

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-14064-5 - Practice Tests for IGCSE English as a Second Language: Reading and Writing Book 2

Marian Barry, Barbara Campbell and Sue Daish

Frontmatter

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Practice Tests for IGCSE English as a Second Language

Reading and Writing
Book 2

Previously published by Georgian Press

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Barbara Campbell,
Sue Daish

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CONTENTS

IGCSE in E2L at a Glance	4
Introduction	6
Advice to the Student	12
Practice Test 1 (Extended level)	17
Practice Test 2 (Extended level)	33
Practice Test 3 (Extended level)	49
Practice Test 4 (Extended level)	65
<i>With Key edition:</i>	
Key	81
Model Compositions	93

IGCSE IN E2L AT A GLANCE

PAPER 1 Reading and Writing

(Core curriculum) $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours

PAPER 2 Reading and Writing

(Extended curriculum) 2 hours

EXERCISE 1: READING

Candidates answer questions of factual detail about a text (an advertisement, brochure, leaflet, guide, instructions, etc). Skimming/scanning and gist reading skills are tested, and short answers using single words or phrases are required.

Total marks: Core 6, Extended 8

EXERCISE 2: READING

Candidates answer questions requiring a more detailed understanding of a text, such as a report or newspaper/magazine article with a graphical element (a map, chart, graph or diagram). One question may ask candidates to make a list of points based on the text.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 14

EXERCISE 3: INFORMATION TRANSFER

Candidates complete a form or skeletal notes using information given in a scenario on the question paper.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 8

EXERCISE 4: NOTE-MAKING

Candidates write brief notes from a written text, under a heading or headings provided.

Total marks: Core 6, Extended 8

EXERCISE 5: SUMMARY WRITING

Extended candidates write about 100 words on an aspect or aspects of a written text, such as a newspaper or magazine article.

Core candidates write a paragraph of no more than 70 words, using their notes from Exercise 4.

Total marks: Core 4, Extended 10

EXERCISE 6: WRITING

Extended candidates write about 150–200 words (Core candidates 100–150 words) of continuous prose. The purpose, format and audience are specified, e.g. an informal letter to a friend, or an article about a holiday for the school magazine. Candidates must use an appropriate style and register. A stimulus is provided, in the form of pictures or photos and/or short prompts.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 18

EXERCISE 7: WRITING

Extended candidates write about 150–200 words (Core candidates 100–150 words) of continuous prose. The format, purpose and audience are specified, and will be different from Exercise 6, e.g. a formal letter to a newspaper about a local issue. Candidates must use an appropriate style and register. A stimulus is provided, in the form of pictures or photos and/or short prompts.

The prompts are a guide to help students focus their thoughts and are not meant to be prescriptive. Good candidates can use them selectively, and some may choose to write totally without reference to the prompts. This is perfectly acceptable, as long as they do not drift away from the point of the question.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 18

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 1: 56

Weighting: 70% Grades available: C-G

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 2: 84

Weighting: 70% Grades available: A-E

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[More information](#)

PAPER 3 Listening

(Core curriculum) 30–40 minutes

PAPER 4 Listening

(Extended curriculum) 45 minutes

QUESTIONS 1–6

Candidates answer questions on six short spoken texts, such as informal conversations, travel announcements, answerphone messages. They are required to identify specific points of information. Each text is heard twice, and short answers (one word or phrase) are required.

Total marks: Core 7, Extended 8

QUESTIONS 7 AND 8

Candidates listen to two recordings of longer spoken texts, such as formal or informal conversations, interviews, monologues, formal talks. Each text is heard twice.

Candidates fill in skeletal notes or close gaps on forms or charts with single words or short phrases. They need to be able to select information from what may be incidental.

Total marks: Core 12, Extended 16

QUESTIONS 9 AND 10

Candidates listen to two recordings, which may be informal conversations or more formal talks, interviews, etc. Each text is heard twice.

Extended candidates answer about six questions on each recording, requiring short or sentence-length answers. Core candidates answer about 10 true-false or multiple-choice questions on each recording by ticking boxes. In both cases, candidates need to be able to understand more complex meanings, opinions and attitudes of the speakers. Extended candidates should also be able to infer meaning implicit in the text.

