

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 1 - Read aloud

Time allocated: 60 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Item Type

This is a long-answer item type that integrates speaking and reading skills, and requires test takers 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.

Step 2: Present the Item Type Strategies

Strategy 1

You have 30–40 seconds to go through the text. Read it silently trying to decode 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 skip 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.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that they will have 30–40 seconds to prepare and familiarize themselves with the text before the microphone opens. They should use the time to try to decode and understand any unfamiliar words, as well as the content of the text.

Context clues are usually any surrounding words that will give your students hints about the words they do not know. Word structure clues are clusters 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 clusters of letters will lead to more rapid and efficient word identification.

To practice this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Display 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."* Have students work out the meaning of the underlined word and discuss what context clues helped them decode the correct meaning, e.g., meaning – gross profits; context clues – *improve*, *profitability*, *business*.
- Now ask students to look at the words *improvement* and *profitability*, identify the roots and suffixes (*-ment*, *-able*, *-ity*), and sound them out. Then give students copies of Item 1 and have them highlight all prefixes, suffixes and inflectional endings, and discuss their meaning and pronunciation.

Strategy 2

Explain to your students that they should read all words in the text. To become skilled readers, they should be able to identify and/or predict words quickly and accurately. They must be proficient in decoding the printed words into spoken language.

In addition to using word structure clues discussed above, decoding 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, teaching the most common sound-spelling relationships in English is extremely useful for readers.

To apply this strategy, ask your class to do the following activities:

- Have your students make a list of sight words, e.g., *another*, *because*, *here*, *there*, *where*, *whole*, *could*, *enough*, *though*, etc. and practice reading them to each other in pairs.
- If students are familiar with the phonetic symbols, write down a list of vowels (e.g., /i:/, /Λ /, /ə/) and have them 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

Explain to your students that it is important to understand how the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables helps to create the sentence rhythm in English. They 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, students should 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, they should 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, ask your class to do the following activities in pairs:

- Display 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."* Have students divide the sentence into thought groups and mark the unstressed syllables. Then have them practice reading it to each other.
- Now ask students to mark the words that can be linked in each thought group. Have them practice reading it until they are fluent readers.
- Display the other sentence from Item 1 and repeat the activities.

Step 4: Respond to a Read Aloud Item

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test item simulating the test conditions. They will have 40 seconds to read the text silently and 40 seconds to read it aloud. Remind students of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply these strategies.

Now give students copies of Item 2. If possible, seat students at separate workstations or away from each other. Have students record their responses using the recording devices on their mobile phones or computers.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful?

If students have recorded their responses, ask them to compare and evaluate each other's responses in pairs or groups.

Play 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], and ask students to rank the responses from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations for Item 2.

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.

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 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 staccato and labored. 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 omitted and one word is read inaccurately. Phrasing is somewhat staccato and there are two repetitions. Omission or incorrect pronunciation of some consonants does not affect understanding.

Audio [L1_Read_aloud_2_Response_C1]

One word is omitted. Speech is at a conversational rate and demonstrates appropriate phrasing. Minor pronunciation errors do not affect understanding.