



JetBlok Studio

PTE ACADEMIC 2026

Reading Guide

All 5 reading tasks, with a time plan that fits 23 minutes.

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26 pages · Chapter 3 of the PTE Complete Guide

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How to use this guide

PTE Academic changed in a big way in August 2025, and plenty of guides online still teach the old version. If you're sitting the test in 2026, you need to know the 22 question types, how the AI and human scoring fit together, which tasks carry the most weight, and the new Australian visa scores that catch a lot of people out. I've checked the official facts here against Pearson's own score guide and the Home Affairs rules. Where a tip comes from PTE coaches and teachers rather than Pearson, I say so.

What's official and what's coach advice

Official rules come from Pearson. Tips marked **Coach tip** come from PTE teachers and coaches, not Pearson. Percentages labelled as coach estimates are not published by Pearson.

PEARSON RULE

Rules from Pearson's score guide and test format pages.

COACH TIP

Advice from PTE teachers and coaches, not Pearson.

What's in this guide

- **Chapter 3, Reading:** All 5 reading tasks, with a time plan that fits 23 minutes.

Underlined links open the full articles on jetblok.com.au, and everything in the contents is tappable. PTE Reading Guide · Version 1.0 · Last updated 10 October 2026 · jetblok.com.au/guides/pte-reading

What's inside

How to use this guide	2
The test at a glance	4
What changed in August 2025	6
How scoring works	7
03 Reading	10
The Secret: Your Reading Score Starts Outside the Reading Part	11
Reading Score Breakdown: Where the Points Come From	11
Fill in the Blanks: The Core Strategy	12
Reorder Paragraphs: about 9% of Reading	15
Multiple Choice: The Time Traps	17
The "2 out of 3" Idea for 79+	18
Scoring Types: Why They Change Your Strategy	18
Time Plan: Your Reading Blueprint	19
Your FIB Practice Routine	20
Common Mistakes That Kill Reading Scores	21
Your Score 90 Action Plan	22
One more mistake to avoid	23
Quick answers	23
Sources and disclaimer	25
Keep going	26

What is PTE Academic?

PTE Academic (Pearson Test of English Academic) is a computer-based English test accepted by universities and governments in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the UK, the USA and many other places. It tests Speaking, Writing, Reading and Listening in one sitting of about **2 hours** at a Pearson test centre (or at home, if you book the PTE Academic Online version and your purpose accepts it). Pearson’s test taker handbook says results are typically ready within 48 hours, but can take up to 5 days. That’s a lot faster than many other tests.

What makes PTE different is that **AI scores every answer**. Pearson’s scoring engine checks pronunciation, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and content. On top of that, Pearson’s score guide says humans review the content of seven longer tasks before the score is final. So it’s consistent, and it’s harder to game with memorised scripts.

2026 PTE Test Structure: 3 Parts, 22 Question Types

The test runs for **about 2 hours** and has three parts with **22 question types**, up from 20 before August 2025. The two tasks added for tests taken from 7 August 2025 are Summarize Group Discussion and Respond to a Situation. Pearson says the part timings below don’t add up exactly because each test version is balanced for total length.

Part	Time (Pearson)	Question types	Tasks
Part 1: Speaking & Writing	about 76 to 84 minutes	9 scored types, plus an unscored Personal Introduction	Read Aloud, Repeat Sentence, Describe Image, Retell Lecture, Answer Short Question, Summarize Group Discussion (added Aug 2025), Respond to a Situation (added Aug 2025), Summarize Written Text, Write Essay

Part	Time (Pearson)	Question types	Tasks
Part 2: Reading	about 23 to 30 minutes	5 types	Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown), Multiple Choice Multiple Answers, Reorder Paragraphs, Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop), Multiple Choice Single Answer
Part 3: Listening	about 31 to 39 minutes	8 types	Summarize Spoken Text, Multiple Choice Multiple Answers, Fill in the Blanks (Type In), Highlight Correct Summary, Multiple Choice Single Answer, Select Missing Word, Highlight Incorrect Words, Write from Dictation

Pearson’s 2025 update also raised the number of questions: the July 2025 institution score guide says you’ll answer 65 to 75 questions across the 22 types. Coaches often compare this with about 52 before the update.

