

HSE Business English Test

READING

The Reading section lasts approximately 60 minutes. It consists of fifty questions and includes three parts. Each part of this section incorporates Use of English questions thus testing the candidate's grammar and vocabulary skills as well as the ability to use various reading strategies. The Reading section includes multiple-choice, open cloze, and gap-filling questions. All the tasks are based on authentic materials relevant to business communication.

Duration: 60 minutes

Number of parts: 3

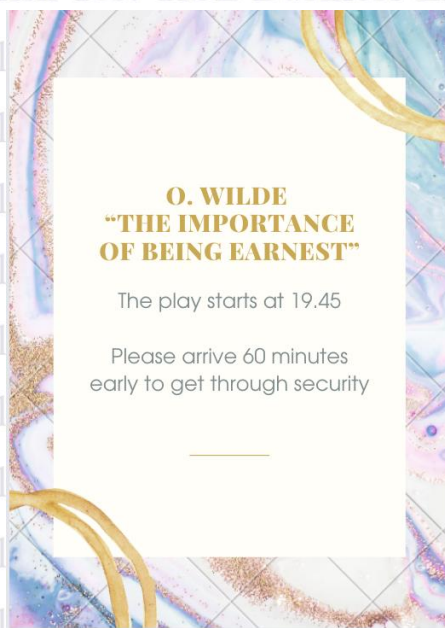
Number of questions: 50

Points: 100

PART 1

For Questions 1–8 read the texts and decide which option (A, B or C) best answers each question.

Text 1



Question 1. To be on time at the theatre means to arrive at:

A: quarter to seven pm

B: quarter past six pm

C: quarter to eight pm



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SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Text 2



BOUQUETS FOR THE LOVED ONES

ROSES – £ 1.5/EACH;
TULIPS – £ 0.8/EACH;
DAISIES – £ 0.5/EACH

OPEN DAILY: 8.00 AM – 8.00 PM
ADDRESS: 10 TOWER PLACE, SOUTH TOWN
ONLINE ORDERS CAN BE PLACED ROUND THE CLOCK
DOOR-TO-DOOR DELIVERY

Question 2. The announcement is about:

- A: a flower market
- B: an internet shop
- C: a street flower seller

Text 3



**NEW DIRECTION
IN EXTREME
TOURISM**

**COME TO THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE IF
YOU:**

- ARE YOUNG, RICH, AND ADVENTUROUS
- DON'T HAVE CHILDREN
- ARE COOL-HEADED

Question 3. The Bermuda tour best suits someone who:

- A: can leave kids with a nanny
- B: is a middle-aged active person
- C: is looking for new exciting experiences



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Text 4



Mark's final grades

Maths – excellent
Physics – excellent
Chemistry – excellent
Geometry – very good
Foreign languages – poor
History – poor
Social sciences – poor

Parents are called into the principal's
office

Question 4. At school, Mark's parents will likely be told:

- A: about Mark's talents in all subjects
- B: about Mark's behaviour at school
- C: about Mark's problems with the humanities

Text 5

Dear clients,
This is to inform you that the new bank service will

- Keep your money safe
- Simplify loan application
- Improve your financial literacy
- Provide personal consultations

Question 5. In the announcement, the bank:

- A tells about a new loan programme
- B offers a reliable security programme
- C promotes a home security system

Text 6**PARKING RATES**

MON-FR: 7.00 AM-9.00 PM £2.5/HOUR.

£1 BEYOND SPECIFIED HOURS

SAT-SUN: £1/HOUR ALL DAY LONG

Free parking for area residents (ID with residential address is required)

Question 6. Drivers who park their cars:

- A: pay the same rates all the time
- B: pay nothing as long as they live in the area
- C: pay special rates for the locals' guests

Text 7

URGENTLY REQUIRED

Reservation agent in a tourist bureau

- **Permanent contract**
- **Competitive salary + bonuses based on KPI**
- **Full-time employment (up to 24/7)**
- **Regular business trips**

Multilingual candidates are most welcome
(Chinese, Spanish, Arabic)

Question 7. Prospective employees are:

- A: offered a freelance contract
- B: promised a desk job
- C: required to work irregular hours



Text 8



 EDUCATION CENTER "LIFE-LONG LEARNING"

- 100+ PROFESSIONS: from shoemaker and tailor to wordsmith and script writer
- No entrance exams
- 21+, discounts for married couples
- Ongoing intakes
- Course duration: 1 week to 3 years
- Social care for students 70+

Question 8. The 'Life-long Learning' school can:

A: provide special support for the elderly people

B: teach school children useful professions

C: compete with classic universities



For Questions 9–18 read the letter and think of **ONE** word which best fits each gap. The first one (0) has been completed for you as an example.

