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Test of English

PTE Academic

Scoring Information for Teachers and Partners

Purpose of this Document

This document is intended to provide information about PTE Academic scoring procedures and to address common misconceptions. It is written for partners and teachers engaged in preparing test takers for PTE Academic, ensuring they have accurate and detailed information to guide test preparation. The information is also intended to support institutions and governments in understanding and interpreting scoring information.

This document should be read alongside the **PTE Academic Score Guide**.

Introduction

PTE Academic is a globally recognized, computer-based English language test that combines automated scoring with expert human assessment. The test reports:

- An Overall score (10–90 points)
- Four communicative skills scores: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing (10–90 points each)

Test takers also receive feedback on their performance in a Skills Profile that highlights areas of strength and areas for improvement. The Skills Profile does not contain scoring information and is available only to test takers through their myPTE account; institutions do not have access.

Scoring Overview

Question scores

Test takers complete 65–75 questions in a test. There are two ways in which score points are awarded for each question:

- **Correct or incorrect:** Some questions are scored as either correct or incorrect. If responses are correct, 1 score point is given, but if they are incorrect, no points are awarded.

- **Partial credit:** Other questions are scored on a range of score points. Partial credit questions reward a number of points depending on the accuracy or quality of a response.

Content and Form gatekeepers

Some partial credit questions that involve Speaking and Writing are scored on different aspects of the response called *traits*. Two important traits in scoring are Content and Form (explained below), which can act as so-called gatekeepers, meaning that a response must meet the Content or Form minimum requirements in order to receive a score.

All extended Speaking & Writing questions are scored for Content. Content means how appropriate the content of a response is in relation to the prompt. Some Writing questions are scored for Form. Form scores are based on formal characteristics of the response such as the number of words. When the response is scored as 0 for Content or Form, no other score points for the response will be given. Here are examples of descriptions of responses that will not receive any score points:

- An essay written on a completely different topic from the question prompt (Content)

- An essay that is less than 120 words (Form)

- A response that does not deal properly with the prompt due to significant amounts of pre-prepared/memorized material (Content).

Integrated skills

Each question in the test counts toward the Overall score and one or more communicative skill scores. Questions that assess more than one skill are called integrated skills questions. For *integrated skills questions*, the score points count toward both skill score calculations.

The PTE Academic Score Guide explains how each question type is scored and which skill scores each question type counts toward.

PTE Academic's Scoring Model

Question scores are used to calculate the Overall score and each communicative skill score. However, these scores aren't a simple sum of question score points. PTE Academic's scoring model uses advanced statistical techniques to determine a fair score for each test-taker's ability based on three types of information:

- **Question scores:** We start with the number of score points the test taker achieved for a question.

- **Question difficulty:** Some questions are easier or harder than others, and it is important to take this into consideration when calculating a test-taker's score. We determine question difficulty through extensive pre-testing of every question in the PTE Academic question bank. This method allows for fair score comparisons, even though each test taker has a different collection of questions in their test.

- **Question weighting:** Questions are weighted to ensure each test consistently assesses skills that are important for real-world communication.

Each score—Overall, Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing—is calculated independently of the other scores. The Overall score is based on all questions in the test, while the Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing scores are based on the subset of questions that assess each skill. Some questions count toward more than one skill score because they assess integrated skills.

Question Weighting

Understanding how each question type is weighted in score calculations can help test takers better understand what scores mean. Table 1 shows how much (i.e., the "weighting") each question type contributes to each score on an average test.