Total marks: Core 11, Extended 12

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 3: 30

Weighting: 30% Grades available: C–G

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 4: 36

Weighting: 30% Grades available: A–E

COMPONENT 5 Oral test

(Core and Extended curriculum) 10–12 mins

Candidates take part in a discussion with the teacher/examiner, and possibly another candidate, on a set topic. There are up to five topics, e.g. holidays, health and fitness, the rights and wrongs of zoos, winning the lottery. After a short warm-up, which is not assessed, candidates are allowed 2–3 minutes to read the Oral Assessment card which has been selected by the examiner. The cards include prompts to guide the discussion. Candidates are not allowed to make written notes.

The conversation itself should last 6–9 minutes.

Detailed guidance is provided by CIE on how to conduct the Oral tests, and advice should be sought regarding all aspects of the tests.

Grades available: 1 (high) to 5 (low)

COMPONENT 6 Oral coursework

(Core and Extended curriculum)

Instead of Component 5, centres may, with the permission of CIE, opt for Component 6. This is a coursework option in which oral work is set and assessed by the teacher, at any time in the year before the written exam. Each candidate is assessed on three oral tasks, e.g. role play situations, telephone conversations, interviews, paired or group discussions, brief talks followed by discussion, debates. Further guidance on suitable types of tasks is given in the Distance Training Pack, available from CIE.

Grades available: 1 (high) to 5 (low)

More detailed information about the IGCSE in E2L examination, including support available for teachers, can be obtained from University of Cambridge International Examinations, 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU, United Kingdom, and online at www.cie.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

About the IGCSE in E2L

These Practice Tests are designed to give practice in the Reading and Writing papers of the revised (2006) Cambridge IGCSE examination in English as Second Language. The exam is set at two levels, known as Core and Extended. The Core papers are aimed at lower-intermediate to intermediate students, hoping to achieve a grade C–G, while the Extended level is for intermediate to upper-intermediate students hoping to achieve grades A*–E. (See *IGCSE in E2L at a Glance* on pages 4/5 for a detailed overview.)

The exam is usually taken as part of the IGCSE curriculum, which offers a wide range of subjects. It can be taken at any age, although most students are about 16 years old. Students generally study for the exam over a period of two years, which allows them to develop both intellectually and emotionally.

The IGCSE in E2L qualification is widely recognised by universities where evidence of attainment in English is a requirement of entry.

About the Practice Tests

Like the exam, the material used in the Practice Tests aims to be international in perspective, culturally fair to students from all parts of the world, educational in impact and to reflect the needs and interests of teenagers. Exam tasks are realistic and similar to what students could be expected to meet at work, in training or in academic study.

The **Practice Tests** have the following benefits:

- They introduce students to the exam format.
- They allow students to experience a simulated exam under exam-type conditions.
- They help to build confidence and to develop exam techniques.
- Gaps in students' learning and skills can be uncovered and remedied.
- Students can acquire insight into what the examiners are looking for.

Common questions asked about the IGCSE in E2L

Why are there two choices of entry level?

The separate papers for Core and Extended levels are intended to encompass a wide ability range and to allow all students a chance of being awarded a qualification and a grade which reflects their level of ability in English.

This book contains four Extended-level Practice Tests (the most popular level).

What are the differences between Papers 1 and 2? (i.e. Reading and Writing, Core, and Reading and Writing, Extended)

The exercises and tasks for the two levels are very similar. The differences are largely in the way the same exercises are adapted to be more challenging at Extended level and to stretch the candidates further. This is achieved mainly by asking additional questions on a reading text or by asking Extended candidates to write at greater length. However, there are a few specific differences. At Core level, note-taking and summary tasks are based on one text, whereas at Extended level, two different texts are used and the tasks are kept completely separate.

Some of the exam-type texts look very demanding. Is this a real problem?

Although some exam-type texts are demanding in terms of reading level, the tasks which students are asked to carry out in the exam are very straightforward. Exam practice will build the necessary confidence required to tackle difficult-looking texts with assurance.

I notice there is no Use of English paper in the exam. Why is this?

The aim of the exam is to enable students to make the language that they know work effectively in a practical context. The testing of language structures and vocabulary is integrated into the assessment of students' ability to carry out practical communication tasks. A few slight technical mistakes will not affect a student's grade as long as the overall impression is appropriate. This approach is fairer to students learning English in a second-language situation, where they may be 'picking up' English in a number of ways, not just learning it in their English classes.