There are no scheduled breaks. Pearson’s July 2025 test taker handbook says you can ask the test administrator for an unscheduled break, but **the test clock keeps running** while you’re away. So treat the whole test as one continuous block and plan your water and bathroom stop before you start.

What changed in August 2025

PTE Academic changed in a big way in August 2025, and plenty of guides online still teach the old version. These changes apply to tests taken from 7 August 2025.

22 question types

Up from 20. Summarize Group Discussion and Respond to a Situation were added. The test runs for about 2 hours.

65 to 75 questions

Pearson's July 2025 institution score guide. Coaches often compare this with about 52 before the update.

Read Aloud is Speaking only

Since August 2025, Pearson lists Read Aloud as a Speaking task only.

New visa scores

Each skill has its own minimum and must be met separately. You can't average them.

English level	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Skilled visa points
Vocational	33	36	29	24	n/a
Competent	47	48	51	54	0
Proficient	58	59	69	76	10
Superior	69	70	85	88	20

Home Affairs PTE Academic scores for tests taken from 7 August 2025, in Pearson's order. Functional English is an overall 24 with no minimum for each skill. Results from tests taken on or before 6 August 2025 use the old bands, and can be used until 6 August 2028 depending on the visa. Checked October 2026. Confirm current numbers with Home Affairs and Pearson before you book.

The Scoring System: AI First, Humans on Content

This is the part most people get wrong. Here's how it works, using Pearson's own score guide.

How AI scoring works

AI scores **every response**. Depending on the task, it looks at traits like:

- **Pronunciation:** clear sounds, word stress and natural intonation
- **Oral Fluency:** smooth rhythm and phrasing, without long hesitations or restarts
- **Content:** how well you answered the actual prompt
- **Grammar, vocabulary and spelling:** on the written tasks
- **Form:** things like word count and, for Summarize Written Text, writing one sentence

Where humans come in

Pearson's score guide lists **seven tasks** where a trained human also reviews the **content** before the score is final:

- 1 Describe Image
- 2 Retell Lecture
- 3 Respond to a Situation
- 4 Summarize Group Discussion
- 5 Summarize Written Text
- 6 Write Essay (humans also review structure, coherence and language range here)
- 7 Summarize Spoken Text



Humans don't score your accent or pronunciation. That stays with the AI, and it's built to handle a wide range of accents. What matters is being easy to understand.

TEMPLATES WARNING

Pearson's score guide says a response that relies on large amounts of pre-prepared or memorised material can get **zero for content**, and zero content means zero for that answer. Coaches often say the engine "flags rhythmic monotony". Pearson doesn't use that phrase, but the advice behind it holds: use a flexible structure, not a word-for-word script.

Your Overall Score is NOT the Average of Your Four Skills

Most people assume $\text{Overall} = (\text{Speaking} + \text{Writing} + \text{Reading} + \text{Listening}) \div 4$. **It isn't.** Pearson says it directly: the overall score is not an average of the four skill scores.

Pearson works out the overall score from your performance on all the items, and each skill score is calculated on its own from overlapping sets of tasks. One task can feed two skills. Repeat Sentence counts for Listening and Speaking. Write from Dictation counts for Listening and Writing.

So a weak task can pull down more than one skill, and getting good at the high-weight tasks lifts several scores at once.



Partial Credit and Negative Marking: Know the Rules

Most PTE tasks use partial credit, so every correct part earns points even if the whole answer isn't perfect. But Pearson's score guide lists **three tasks with negative marking**, where a wrong pick costs a point (the item can't go below zero):

- Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers (Reading)
- Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers (Listening)
- Highlight Incorrect Words (Listening)

The rule: on these three, **only choose what you're sure of**. A wrong pick cancels out a right one.