Table 1. *PTE Academic question weighting table*

Test Structure		Average Question Type Weighting for Each Score				
	Question Type	Overall	Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing
Speaking & Writing	Read Aloud	4%			9%	
	Repeat Sentence	7%	17%		16%	
	Describe Image	15%			31%	
	Retell Lecture	6%	13%		13%	
	Answer Short Question	2%	4%			
	Summarize Group Discussion	9%	20%		19%	
	Respond to a Situation	6%			13%	
	Summarize Written Text	7%		23%		28%
	Write Essay	7%				31%
Reading	Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown)	7%		25%		
	Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers	1%		5%		
	Reorder Paragraph	3%		9%		
	Fill in the Blanks (Drag and Drop)	6%		20%		
	Multiple Choice, Single Answer	<1%		3%		
Listening	Summarize Spoken Text	4%	10%			18%
	Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers	1%	3%			
	Fill in the Blanks (Type In)	3%	8%			
	Highlight Correct Summary	<1%	2%	3%		
	Multiple Choice, Single Answer	<1%	2%			
	Select Missing Word	1%	1%			
	Highlight Incorrect Words	4%	8%	13%		
	Write from Dictation	5%	13%			23%
	TOTALS	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**	**100%**

Notice that question types have different weightings for the Overall score and the communicative skills scores. For example, Write Essay represents about 7% of the Overall score but 31% of the Writing score. This is because all questions contribute to the Overall score, while fewer questions contribute to the Writing score, so Write Essay carries more weight there. This means that a strong performance on Write Essay will have a large impact on the Writing score and a moderate impact on the Overall score.

The same logic applies to integrated skills questions, such as Summarize Written Text, which assesses both Reading and Writing skills. This question type has slightly higher weighting in Writing than in Reading because there are fewer question types that contribute to Writing compared to Reading.

Ultimately, the scoring model means that PTE Academic provides the fairest and most accurate measure of language ability possible by:

- Enabling integrated skills scoring that mirrors authentic language use
- Ensuring emphasis is given to skills that matter most for real-world communication
- Providing a fair measure of test-taker ability, regardless of which questions are answered.

Remember, the Overall and the communicative skills scores are based on a combination of a test-taker's performance on questions, the difficulty of the questions, and how heavily the question is weighted.

Pearson's scoring models are proprietary and no external third parties have access to information about question difficulty or scoring algorithms. Only official PTE Academic preparation materials utilize accurate and complete scoring model information.

Overall Score Calculation

Common Misconception about Score Calculation

It is important to identify and dispel false ideas about how PTE Academic scoring works so that test takers have an accurate understanding of how their test will be scored.

One of the most common misconceptions is that the Overall score is an average of the four communicative skills scores. However, the Overall score is not an average of the four skill scores. The Overall score is calculated independently of the communicative skills scores and is based on a test-taker's performance across all questions in the test.

