BEST | Business-English Skills Test

Benchmarking Score Card

COMPANY

Name, Title

Date

Time

Location of Test 1:

Location of Test 2:

Location of Test 3:
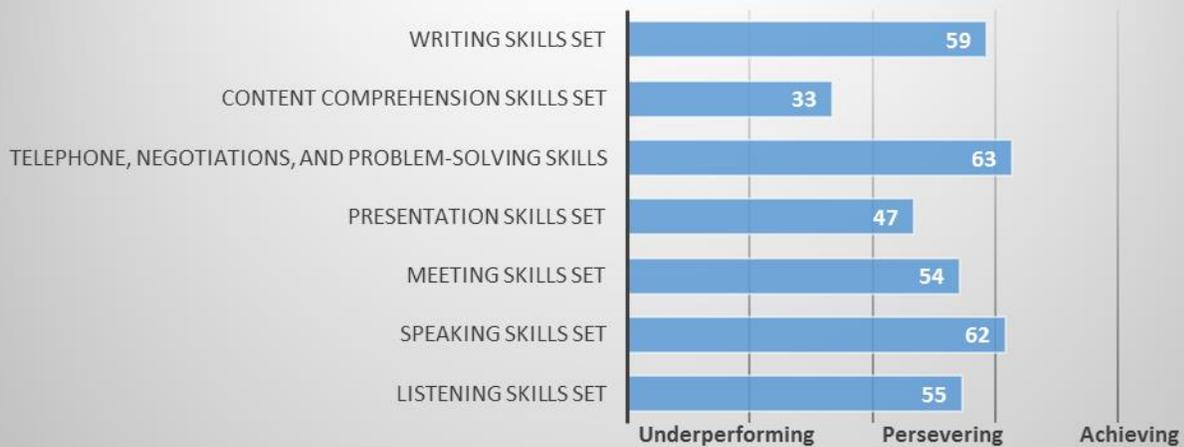
Total Score | BEST 1

Persevering

55

Consolidated Communications
Skill Set Scores | BEST 1

Skill Set	Score
WRITING SKILLS SET	59
CONTENT COMPREHENSION SKILLS SET	33
TELEPHONE, NEGOTIATIONS, AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS	63
PRESENTATION SKILLS SET	47
MEETING SKILLS SET	54
SPEAKING SKILLS SET	62
LISTENING SKILLS SET	55

Underperforming | Persevering | Achieving

Objectives & Scoring

The objectives of this test are to enable a student and/or company to determine the gaps between actual and necessary Business-English Communications across a variety of key skill sets, and to provide actionable guidance on how best to close those gaps. Accordingly, scoring for this test is intentionally kept simple, with numerical scores in all skill sets weighted (0-100) to produce comparative scores, as well as one overall score that falls into one of three levels of performance: Achieving, Persevering, and Underperforming.

Achieving

Speaker is able to perform at a level of achievement with regards to common functions involving Business-English communications, and can be expected to add value on projects through a variety of interactions and media.

Persevering

Speaker is able to perform common functions to some extent in some or all of the communications skill sets in a Business-English context, but may not be expected to add much value or achieve objectives without requiring some assistance and/or extra time.

Underperforming

Speaker may be able to perform some of the common functions in a business English context, but is inefficient, and may be unable to comprehend or convey key details, which could contribute to delays or misunderstandings when interacting with others across a variety of media.

Skill Set Testing Details

Listening Skills Set

Recognizing Problems & Providing Solutions; Answering Questions Based on Content; Understanding Discussions in a Meeting or Conference Call

This score is an aggregate of overall Comprehension, Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication

Speaking Skills Set

Describing Something, Responding to Specific Questions; Responding to Open-ended Questions

This score is an aggregate of overall Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication

Meeting Skills Set

Greetings and Small Talk with Common Phrases; Introducing Yourself and Others, Getting Information, and Exchanging Business Cards; Inviting Someone to a Meeting Room; External Meeting to Introducing Yourself and Your Company; Starting an Internal Meeting to Introduce Topic, Purpose, and People

This score is an aggregate of overall Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication

Presentation Skills

Speaking Text Aloud; Presenting Briefly About Your Company; Responding to Questions about Numerical Content, Data, Dates, etc.

This score is an aggregate of overall Volume, Pronunciation, Rhythm, Intonation, Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication.

Telephone, Negotiations, and Problem-solving Skills

Setting-up an Appointment by Phone; Reschedule an Appointment by Phone; Checking Information by Phone; Negotiating, and Solving Problems

This score is an aggregate of overall Comprehension, Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication

Content Comprehension Skills Set

Answering Questions Based on Material

This score is an aggregate of Time and Errors

Writing Skills Set

Describing Something; Writing Email; Replying to Email; Writing a Report

This score is an aggregate of Time, Errors, Quality, and overall Effectiveness

Detailed Scoring Criteria

The scoring on most tasks are based on four primary elements: Effectiveness, Grammar Accuracy, Fluency, and Sophistication.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness indicates the ability to fulfill the objective of the task, and it may be exclusive of the other three elements, i.e., the test-taker could possibly fulfill the task effectively without perfect grammar and/or vocabulary or much sophistication.

Grammar Accuracy

General grammar accuracy is factored into scoring, but only to the extent that it facilitates or detracts from the effectiveness of fulfilling task objectives.

Fluency

Fluency indicates the ease of the communications, and it may also be exclusive of the other three elements, i.e., a test-taker could score well in Fluency without much sophistication, perfect grammar and/or vocabulary, and while failing to fulfill task objectives.

Sophistication

Sophistication indicates the appropriate use of vocabulary and phrases—but not necessarily the complicated or varied use of vocabulary—as well as effective elements of communications and business manner, which may include one or more of the following: body language, rhythm, pronunciation, intonation, and volume.