CHAPTER 3

Reading

All 5 reading tasks, with a time plan that fits 23 minutes.

Here's something that changes how you prepare for PTE Reading: **the Reading score isn't only about the Reading part**. A big slice of it comes from tasks in other parts of the test. Once you see how PTE's integrated scoring works, you can stop wasting time on low-value tasks and put your effort where it moves your score. This chapter covers where the Reading points come from, the strategies for each task and a time plan for hitting 79+ or 90. The official rules (timings, scoring types, negative marking) come from Pearson's score guide. The percentages and many of the tactics come from PTE coaches and teachers, and they're labelled that way.

The Secret: Your Reading Score Starts Outside the Reading Part

This is the biggest insight for PTE Reading, and most people don't know it. Pearson's score guide shows that some tasks in Speaking & Writing and in Listening also feed Reading. Using the weighting table coaches quote from Pearson, here's roughly how much:

- **Summarize Written Text (SWT):** about **23% of Reading**
- **Highlight Incorrect Words (HIW):** about **13% of Reading**
- **Highlight Correct Summary (HCS):** about **3% of Reading**

So, on those estimates, **around 39% of your Reading score is decided outside the Reading part.** If SWT or HIW goes badly, your Reading score suffers however well you do on the Reading tasks themselves.

KEY TAKEAWAY

Reading prep doesn't start in Reading. It starts with SWT in Part 1 and HIW in Listening. If your Reading score is below target, check those two first.

Reading Score Breakdown: Where the Points Come From

Now the tasks inside the Reading part. The item counts and scoring types are from Pearson's score guide. The percentages are coach estimates from the weighting table quoted from Pearson's teacher document. They're averages, not a formula.



Task	Items (Pearson)	Approx. overall weight	Approx. share of Reading
Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown)	5 to 6	7%	25%
Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop)	4 to 5	6%	20%
Reorder Paragraphs	2 to 3	3%	9%
Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers	2 to 3	1%	5%
Multiple Choice, Single Answer	2 to 3	under 1%	3%

The two Fill in the Blanks tasks together are about **45% of Reading** on these numbers. Nearly half your Reading result from two task types. Meanwhile Multiple Choice, Single Answer is under 1% of your overall score.

That tells you where to put your prep time, and where to stop wasting it.

Fill in the Blanks: The Core Strategy

Since the FIBs carry so much weight, let's go through both.

Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown): about 25% of Reading

You read a passage with gaps and pick the right word for each from a dropdown. It's the biggest task in the Reading part. In the current test, Pearson's score guide lists it as a Reading task only. (Older guides call it "Reading & Writing Fill in the Blanks" and say it feeds Writing. That's no longer the case.)

STRATEGY

- **Read 2 or 3 words either side of the blank first.** The answer usually connects to what's right next to it. Skim the passage once for the gist, then let the local clues do the work.
- **Read for logic, not synonyms.** Don't hunt for the word that "means the same" as something nearby. Ask: "Which word makes this sentence make sense?"
- **Use grammar clues hard.** Look at the preposition after the blank, the tense of nearby verbs and any article before it. These knock out wrong options faster than trying to understand everything.

EXAMPLE

Example: "The study was _____ by a team of researchers." The blank needs a past participle (conducted, carried out, led). "Was ... by" tells you it's passive, which rules out the other forms straight away.

Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop): about 20% of Reading

You drag words from a box into the gaps. There are more words than gaps, so some won't be used.



STRATEGY

- **Do the easy blanks first.** Once a word is placed, it's out of the box, which makes the harder gaps easier.
- **Eliminate, don't guess.** For each gap, rule out words that can't fit the grammar or make no sense. "It can't be a noun, it needs a verb" is faster and more accurate than hunting for the "best" word.
- **Get it down to two.** If you can rule out all but two options, your odds are far better than picking from 6 to 8. FIBs give **partial credit**, so every correct word counts, and a blank costs you nothing to fill.

