test session.