



STEP

Standardized Test
of English Proficiency

A Student Brochure



إحضار إثبات الشخصية شرط أساسي للدخول الاختبار

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1. Background

Based on growing international needs for the English language, several academic and non-academic institutions approached the National Center for Assessment calling for the development of an English test that could measure the proficiency of their applicants. Consequently the Center formed a committee consisting of specialists in the fields of English and Psychological Measurement. The Committee looked first into available international, regional and local test experiences and practices. It also visited and consulted institutions specialized in standardized language testing. After this survey the Committee reached a conclusion on the need and formation of the test tailored to the needs of the Saudi and wider Gulf market.

2. What is STEP?

STEP is an acronym for Standardized Test of English Proficiency. It is designed to be an objective and unbiased test of a person's level of proficiency in the use of English. The test is made up of the following four components:

1. Reading Comprehension (RC – 40%).
2. Structure (ST – 30%).
3. Listening Comprehension (LC – 20%).
4. Compositional Analysis (CA – 10%).

The Committee chose these four components and their respective weights after consultation and research into the approach of both regional and international bodies responsible for the production of similar English tests and feedback provided by national organizations requesting such a test. Contingent on statistical analysis and feedback on STEP results, the weighting of the four components may be subject to revision to meet the needs of the Arab Gulf region.

It should be added that STEP is uniquely designed by English language professors and experts native to the region and therefore knowledgeable of the abilities and the needs locally. This drastically lowers the possibility of cultural, social and regional bias and provides a more appropriate tool for objective assessment.



3. Who should take the test?

STEP should be used for those who are seeking:

- admission at a university or college as an undergraduate.
- admission to a graduate program.
- employment in the private sector.

4. Test Formation

The actual STEP test has 100 questions distributed among the four components previously mentioned. With additional time allotted for non-scorable trial questions and instructions, the total test time is 2.5 hours.



5. Examples of STEP items

5.1. Listening Comprehension (LC)

Instructions

In the actual test, you will not see the passage. You will only hear it.

Recording 1

Questions 1&2

You will hear a conversation between three people. After listening, you will answer two questions. Listen carefully; you will only hear the conversation once.

Waiter: Are you ready to order?

Wife: Yes. For a starter, I would like a Greek salad, please.

Husband: I'd like a lentil soup, please.

Waiter: What would you like for the main course?

Wife: I'd like grilled salmon with lemon, pepper and garlic.

Husband: I think I will go for a steak with French fries and pepper sauce.

1. This conversation takes place in a _____.

- A house
- B restaurant
- C coffee shop
- D supermarket

- A Incorrect The couple were served by a waiter. This does not happen if you are in a house.
- B Correct The couple ordered a meal. You do this in a restaurant.
- C Incorrect The couple did not order coffee or sweets. They ordered a meal.
- D Incorrect You can't order a meal in a supermarket.



2. The man ordered _____.

- A lentil soup
- B Greek salad
- C garlic salad
- D onion soup

- A Correct This is what the man ordered.
- B Incorrect Garlic salad is not mentioned in the conversation.
- C Incorrect This is what the woman ordered, not the man.
- D Incorrect Onion soup is not mentioned in the conversation.



Recording 2

Questions 3&4

You will hear a news report. After listening you will answer two questions. Listen carefully; you will only hear the news report once.

A number of studies show that people tend to become happier and more satisfied with their lives as they grow older.

The studies claim that the possible reason behind this tendency towards happier life is that people become more trusting as they age. This affects their overall well-being and makes them more relaxed and at ease.

This contradicts the general belief that as people grow older, they decline and lose interest in life and hence become more stressed.

The studies also claim that the most joyous phase of life starts right after becoming 50 years old.

3. What is the news report about?

- A People get nervous when they get older.
- B People become happier when they get older.
- C Younger people feel at ease and are less nervous.
- D Older people lose interest in life and become more stressed.

- A Incorrect There is no information about being nervous in the passage.
- B Correct This is the topic of the news report. The passage focuses on the idea that people get happier as they get older.
- C Incorrect The news report does not mention this at all.
- D Incorrect This is the general belief people have, but it is the opposite of the correct answer.



4. According to the passage, what is one reason for increased happiness?

- A Trust
- B Money
- C Well-being
- D Satisfaction

- A Correct The passage says the reason for a happier life is that people become more trusting as they age.
- B Incorrect Many people think that more money makes you happier. However, the passage does not mention anything about this. Always remember to answer the questions using the information in the passage.
- C Incorrect Well-being is a result of being happier, not the reason why people become happier.
- D Incorrect Satisfaction is a *result* of being happier, not the *reason* why people become happier.



