

PTE Academic Lesson Plan Ideas: Test Taking Strategies

Lesson 4 – Retell lecture

Time allocated: 60 minutes

Step 1: Introduce the Question Type

This is a long-answer question type that integrates listening and speaking skills, and requires test takers to understand and retell a lecture.

You will hear a lecture. After listening to the lecture, in 10 seconds, please speak into the microphone and retell what you have just heard from the lecture in your own words. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.



Status: Beginning in 2 seconds.

Volume 

Recorded Answer

Current Status:
Beginning in 86 seconds.

Step 2: Present the Question Type Strategies

Strategy 1

Write your notes in a systematic and effective way. Listen for content words which convey key information. Don't worry about the spelling of words, but make sure you understand the meaning.

Strategy 2

You only have 10 seconds to prepare before the microphone opens. Quickly review and connect the ideas in your notes.

Strategy 3

Try to think in English when you speak. Don't translate from your native language into English.

Step 3: Explain and Practice Each Strategy

Strategy 1

Explain to your students that in the test they will hear the lecture only once so they should try to make effective notes which will help them improve their performance. Remind them not to get distracted by the speaker's accent and delivery mode. Explain that test takers can't write down every single word, but they should try to take down the following: main points and principles, supporting details and examples, important dates and numbers. They should note connections between the main ideas or points, e.g., whether they support or contradict each other, and their hierarchical relationships.

Students should also think of a simple layout for their notes that they will try to follow when speaking. If the lecture is accompanied by an image such as a graph or map, the headings may include some of the keywords that they will need to retell the information.

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

- Display Question 1 and explain to your students that they will hear an interview. First, read out the first question and the interviewee's answer, and have your students take notes.
"In an article that you wrote that I just read, you said you wished you could take everyone back to decades ago to look at the Florida Keys.
Fifty years ago. Think about how much change has taken place in that short period of time. We have managed to consume on the order of 90% of the big fish in the ocean: the tunas, the swordfish, the sharks. They're mostly gone. Until recently, people have had the belief that there isn't much we puny human beings can do to change the nature of the ocean. But in fact, we have, not just because of what we've been taking out and the destructive means often applied to take fish and other creatures from the sea, but also what we're putting into the sea, either directly or what we put into the atmosphere that falls back into the sea."
 The instructions for this question type have been modified for this lesson to include an interview. In the actual test, the instructions will generally refer to a lecture.
- Now read out the next question and answer, and have your students take notes.
"So if you were going to give a grade on the health of the oceans today what would it be?
Well, it depends on which aspect. Across the board. Huh. The oceans are in trouble. It's hard for me to assign a specific grade. Maybe C"
- Play the complete audio of the interview [L4_Retell_lecture_1] and have students check their notes and add any additional points.
- In pairs, ask them to compare the notes they have taken and explain how they have organized them.
 Topic: *article about fish in the Florida Keys*
50 years – much change
Consume 90% of big fish
Belief – humans can't change ocean
But – humans destructive → take fish out of sea; put things back Health of oceans – in trouble, grade C

Strategy 2

Remind your students that in the test they will only have 10 seconds to prepare for speaking. They should not try to re-write their notes or add more information. Instead, they should review them quickly and select the key information and points, and think about how to present them in a logical way using connectives and transition words.

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

- Have students quickly review their notes and think about how to present them, and what connectives and transition words they need to use.
- Ask your students to practice retelling the information to each other.

Strategy 3

Remind your students that their response to the test question should be smooth and effortless, and delivered at a natural rate with appropriate phrasing. So it is important that they try to think in English when they speak and avoid translating from their native language. Translation may result in slow, hesitant and unnatural speech.

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

- Assign two topics to each pair, e.g., *population growth*, *sustainable living*, *eco-diversity*, etc. Ask students to practice giving a short presentation of no more than one minute on each topic to each other. On the first topic, they should think in their first language as they prepare their notes and translate in their heads as they speak. On the second topic, they should think in English as they write notes and speak. If possible, have them record the presentations and compare the mode of delivery. They will probably notice that the first approach of translating in their heads results in slower, labored speech.
- Have your students look at their notes for Question 1 and have them present the information to their partners. Encourage them to think in English without translating in their heads.
- Play the three sample responses in audio files [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_B1], [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_B2] and [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_C1] and ask students to discuss the mode of delivery and rank them from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations.

Step 4: Respond to a Retell Lecture Question

Explain to your students that they will now respond to a test question simulating the test conditions. They will have 10 seconds to prepare after the recording finishes and 40 seconds to record their response. Remind them of the three strategies covered in this lesson and ask them to apply them.

Seat your students at separate workstations or position them in a way that they will not interfere with or disrupt others while speaking. Give out copies of Question 2. Play the audio [L4_Retell_lecture_2], and ask students to record their responses on personal recording devices such as computers and mobile phones.

