

# Integrated Skills in English (ISE) Guide for Students – ISE I (B1)

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Reading & Writing | Speaking & Listening

Trinity College London  
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## Foreword

Trinity's Integrated Skills in English (ISE) exams assess all four language skills – reading, writing, speaking and listening – in a way that reflects real-life communication in English.

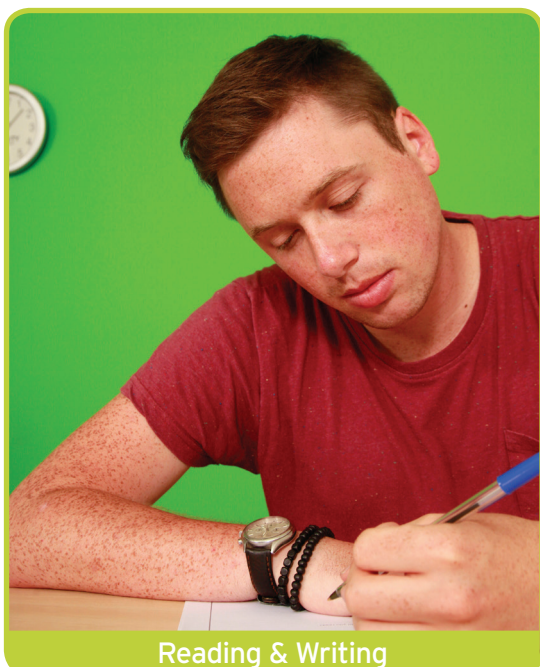
This guide:

- ▶ gives a summary of both modules of the ISE I exam – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening
- ▶ gives you some ideas on how to prepare for the ISE I exam
- ▶ tells you what the examiner is looking for
- ▶ tells you about results and certificates.

Please check [trinitycollege.com/ISEI](http://trinitycollege.com/ISEI) for the latest information about Trinity's ISE exams, and to make sure you are using the latest version of the related documents.

### What is ISE I?

ISE I is an English language exam for learners of English who are at level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference. You take ISE I in two parts – Reading & Writing and Speaking & Listening.



Reading & Writing



Speaking & Listening

### When do I receive the ISE I qualification certificate?

After you have passed both ISE I Reading & Writing and ISE I Speaking & Listening, you receive the ISE I qualification certificate, which shows your results in all four skills. The certificate shows your results for each separate skill – reading, writing, speaking and listening (Pass, Merit or Distinction).

### Who recognises ISE?

Many institutions recognise ISE as proof that you can read, write, speak and listen in English. To find out more visit:

[trinitycollege.com/recognition](https://trinitycollege.com/recognition)

# ISE I summary

## Reading & Writing

**How long is the Reading & Writing exam?** Two hours.

**Which skills do the reading tasks test?** Reading for gist, reading for details, reading comprehension, and understanding the main ideas of a text.

**Which skills do the writing tasks test?** How you organise a text, your range of language functions, grammar and vocabulary, how well you answer the question, and how you transform reading texts into a writing text.

The Reading & Writing exam has four parts:

### Task 1 – Long reading

**How many texts?** One text.

**How long is the text?** About 400 words.

**How many questions?** 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 1-5 – choose the right title for each paragraph of the reading text
- ▶ questions 6-10 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the text – three are false
- ▶ questions 11-15 – complete sentences with exact words from the reading text.

### Task 2 – Multi-text reading

**How many texts?** Four short texts.

**How long are the texts?** In total, the four texts are about 400 words. One of the texts is an infographic.

**How many questions?** 15 questions. There are three types of question:

- ▶ questions 16-20 – choose which text matches a description – there are five questions that describe the main idea or purpose of the texts
- ▶ questions 21-25 – decide which five statements from a list of eight are true according to the texts – three are false
- ▶ questions 26-30 – complete notes with exact words from the texts.

### Task 3 – Reading into writing

**How many texts do I read?** You use the four texts from task 2.

**What do I write?** A descriptive essay, a discursive essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal email or letter, a formal email or letter, or a review.

**How many words do I write?** 100-130 words. You can **only** use information from the texts in task 2 in your answer. Your answer must be in your own words and not copied from the texts.

### Task 4 – Extended writing

**What do I write?** A descriptive essay, a discursive essay, an article (magazine or online), an informal email or letter, a formal email or letter, or a review.