Dr. George Brown
Director of Personnel
Urbana School District 116
1602 South Anderson Street
Urbana, IL 61801

Dear Dr. Brown,

(0) __Herewith__ I send an application letter and curriculum vitae (9) _____
response to the advertisement that appeared in the March 10 Champaign News
Gazette.

I (10) _____ had experience (11) _____ the past five years as a middle school
English teacher (12) _____ Mercer International Middle School in Seattle,
Washington. In that position I have developed a method (13) _____ differentiate
my instruction to meet every student's needs and increase their level (14) _____
literacy.

Attached (15) _____ my resume which will provide you (16) _____ additional
information about my qualifications. I have completed your online application and
would be happy to provide all other information you may need and can be available
for an interview (17) _____ your convenience. Thank you for your consideration.
I look forward (18) _____ hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,
Marc Jacobs



Read an extract from a newspaper article and 6 passages from the correspondence column.
For **Questions 19–22** match each part of the article to the passage (**A–F**). There are two extra passages.

HOME SWEET HOME

Gardens and gardeners will flourish at last

No matter what house you have – a cozy country house or a high-tech cottage – “Paradise Gardens” has it all. It is the largest-ever specialized market that can help you turn your suburban area into a blooming plot of land. The market space is divided into four sections. Today you are invited on a trip around the venue to find everything that you’re looking for.

Amy Smith, reporting from “Paradise Gardens”:

Question 19	Part 1	Passage
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The ‘**Plants**’ section is located on the first floor the market. Every plant on sale is cultivated with great care and awareness of local nature. Apart from potato and carrot seeds, gooseberry shrubs and apple trees typical to our area, there are exotic samples such as orange and tangerine trees. They survive freezing temperatures, dry summers, and rainy springs. I was assured that such plants don’t require special care and can be grown by anybody. Prices vary, budget options are also available.

Question 20	Part 2	Passage
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‘**Tools**’ – the most important section of the venue – is on the ground floor. A range of tools on offer is fascinating. I have always used manual grass trimmers, spades, and rakes but I was surprised by the amount of new electronic devices. Among the latest engineering achievements are new tools that carry out hard garden work. Fees are rather high, but I immediately bought a cultivator and a remover and already said ‘goodbye’ to the pain in my back. There are mechanized tools for every type of work!

Question 21	Part 3	Passage
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If you haven’t built your dream house yet, come and see the projects in the ‘**Buildings**’ section. It used to be impossible to fit a large house into a small plot of land. With new technologies, you can organize any open space effectively. You can also remodel your house to make it more comfortable. A country house can become a city-type living space with water supply, heating, and bathrooms. You can choose from the ready-made projects or order a tailor-made one.

Question 22	Part 4	Passage
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‘**Other goods**’ will help you make your house feel like a home. In this section, you can find napkins, dish soaps, detergents, and glass cleaners that are much cheaper than in other shops. It is very convenient that you can find all the necessary dishes and furniture, supplies and appliances in one place. I was looking for a manual coffee-mill and found one easily. There are many manual devices for regions where electricity is not stable.



Correspondence column:

Passage A: I am a pensioner, and I travel a lot. It is my hobby to bring unusual plants from everywhere. Last time, I brought a new kind of strawberries. They require great care; I should tell you. In order to remove weeds and water my strawberries, I bend down to the ground, and my knees hurt so much afterwards! I hope my garden will no longer cause me such suffering!

Passage B: I bought a plot of land two years ago and it is still empty. We haven't even taken a loan to build a house. My whole family are historians, and we are interested in the history of plants and not in gardening. Did you know that there are 30,000 species in the vanilla family? I wonder if anybody has ever tried to grow vanilla in our area.

Passage C: A few years ago, I bought a cottage in a quiet area hoping to spend my free time in peace. But I was surprised when I first heard about this market. I didn't expect it to cause so many problems for us. Now hundreds of cars and trucks pass by our windows, the noise keeps us awake at night, petrol fumes poison our air and plants.