How to use the Practice Tests

The Tests are designed to be used as flexibly as possible. They can be introduced at any time in the learning process when you feel students will benefit from being tested on exam-style exercises. Tests may be broken down into stand-alone exercises and integrated into coursework, perhaps as consolidation for work on a particular skill. Some exercises could be discussed in class before students start work on them; others could be treated as a check on skill level and students asked to complete them without help. The latter approach is also useful for diagnostic assessment at the start of the course. Alternatively, a whole test could be taken as a mock exam under exam conditions when you feel the students are ready. Obviously, you may have to extend normal lesson time to do this. Test results should help predict the kind of grade the students will get in the exam itself.

Timing

One of the benefits of Practice Tests is that students have the opportunity to practise timing themselves to see how they can build up speed for the actual exam. You can help them do this by gradually reducing the amount of time you allocate to particular exercises. This will encourage them to sustain concentration at a higher level for longer periods, to read and retain information more effectively, and to produce writing of a better and more consistent quality.

General advice on marking

When you decide on a mark, you need to take into account how well the student has completed the particular task. Students who fulfil a task very effectively should be given either full or very high marks. Students who do less well should naturally be awarded lower marks. However, the extent to which you apply this criterion will depend on the needs and capabilities of your own students. In order to motivate and encourage, you may want to be quite lenient in grading work at first, when the exercises are relatively unfamiliar, and become stricter as students progress in skills and experience.

INTRODUCTION**Marking comprehension exercises**

The right answer to a comprehension question is one in which the student has extracted the correct information from the text. An answer to a question may also be drawn from non-verbal information such as a chart or graph.

Sometimes there is more than one possible answer to a question. This is shown in the Key by the use of slash/slashes. Information which may be included in the answer but which is not necessary for achieving the mark is put into brackets. Answers requiring specific amounts, percentages, numbers, etc must be exact, not generalised. Sometimes an answer to a question has more than one element and both elements are required to obtain the mark. This is shown clearly both in the layout of the question and in the Key.

Marking information transfer (form-filling) exercises

Look out for the most common exam mistakes, which are:

- Filling in the form for themselves, not the person in the scenario.
- Mistakes in copying factual details (e.g. names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates), which need to be error-free to obtain the marks allocated.
- Not using block capital letters where required.
- Not following specific instructions such as *Circle*, *Delete*, *Tick*, etc.

Marking note-taking exercises

In the exam, the note-taking exercises take the form of headings followed by bullet points, against which students write their notes. Full sentences are not required and answers can be one word or a brief phrase. Students should take care with spelling, however, as they may inadvertently miss a mark if a misspelled word gives another meaning. The bullet points guide the student as to the number of points to find, and each point should be used only once.

Weak note-taking answers tend to extract irrelevant information from the text or put the right points under the wrong headings.

Marking summaries

Summary questions are selective which means that only some of the information in the text is relevant.

Core-level summaries are linked to the preceding note-taking task. Students are asked to re-present their notes in continuous prose. For example, in Exercise 4 the students may make notes for a wildlife club on a text about endangered species. Then, in Exercise 5, they have to summarise the notes into a connected paragraph for a school magazine feature. The summary exercise for Extended-level is completely separate from the preceding note-taking exercise.

When marking summaries look for the following:

- Inclusion of the appropriate content points.
- The ability to change some of the language of the text into own words without destroying the original meaning.
- Use of a clear and logical sequence.
- Good spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Good summaries should be completely understandable, even by someone who has not seen the original text. Weaker summaries, on the other hand, show less understanding of the task by failing to include all the relevant points. Weaker answers often include information which is not required by the question, chunks of text are copied, and there are errors in grammar and vocabulary which obscure the meaning.

Detailed guidelines for marking the language aspect of the summary exercises are given on page 82 of the Key.

Marking compositions

Exam compositions are not marked by examiners with perfect model answers next to them. They mark each script on its own merits and in accordance with an agreed interpretation of exam guidelines. (These are summarised in the table provided on page 83 of the Key.) When marking your own students' work, you can grade it appropriately and help them reach exam standards by using the following approach.