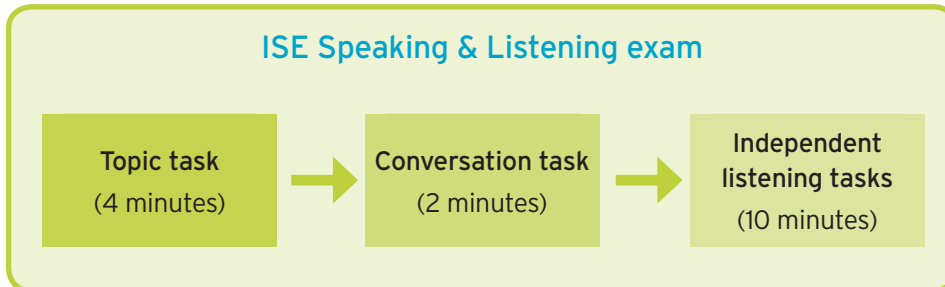
**How many words do I write?** 100-130 words.

To see sample Reading & Writing exams, please go to:

[trinitycollege.com/ISEI](http://trinitycollege.com/ISEI)

## Speaking & Listening

The Speaking & Listening exam is a one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner. The exam is in three parts:



### Topic task (4 minutes)

To prepare for the exam, prepare to talk about a topic. You can choose what you want to talk about, for example, your interests, a musical instrument, a game, or a favourite gadget.

#### How do you choose a topic?

Think of three different possible topics that you can talk to the examiner about.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

What can you say about each possible topic? Which one shows your English skills the best? Which one do you want to talk about with the examiner?

Before the exam, you must complete a topic form with four points you want to discuss. You may use the Trinity topic form available at [trinitycollege.com/ISEtopicform](http://trinitycollege.com/ISEtopicform) or you may create your own form with four points for discussion. You may also bring a small item such as a picture, an event ticket or medal into the exam room to support the topic discussion. However, mobile phones must not be brought into the exam room.

You take the topic form into your exam. The examiner uses this to start the discussion.

Can you think of some possible ideas for your topic form?

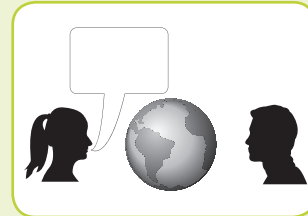
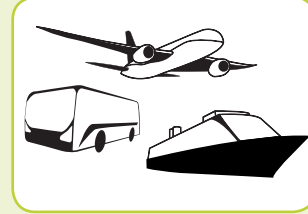
During the exam, you discuss your topic and your topic points with the examiner.



## ISE I summary

### Conversation task (2 minutes)

In this part of the exam, you and the examiner have a conversation on one of these subject areas. Can you label each of the pictures using the subjects in the box below?



Travel

Money

Fashion

Rules and regulations

Health and fitness

Learning a foreign language

Think about each subject area. What can you say about each one? Try to talk about your personal experience.



## Independent listening tasks (10 minutes)

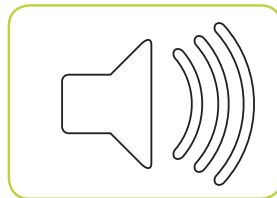
In this part of the exam there are two tasks.

### Task 1 (4 minutes 30 seconds)

You listen to a recording (1 minute) twice and take some notes. You don't have to take notes if you don't want to. The examiner asks you six questions about facts in the recording.



The examiner gives you some instructions



Listen to a recording (twice)



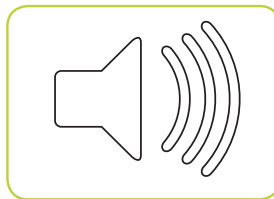
The examiner asks you six questions

### Task 2 (5 minutes 30 seconds)

You listen to a recording (1 minute 15 seconds) twice. After the first time you tell the examiner what the talk is about in a few words. You listen again and this time take some notes if you want to. Then you tell the examiner six facts you heard in the recording. After this, the examiner asks you four questions about the recording.



The examiner gives you some instructions



Listen to a recording (twice)



After the second time you say six things you heard



The examiner asks you four questions

To watch a video of an ISE I Speaking & Listening exam, please go to:

[trinitycollege.com/ISEI](http://trinitycollege.com/ISEI)

### How to prepare for ISE I

Below are some tips for preparing for each part of the ISE I exam:

#### Reading & Writing

##### Reading

Do

- ▶ Practise reading in English by, for example, reading English websites, newspapers or magazines – look for subjects in English that interest you and subjects that you are studying in school or college.
- ▶ Use graded readers, which are books specially written for B1 level learners of English.
- ▶ Try to understand the meaning of words you don't know. Look at the whole sentence, the paragraph and the context and try to think of possible meanings of the word. After you finish reading the paragraph or the whole text, check the meanings of the words in the dictionary.
- ▶ Practise highlighting words or phrases that you think are important for your answer. You can use a highlighter pen to highlight parts of the texts or questions in the exam, if you want to.