Passage D: I like to grow plants from seeds. I start every new season in February when I put tomato, pepper, and corn seeds in boxes and cups. You might remember it was cold in June last year, so when I transferred my eggplants to the soil, none survived. It is lovely to know there is a place where professionals could help and supply more region-specific plants!

Passage E: Our house is not small with two floors, six rooms, a kitchen, and two bathrooms. My husband is planning to add a garage. And I want a terrace with French windows for family gatherings. I would like to make it cozy, so I want to buy all sorts of cushions, coverings, and vases. All these additions require cleaning. We also need outdoor lamps for our playground.

Passage F: I am a professional builder, so I built my 200-square-metres house with no assistance. It was 20 years ago, and as technology was not very advanced, I couldn't place a kitchen or a toilet inside the house. I no longer find it convenient, so it is good that there are experts at the market who know how to add facilities and fit projects to clients' needs.

PART 2

For **Questions 23–30** read the text below. Change the given word to fit the text.

In mid-November 2021, Portugal made it (23) _____ for bosses to contact employees after work. Legislators wanted to protect employees from work interfering with their personal lives. According to the new Portuguese bill, employers will also need to cap (24) _____ hours even if employees can be compensated for them and (25) _____ the taking of leave. A survey by (26) _____ outplacement firm Challenger, Gray and Christmas revealed that a large percentage of North American managers contact their employees after hours, and 28.57 per cent of them expect a response within a few hours. As a result of such pressure, many people, particularly those working remotely, report that they work longer hours than before, and this has taken both a physical and a psychological toll. The inability to detach from a “work-life” (27) _____ leads to emotional and physical exhaustion, which ironically erodes (28) _____ and performance, despite the longer hours. Perhaps the solutions lie in the hands of each leader. Leaders need to create a sense of psychological safety that lets their employees feel trusted to get their work done. Some leaders are now including a (29) _____ in their email (30) _____, so they have the freedom to work when it is convenient for them and at the same time respect the well-being of others. Here are two examples:	LEGAL TIME FORCE EXECUTE INTEGRATE ENGAGE CLAIM SIGN
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from The European Business Review

For **Questions 31–36** read the text and answer the questions below. There is only one correct answer to each question.

The Unequal Geography of the Gig Economy

A. When Terrence Davenport first heard about the so-called gig economy, he was working at a free-meal program in his hometown of Dumas, Arkansas, a tiny village surrounded by cotton fields. Around 40 percent of Dumas’s roughly 5,000 residents lived in poverty. “What did you eat today?” Davenport would ask kids he passed on the street. Often it wasn’t much, and he invited them to have a free meal. But what he really wanted to do was solve the deeper problems that made them hungry.

B. It was 2014, still the early days of Uber and Airbnb, and Silicon Valley was promoting the idea that its app-infused “gig economy” – which used digital technology to connect workers with projects – could solve the United States economy’s problems. “In many ways, we look at Uber as the safety net for a city,” then Uber-CEO Travis Kalanick said on a conference stage in 2016. He asked the audience to imagine that a factory had closed down. What would happen to those workers? “They can push a button and get to work.”



C. A San Francisco – non-profit called Samasource wanted to test the idea in Dumas. It already hired extremely poor people in East Africa and India to complete online projects for tech companies like Google. Samasource hoped the gig economy could create similar opportunities for the unemployed in Dumas. It called the idea “Samaschool” and had chosen Dumas, along with Merced, California, to test the program; in Dumas, the local school district’s outgoing superintendent, Mr. Winchester. During his three-year posting at the Dumas district, Mr. Winchester had sat in on Sunday-school classes taught by Davenport and was quite impressed by what he saw. Before his time at Dumas district came to an end, Mr. Winchester had recommended Davenport to run Samaschool.

D. For a small town, attracting businesses, nurturing start-ups, and retraining workers for local jobs can be slow processes. In Dumas, Samaschool hoped it could sidestep these workforce-development challenges by connecting residents, through the internet, to gigs that had been created elsewhere.

E. Research, data entry, and customer service – all work that was plentiful on online freelancing websites—didn’t require college degrees or trade skills. All Dumas residents needed, the thinking went, was some instruction about self-promotion and digital literacy, and an internet connection. An 80-hour program, to teach all this, would span 10 weeks. Around 70 Dumas residents applied. Davenport chose 30 of them. The Dumas program quickly attracted attention both locally and nationally. But as he started teaching, Davenport knew almost instantly that the gig economy wasn’t going to provide the easy solution to unemployment that had been promised – at least, not in Dumas.