Firstly, a balanced view of a composition is important when you decide on an overall mark. One or two errors should not 'ruin' an effective piece of work if these are balanced out by other strengths. At IGCSE level, even the best students are expected to suffer from some frustration with the language and to make one or two mistakes, especially if they are being ambitious in their choice of grammar, vocabulary and idioms.

The best compositions, as a rule of thumb, are clear, straightforward and easy to read. They have definite beginnings and endings. The student shows involvement with the topic he/she is writing about, and is able to arouse your interest in it. Compositions of this kind can be given marks at the top end of the range.

Weak writing, on the other hand, is much more difficult to follow and you may find yourself re-reading it several times in order to make out the sense. As a reader, you don't feel drawn into the topic. After you have finished reading it, you may not be entirely clear about the meaning, or the student's opinions, or, if he/she was telling you a story, what exactly happened or how the story ended. Weak writing should be given marks at the lower end of the range.

Some writing is neither very good nor very weak. The task is interpreted in a safe but unexciting way. The meaning is clear but as a reader, you won't find it especially interesting or enjoyable to read. Average compositions of this type can be given middle-range marks.

Checklist for marking

In addition to the general guidance given above, you may like to use this checklist to help you when selecting a mark for your students' work.

1 Answering the question

Does the writing cover the question set, or does it drift away from the question?
If rubric prompts are given, are these addressed?

2 Sentence construction

Do sentences begin and end in the right places? How varied are the sentences – are they a mixture of lengths or mostly short and simple? Are any relative clauses used?

INTRODUCTION

3 Grammar

To what extent are tenses, modal verbs, conditionals and other grammatical features accurate where used? Is there some ambition in the use of grammatical structures, or does the student keep to very simple structures he/she can manage accurately?

4 Vocabulary

How varied and accurate is the vocabulary for the intended meaning? Does the student keep to limited and repetitive vocabulary, or is he/she making a real effort to use a wider range of vocabulary? Are any idioms used?

5 Punctuation

Is punctuation used? Is the punctuation accurate? Has the candidate set him/herself a more complex punctuation task (e.g. punctuating direct speech), and how well is this task achieved?

6 Spelling

How accurate is the spelling? Are simple, common words (e.g. *house*, *table*) spelled correctly? Are misspellings mostly because the student is trying to achieve a more ambitious effect with complex vocabulary? Are the spelling mistakes phonetic (e.g. *frend* for *friend*)? Remember, phonetic mistakes interfere less with communication than other kinds of spelling errors.

7 Paragraphing

Has the student organised his/her own work into paragraphs? Are the paragraphs in the right sequence and accurately linked together so the writing makes a coherent whole?

8 Subject matter

How well does the student deal with the topic? Does he/she get straight into the topic and seem interested in it, and also make the reader interested in it?

9 Tone, register, sense of audience

Do the tone, register and sense of audience feel right for the purpose? Competition entries, for example, should sound positive, enthusiastic and encouraging; a letter to a friend should sound friendly and sympathetic, whereas a letter to a newspaper should sound more formal and distanced.

10 Sense of argument

Is the argument set out clearly and logically and does the writer come to a clear conclusion? Are you sure what he/she thinks, or are there contradictions? Does the writer give clear examples? Are linking words (e.g. *however*, *moreover*) used, and do these help to make the meaning clear?

11 Length of work

Is the writing about the right length, within the word limit given?

Helping students improve their work

Setting and marking work is a tried and tested way of supporting learning. There are several ways of marking work so that students can learn and move on from their mistakes. Marking is most helpful when it is selective, so that some errors are highlighted and others are overlooked.

Error analysis

Error analysis is used to draw the attention of the class to an extract written by a fellow student which is a clear example of a mistake to avoid. You can read the extract aloud and ask students to analyse the error(s), or write the extract on the board. If your class is not familiar with error analysis, it is useful to explain the idea behind it so that the student who wrote the extract understands that the criticism is objective. Error analysis is a particularly useful way of giving feedback if you come across an example of something which has recently been taught to the class, e.g. an error in tone and register, or an inappropriate beginning or ending, or a point of grammar. It is best to focus the error analysis on a few sentences extracted from a student's composition, rather than looking at a whole piece of work.