Grammar Rules for FIBs: Cheat Sheet

These patterns come up again and again. Learn them and you'll fill blanks faster:

Match the tense: Look at the other verbs in the sentence. "The researchers *discovered* that the compound _____ significant results" needs a past tense verb (produced, showed, yielded).

Singular or plural:

- "One of the _____" → **plural noun** (one of the *reasons*)
- "Another _____" → **singular noun** (another *study*)
- "Each _____" → singular noun (each *participant*)
- "Several _____" → plural noun (several *studies*)

The comma rule (a coaching rule of thumb):

- **Comma before the blank** → often *which* or *while* (a non-defining clause)
- **No comma** → often *that* (a defining clause)

It isn't a grammar law, but it's right often enough to be a useful tiebreaker.



Lean academic: PTE passages come from academic texts. Many coaches say that when two options both seem right, **the more formal or precise word** is usually the better bet:

- *Substantial* over *big*
- *Detrimental* over *bad*
- *Tremendous* over *huge*

Treat that as a tiebreaker, not a rule. Meaning and grammar come first.

Collocations: Academic English uses fixed pairs. Know them and some blanks fill themselves:

- depend **ON** / rely **ON**
- struck **BY** / affected **BY**
- involved **IN** / engaged **IN**
- conduct **research** / carry out **an experiment**
- pose **a threat** / raise **a concern**

Reorder Paragraphs: about 9% of Reading

Reorder Paragraphs can feel overwhelming: 4 or 5 jumbled boxes to put in order. With a method, you can reliably get some pairs right, and Pearson scores each correct **adjacent pair**, so partial answers still earn points.

Step 1: Find the opening sentence

The first sentence usually does **NOT** contain:

- **Pronouns with nothing to refer to:** *it, they, these* point back to something earlier



- **Contrast or linking words:** *but, however, on the other hand* need something before them
- **Back-reference phrases:** *these findings, that approach, such methods*

It usually introduces a **topic, person, place or idea** by its full name, or makes a general statement.

Step 2: Find linked pairs

Don't try to order all 5 at once. Look for pairs that clearly belong together:

- **Name, then pronoun:** "Dr Smith ran a study" then "She found that..."
- **Contrast:** one view, then "However,..."
- **Cause, then effect:** "X happened" then "As a result..."
- **General, then specific:** a broad claim, then the evidence or example

Step 3: Use time and logic markers

For time-based or process texts, words like *initially, first, then, subsequently* and *finally* give the order away.

Good enough is good enough

With 5 sentences there are 4 adjacent pairs. Many coaches say getting **2 of the 4 pairs** right regularly is enough to support a strong Reading score, because Reorder is a small slice. You don't need perfection.

The time cap

Coaches generally suggest capping each Reorder question at **about 90 seconds to 2 minutes**. If you're stuck after finding 1 or 2 clear pairs, make your best order and move on. Your time is worth more on the FIBs.

Multiple Choice: The Time Traps

Multiple Choice questions are the biggest time traps in Reading. People spend 5 to 7 minutes agonising over tasks worth very little. Don't.

Multiple Choice, Single Answer: about 3% of Reading

This is worth so little that the plan is simple:

- Read the question quickly
- Scan the passage for the relevant part
- Pick the most likely answer
- Move on

It's **right or wrong**, no partial credit, and no penalty for a wrong answer. So always answer, but don't overthink it.

Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers: about 5% of Reading

This one is **risky** because Pearson uses **negative marking**: each wrong choice takes off a point (the item can't go below zero).

Safest approach: choose only the option(s) you're sure of. Many coaches tell students to pick just **one** answer they're confident about and move on. You give up a possible extra point, but you avoid losing one.

TIME RULE

Coaches suggest no more than **60 to 90 seconds** on any Multiple Choice question. If you haven't decided by then, make your best call and move on.