F. At the end of Davenport’s first course, the feedback was consistent: This is a nice platform and all, but we’re spending a lot of time working on it without getting paid. Where are the jobs? So, Davenport and Samaschool pivoted. They thought students would win more gigs if they had been trained for specific ones. So, for the second class cohort, Davenport taught students not only how to use Upwork and promote themselves, but also how to do work in areas like customer service, social-media marketing, and virtual assistance (helping clients manage their email, calendars, and errands from afar).

G. Still, only two people found digital work. For the third cohort, Samaschool narrowed the curriculum to one skill: social-media marketing. The field paid fairly well and favored native English speakers. But it also required constant creative thinking and perfect grammar. “We’ve been doing physical labor,” Davenport told me, “where you get a job and obey what your boss tells you.” Marketing didn’t agree with most of his students’ past experiences, and the training wasn’t enough to overcome that; only one student found gig-economy work.

from The Atlantic

QUESTIONS

31. How was Terrence Davenport helping the people of his hometown?

- A. By solving the short-term problem of hunger.
- B. By looking for long-term solutions to poverty.
- C. Both answers are correct.

32. According to Travis Kalanick, what is the greatest benefit of the gig economy?

- A. It helps relocate fired workers to a new job.
- B. It makes the job market accessible to all.
- C. It provides more jobs for IT specialists.

33. What does the word “outgoing” (Paragraph C) mean in relation to the school district’s superintendent?

- A. It refers to the superintendent whose term is about to run out.
- B. It means that the superintendent got fired from his job.
- C. It hints at the fact that the superintendent is a people person.



34. What is a Samaschool applicant required to have?

- A. Previous job experience
- B. A valid college degree
- C. Access to the Internet

35. What does the word “pivoted” in Paragraph F refer to? (So, Davenport and Samaschool pivoted.)

- A. Davenport accepting the failure of Samaschool.
- B. Davenport switching up Samaschool’s focus.
- C. Davenport accepting more applicants to Samaschool.

36. To what does Davenport attribute the failure of the Samaschool social-media marketing program?

- A. The students were not registered on social media platforms.
- B. The social-media marketing jobs were not paid well enough.
- C. The students were not used to having creative freedom.

PART 3

For **Questions 37–44** read the text and fill in each gap with **NO MORE THAN ONE WORD**.

Choosing the right successor can make or (37) _____ the future of your business. The one who’s next in (38) _____ of succession should have long-lasting passion for the work, the company’s respect and the expertise needed to maximize profits and promote business longevity. Can your successor make the tough decisions you may have struggled with in the past?

Truth be (39) _____, an effective succession plan ensures the company remains a thriving enterprise. When evaluating potential successors, you should first analyze your (40) _____ role by assessing the crucial aspects of running your business and what specific skills and qualities are needed for success.

When it (41) _____ to a family business, often an adult child or other family member is the common choice to lead. A strong succession plan clarifies this person’s responsibilities as well as the roles of other family members. It’s important for everyone to understand their value. If it is clear a family member may not be the one to take (42) _____, you will then need to weigh other options, such as team members and external candidates.

An effective succession plan creates a structure the business can follow through the transition. A company’s mission (43) _____ creates a starting point that commits all stakeholders to staying on the same page. It should include company core values, goals for the transition and established responsibilities.

When leaving your company to heirs, there are many methods to minimize taxation. One of the most effective is a family limited partnership. A Family Limited Partnership (FLP) can help facilitate the business succession and possibly save money on taxes. Each family member owns shares and has voting (44) _____ in proportion to their holdings.

from Kiplinger

You are going to read a text about business in the post-pandemic era. Six paragraphs have been removed from the text. For **Questions 45–50** choose the paragraph which best fits each gap. There are two extra paragraphs.

Strategic Drivers for The Post-Pandemic Era

Business news coverage includes dozens of new products and technologies which should not be ignored. Yet, the increasing volume of this critical information leads to most business leaders having no choice but to ignore it. Doing so results in stagnation and uninformed strategic planning. In these times of constant swift change, keeping up to date is highly problematic and may leave some organizations behind.

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A VUCA world is a shift in kind rather than degree. Tried and tested approaches cannot be simply updated, they should be altogether replaced. Even as strategic decisions become increasingly short lived, the rules of strategy are being constantly rewritten. As exponential technologies become a reality, they empower new consumer behaviors and business models.