Figure 1 displays an incorrect representation of how PTE Academic is scored. Some people incorrectly believe that each question type counts toward only one skill score, that all question types are equally weighted, or that skill scores are equally weighted and averaged to produce the Overall score.
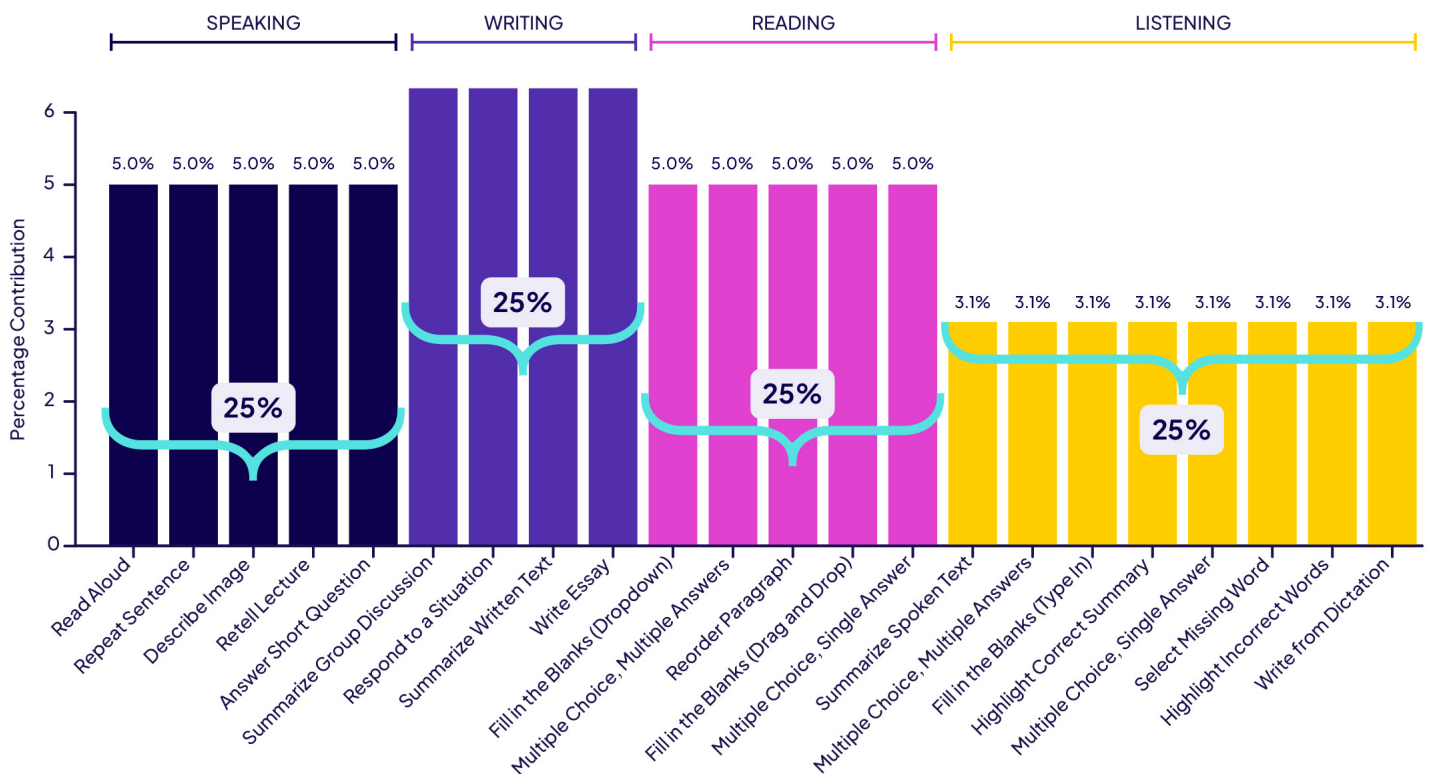

Figure 1. *Incorrect interpretation: Overall score as a simple average of the four skills (each skill 25%). This is not an accurate representation of score calculation.*

