

Read aloud

This is a long-answer item type that integrates speaking and reading skills, and requires you to read a short text aloud, using correct pronunciation and intonation.

Look at the text below. In 40 seconds, you must read this text aloud as naturally and clearly as possible. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 40 seconds.

Analysts were impressed by the improvement in margins reported across all regions, apart from the United Kingdom, and said that this reflected a clear effort to improve profitability across the business. Although the turnaround is still in its early stages and the valuation looks full, given the challenge of turning around such a large and complex business, this is certainly an impressive start.

Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

You have 30–40 seconds to go through the text. Read it silently and try to figure out any words you do not know using context and word structure clues.

Strategy 2

When you speak into the microphone, read every single word. Do not miss out words or rush through. Apply your letter-sound knowledge or phonemic awareness to pronounce unfamiliar words.

Strategy 3

When you speak, try to link the words within phrases and do not emphasize grammar words such as prepositions and articles. This will help you achieve native-like rhythm and phrasing, and sound more fluent.

Explanation and Practice of Each Strategy

Strategy 1

You will have 30–40 seconds to prepare and familiarize yourself with the text before the microphone opens. Use the time to try to figure out and understand any unfamiliar words, as well as the content of the text.

Context clues are usually any surrounding words that will give you hints about the words you do not know. Word structure clues are groups of letters that occur frequently in words. These are prefixes (*un-*, *re-*, *in-*), suffixes (*-ful*, *-ness*, *-est*), and inflectional endings (*-ed*, *-ing*, *-es*). Associating meaning and sounds to these groups of letters will lead to quicker and efficient word identification.

To practice this strategy, do the following activities:

- Look at the first sentence from Item 1: "*Analysts were impressed by the improvement in margins reported across all regions, apart from the United Kingdom, and said that this reflected a clear effort to improve profitability across the business.*" Try to work out the meaning of the underlined word and think about what context clues helped you figure out the correct meaning, e.g., meaning – gross profits; context clues – *improve, profitability, business*.
- Now look at the words *improvement* and *profitability*, identify the roots and suffixes (*-ment, -able, -ity*), and sound them out. Then go through Item 1 and highlight all prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings. Use a dictionary to work out their meaning and pronunciation.

Strategy 2

When responding to this item type, you should read all words in the text. To become a skilled reader you should be able to identify and/or predict words quickly and accurately. You need to become proficient in verbalizing printed words.

In addition to using word structure clues discussed above, reading also involves recognizing sight words, i.e., common words that should be recognized on sight such as *should, ought*, and associating spelling with sounds. Approximately 84% of English words are phonetically regular. Therefore, learning the most common sound-spelling relationships in English is extremely useful for readers.

To apply this strategy, do the following activities:

- Make a list of sight words, e.g., *another, because, here, there, where, whole, could, enough, though*, etc. and practice reading them out loud.
- If you are familiar with the phonetic symbols, write down a list of vowels (e.g., /i:/, /ʌ/, /ə/) and think of all letter representations that are associated with each sound, (e.g., /i:/ – ee, ea, e, y) and provide example words. Do the same for the more difficult consonants (e.g., /f/ as in **full, effort, half, phone, cough**).

Strategy 3

It is important to understand how the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables helps to create the sentence rhythm in English. You should also know how to group syllables together into larger units such as phrases or thought groups. Thought groups include short sentences, phrases, clauses, and transition words and phrases that make the organization of the text clear (e.g., *on the other hand, for example, in fact*).

In addition, try to link the final sounds of words to the next word in the phrase. For example, if the final sound of a word is a consonant and the next word starts with a vowel, blend the last consonant of the word with the next word, e.g., *They lived in Hong Kong* sounds like *They live din Hong Kong*.

To practice this strategy, do the following activities:

- Look at the first sentence from Item 1: "*Analysts were impressed by the improvement in margins reported across all regions, apart from the United Kingdom, and said that this reflected a clear effort to improve profitability across the business.*" Divide it into thought groups and mark the unstressed syllables. Then practice reading it out loud.
- Now mark the words that can be linked in each thought group and practice reading until you feel you are more fluent.
- Do the same with the other sentence from Item 1 and repeat the activities.

Respond to a Read Aloud Item

Now respond to Item 2 simulating the test conditions. Spend 40 seconds to read the text silently and 40 seconds to read it aloud. Remind yourself of the three strategies for this item type and apply them.

Record your response using the recording device on your mobile phone or computer.

Assess your Response

Were you able to use the strategies? Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one did you think was the most useful?

Play back your response and compare it to the three sample responses in audio files [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_B1], [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_B2] and [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_C1].

Read the explanation about each response. Which one do you think your response was closest to? What do you think you need to improve?

Item 1

Look at the text below. In 40 seconds, you must read this text aloud as naturally and clearly as possible. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

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Item 2

Look at the text below. In 40 seconds, you must read this text aloud as naturally and clearly as possible. You have 40 seconds to read aloud.

Once most animals reach adulthood, they stop growing. In contrast, even plants that are thousands of years old continue to grow new needles, add new wood, and produce cones and new flowers, almost as if parts of their bodies remained "forever young". The secrets of plant growth are regions of tissue that can produce cells that later develop into specialized tissues.

Item 2: Explanations

Audio [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_B1]

Speech is disconnected. The rate of speech is uneven and phrasing is irregular. Inappropriate stress and incorrect pronunciation of some consonants might require listeners to adjust to the accent of the speaker.

Audio [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_B2]

One word is left out and one word is read inaccurately. Phrasing is somewhat disconnected and there are two repetitions. Leaving out or incorrect pronunciation of some consonants does not affect understanding.

Audio [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_C1]

One word is left out. The rate of speech is conversational and shows appropriate phrasing. Small pronunciation errors do not affect understanding.