Weighting of Scores

Some elements of Business-English communications are tested more comprehensively than others, so scores were numerically weighted (0-100) to produce an even comparison of all skill sets. Note: The Total Score is also adjusted to produce a simple and clear number on the 0-100 scale.

Test Design Philosophy

Measuring communications skills with numerical scores is difficult, yet many tests exist for this purpose, as there is high demand for easy, affordable, and perfectly structured tests with neat scores and ranges that students and businesses can use to determine abilities. Business-English skills, in particular, are in high demand, as business people wish to maximize the value of their time and money spent on lessons, and HR Managers strive to maximize values for investments in training their employees, all for the purpose of maximizing overall business performance.

Not surprisingly, multiple-choice answer tests (that measure language elements, such as listening comprehension with recordings, and vocabulary and grammar through readings and questions) are most efficient to create, correct, and score. Unfortunately, multiple-choice answer tests artificially and imperfectly represent the realities of business, and cannot truly be relied upon to gauge a businessperson's ability to perform in real, interactive business environments across a variety of cultures and media.

Furthermore, the language elements that are tested, such as vocabulary, are not always important for business communications. As business expands globally, more and more speakers of English are non-native, which suggests that high levels and/or wide varieties of vocabulary are not only less important, they could be counter-productive. This is especially true for Business-English, as the range of vocabulary and phrases are comparatively narrow and repetitive. For this very important reason, Business-English Skills Test (BEST) considers vocabulary as only a moderate factor of scoring, focusing mostly on communications clarity and functional effectiveness.[1]

To determine what testing method is best for assessing communications capabilities, it is useful to consider that neither the English language, nor the

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[1] It should be additionally noted that vocabulary, like listening skills, cannot efficiently be taught in language lessons, as time and privacy are required to develop these skills through reading or listening, thoughtful concentration, and repetition. These factors suggest that lessons promising to improve these skills would be cost-ineffective, and that targeted homework between face-to-face lessons is necessary and best.

world of business is perfectly structured, as communications require dynamic performance involving a variety of circumstances. Accordingly, measuring communications ability is more truly a matter of communications skills and effectiveness than language knowledge, and the challenge for test designers should be to find testing elements and reliable scores that better match the performance needs of businesspeople. That is why BEST was created.

One important difference between BEST and other tests is an emphasis on mimicking real business requirements, instead of language knowledge. One example of this objective is the decision not to inform test-takers of a time limit for the BEST Writing and Content Comprehension Assignments, but to instead only ask them to work at the fastest pace possible. The reason for this is to judge the true pace of work as it relates to daily office productivity. With typical English tests, a fixed time limit is given, and test-takers work until the time is up. In the real business environment, however, judgements are made about the tradeoff of quality for time, and that is the critical factor that BEST wishes to measure. In researching the value of this decision, a consensus was gleaned from conversations with managers and HR people alike not to set a time limit for this very important reason.

It should be noted that although BEST brings a unique approach to communications test design and scoring (see below), with some exclusive content—based on the designer's own business and teaching experience—a lot of the material was selectively gathered from well-known testing and teaching materials, including Cambridge (stepBULATS) and English Testing Service (TOEIC and TOEIC Speaking & Writing). This meticulous assemblage is widely expected to be the most efficient, effective, and reliable test to date.

In addition to testing methods, there are the challenges of determining how to score performance, and BEST offers a unique approach to scoring. As briefly mentioned, the value of business performance is most notably seen in results, so BEST scores are based on Effectiveness and Sophistication, as well as Grammar Accuracy, Fluency. It is acknowledged that these types of measures vary, and are subjective to some extent, making it difficult to measure consistently, especially if two different teachers design and score the exams. (This may explain why a test-taker sees test scores move up and down on tests that measure speaking and writing skills.) BEST is designed and scored by only one professional teacher, so all measures are

expected to be fairly consistently, at least to the extent possible under the circumstances.

As BEST has been expressly designed to represent more practical, realistic, and interactive elements of Business-English communications, it is recognized that it is also difficult to measure consistently, because, although only one teacher is designing and scoring the test, its focus on performance is still subjective to the content. This means that a test-taker could still perform better or worse on the same sections of different tests, because of the different content. There is no reasonable way to adjust for this. A solution would be more data, as more data will produce more reliability in measuring true communications skills with BEST. Therefore, it is recommended that BEST be taken at more frequent intervals to get a clearer understanding of Business-English communications skills across a wider variety of content.

The final and perhaps most important value-adding aspect of BEST is the timely and actionable feedback and guidance that is provided on how to improve Business-English communications skills: After most tasks, the teacher will inform the test-taker of any errors, then teach how to better perform, just as in an actual Business-English Lesson. And in the Meeting and Writing Skills sections of BEST, structures are given, and standard phrases are tested and explained, so test-takers could quickly learn to conduct business meetings in English and write email more efficiently, all facilitating greater business productivity.

A Note on the Priority of Skill Sets

It may seem useful to weight certain skill sets based on the priority of an individual or company, and serious consideration was given to this issue. However, upon deeper analysis, it was determined that Business-English language skills are fundamentally synergistic, making it unnecessary to give priority to any particular skill set(s). In parts of the Listening, Meeting, Presentation, and Telephone, Negotiations, and Problem-solving sections, for example, Speaking and Listening are necessary elements of testing; and Comprehension is necessary in virtually all sections. And within the skills of Speaking and Listening, there are different elements of performance. For these reasons, no weighting of skill sets was made for the purposes of this test, and such overlapping language elements mentioned above are expected to serve as a good overall measure of the ability to perform in the variable Business-English context.

For more information, contact English+Advantage at info@englishplusadvantage.com

Best wishes on your business success!