The Truth about Score Calculation

In practice, PTE Academic scores are more nuanced. Figure 2 presents a more accurate representation of PTE Academic scoring. The bars represent the Overall score and each communicative skill score, and each bar is divided into sections that show how much each question type contributes to the final calculation.
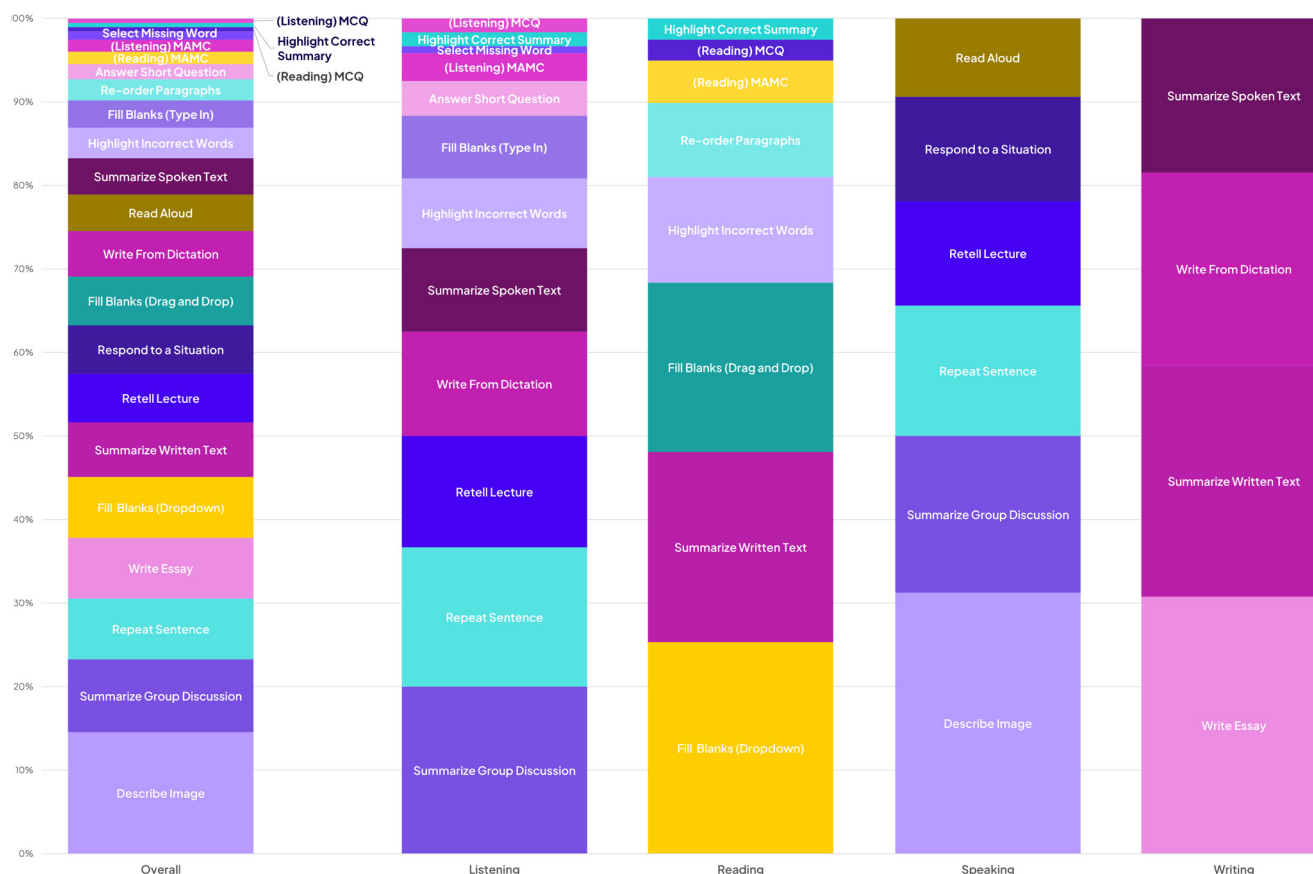

Figure 2. *Correct interpretation: Overall score derived directly from weighted question contributions.*

There are important differences between Figures 1 and 2.

- **Integrated skills:** Figure 1 incorrectly shows each question type appearing only once and only in relation to one skill. Figure 2 more accurately reflects the integrated nature of the scoring system. Some question types appear in more than one bar in Figure 2 because they count toward more than one skill.

  If skill scores were averaged to calculate the Overall score, integrated questions would be counted more than once. To avoid this, the Overall score is based on all questions in the test, and each question is only counted once in the Overall score calculation.

  For example, Summarize Written Text contributes to both Reading and Writing scores as well as directly contributing to the Overall score. Summarize a Group Discussion

likewise contributes to both the Listening and Speaking scores as well as directly contributing to the Overall score. Because of such integrated scoring, the overall proficiency isn't a simple average of the four skill scores—rather, it reflects each question type's multi-faceted contribution.

- **Question weighting:** Figure 1 incorrectly shows all question types equally weighted, while Figure 2 shows the actual weightings designed to reflect the real-world importance of each skill assessed. Question types that are more heavily weighted are the extended response question types, such as Summarize Group Discussion and Write Essay. These question types assess a test-taker's ability to produce a coherent and detailed extended response in their own words—an important skill for communication at college or in professional settings.

