

IELTS Trial Testing FAQs

May 2024

1. What is Trial Testing?

Trial Testing is a vital element in the development process of IELTS examinations. Testing materials before they are used in live examinations allows us to make certain our exams are accurate, fair and reliable. 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.

2. What are the benefits of Trial Testing?

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

3. What is the format of the Trial Test?

IELTS Trial Testing is available in two test types: Academic and General Training. 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.

4. How do I get started with Trial Testing?

British Council or IDP test centres should contact their Trial Testing Partner Support representative for more details about their target allocation of Trial Tests and should provide details of their Trial Testing schedule in advance of the window. Non-partner affiliated institutions should complete the [online request form](#) to request papers in advance of the window.

5. Do you have a document that guides me through the Trial Testing process?

The IELTS Trial Test Delivery Handbook (Operations) provides comprehensive information on how to deliver IELTS Trial Test sessions. This document is available on IELTS CentreNet and the Cambridge English Support Site. You can also ask your Trial Testing Partner Support representative for a copy.

6. Can I order more Trial Test papers after the request deadline?

Unfortunately, it is not possible to send additional papers after the request deadline. You can request permission to photocopy (stating the number of papers) by contacting IELTSPretesting@CambridgeEnglish.org

7. Will all Trial Test material arrive at the same time?

Materials should arrive at the same time as they are dispatched from Cambridge, however, customs may hold on to listening CDs longer than paper documents. Please be patient on arrival of materials and wait a few extra days for CDs to arrive in centre. If you do not receive your CDs and it is 48 hours before your Trial Test session, then please contact IELTSPretesting@CambridgeEnglish.org and your partner representative immediately. Cambridge can then arrange to send a secure FTP file for listening test sessions.

8. What materials can I expect to receive in my despatch from Cambridge ahead of the Trial Test window?

You should receive the following materials in your despatch:

- Cover letter
- Question Papers
- Answer Sheets
- CDs
- Feedback Forms
- Candidate Register

9. Do centres need approval from Cambridge before opening the question booklets?

Centres do not need approval from Cambridge to open the question booklet packs prior to a session to ensure they have enough materials to deliver their sessions.

10. If approval is not required should the centre keep a log of papers in secure storage and used papers for each session?

Centres must follow the protocol for material movement or opening materials prior to a session. Two staff must be present to oversee the materials and their movement, ensure double counting is complete and materials are logged on the stock control documents in place for trial testing.

- Log out papers from CMR/secure storage area and check the ISCD sheet (Record Sheet of live test materials)
- Two members of exams staff to check materials and number of QP needed for each module for Trial Testing
- If other QP packs need to be opened these must be opened, double counted by two members of the team, necessary papers for session delivery removed and double counted.
- Materials for the test session must be packed in a sealed envelope with centre stamp over the seal and both signatures from the two staff members with number of QP papers.
- Remaining QP must be re-sealed in original packaging with centre stamp and two signatures over the seal. The materials must be placed back in the CMR/Secure Storage room under two-tier locking.
- ISCD documents must be updated with current materials in the CMR/Secure Storage area.

11.Can Trial Tests be taken on different days? For example, Listening on a Monday, Reading on a Tuesday and Writing on a Wednesday

Yes, but please note that when scanning and returning scripts the results turnaround time for marking will only be counted from the date scripts are received by Cambridge. Test takers should be advised of when they are likely to receive their results based on this timeline.

12.What is my Trial Test centre number? Is it the same as my IELTS centre number?

Your Trial Test centre number is different to your live IELTS centre number, it is a four-digit number. Please contact your partner project team to confirm your Trial Test centre number.

13.When and how do we return materials after the session to Cambridge?

You should return your completed answer sheets by scanning and uploading to your secure FTP folder location, no materials need to be physically returned to Cambridge. Please retain all other materials and original answer sheets in centre. Once results have been received and issued to test takers you can securely destroy

all Trial Test materials. Please ensure you follow standard IELTS destruction of secure materials and ensure that details are logged on stock control documents.

14. When will I receive my secure FTP link for uploading scanned scripts?

This will be sent by Cambridge the week before the Trial Testing window opens. You will receive an email with the link to access the secure folder and a password to access your centre specific folder. Please contact your partner project lead if you don't receive your link.

15. Are Trial Tests the same as live IELTS tests?

Yes, but the timings may differ. Listening and Reading may have additional items.

16. When can I expect to receive my scores from Cambridge?

Cambridge will begin marking and scores processing as soon as all materials are uploaded to the secure FTP folder. Scores will be sent to centres via email within 13 days of receipt. However, if the candidate attendance register is not provided, if any scans are unclear, if materials are uploaded to the wrong location or in the incorrect format (as a photo instead of a PDF file) then Cambridge will request a re-scan or re-upload of materials which will delay the processing time.

17. How will I receive my scores?

Scores will be sent to the centre contact email address via email in an Excel format. Instructions on how to distribute scores to your test takers are included in the Appendix of the Trial Testing Delivery Handbook.

18. What do my scores mean?

The scores you get on a Trial Test give you an idea of the scores that you might get in a live IELTS test. This is not a guarantee that you will get the same result in a live test. The Trial Test score is not the same as a live IELTS test score, because the test content has not been fully trialled and validated.

19. How do I submit my requests for the next window?

You should contact your partner support rep for details on how to submit your requests for the next window. These requests will then be passed to Cambridge for central processing.

20. Where can I access additional information on Trial Testing?

You can find Trial Testing Resources, including the Trial Testing Delivery Handbook on IELTS CentreNet [here](#) or on the Cambridge English Support Site [here](#).

21. Who should I contact if I have any questions about Trial Testing or need additional support?

IDP Contact	ielts.trialtesting@idp.com
British Council Contact	Saud-Al.Shams@britishcouncil.org Laurice.Letwaba@britishcouncil.org
Cambridge Contact	IELTSPretesting@CambridgeEnglish.org

Please remember to quote your four digit Trial Test centre number in any correspondence.