##### Writing

Do

- ▶ Look at the question carefully (How many different ideas are there in the question? How many ideas do you have to write in your answer?).
- ▶ Practise writing in three stages:
  - plan what you want to write
  - write your answer
  - check your writing/answer.
- ▶ Check your work to see if it is:
  - organised (Have you used paragraphs? Does it have a conclusion?)
  - appropriate (Have you answered the question? Have you thought about who will read your writing?)
  - accurate (Is your spelling correct? Have you used capital letters and full stops?)
  - legible (Is it easy to read?).
- ▶ Practise doing sample exams from the Trinity website [trinitycollege.com/ISEI](http://trinitycollege.com/ISEI)
- ▶ Practise writing in English outside class – for example, write reviews of films or books you have enjoyed, take part in discussions on the internet in English or write emails or messages to friends in English.



# Speaking & Listening

## Topic task

### Do

- ▶ Spend time choosing and preparing your topic. Choose a topic that interests you and that you can spend up to four minutes talking about.
- ▶ Try to think of a topic that includes lots of language of ISE I. For example, a topic that helps you to give reasons and opinions and discuss the past and the future.
- ▶ Use a range of different language functions from the level (see page 14).
- ▶ Think of the language you will need and the questions the examiner might ask you.
- ▶ Think of questions you can ask the examiner about your topic.
- ▶ Practise listening to English in addition to speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

### Don't

- ▶ Don't choose a technical topic – it's difficult to remember technical vocabulary in the exam.
- ▶ Don't memorise a script – you can plan ideas and phrases for your topic, but remember that the topic is a discussion and it is important to be natural.

## Conversation task

### Do

- ▶ Be prepared to talk about all the conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about what questions the examiner could ask about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Think about how you can use the language of ISE I to talk about the different conversation subject areas.
- ▶ Remember to think of a question to ask the examiner about each conversation subject area.
- ▶ Practise listening to English as well as speaking it – you are tested on your interactive listening skills (how well you follow the conversation), so practise having conversations in English.

## Independent listening task

### Do

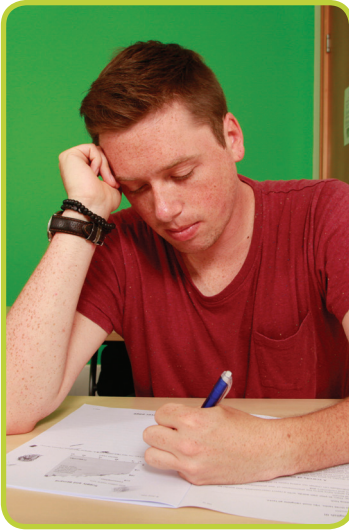
- ▶ Practise listening to recorded English – you are tested on listening to recordings, so watch films and television in English, listen to English podcasts or news programmes, watch English videos on the internet and practise in class.
- ▶ Practise taking notes while you listen – try to only write the most important information like dates, names, places and facts.

### Don't

- ▶ Don't try to write down everything you hear – you don't need 100% of the information.

## What happens on the day of the exam?

### What happens on the day of the exam?



#### Reading & Writing

You take the exam at a Trinity centre or at a registered exam centre. It is a written exam and it takes two hours.

Here is the format of the exam and some tips on each part.

#### Task 1 – Long reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task.
- ▶ Make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

#### Task 2 – Multi-text reading

- ▶ Read the questions carefully.
- ▶ You can highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Spend about 20 minutes on this task.
- ▶ Make sure you leave enough time to do all the other tasks in the exam.

#### Task 3 – Reading into writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ You can highlight parts of the texts or questions, if you want to.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write – your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Make sure you use information from the texts in task 2 to answer the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

#### Tip

Don't just copy from the texts – always try to use your own words.

#### Task 4 – Extended writing

- ▶ Read the task carefully.
- ▶ Plan your answer before you write. Your plan is not marked.
- ▶ Make sure you answer all the points in the question.
- ▶ Check your work when you have finished.
- ▶ Spend about 40 minutes on this task.