5.2. Reading Comprehension (RC)

Instructions

Read the following passages and answer the questions.

Passage 1

Questions 5 & 6

A patient was left in the lurch during a routine appendix operation in Belgrade, when two surgeons started fighting and stormed from the operating theater to settle their dispute outside, the daily *Politika* reported Wednesday. Surgeon Spasoje Radulovic was operating when his colleague Dragan Vukanic entered and made a remark that started a quarrel, said the anesthesiologist on duty. "At one moment Vukanic pulled the ear of the operating doctor, slapped him in the face and walked out" she said. Radulovic followed and an all-out fight ensued, resulting in bruises, a split lip, loose teeth and a fractured finger. The operation was completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor.

Questions

5. What happened between the two surgeons?

- A They had a serious fight.
- B They performed an operation.
- C They stormed into the surgery.
- D They went to an operating theatre.

- A Correct We can see that the two surgeons were fighting from the words: '*when two surgeons started fighting*'.
- B Incorrect Only one surgeon, Spasoje Radulovic, was operating on the patient, but was not able to complete it. The other surgeon, Dragan Vukanic, did not take part in the operation: '*Surgeon Spasoje Radulovic was operating when his colleague Dragan Vukanic entered*' and '*the operation was completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor*'.
- C Incorrect We can understand that the surgeons did not '*storm*' into the '*surgery*' or operating theater, but instead *left* the operating theater. The passage says that they: '*stormed from the theatre to settle their dispute outside*'.
- D Incorrect The two surgeons were in the operating room together after Dragan Vukanic entered, but the passage does not say anywhere that they went to the operating theatre together.



6. Who finished the surgery?

- A The anesthesiologist
- B An assistant surgeon
- C An assistant nurse
- D The head nurse

- A Incorrect

We know there was an *anesthesiologist* present from the words: *'said the anesthesiologist on duty.'* However, it does not say anywhere that she took part in or completed the operation. The passage also makes it clear that the operation was *'completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor'*.
- B Correct

We can understand from the last sentence that the operation was completed by an assistant doctor: *'The operation was completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor.'*
- C Incorrect

The passage makes it clear that the operation was *'completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor'*, not an assistant nurse. The word 'nurse' is not used anywhere in the passage.
- D Incorrect

The passage makes it clear that the operation was *'completed successfully by the attending assistant doctor'*, not the head nurse. The word 'nurse' is not used anywhere in the passage.



Passage 2

Questions 7-10

- (1) My own notorious carelessness caused me to drop a very large sum of money on the street. A group of young boys returning from their school came upon it and immediately turned it over to a nearby policeman. The students and the officer for some reason guessed that it must belong to the Westerner who lives nearby. Before I had even noticed the loss of the money, the policeman came knocking on my door and informed me that what had been lost has been found and he now had it with him. Now, at this point, there is a need to emphasize that the policeman had the equivalent of several months' pay in his hand and that the students who found the money were from families that were struggling from paycheck to paycheck. Any temptation to keep the money would have been natural. But the speed with which the money was returned to me proved that the idea never occurred to anyone involved in the incident.

- (2) When I went to the Police Station to sign for the money, I was treated like royalty. I was invited to sit with the officers and have some coffee. What normally would have been an administrative routine turned into a very pleasant event and I felt as if I were sitting in comfortable conversation with old friends. Good works should be rewarded. I tried to employ that principle by offering the father of the boy who took charge of the money a generous reward for his help and honesty. The father refused the money, and said that my thanks was quite enough and that his family was glad to be of service.



Questions

7. According to the passage, what did the man do?

- A He called the police.
- B He walked recklessly.
- C He lost something valuable.
- D He met a group of schoolboys.

- A Incorrect The policeman came to knock on the man's door, but the man did not call the police.
- B Incorrect The passage does not mention the way the man walked.
- C Correct The words '*something valuable*' have the same meaning as '*a very large sum of money*' in the passage.
- D Incorrect The passage says that the boys took the money to a policeman, but they did not meet the man at all.

8. What did the boys and the police officer think about the man who lost the money?

- A He lived far away
- B He was very unhappy
- C He was European or American
- D He knew he had lost the money

- A Incorrect The passage says the opposite. It says: '*who lives nearby*'.
- B Incorrect The passage does not mention the man's feelings about losing the money.
- C Correct The words '*European or American*' have the same meaning as '*Westerner*' in the passage.
- D Incorrect The passage says that the policeman told the man about his money before he even noticed that he had lost it.