- **Overall score:** Figure 1 incorrectly shows each communicative skill score being weighted equally and averaged to produce the Overall score. In practice, the Overall score is not an average of skill scores. Instead, it is a holistic measure of a test-taker's performance across all questions in the test.

Skills Profiles and Question Types

The Skills Profile, such as exemplified in Figure 3, offers a snapshot of a test-taker's performance across specific language categories, such as extended writing or short speaking. Unlike the communicative skills scores, which scaled on the Global Scale of English (GSE), the Skills Profile bars reflect relative strengths based on performance in relevant question types. It is important to understand that the Skills Profile does not report scores; it highlights areas of strength and areas needing improvement. A full bar does not equate to a score of 90.
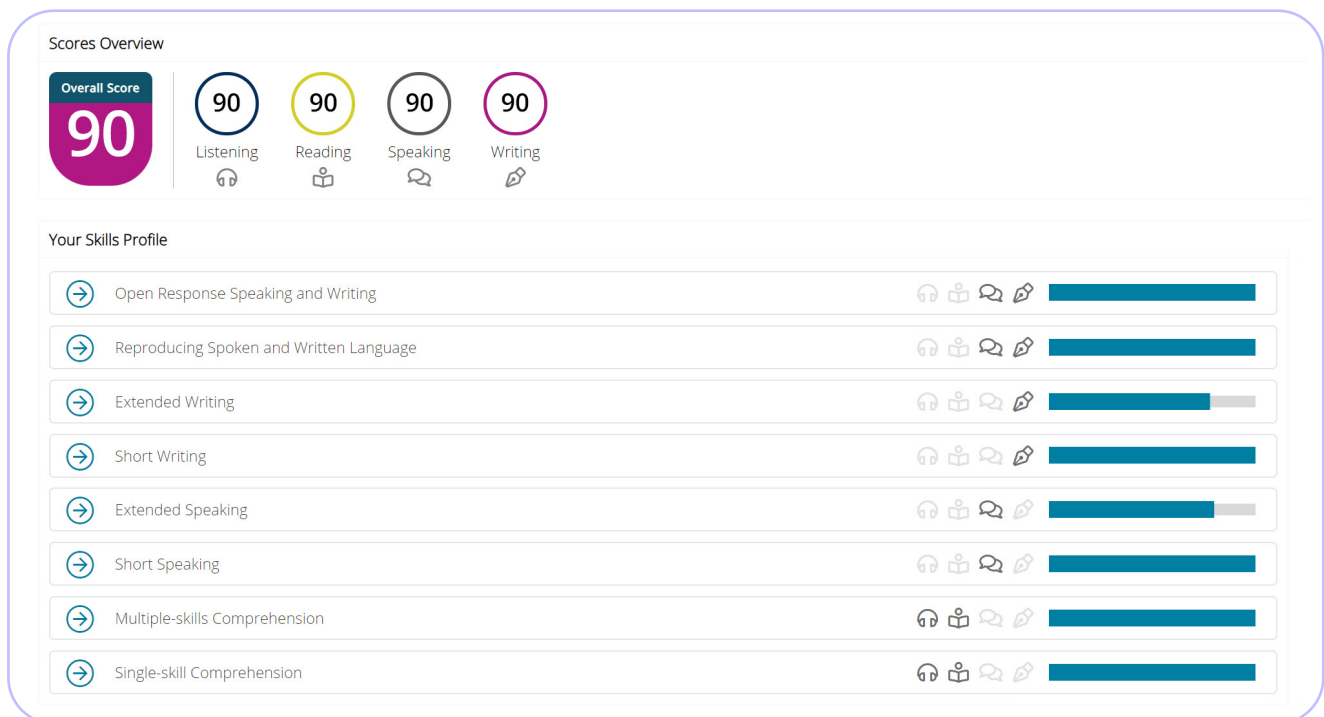

Figure 3. *An example of a Skills Profile dashboard that can be viewed by a test taker.*

Table 2 shows how each PTE Academic question type corresponds to the Skills Profile categories, helping teachers and partners to use the profile as a guide for feedback and development, not as a score report.