### Speaking & Listening

A Trinity examiner comes to your centre for the Speaking & Listening module. This is what happens:

#### Introductions

- ▶ The examiner says 'Hello' and asks your name. The examiner uses some simple greetings like 'How are you?'.
- ▶ The examiner asks to see your identification.
- ▶ You are not tested during the introductions part of the exam.



#### Tip

It is natural to be nervous when taking an exam – but try to think of the Speaking & Listening exam as an opportunity to talk about things that interest you. It's a chance to show the examiner what you can do in English.

If you don't understand something, ask the examiner to repeat what he or she said.

#### Topic task

The examiner asks you for your topic form and he or she asks you what you want to talk about. The examiner uses the form to ask you questions about your topic. Listen carefully and answer the examiner's questions. Don't forget to ask questions too.

#### Conversation task

The examiner tells you which subject you are going to talk about and then asks you a question to start the conversation. Listen carefully and answer the examiner's questions. Don't forget to ask questions too.

#### Independent listening tasks

In task 1 you listen to a recording twice and take some notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed. The examiner asks you six questions about facts in the recording.

In task 2 you listen to a recording twice. After the first time you tell the examiner what the talk is about in a few words. You listen again and this time you can take some notes if you want to. Your notes are not assessed. Then you tell the examiner six facts you heard in the recording. After this, the examiner asks you four questions about the recording.

#### End of the exam

The examiner tells you that the exam has finished and says goodbye. You are not marked on this part of the exam.

### What is the examiner assessing in ISE I?

#### Language functions for ISE I

Study and practise the language functions before the exam. You should also be able to use the language functions for ISE Foundation

- ▶ Describing past actions in the indefinite and recent past
- ▶ Describing the future, informing and expressing intention
- ▶ Predicting and expressing certainty and uncertainty
- ▶ Giving reasons, opinions and preferences
- ▶ Expressing obligation
- ▶ Asking for information and opinions

### Reading

There are 30 questions in the reading section. Depending on the number of correct answers you give, your Reading result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

### Writing

Here are the four skills that the examiner assesses:

**Task fulfilment:** How well you answer the question.

**Organisation and structure:** How well you organise your writing, use paragraphs and sentences and link your ideas together.

**Language control:** How well you use the language functions of ISE I and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and spelling that you use.

**Reading for writing (task 3 only):** How well you use the reading texts from task 2 to write answers using your own words in task 3.

For the writing tasks, your scores in the four scales are combined. Your Writing result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the reading part and the writing part, you will pass the Reading & Writing module. If you fail either the reading part or the writing part, or both, you will not pass the Reading & Writing module.

Reading result:

Writing result:

Reading & Writing module result:

Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

### Speaking

The examiner assesses these four abilities:

**Communicative effectiveness:** How well you complete each task. For example, discussing your topic or having a conversation.

How well you respond to the examiner and how you cope with problems. For example, can you ask the examiner to repeat when you don't understand?

**Interactive listening:** How well you follow the conversation and understand the examiner.

**Language control:** How well you use the language functions of ISE I (see page 14) and the range and accuracy of the vocabulary and grammar that you use.

**Delivery:** Your pronunciation and fluency, and how well the examiner understands you.

Your Speaking result will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.



### Listening

In the Independent listening task 1, you receive a score from 1 to 6.

In the Independent listening task 2, the examiner awards a score based on how well you understand the recording.

Your speaking and writing are not assessed in the Independent listening tasks.

Your scores in task 1 and task 2 are combined to give your overall Listening result, which will be Distinction, Merit, Pass or Fail.

If you pass the speaking part and the listening part, you will pass the Speaking & Listening module. If you fail either the speaking part or the listening part, or both, you will not pass the Speaking & Listening module.

Speaking result:		Listening result:*		Speaking & Listening module result:
Distinction Merit Pass	+	Distinction Merit Pass	=	Pass
Pass	+	Fail	=	Fail
Fail	+	Pass	=	Fail
Fail	+	Fail	=	Fail

\*Independent listening tasks



## Your ISE I qualification certificate

### Your ISE I qualification certificate

When you pass both the Reading & Writing module and the Speaking & Listening module, you receive your ISE I qualification certificate. This certificate shows that you have passed ISE I and gives your results in reading, writing, speaking and listening.

**ISE I:** Pass

**Reading:** Pass or Merit or Distinction

**Writing:** Pass or Merit or Distinction

**Speaking:** Pass or Merit or Distinction

**Listening:** Pass or Merit or Distinction

You also receive a report showing your strengths and areas for future improvement in each skill. You get this report if you pass or fail.