Written feedback

In addition to error analysis, you can write comments at the end of students' work. The most helpful ones are usually specific comments that pick up on areas of language that have recently been taught. You can ask students to rewrite drafts of work to produce a better example. Misspelled words should be written out correctly for students to copy and learn. Areas of improvement should also be commented on and praised, to reinforce students' sense of progress and to continue to motivate and encourage.

ADVICE TO THE STUDENT

When facing an exam, many students naturally feel a little nervous. The information and advice below should help resolve your worries and enable you to do your best. Remember, lots of practice and hard work are the most important thing, so keep at it! You'll probably do much better than you think!

Paper 1, Reading and Writing (Core level)

The Core paper has seven exercises and must be completed in 90 minutes. There are two comprehension exercises, a form-filling exercise, a note-taking exercise with a linked summary exercise, and two composition questions. See the chart on pages 4/5 for more information.

Paper 2, Reading and Writing (Extended level)

The Extended paper has seven exercises and must be completed in two hours. There are two comprehension exercises (the second exercise may include finding a list of points), a form-filling exercise, a note-taking exercise, a summary exercise and two composition exercises. See the chart on pages 4/5 for more information.

Exercises 1 and 2 (Reading)

Exercise 1 is based on a brochure or advertisement with straightforward questions. Exercise 2 is based on a newspaper or magazine article and the information given in the text is more detailed. The way to do well in both exercises is to be as alert as possible to all the clues, to read quickly but with a lot of concentration, and to take care over the detail of the questions. For example, pictures/diagrams or headings supplied will give clues to meaning. Ask yourself: where is this text from and what is it likely to be about?

When reading, don't worry too much about words you don't understand – try to work them out from context. If you still don't understand, don't worry. Understanding them may not be necessary in order to give the right answer.

The questions often use different words and phrases to those given in the text because the exam is looking for understanding of meaning, not just matching words together. Find evidence for the answer by checking the text. Answer everything. You may get the answer right, even if you are not sure! The right answer to a question is one which contains the correct information, which can often be copied from the text. Answers can be very brief – a single word may be enough.

If you are asked a question such as *How much...?/How many...?/How long...?* requiring information about measurements, times, costs, percentages, etc, your answer must be specific. For example: *2 hours 10 minutes* (NOT *about 2 hours*), *The trip costs \$149.50* (NOT *about \$150*), *Five out of six houses* (NOT *Most houses*).

The questions usually follow the sequence of the text. For example, the answer to question (b) will be found at an earlier point in the text than the answer to question (c). Some questions have two bits to them. In this case, make sure you find answers to both bits of the question.

Exercise 2 may have a final question asking you to write a list of points. You can find the points by scanning the text and copying out the right information.

The number of marks allocated to each question is shown in brackets at the end of the question.

Exercise 3 (Form-filling)

This is an 'information transfer' exercise, which means you have to complete a form or set of notes based on information given. The key to doing really well in this exercise is to be careful with the detail and to check your work. You can get a lot of easy marks just by making sure facts such as names, addresses and telephone numbers are copied exactly. It's important that you spell everything correctly.

Exercise 4 (Note-taking)

Exercise 4 is not particularly hard because headings for the notes are given, and bullet points are supplied to guide your answers. Remember, each heading requires different bits of information from the text. Don't repeat anything you write or add any ideas or opinions of your own – everything has to come from the text. And remember that the finished notes should make sense! When practising, it's worth asking yourself: could someone reading these notes understand them even if they hadn't seen the original passage?

Exercise 5 (Summary)

In Exercise 5 you have to write a summary based on a text. In Paper 1, the exercise is linked to the notes for Exercise 4. All you need to do in this case is produce a clear paragraph in full sentences, reworking the notes you have already made and using some words of your own.

Extended candidates should read the text for their summary quickly and underline any relevant sections. Check back with the summary question. Join the ideas you have picked out into one or more coherent paragraphs, using some words and phrases of your own. Check back quickly again with the question and make any changes. Count the number of words. If you have time, make another draft of your summary, incorporating any changes. If you don't have time, simply make corrections to the first draft. In the exam itself, don't worry about the summary looking 'messy' as long as it is easily readable.

Make sure you read the question carefully because sometimes you are asked to include more than one aspect of the text in your summary.