The "2 out of 3" Idea for 79+

You don't need to be perfect at everything. A common coaching idea: to reach 79+ in Reading, be **strong in 2 of these 3 groups**:

- 1 Fill in the Blanks (both types)**: about 45% of Reading
- 2 Reorder Paragraphs**: about 9% of Reading
- 3 The outside tasks (SWT and HIW)**: about 36% of Reading

If your FIBs and SWT/HIW are solid, you can be average at Reorder and still get there. If FIBs and Reorder are strong, you have some room for SWT slips. Play to your strengths.

Scoring Types: Why They Change Your Strategy

Pearson's score guide uses different scoring for different tasks, and that should change how you play each one:

Task	Scoring type	What it means for you
FIB (both types)	Partial credit, 1 point per correct blank	Never leave a blank empty
Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers	Partial credit with negative marking	Wrong picks cost points, so pick fewer
Multiple Choice, Single Answer	Right or wrong	Always answer, then move on
Reorder Paragraphs	Partial credit, 1 point per correct adjacent pair	Two correct pairs still earn points

The short version: **partial credit rewards having a go**. Fill every FIB blank even if you're unsure. On Multiple Answers, it's the opposite: holding back protects your score.



Time Plan: Your Reading Blueprint

Time management is the difference between knowing the material and scoring well. Pearson gives the Reading part **about 23 to 30 minutes**, depending on your test version. Here's a coach-style split per question:

Task	Time per question	Priority
Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown)	2 to 2.5 minutes	HIGHEST
Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop)	1.5 to 2 minutes	HIGH
Reorder Paragraphs	1.5 to 2 minutes	MEDIUM
Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers	60 to 90 seconds max	LOW
Multiple Choice, Single Answer	whatever time is left	LOWEST

Watch the timer on screen and adjust to how many items you get. **The golden rule:** if time is running out, sacrifice the Multiple Choice questions. A quick guess on Single Answer costs you almost nothing. Running out of time on a FIB costs a lot.

COACH TIP

Pro tip: switch gears fast after the essay

Reading comes straight after the writing tasks in Part 1, and Pearson's handbook confirms there are no scheduled breaks (you can ask for one, but the clock keeps running). Many people lose a few minutes because their head is still in "essay mode" and they read the instructions slowly. You already know what the tasks look like, so you don't need to read every instruction word by word. Those saved minutes can be one more FIB done properly, which can be the difference between 78 and 80.

Your FIB Practice Routine

Since FIBs are such a big chunk of Reading, your practice should reflect that.

Weeks 1 to 2: Build your collocation bank

- Read academic texts and highlight word pairs that sound natural together
- Note preposition patterns: *contribute TO, result IN, lead TO, account FOR*
- Learn adjective and noun pairs: *significant impact, substantial evidence, fundamental principle*
- Practise on a PTE platform with AI scoring, such as APEUni

Weeks 3 to 4: Speed and accuracy

- Set a timer for 2 to 2.5 minutes per question, no extensions
- Practise the "context window": read 2 or 3 words either side of each blank
- After each set, sort your mistakes: vocabulary gap, grammar or a collocation you didn't know?
- Track your accuracy. Aim for 70%+ on Dropdown and 65%+ on Drag and Drop to start

Week 5 onwards: Full section practice

- Use a strict timer of about 25 to 30 minutes
- Follow your time plan exactly
- Practise the switch: write an essay first, then go straight into Reading
- Review your time, not just your answers. Did Multiple Choice eat too much?

Common Mistakes That Kill Reading Scores

These are the patterns I see most often in people who underperform in Reading:

COMMON MISTAKE

Mistake 1: Equal time on every task

Spending 3 minutes on a Single Answer question and 2 on a Dropdown FIB is backwards. Match your time to the value.

COMMON MISTAKE

Mistake 2: Reading every word of the passage before answering FIBs

You need the gist and the local clues, not a full close reading. Reading every word first eats 30 to 60 seconds a question.

