

Test specification

1. Statement of purpose

This is an integrated test of English academic reading, note-taking, summarising, paraphrasing, and writing skills. It consists of a reading-into-writing guided summary task and measures the test taker's ability to use English at a high level of proficiency in academic language use settings.

2. General information

This test must be taken by all students enrolled in a BBN-ANG11-104 or OT-ANG-104 Academic Skills 1 (AS1) course. The test is offered each year towards the end of the autumn semester and can be taken once only. The time of the test is provided by the AS1 course tutor on the course schedule and is further specified before the administration of the test.

The test is double marked by the course tutor and another AS1 tutor, with the course tutor as the second reader. The results are usually announced by the latest either in the last week of the semester or in the first week of the examination period. The final AS1 course mark is calculated so that the coursework constitutes 60% and the test result 40% of the mark. Only those students can get a mark for the Academic Skills course who have taken the test.

Please note that the AS1 (Tudományos íráskészség 1) course is a pre-requisite for the AS2 (Tudományos íráskészség 2) course offered in the spring semester. The AS2 course, in turn, is a pre-requisite for the Language Proficiency Examination (ANG11-001/002 Nyelvi alapvizsga angol nyelvből), the successful completion of which is necessary to register for second year courses. **In short**, students who do not complete successfully the AS1 and AS2 courses will most likely be only able to start their second year of studies with a delay.

3. Registration for the test

The registration takes place in class, in October, with the course tutor. Students with special needs (e.g., hearing-impaired, visually impaired, dyslexic students) should let their course tutor know as part of the test registration process that they would like to be accommodated (e.g., allowed the use of a computer, given extra time to complete the task, provided with a question paper with larger fonts—as stated in the *Igazolás speciális jogokról*, the certificate issued by the Disability Center. For details, please refer to <https://www.elte.hu/en/equal>).

4. The test

4.1 Procedures

Working time: 60 minutes

The use of dictionaries, any other reference materials, or electronic devices—including cell phones—is NOT allowed during the examination. Test takers who cheat are suspended, and suspension will automatically result in a fail mark ('1', elégtelen).

4.2 Test takers are given the following instructions before the test (only main points listed here):

- Switch off and put away your mobile phones.
- Do not talk during the test.
- Write in BLUE ink (kéken író töltőtollal / golyóstollal).
- Write legibly.
- Put your name, Neptun code, course code (BBN-ANG11-104/_?_ or OT-ANG-104/_?_), and tutor's name **legibly** on both the question paper (*see Section 5 below for a sample question paper*) and the answer sheet.
- Put your name and Neptun code on the sheet(s) you used for drafting.
- Write the **final version** of your summary on the **answer sheet**.
- If you have written a draft version, cross it out to indicate that the text is not to be assessed.
- You can detach the sheets, but you shall have to hand in **all** the test materials at the end of the test.
- You have 60 minutes to complete the task.
- Count the words in the final version of your summary and write the number in the space provided, for example: *(139 words)*.
- When you have finished writing the test, **remain seated**, put up your hand, and wait until an invigilator collects your test materials and tells you what you have to do next.
- The results of the test will be announced by the class tutor.

4.3 Structure of the test

The test consists of a guided summary writing task. The test taker reads a reading passage of about 700 words on a general academic topic (e.g., using authentic texts as language teaching materials, the role of dictation in the language classroom, study skills) that discusses different aspects of the topic. The test taker must find, summarise, and paraphrase typically six related aspects by responding to a guiding question about the reading passage.

The whole reading passage does not have to be summarised (i.e., a *guided* not a global summary is to be written). Only those parts of the reading passage have to be included in the summary that feature content which answers the guiding question. In terms of visual representation and rhetorical structure, the summary must be a complete, functional paragraph of about 130 (+/- 10%) words written in the neutral or semi-formal/formal style typical of popular science magazines (e.g., *National Geographic*, *Popular Science*).

The guided summary does not have a title. It is evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Content**, which has three subcriteria:
 - *Presence of content points* (the summary contains all the relevant ideas from the reading passage),
 - *Extent and accuracy of reproduced content* (the summary contains a complete yet concise equivalent—i.e., not distorted—restatement of the gist/essence of the relevant ideas from the reading passage)
 - *Presence of irrelevant, added, or repeated content* (the summary does NOT contain any irrelevant information, and in the body part does NOT contain either

any information added by the test taker—for example, in the form of comments on the summarised content—or repeated information).

- **Language**, which has four subcriteria:
 - *Distance from the source text* (the summary is written in the summariser's own words as much as possible; it contains no strings of words copied from the reading passage or parts that are close in wording to the original).
 - *Lexical accuracy* (the summary contains appropriately chosen and correctly used lexical items)
 - *Grammatical accuracy* (the summary contains appropriately chosen and correctly used grammatical structures)
 - *Level of formality* (the style is neutral, semi-formal, or formal—typical of written academic English)

- **Paragraph Structure**, which has one subcriterion:
 - *Topic sentence and Concluding sentence* (the topic sentence is present, focused, fully functional, and contains a complete signal phrase with a reporting verb in the Past Simple Tense; the concluding sentence is present, focused, and effectively rounds up the summary in the form of, for example, a restatement of the topic sentence, an inference arrived at on the basis of the ideas included in the body, or a suggestion formulated on the basis of the ideas included in the body).

- **Texture**, which has two subcriteria:
 - *Coherence and Cohesion* (the ideas in the summary are organised logically; linking devices are used to connect ideas within and across sentences)
 - *Punctuation* (the summary is punctuated correctly and communicatively effectively).