46

Strategy scholars have espoused two key schools: the positioning and the resource-based. The positioning school instructs companies to position themselves in an attractive industry, establish a competitive focus through differentiation or low cost, and operate a coherent value chain. According to the resource-based school, companies should cultivate unique resources and capabilities to develop a durable competitive advantage to best their competitors.

47

Successful companies such as Alibaba and Amazon operate dozens of business models across multiple industries at the same time: business-to-business, business-to-consumer, and consumer-to-consumer; domestic and international; they sell other companies' products as well as their own; they are active in retail, logistics, cloud computing, warehouse management solutions, etc.

48

In a VUCA competitive landscape, competitive advantages are no longer durable. They are, at best, transient. Product development can be crowdsourced, manufacturing outsourced to the likes of Foxconn, retail via Amazon, and logistics handled by FedEx or UPS. None of this requires large capital expenditures and can be accessed even by the latest startups. In fact, capitalism is becoming decoupled from physical and financial capital. When resources become widely available, they no longer offer a durable competitive advantage.

Unlike companies managing a linear supply chain, ecosystems are complex and integrated networks of separate entities co-creating value. Companies in an ecosystem operate as nodes in a network.

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The organizations that best cope with the uncertainty of ultra-rapid change, do so by intelligently coordinating a broad range of skills. For example, they combine the skills of humans and machines and coordinate tasks that cater to their strengths, as Amazon does in its warehouses where Kiva robots collaborate with human workers.

50

Today's organizations have access to unprecedented amounts of data. This information can provide unique insights, but it's impossible for humans to parse such enormous datasets on their own. Organizations can use machine learning algorithms (or AI) to process these vast stores of data into a meaningful analysis. Nowadays most applications only use the simplest form of learning and automation. Nonetheless, Learning Systems allow companies to make decisions that are not only faster and more accurate, but also continuously become even faster and more accurate.

PARAGRAPHS

A. As organizations experience the rapid pace of technological transformation of the post-pandemic era and as their go-to principles of strategy are being updated, they look for new solutions. In rapidly changing environments, where business models have a short lifespan, companies need to continuously look to the future. This explains a growing interest in foresight among both scholars and practitioners.

B. Traditional businesses create value for shareholders, disregarding the costs for other stakeholders. For this reason, trust in business is declining. The majority of respondents to the Edelman Trust Barometer 2020 believe that “capitalism as it exists today does more harm than good in the world.” Many companies embrace a purpose, what EY and Harvard Business Review define as “an aspirational reason for being which inspires and provides a call to action for an organization...and provides benefit to society.”

C. Even as Apple and Google compete over mobile operating systems, Google pays Apple \$12 billion per year to remain the default search engine on Apple’s browser Safari, while Apple lets its users access Google’s apps and rents Google’s cloud for its iCloud service. Apple and Google surely compete, but they also need each other in order to thrive. So, the relationships among nodes are not strictly transactional, but complex and multifaceted.

D. The post-pandemic era is subject to extremely rapid change, characterized by increasing volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). In the past 50 years, the average lifespan of a business model has dropped from 15 years to less than five. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this trend.

E. Some companies engage in open innovation – using knowledge and resources that are internal as well as external (e.g., consumer feedback, competitors, universities), as Lego does when it invites its customers to suggest ideas for new products. The intelligent coordination of a broader range of skills allows outcomes that are not simply better, but otherwise altogether impossible.

F. For effective foresight, understanding drivers is paramount. Trends continue only if the underlying conditions that triggered them – the drivers – are still active. Drivers allow broad general directions to be investigated to inform strategy formulation. That’s how CLEVER helps decision makers take strategic action now and in the future.

G. The pillars of the positioning school have seemingly become less critical to success. Prof. Porter himself acknowledged that, as smart connected products shift the basis of competition from single products to broad systems of value creation of which a firm is one of many elements, the boundaries of industries expand. As a result, “competitive advantage no longer comes from low cost or product differentiation,” but from perfecting business models that can deliver ever evolving, customer centric, value propositions.

H. While in academic debates the resource approach is now dominant, in managerial practice the two approaches complement one another. Yet, as the post-pandemic era shapes different competitive landscapes, both positioning-based and resource-based principles are increasingly insufficient to guide strategic decisions.

From The European Business Review