Table 2. *PTE Academic example question types mapped to Skills Profile categories*

Skills Profile Category	Example Question Types
Open response speaking & writing	Describe Image Retell Lecture Summarize Group Discussion Respond to a Situation Summarize Written Text Write Essay Summarize Spoken Text
Reproducing spoken & written language	Read Aloud Repeat Sentence Write From Dictation
Extended writing	Summarize Written Text Write Essay Summarize Spoken Text
Short writing	Write from Dictation
Extended speaking	Describe Image Retell Lecture Summarize Group Discussion Respond to a Situation
Short speaking	Read Aloud Repeat Sentence
Multiple skills comprehension	Repeat Sentence Retell Lecture Summarize Group Discussion Summarize Written Text Summarize Spoken Text Highlight Correct Summary Highlight Incorrect Words Write From Dictation

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Skills Profile Category	Example Question Types
Single skill comprehension	Answer Short Question Respond to a Situation Fill in the Blanks (Dropdown) (Reading) Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers Reorder Paragraph Fill in the Blanks (Drag & Drop) (Reading) Multiple Choice, Single Answer (Listening) Multiple Choice, Multiple Answers Fill in the Blanks (Type In) (Listening) Multiple Choice, Single Answer Select Missing Word

Rescoring

If a candidate challenges their PTE Academic score and requests a rescore, the test is re-evaluated by professional human raters. While the initial scoring combines automated scoring with human evaluation for certain tasks, the rescore is conducted entirely by human raters. Each extended response is independently reviewed by two human raters, and if their evaluations differ, a third expert rater is brought in to adjudicate. Closed questions with definitive correct answers, such as multiple-choice questions, are not rescored. This rescore process ensures the candidate's performance is thoroughly re-evaluated solely by human experts, providing an additional layer of assurance to those seeking a review.

Under Pearson's policy, the rescore completely replaces the original score report and becomes the candidate's official result for that test. The original scores are not averaged or combined with the new ones; they are simply superseded.

Test takers should be aware that it is not possible to predict the outcome of a rescore, and test takers should not assume a rescore will result in a higher score. Scores can increase or decrease, or stay the same, and whatever the outcome is, the rescore is final. For fairness, only one rescore per test attempt is permitted.

Why scores can change

Because rescoring involves human re-evaluation of every extended response in the entire test, the rescore results may differ from the original scores. In most cases, rescore outcomes closely match the original scores, but noticeable differences can occur in rare cases. Minor differences in how each human rater scores each trait for each extended question can add up across the test, leading to higher or lower Overall and/or skills scores. Importantly, this outcome does not mean the original scoring was wrong—

rather, it reflects the inherent subtleties of a fully human evaluation, where the sum of small adjustments can lead to a change in the score report after a rescore. The initial scores remain robust and trustworthy, as PTE Academic's scoring model combines the strengths of automated scoring with expert human judgment to produce accurate and reliable scores.

Transparency and security

In the rescoring process, no additional feedback or question-level rationale is given to the test taker about why a score changed. To maintain test security, Pearson does not provide access to the answers or any detailed breakdown of how each response was judged during rescoring.

Real Examples of Misconceptions

To enhance clarity, we have identified common misconceptions identified in past inquiries, and we present some of them here along with explanations as to why they are inaccurate.

Belief # 1:

"I think my Overall score is inaccurately calculated; because when I calculate it, it makes a different average."

Example: Overall score of 81 (Listening 69, Reading 63, Speaking 90, Writing 64)

FACT The Overall score is not the average of the individual skill scores. Each question type contributes directly to the Overall score, with its own different weighting. Therefore, calculating an average of the four skills will not reflect the true Overall score.