- **Form**, which has two subcriteria:
 - *Paragraphing* (the summary is written up as one physical paragraph, with the first line indented)
 - *Length* (the summary is of the length specified in the task instruction).

4.4 Scoring

The summary is rated individually by two examiners, and the final score is calculated based on the two independent sets of scores.

Criterion		Score
Content	Presence of content points	0–3*
	Extent & accuracy of reproduced content	0–3*
	Presence of irrelevant, added, or repeated content	0–3*
Language	Distance from the source text	0–3*
	Lexical accuracy	0–3*
	Grammatical accuracy	0–3*
	Level of formality	0–3*
Paragraph Structure	Topic sentence and Concluding sentence	0–3*

Texture	Coherence & Cohesion	0–3*
	Punctuation	0–3*
Form	Paragraphing	0–1
	Length	0–1
Total		32 points

*NB For a pass mark, this score must be minimum “1” point. For example,

CPs Pres.	Ext. & acc. of CPs	Irr./Add./Rep. content	Distance from source text	Lexical accuracy	Grammatical accuracy	Level of formality	Coher. & Cohes.	Topic & Concl. sent.	Punct.	Paragr.	Length	Total
2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	1	1	26

is a mark 4 script (see below), but

CPs Pres.	Ext. & acc. of CPs	Irr./Add./Rep. content	Distance from source text	Lexical accuracy	Grammatical accuracy	Level of formality	Coher. & Cohes.	Topic & Concl. sent.	Punct.	Paragr.	Length	Total
2	2	2	1	2	0	2	1	2	2	1	1	18

is a fail because the Grammatical accuracy score is “0”.

The raw scores are converted into marks according to the following matrix:

0–16	1 (elégtelen)
17–20	2 (elégséges)
21–24	3 (közepes)
25–28	4 (jó)
29–32	5 (jeles)

For further details please contact the academic skills course coordinator, Gyula Tankó, R430 (tanko.gyula(at)btb.elte.hu).

5. Sample test paper

Academic Skills Test – 27 November 2023 (Working time: 60 minutes)

Name: _____ Course: BBN-ANG11-104/_____
Neptun code: _____ Tutor: _____

Write a paragraph of 130 (+/- 10%) words in which you summarise in your own words as far as possible *the potential problems with dictation in language teaching and the ways these problems can be overcome*, which are discussed in the reading passage below.

Using dictation Amy Lightfoot (2005)

In its simplest form, dictation refers to a person reading some text aloud so that the listener(s) can write down what is being said. When used in the language classroom, the aim has traditionally been for students to write down what is said by the teacher, word for word, later checking their own text against the original and correcting the errors made. While this certainly has its uses, there are countless variations that can make it more interesting and learner-centred. For example, a related activity, sometimes called 'dictogloss', requires the students to only take notes of the key words used as they listen and then later reconstruct the text so that it has the same meaning as the original text although perhaps not exactly the same form.

There are several reasons why dictation activities work well in the classroom. From the teacher's point of view, dictations can be done with any level, depending on the text used; can be graded for a multi-level class; and usually require very little preparation and photocopying. In fact, dictation can be used to decrease preparation time for other activities. Instead of spending hours making cut-up activities such as matching vocabulary and their definitions, why not just give the students blank slips of paper and dictate the necessary information to them in the classroom? This also gives the students more listening, writing and spelling practice.

For the students, dictations can focus on both accuracy (form) as well as meaning. Speaking and pronunciation can be developed if the students do the dictating rather than the teacher. Additionally, dictation activities where students compare their version of the text to the original can increase their ability to notice aspects of the language which are sometimes overlooked, as well as mistakes which they commonly make. These might include common spelling errors, absence of articles or the third person 's', etc. The comparison also helps students to become better at identifying errors in their own written work.

What definitely needs to be addressed is the perception that students may have of doing a dictation activity. Some students (and teachers) may have developed an aversion to dictation. It is important, therefore, to ensure that we vary the ways that we do dictation in class and encourage the students to focus on meaning as well as accuracy. All sorts of texts can be dictated, from single words of a vocabulary list to sentences from a dialogue to full paragraphs. These can also be dictated in the 'wrong' order, requiring students to unscramble them once it is finished. Using dictated texts as a precursor to further activities like this will help students to see them as an integrated part of the learning process. It is important that we and the students see these activities as learning experiences rather than as simply testing their ability to listen and copy words and sentences.

A second issue is that some students may find dictation more difficult than others, especially if you are teaching a multi-level class. One way of combating this is to think about how much of the dictation we expect our students to produce. We can give weaker students skeleton versions of the text to be dictated, with gaps for them to fill in as they go along, rather than a blank sheet of paper. Incidentally, this can be a useful approach for practising 'noticing' specific parts of speech – for example, all the students can be required to listen for only the prepositions or articles needed to fill in the gaps.

Students often are not very good at looking for mistakes in what they have written when comparing it to the original text. It can often be easier to check the errors in someone else's text rather than in our own. Also, it might be an idea to leave some time between completing the dictation and checking the text against a correct version as students are often better able to find their errors with 'fresh' eyes. Doing this will also be good training for students, giving them strategies for checking their own written work.

In this article we have examined the benefits and problems associated with dictation as well as explored some variations on the traditional approach. Dictation does not work for everything or for everyone, but by looking again at this traditional method we can add to our classroom techniques a touch of the familiar with a little innovation.

Write the clean copy of your summary on the answer sheet.