Exercises 6 and 7 (Composition writing)

You need to do one task for each of these exercises. Typical tasks are writing a short formal or informal letter, or an article for the school magazine or a newspaper. In Exercise 7, prompts in the form of imaginary comments are usually given to help you understand the type of situation and to give you ideas. The key to starting well in the composition is to make sure you understand the situation, so give a little thought to what it's about before writing.

If you use the prompts in your composition, be selective (don't try to use them all), and expand them with reasons and examples. Don't just copy out the prompts, though – you won't get marks for copying. If you don't like the prompts, don't use them. You can write a good letter or article without any of them. Just check that your composition is still relevant to the question.

General advice on writing

The main point to remember is that the examiner is marking positively, looking for ways to reward you, not trying to criticise, so try to show the best you can do.

ADVICE TO THE STUDENT

One or two mistakes in grammar or spelling won't 'spoil' your work if the overall impression is good. Try to remember the following points:

- It's worth trying to **be a little ambitious** in your writing. Take one or two small risks to make your writing more interesting by using more complex structures or more unusual vocabulary. This can get a higher mark than sticking with safe but simple work.
- Let your personality shine through in your writing. The examiner will reward this. **Ideas and examples from your own life** are interesting to the examiner, even if you don't think so! Background details about your own life, family and school, and personal views which are relevant to the question, really help in gaining higher marks.
- **Plan before you write.** Think and plan in paragraphs. Three paragraphs are usually enough.
- **Keep to the point of the question, and cover all parts** – don't drift away and begin to write in general terms, and don't ignore any part of the question.
- **Take care** with grammar, spelling, vocabulary, punctuation and paragraphing. Indicate where paragraphs should be by putting // if you forget to write in paragraphs.
- **Proofread your work** at the end and correct careless mistakes.

- Have a **clear opening and closing sentence.** Examples:

Formal letters

I am interested in applying for...

I was concerned to hear/read about...

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I hope we will be able to arrange a meeting soon.

Informal letters

Just a quick line to tell you about Danielle's wedding.

You'll be surprised when I tell you what happened to me last week!

I must end now as I've got to catch up on my homework.

It'll be great to see you next month. Give my love to everyone in the family.

- Use a **suitable tone and register.** For informal writing, instead of writing to an imaginary person such as Bill or Mary, it helps to think of someone you actually know (Ahmed? Pedro? Martina?) and to write to him or her. This will help to achieve a more natural tone and register.

Sounding positive and enthusiastic makes a good impression and is the required tone for a competition entry. Balance negative ideas with positive points.

- Show **awareness of your audience** – a close friend, someone you haven't met before, a teenage magazine, a school newsletter, etc. Useful phrases for showing audience awareness are:

I don't usually write to newspapers/the school magazine but I feel strongly about...

My class has become involved in a really interesting project about...

I think our school should...

People of my age often feel...

Do write back. I'd love to hear your views. (for the school magazine)

I'd be very interested in hearing what other readers think. (for a newspaper)

Advice on time management

You'll probably find some exercises easy and others more challenging. Common sense in planning your time is your best aid. Core candidates have just under 13 minutes per exercise, but the exercises are not equal in difficulty and the marks given to them reflect this. Extended candidates have just over 17 minutes per exercise. Again, the exercises are not equally complex, so adjust the amount of time you spend, depending on how easy you find an exercise.

Think in minutes rather than parts of an hour – minutes do count and will add up. Keep a close eye on the clock. The longer you spend on one question, the less time you have for another. Don't spend too long on any one question – it's not worth it.

Don't count your words in the writing section. This is not necessary and, if you have practised, you will know what 150 or 200 words look like in your handwriting. Lined paper is provided in the exam as a guideline to the length required.

Exercise 1 is the 'easiest', but you don't have to start with the first exercise on the paper. Start wherever you feel comfortable and most confident. Don't forget about an exercise altogether, though!

This book will be very helpful because you can practise answering questions according to the time limit. Lots of practice really does make a big difference to speed and confidence. Be generous with yourself at first, then reduce the amount of time you allow yourself as your skills increase.

And finally...

We hope you enjoy using these Practice Tests, make lots of progress and achieve the success you are hoping for. Good luck!