

Occupational English Test

Listening sub-test

Test information

The OET Centre
GPO Box 372
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia

Telephone: +613 9652 0800
Facsimile: +613 9654 5329
www.occupationalenglishtest.org

General Information



Time Allocation

The Listening sub-test takes approximately **50 minutes**. The exact length will vary depending on the length of the audio recording.

Test format and procedure

The Listening sub-test has **two parts** and is the same for all OET candidates:

Part A:

In Part A, candidates listen to a professional-patient consultation (dialogue) during which they are required to take notes under headings.

Part B:

In Part B, candidates listen to a health professional giving a talk or lecture (monologue) on a health-related topic, during which they are required to complete a range of open-ended and fixed-choice listening tasks.

Test topics

The topics of the Listening sub-tests are chosen carefully to be accessible to all candidates of the OET. They are of general medical interest and cover a wide variety of issues. The OET is a test of English, not of medical knowledge, and the test developers are careful in the test design to minimise areas where candidates may use prior knowledge rather than language skills to respond.

Topics will vary from administration to administration and while some topics may include content that is familiar to one particular health practitioner's area of experience and expertise, the language tasks and questions associated with the texts are designed to test language knowledge and ability, over and above, the candidate's knowledge of that field. In other words, correct responses cannot be simply 'predicted' because a candidate has experience in that area. Listening texts are selected for their concentration of content of a general health literacy nature; elements that can be considered common across multiple professions.

The topics of all texts are designed to be comprehensible to any educated lay native speaker, or highly proficient non-native speaker, and this is regularly demonstrated through the trialling process (both internal and external).

The two listening texts are developed by health professionals according to guidelines provided by test development specialists at the University of Melbourne. In response to feedback on initial topic ideas and drafts of materials, texts are refined and then question and response formats are developed by the university team. These are subjected to trialling, analysis and further refinement. Through this process a **marking guide** is developed for use by assessors. A sample marking guide is included in the sample listening materials.

Test task types

In **Part A**, all responses are expected to be in the form of notes that the candidate writes under the headings provided. The number of bullet or 'dot' points under each heading is a good indication of how many relevant points relating to the heading that candidates are required to note down.

A range of task types are used in **Part B** of the Listening sub-test. Task types include:

- Table/flow-chart/diagram completion (candidates fill-in missing information in a table/flow-chart/diagram).
- Sentence completion (candidates fill-in a gap or gaps at the end of a sentence with one or more missing words).

- Summary completion (candidates fill-in missing words in a summary passage by writing one or more missing words).
- Lecture notes completion (candidates fill gaps to complete a set of structured notes).
- Short answer questions (candidates are expected to write a short answer to direct questions [usually 'wh' type questions i.e., What, Who; Where, Why, When, How many, How etc.]).
- Word replacement response (candidates are expected to read a sentence while listening, cross-out a single incorrect word and replace it with the correct word, as mentioned in the audio).
- Matching responses (candidates link items in a list to headings or categories according to whether they are mentioned in the recording).
- Multiple choice response (candidates circle the correct alternative from list of options or check (tick) a number of items in a list according to whether they are mentioned in the recording).

Note: **Not every task type** will be included in each Listening sub-test at every administration.

Test procedure

Each part (A and B) contains about 15 minutes of recorded speech, separated into sections by pauses. A set of questions is attached to each section, indicated by headings and a question number. Candidates are expected to write their answers while listening.

Candidates will firstly hear (and be able to read at the same time) the instructions for Part A on **page 2** of the test paper. Candidates are advised to spend **1 minute** looking through Part A. Then, candidates are directed to look at the example question and sample response on the next page. The audio will continue and candidates will start writing information for the next question (Q.2).

During the test candidates will hear a **narrator's voice** advising them:

- which question they are about to hear
- when to read the following question.

Candidates will hear each recording **ONCE only**. The recording contains pauses to allow candidates time to write their answers.

The questions in Part B (the lecture) include indications on the number of points a candidate is expected to include.

There are **approximately 20 questions** in total to answer in the Listening sub-test.

At the beginning of Part B, candidates will hear and read instructions and have **1 minute** to look through the paper in the same way as for Part A.

Test Assessment

The OET assesses all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking – with an emphasis on contextualised communication for professional purposes. The Listening and Reading sub-tests are common to all candidates while the Speaking and Writing sub-tests are specific to each profession.

The Listening sub-test is marked in Melbourne. The Listening sub-test is assessed against a detailed marking guide prepared by the test designers (similar to the practice marking-guide included on the website). Problematic scripts are dealt with as a group by an experienced assessor and all critical borderline scripts are double-marked. Before each administration, assessors for the Listening sub-test conduct a formal meeting to discuss the marking guide, test audio and test-paper and to moderate their initial marking.