Belief # 2:

"If my Overall score is 90, then all my individual communicative skills scores must also be 90."

Example: Overall score of 90 (Listening 90, Reading 69, Speaking 90, Writing 90)

FACT The Overall score is not an average of the four communicative skills. It is calculated holistically based on a test-taker's performance across all questions in the test. It's also important to remember that "90" does not mean a test taker has received a perfect score, only that they have demonstrated ability at the top end of the range that PTE Academic measures. If a test taker has achieved 90 in both Speaking and Writing, and has done so with exceptionally strong performances in the questions that receive the highest weighting, it is possible to achieve a score of 90 overall, but not achieve 90 in every single skill score. This indicates that, overall, the test taker has demonstrated mastery across key areas that are important for real-world communication, but they have not demonstrated a perfect performance in every aspect of the test.
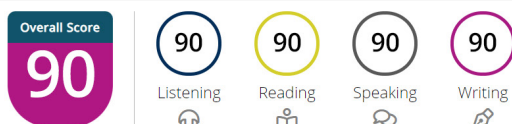
Belief # 3 :

"The Skills Profile bars appear full, but my skill scores are not all 90."
or: "All my skill scores are 90, but the Skills Profile bars don't appear
full."

Example:

Scores Overview

Overall Score
90

90	90	90	90
Listening	Reading	Speaking	Writing

Your Skills Profile

→	Open Response Speaking and Writing	
→	Reproducing Spoken and Written Language	
→	Extended Writing	
→	Short Writing	
→	Extended Speaking	
→	Short Speaking	
→	Multiple-skills Comprehension	
→	Single-skill Comprehension	

FACT The Skills Profile is designed to show a test-taker's relative performance across specific language categories, not to mirror the scaled scores directly. Each bar indicates relative strengths within a category, based on performance across relevant question types. A full bar does not necessarily correspond to a score of 90, and conversely, a score of 90 does not guarantee a full bar. This is because the Skills Profile is not scaled on the 10–90 Global Scale of English (GSE) used for skill scores. It is a diagnostic tool to help identify areas of strength and opportunities for improvement, not a direct reflection of the scoring algorithm.

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Belief # 4:

💬 "Weighting percentages allow you to predict exact scores."

FACT No, it is not possible to predict scores using the weighting table (Table 1). PTE Academic scores are a reflection of a test-taker's language proficiency, taking into account their performance on test questions, the difficulty of those questions, and the weighting of those questions in score calculations.

Belief # 5:

💬 "If a question type has a high weighting, then a perfect performance should yield a proportional share of the scaled score. For example, the weighting table shows that Describe Image accounts for around 31% of the Speaking score, so a perfect response should give me 31% of the 80-point range, considering the Global Scale of English (GSE) spans from 10 to 90."

FACT This assumption is incorrect because it overlooks how PTE Academic converts raw scores into scaled scores. While the weighting table (Table 1) shows indicative percentages, these do not translate directly into scaled points. The scoring algorithm considers the difficulty of each question and a test-taker's overall performance across all tasks along with the weighting of each question when calculating scores.

Belief # 6:

"Incorrect answers make you lose your points."

FACT The lowest score possible for any question on PTE Academic is zero points. Some questions use partial credit scoring that balances selecting the correct information with selecting incorrect information. For example, in a Multiple Choice, Multiple Answer question that asks a candidate to "select all that apply," they will earn 1 point for selecting a correct option and lose 1 point for selecting an incorrect option. However, even if someone only selects incorrect options, the lowest score they will receive for the question is zero points. This scoring rule is in place to discourage test takers from selecting all available options, but also to ensure that the total score for the question can never be negative.

Belief # 7:

"Completing just two Summarize Written Text tasks in the Scored Practice Test gave my candidate a high Writing score, so that must be how the operational test works too."

