



Read the Instructions Carefully!

Aim: This section will give you a few common examples of instructions you can find in the listening (and reading) sub-tests.

Problem: People studying for the IELTS test often answer “yes” when they’re asked if they have read the instructions carefully in the listening part of the IELTS test. However, in the real-test situation, many people don’t - or at least don’t do it carefully.

As a result of not reading the instructions carefully enough, students could answer the questions correctly, but get band ‘0’ marks for a whole section of questions because their answers do not correspond to what they are being asked to do. This can reduce their IELTS scores by up to 2.5 bands.

A lot of the time, students look at the format of the questions and automatically assume that the instructions are going to be the same as what they have been previously used to – see the examples below.

1) Compare the two sets of instructions below:

a) Read the following statements and write ‘T’ if they are true or ‘F’ if they are false.

All students can eat in the cafeteria for free T F

b) Read the following statements and write ‘Y’ if the passage agrees with them or ‘N’ if the passage disagrees.

All students can eat in the cafeteria for free Y N

...and...

c) Read the following statements and write ‘True’ if they are true or ‘False’ if they are false.

All students can eat in the cafeteria for free True False

d) Read the following statements and write ‘Yes’ if the passage agrees with them or ‘No’ if the passage disagrees.

All students can eat in the cafeteria for free Yes No

“So what ???”you might ask yourself – it’s very clear; whether I write ‘T’, ‘True’, ‘Y’ or ‘Yes’ for the same answer. Technically you are correct, but if you don’t enter your answer exactly as you are instructed, you’ll get band ‘0’ – even if it is clear what you mean.



2) Now compare the instructions for these gap fill questions:

a) Complete the sentences using a word or short phrase.

I have to always _____ carefully.

b) Complete the sentences using NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS.

I have to always _____ carefully.

In example (a) you can write as many words as you feel are necessary to answer the question clearly (and make sure the sentence is grammatically correct!). But, in example (b) if you write four words or more, you will get 0 – even if your answer is correct.

3) Now, compare this pair of similar instructions:

a) Choose the correct answer and write the appropriate letter in the space provided.

A: John B: Mary C: Peter

Answer: _____

b) Choose the correct answer and write it in the space provided.

A: John
B: Mary
C: Peter

Answer: _____

If the answer is B: – Mary – and you write 'Mary' for example 3.a), you'll get a score of 0. Likewise, if you write 'B' in example 3.b).

4) Now, look at these T/F/NG questions:

a) Write 'T' if the passage supports the statement, 'F' if the passage contradicts the statement, or 'NG' if there is nothing in the passage that supports or contradicts the statement.

Monkeys in area of the Wakatikki River only mate in the spring T F NG

Answer: _____



b) Write 'T' if the passage supports the statement, 'F' if the passage contradicts the statement, or 'NI' if there is no information in the passage to support or contradict the statement.

Monkeys in area of the Wokatikki river only mate in the spring T F NI

Answer: _____

Again, writing 'NG' instead of 'NI' or the other way around will lose you marks.

There is no answer key for this worksheet.

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