COMMON MISTAKE

Mistake 3: Picking lots of answers in Multiple Answers

Negative marking means each wrong pick costs a point. Choosing 3 when you're sure of 1 is a losing game.

COMMON MISTAKE

Mistake 4: Ignoring SWT and HIW

If you only practise Reading-part tasks, you're leaving a big chunk of your Reading score to chance. SWT and HIW need their own practice.



COMMON MISTAKE

Mistake 5: Chasing perfection on Reorder

Getting stuck for 5+ minutes is one of the most common time disasters. Find your pairs, make your best order, move on.

Your Score 90 Action Plan

If you're aiming for 90 in Reading, here's the order:

- 1 Master both FIB types.** Practise collocations, grammar rules and elimination daily. Aim for 80%+ accuracy.
- 2 Nail Summarize Written Text.** It's in Part 1 but feeds Reading. Write one sentence of 5 to 75 words (ideally 35 to 55). See the [PTE Writing guide](#).
- 3 Practise Highlight Incorrect Words.** This Listening task feeds Reading too. Only click words you're sure about. See the [PTE Listening guide](#).
- 4 Build a Reorder system.** Find the opener and linked pairs. Accept "good enough" and protect your time.
- 5 Keep Multiple Choice in its place.** Practise it now and then, but never at the expense of FIBs or SWT.

People who score 90 in Reading aren't always better readers than people scoring 70. They're better strategists. They know where the points are, they guard their time, and they don't get stuck on low-value tasks.



One more mistake to avoid

From Pearson's score guide and what PTE coaches warn about most.

MISTAKE #8

Spending Too Long on Reorder Paragraphs

THE PROBLEM	Burning 5+ minutes trying to get the order perfect.
WHY IT HURTS	Coaches estimate Reorder is only about 9% of Reading, while the two Fill in the Blanks tasks are about 45%. Time lost on Reorder is time stolen from the FIBs.
THE FIX	Coaches suggest a cap of about 90 seconds to 2 minutes. Find one sure pair, make your best guess on the rest and move on. More in the PTE Reading guide .

Quick answers

How long is the PTE Reading section?

Pearson gives about 23 to 30 minutes for Part 2 (Reading), depending on your test version. It has 5 task types.

Which task is worth the most in PTE Reading?

Fill in the Blanks. Coaches estimate the Dropdown version at about 25% of Reading and Drag and Drop at about 20%, so about 45% between them, based on a weighting table they quote from Pearson.



Is there negative marking in PTE Reading?

Yes, on Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers. Each wrong choice loses a point, though the item can't go below zero. Single Answer has no penalty, so always answer it.

Do other tasks affect my PTE Reading score?

Yes. Pearson's score guide shows Summarize Written Text, Highlight Incorrect Words and Highlight Correct Summary also feed Reading. Coaches estimate they make up about 39% of it together.

How long should I spend on Reorder Paragraphs?

Most coaches suggest about 90 seconds to 2 minutes per question. Find the opener and one or two clear pairs, then move on.

Start today. Read the [PTE Academic 2026 complete guide](#) for the full picture, then come back here and build your Reading plan. And check the [10 Critical PTE Mistakes](#) so you don't give points away.

Reading: the full article on jetblok.com.au

[Read the full article](#)



Sources

Official rules in this guide come from these Pearson and Australian Government sources, checked 10 October 2026:

- Pearson, PTE Academic Test Taker Score Guide (current edition)
- Pearson, PTE Academic Institution Score Guide (July 2025)
- Pearson, Test Taker Handbook, PTE Academic (July 2025)
- Pearson, PTE Academic updates 2025 (pearsonpte.com/pte-updates-2025)
- Pearson, Speaking and Writing test format page
- Pearson articles: Respond to a Situation; Summarize Group Discussion; New DHA visa requirements
- Department of Home Affairs, English language requirements pages

Tips labelled **Coach tip** and percentages labelled **coach estimate** come from PTE teachers and coaching sites, not Pearson. Pearson does not publish task percentages in its score guides.

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