9. The police officer took the money to _____.

- A the man's apartment
- B the boys' families
- C the police station
- D the bank

- A Correct The passage says that 'the policeman came knocking on my door and informed me that what had been lost has been found and he now had it with him'.
- B Incorrect The passage mentions the families of the students in the second paragraph, but it does not say that the families ever met the policeman.
- C Incorrect The passage does not say that the policeman took the money to the station.
- D Incorrect It's normal to take money to the bank. However, the passage does not say anything about a bank.

10. How was the man treated when he went to sign for the money?

- A Routinely
- B Rudely
- C Poorly
- D Kindly

- A Incorrect We can find the word '*routine*' in the passage, but it does not describe the way the man was treated.
- B Incorrect '*Rudely*' is a word with negative meaning and we know that the man was treated very well.
- C Incorrect '*Poorly*' is a word with negative meaning and we know that the man was treated very well.
- D Correct The passage says that the man was '*treated like royalty*', that it was a '*very pleasant event*', and that it was like '*conversation with old friends*'.

5.3. Structure (ST)

Instructions

Choose the best way to complete the following sentences

11. Can you tell me _____ ?

- A where the bus stop is
- B where the bus is stop
- C where is the bus stop
- D where is stop the bus

- A Correct

This is an indirect question. The first part—‘*Can you tell me*’—is a question and has the **word order of a question**. The second part ‘*where the bus stop is*’ is a statement and follows the word order of statements.
- B Incorrect

‘*Bus stop*’ is a compound noun, which means that it is a two-word noun which cannot be separated. Therefore, we cannot put a word between ‘*bus*’ and ‘*stop*’. This also means that ‘*stop*’ is not a verb in this sentence.
- C Incorrect

‘*Where is the bus stop*’ would be correct as a direct question. However, this is an indirect question.
- D Incorrect

‘*Bus stop*’ is a compound noun so we cannot put a word between ‘*bus*’ and ‘*stop*’. This also means that ‘*stop*’ is not a verb in this sentence.

12. What would happen if I _____ this button?

- A am pushing
- B can push
- C pushing
- D pushed

- A Incorrect

The **present continuous** (*am pushing*) cannot be used with ‘*would*’ + infinitive (*happen*) in conditional sentences.
- B Incorrect

The words ‘*can push*’ describe an ability. However, in **conditional sentences** we cannot use ‘*can*’ together with ‘*would*’ + infinitive (*happen*).
- C Incorrect

The word ‘*pushing*’ is an incomplete verb form if it does not have the helping verb ‘*am*’.
- D Correct

‘*Would happen*’ and ‘*if*’ tell us that this is a **second conditional** sentence. It has two parts: the main clause: ‘*What would happen...*’ and the conditional clause which uses the **past simple**: ‘*if I pushed this button*’



13. Ali always takes an apple with him to school and _____ it at lunch.

- A has eaten
- B will eat
- C eats
- D ate

- A Incorrect
The words '*Ali always takes*' tell us that he does this every day and it happens in the present. However, the verb form '*has eaten*' talks about the past.
- B Incorrect
The words '*Ali always takes*' tell us that he does this every day and it happens in the present. However, the verb form '*will eat*' talks about the future. In addition, we cannot use it to describe something you do all the time.
- C Correct
The words '*Ali always takes*' tell us that he does this every day and it happens in the present. The second verb (*eats*) should also be in the present tense because of the word '*and*'.
- D Incorrect
The words '*Ali always takes*' tell us that he does this every day and it happens in the present. However, the verb form '*ate*' talks about the past.

14. I don't need _____ help.

- A a lot
- B a few
- C some
- D any

- A Incorrect
The words '*a lot*' can only be used as an adverb together with a verb. However, '*help*' in this sentence is a noun so we cannot use '*a lot*'.
- B Incorrect
We can only use '*a few*' with **countable nouns** and '*help*' is a **non-count noun**.
- C Incorrect
We cannot use '*some*' in negative sentences. However, we use *some* in affirmative sentences like 'I need *some* help'.
- D Correct
We often use '*any*' in negative sentences such as this one.



15. He is very tired because he _____ here since early this morning.

- A is
- B was
- C has been
- D had been

- A Incorrect
We use the word 'since' with verbs that talk about something that began in the past, but has not been completed. Therefore, we cannot use the **present simple** verb 'is' in this sentence.
- B Incorrect
We use the word 'since' with verbs that talk about something that began in the past, but has not been completed. However, we use the **past simple** verb 'was' for actions that are completed.
- C Correct
The words 'is' and 'since' tell us that this is an action that began in the past and is still true at the time of speaking—this is how we often use the **present perfect** ('has been').
- D Incorrect
We use the word 'since' with verbs that talk about something that began in the past, but has not been completed. However, we use the **past perfect** verb 'had been' for actions that are completed. In this sentence, the action has not been completed, he is still here.