FACT The Scored Practice Test is designed to provide an accurate indication of readiness only when candidates take the entire test in good faith. If a test taker selectively answers certain questions (e.g., completing only Read Aloud or Summarize Written Text questions at full effort while skipping others), the resulting scores will be distorted and not reflective of true ability. Such distorted results do not give insight into the calculation of scores in PTE Academic, which uses a sophisticated and nuanced scoring model that considers responses across a range of question types, question difficulty, and weighting. Completing only one question type does not provide enough information for the test to accurately assess ability.

For best results, candidates should aim for consistent effort across all question types rather than focusing narrowly on a few. Percentages or weightings only apply when the test is completed in full.

Belief # 8:

"My score changed after a rescore—this means the original score was wrong!"

FACT Unlike the initial scoring of PTE Academic, when a rescore is requested, every open-ended response for the entire test is independently evaluated by two trained human raters. If their assessments differ, a third rater reviews the responses. This process ensures a thorough, fair, and accurate evaluation.

During the human rescoring process, small differences in individual judgments can accumulate, and the sum of these differences may lead to noticeable changes in scores. Most often, rescore outcomes are similar to the original scores, but larger differences can occur in normal human scoring and do not indicate an error.

It is important to note that scores from different tests are never combined, and human and AI scores are not mixed during rescoring. Each rescore replaces the previous scores for all relevant sections. It is important to be aware that when a rescore is requested, scores are subject to change and they may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

Belief # 9:

"The appeal process will re-evaluate my test responses and explain why my scores changed."

FACT PTE Academic offers three post-results services that investigate different elements of the testing process. It can be useful to know what each service offers and what a test taker can expect from the results before requesting a service:

1. **Technical review:** This service checks for any technical issues in audio recordings that may have impacted scoring. If the review identifies issues with the audio recordings, the test fee and the fee for the technical review will be refunded. This service will not change the scores.

2. **Human rescore:** While the PTE test uses a combination of automated and human scoring, a rescore is carried out by only human scorers. This means that human experts will rescore an entire test and the new score will replace the original one. It is important to understand that a score could go down as well as up. A rescore will always overwrite a previous score, and a test taker will no longer be able to use their previous score. This service does not provide feedback on specific responses or reasons for score changes, and a single rescore is allowed per test sitting.

3. **Appeal**: It is possible to appeal the result of a rescore. The purpose of the appeals process is to confirm that the rescoring was completed correctly and in line with Pearson's internal procedures. The appeal process does not involve a re-assessment of test responses or provide detailed feedback on why individual scores changed.

For context, the rescore process—which precedes any appeal—involves a thorough review of all open-ended responses by expert human raters. Each response is independently evaluated by two raters, and if they disagree, a third rater is brought in to adjudicate. The appeal simply verifies that this process was followed correctly; it does not include further rescoring or additional explanation.

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Recommendations to Partners

- Set realistic expectations. PTE Academic measures overall language proficiency rather than mastery of specific question types. Focusing on building comprehensive English skills offers the best approach for success.

- Remind candidates that scores reflect overall proficiency, not isolated performance on individual questions.

- Use weightings and mappings as guides when supporting test takers, rather than exact calculations. Weighting tables are indicative and not designed for score prediction. Attempting to reverse engineer scores using such tables will lead to incorrect conclusions.

- Encourage candidates to prepare thoroughly for all question types. Skipping questions can adversely affect scores.

- Keep in mind that the final scores involve converting raw scores to scaled scores using internal calculations. The PTE Academic scoring model provides a nuanced measurement of a test-taker's language ability based on their performance across all 22 question types, as well as the difficulty and weighting of questions. The scoring model is proprietary and no external parties have access to the scoring algorithms.

- If a candidate believes their scores do not reflect their performance, they may request a rescore through the official Customer Support process. During a rescore, all open-ended tasks in the test are reviewed by expert human raters, and scores may increase, decrease, or stay the same. The rescore replaces the original scores.

- Always refer to the official guidance and research for the most accurate and up-to-date information, and update teaching or advising materials accordingly.

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