Step 5: Provide Feedback

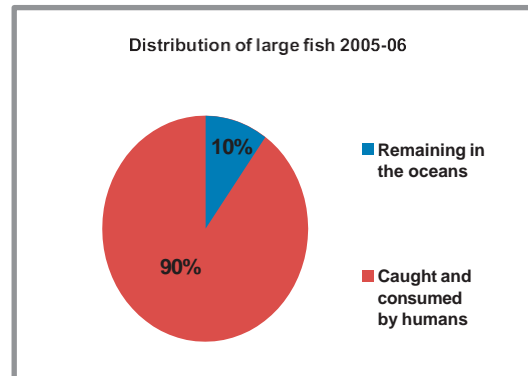
Ask your students if they were able to use the strategies. Which one was the most difficult to apply? Which one do they think was the most useful?

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

Play the three sample responses in audio files [L4_Retell_lecture_2_Response_B1], [L4_Retell_lecture_2_Response_B2] and [L4_Retell_lecture_2_Response_C1]. Ask students to rank the responses from the weaker to the stronger. Then provide the explanations for Question 2.

Question 1

You will hear an interview. After listening to the interview, in 10 seconds, please retell what you have just heard from the interview in your own words. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.



Question 1: Transcript

Interviewer: *In an article that you wrote that I just read, you said you wished you could take everyone back to decades ago to look at the Florida Keys.*

Interviewee: *Fifty years ago. Think about how much change has taken place in that short period of time. We have managed to consume on the order of 90% of the big fish in the ocean: the tunas, the swordfish, the sharks. They're mostly gone. Until recently, people have had the belief that there isn't much we puny human beings can do to change the nature of the ocean. But in fact, we have, not just because of what we've been taking out and the destructive means often applied to take fish and other creatures from the sea, but also what we're putting into the sea, either directly or what we put into the atmosphere that falls back into the sea.*

Interviewer: *So if you were going to give a grade on the health of the oceans today what would it be?*

Interviewee: *Well, it depends on which aspect. Across the board. Huh. The oceans are in trouble. It's hard for me to assign a specific grade. Maybe C-.*

Question 1: Explanations

Audio [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_B1]

While the response includes a few points, other key information is not discussed and some details are misinterpreted. Although some words are spoken in continuous phrases, several hesitations, false starts, and long pauses negatively affect fluency. Incorrect pronunciation of some consonants and vowels does not affect understanding. This response demonstrates limited control over simple grammatical structures. This response is 39 seconds.

Audio [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_B2]

While the response includes some main points and a conclusion, other key information from the lecture is omitted. Fluency is negatively affected by staccato speech, many hesitations and false starts. Minor pronunciation errors do not affect understanding. Language use is weak; grammar and vocabulary errors are present and the word choice is repetitive. This response is 36 seconds.

Audio [L4_Retell_lecture_1_Response_C1]

The topic has been accurately discussed and several supporting points included. There are a few instances of reformulation and some hesitations, but speech is continuous. Pronunciation of most consonants and vowels is standard. The vocabulary used is appropriate for the context and varied. This response is 32 seconds.

Question 2

You will hear a lecture. After listening to the lecture, in 10 seconds, please retell what you have just heard from the lecture in your own words. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.



Question 2: Transcript

The shuttle was designed to be a space truck; it's a multi-purpose vehicle. We've done a tremendous number of different things with it. It's the most versatile space vehicle that has ever been built. We've used it to launch satellites. We've used it to repair satellites in orbit and put them back into orbit. We've used it to capture satellites and bring them back to Earth for repair. We've outfitted it with the space lab built by our European partners and used it before the era of the space station to do scientific research. We used it as part of our partnership with the Russians, which is still continuing, first as part of the Mir space station, where we actually prolonged the useful life of Mir by several years through logistical supply visits with the shuttle. And now, of course, we're using it to build the new international space station, which is a...a huge international partnership.

Question 2: Explanations

Audio [L4_Retell_lecture_2_Response_B1]

The response includes some main points from the presentation, but with a degree of inaccuracy. Speech is uneven and contains several hesitations. Incorrect pronunciation of some consonants and vowels might require listeners to adjust to the accent of the speaker. This response demonstrates limited control over simple grammatical structures. The vocabulary is basic. This response is 32 seconds.

Audio [L4_Retell_Lecture_2_Response_B2]

Several main points are retold, but the omission of key details demonstrates only a moderate understanding of the lecture. Speech is somewhat staccato and there are instances of hesitation and reformulation. Minor pronunciation and grammatical errors do not lead to misunderstanding. This response is 39 seconds.

Audio [L4_Retell_lecture_2_Response_C1]

The test taker accurately retells most of the main points in the lecture. Although phrasing is somewhat uneven, speech continues comprehensibly and with acceptable speed. Incorrect pronunciation of some consonant clusters and vowels does not affect understanding. This response demonstrates good control of standard English grammar. The vocabulary used is appropriate for the context and varied. This response is 39 seconds.