5.4 Compositional Analysis (CA)

Instructions

Choose the best way to complete the following sentence

16. Many tourists love to vacation in Oman _____ it has natural beauty that is unequalled in the Gulf.

- A therefore
- B however
- C since
- D so

- A Incorrect We use the word *'therefore'* to talk about a *result*. But in this sentence we are talking about the *reason* people like Oman, so we cannot use it here.
- B Incorrect We use the word *'however'* to talk about contrast, which means the differences between things. But in this sentence we are talking about the *reason* people like Oman, so we cannot use it here.
- C Correct The sentence *'it has natural beauty that is unequalled in the Gulf'* tells us the *reason* why Oman is popular. We use *'since'* to talk about reason, so it is the correct answer.
- D Incorrect We use the word *'so'* to talk about a result. But in this sentence we are talking about the *reason* people like Oman, so we cannot use it here.



17. In which sentence is all PUNCTUATION correct?

- A Ali is very good at mathematics and science, but he doesn't do well in English Arabic, or history.
- B Ali is very good at mathematics, and science, but he doesn't do well in English, Arabic, or history.
- C Ali is very good at mathematics and science; but he doesn't do well in English, Arabic, or history.
- D Ali is very good at mathematics and science, but he doesn't do well in English, Arabic, or history.

- A Incorrect We need to use a comma when we make a list of three or more things, for example: '*English, Arabic, or history*'. In this sentence, there is a comma missing between the words '*English*' and '*Arabic*'.
- B Incorrect We don't use a comma when we make a list of only two things, for example: '*mathematics and science*'. In this sentence, there is a comma between these two words.
- C Incorrect We use a comma before the word '*but*'. In this sentence, there is a semi-colon before '*but*' so it is incorrect.
- D Correct All punctuation is correct. There is a comma before, '*but*' and there are commas in the list of three things '*English, Arabic, or history*'. Also, there is no other punctuation which should not be there.

18. Which one of the underlined words or phrases is INCORRECT?

I like my new job, but it is very challenged. I have a lot of new things to learn.

- A my B very
- C challenged D to learn

- A Incorrect '*my*' is the correct form of the possessive adjective.
- B Incorrect '*very*' is an intensifier which often appears before an adjective. It is correct in this sentence.
- C Correct We usually use adjectives ending in *-ing* to talk about things. In this sentence, '*challenged*' describes the man's job. Therefore we should say "It is very ***challenging***".
- D Incorrect After the verb '*have*' we use the infinitive. Therefore, the infinitive verb '*to learn*' is correct in this sentence.



19. Which of the following sentences has the CORRECT WORD ORDER?

- A Kills diabetes thousands of people.
- B Thousands of people diabetes kills.
- C Diabetes thousands of people kills.
- D Diabetes kills thousands of people.

- A Incorrect The usual word order in an English sentence is: Subject + Verb + Object. In this sentence, the verb '*kills*' comes before the subject '*Diabetes*'.
- B Incorrect The usual word order in an English sentence is: Subject + Verb + Object. In this sentence, the object '*thousands of people*' comes before the subject '*diabetes*' and the verb '*kills*'.
- C Incorrect The usual word order in an English sentence is: Subject + Verb + Object. In this sentence, the object '*thousands of people*' comes before the verb '*kills*'.
- D Correct The usual word order in an English sentence is: Subject + Verb + Object. This is also the order in this sentence: '*Diabetes*' (subject) + '*kills*' (verb) + '*thousands of people*' (object).



20. Choose the correct order to make the following sentences into a paragraph.

- (1) It is the least common of the heat illnesses, but by far the most serious.
- (2) A dangerous and severe condition known as heat stroke can quickly become a life threatening situation.
- (3) Heat stroke develops when the body's normal mechanism for getting rid of excess heat is overwhelmed.

- A (1), (2), (3)
B (3), (2), (1)
C (2), (1), (3)
D (3), (1), (2)

A Incorrect The topic of the paragraph is '*heat stroke*' in Sentence (2). '*It*' refers to '*heat stroke*'. Therefore, '*It*' must come after '*heat stroke*'.

B Incorrect Sentence (2) gives a definition of '*heat stroke*'. Sentence (3) gives additional information about '*heat stroke*'. When writing a paragraph, the additional information should come after the definition.

C Correct Sentence (2) gives a definition of '*heat stroke*'. Sentences (1) and (3) give additional information about '*heat stroke*'. This is the normal way to write a paragraph.

D Incorrect Sentence (2) gives a definition of '*heat stroke*'. Sentences (1) and (3) give additional information about '*heat stroke*'. When writing a paragraph, the additional information should come after the definition.

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