

# Is your English up to scratch?

Find out if you are ready to study at an English-speaking institution

Test your English skills!

English is the global language of science and research. It is also the language of instruction at universities in Great Britain, Australia, Canada, the United States and other English-speaking countries. Moreover, there is a growing number of English-taught degree programs in places such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Belgium and, yes, Germany. If you plan to study in one of these locations, you will have to demonstrate your ability to read, speak and write English at an advanced level. Our small quiz below features questions similar to the ones you will encounter in the reading section of one of the English language tests required by universities abroad, such as TOEFL or IELTS. Find out whether your English is up to scratch! There is only one correct answer to each question. Grab a pen and have fun!

Read the passage below and answer the questions about its content.

Once a **bargain**, the University of California system is now one of the priciest of any in the country. California's three-tiered system of colleges and universities has long been viewed as a model of excellence by other public higher education institutions nationwide and even around the world. Underlying the creation of this remarkable system was a commitment to the notion that all qualified Californians, whatever their economic status, were entitled to the benefits of a college education. Unfortunately, the financial turmoil that has racked the State of California is **playing havoc with** the ability of its public colleges and universities to fulfill their traditional mission. For students, the practical impact is taking the form of larger classes, reduced course offerings, and – surprise, surprise – a big increase in student fees.

1 According to the passage, what is the University of California's traditional mission?

- a To be a model of excellence for universities around the world
- b To provide a free college education for all students
- c To make university education affordable for all qualified Californians
- d To offer small classes and courses rather than large lectures

2 The expression "a bargain" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- a renowned    b wealthy
- c inexpensive    d little known

3 It can be inferred from the passage that the University of California

- a has lost much of its money because of the global financial crisis
- b is no longer admired by higher education institutions abroad
- c is now the priciest university in the United States
- d has become too expensive for many prospective students

4 The expression "play havoc with" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- a destroy    b reinforce
- c jeopardize    d redeem

Each of the following sentences has one blank, indicating that something has been omitted. Choose the correct word or set of words from the options below.

5 Working in a foreign country can be difficult but also exciting. At first many people have trouble ..... to a strange culture but then make friends and have a good time.

- a with adoption    b to learn about
- c to adapt    d adapting

6 Originally from Leipzig, Lena Feldheim ..... in Manchester since 2013 to pursue a bachelor's degree in European studies at the University of Manchester.

- a lives b lived c has lived d living

7 According to educational statistics, the average age of university students has risen quite ..... over the past 25 years.

- a to be noticed b noticeably  
c noticing d noticeable

8 Only after arriving at the hotel in Toronto, two hours before his job interview, ..... that only one shirt still fit him, and that one only barely.

- a did he realize b he realized  
c realizing d he realizes

9 At the study abroad fair, visitors have the opportunity to speak directly with university representatives, ..... are there to provide first-hand information about admissions and financial aid.

- a which b whom c that d who

Choose the letter of the underlined word or word group that is not correct. If the sentence is correct, select choice E.

10 It is far easier to ride a bicycle than explaining in ..... words exactly how a bicycle is ridden. No error.

- a ..... b .....  
c ..... d ..... e

11 Gwendolyn often referred to art history textbooks ..... while she was sculpting; whenever she learned a new ..... method in art class, she seeks out the work of sculptors ..... who had used it in the past. No error.

- a ..... b .....  
c ..... d ..... e

12 During my most recent trip, I came across ..... a lovely antique store wandering in the old ..... quarter of the city. No error.

- a ..... b ..... c .....  
d ..... e

13 Liz wanted, for the most part, to ..... travel around the world after graduation, ..... but sometimes she thought about ..... taking a job at her father's company instead. No error.

- a ..... b .....  
c ..... d .....  
e

14 It is difficult to predict what kinds of books ..... will be popular in the years ahead, because ..... tastes change and topics either get over-explored and lose their relevance.

- a ..... b .....  
c ..... d .....  
e

15 At the art show, Jenny enjoyed looking at ..... her friend Aaron's innovative paintings, which she thought were more original ..... than the other artists. No error.

- a ..... b ..... c .....  
d ..... e

Read the passage below and answer the questions about its content.

In 2013, the London Underground, or Tube as it is more commonly known, celebrated its 150th anniversary. Some of the tunnels have been in near-continuous operation since steam trains first navigated them in 1863. That's not to say the world's oldest underground rail network isn't showing its age. Delays occur frequently as signals fail, trains break down, or lines are closed for maintenance work. **1** There are other gripes: Commuters complain of paying too much for a service that is estimated to be running at almost 50 percent over capacity. **2** Trains and stations are **rammed** at peak periods, making travel an ordeal of forced intimacy with strangers. **3** Many of these problems are a legacy of the Tube's venerable heritage. Although now run as one service, its individual lines were **haphazardly** dug beneath the city by private companies during its first 70 years of life. Unlike the neatly planned networks that run beneath the streets of Paris, Berlin or New York, the London Tube is a tangle of branch lines, messy intersections and abandoned ghost stations. **4**

Do the following statements reflect the claims of the writer in the reading passage?

Select

- Yes** if the statement reflects the claims of the writer
- No** if the statement contradicts the claims of the writer
- Not given** if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this

**16** London's underground rail network is not showing its age.

Yes

No

Not given

**17** The Tube system is heavily overburdened.

Yes

No

Not given

**18** The private companies that owned and ran the railways were merged in 1933.

Yes

No

Not given

**19** Many of the Underground's current problems originate in historical circumstances over the course of its construction.

Yes

No

Not given

**20** Look at the four squares **1** **2** **3** **4** that indicate where the following sentence can be added to the passage:

In summer, when air conditioning systems struggle against rising temperatures, it is far worse.

Where would the sentence best fit?

- a** **1** **b** **2** **c** **3** **d** **4**

**21** The word "rammed" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- a** overheated **b** disconnected  
**c** overcrowded **d** intimate

**22** The word "haphazardly" in the passage is closest in meaning to

- a** dangerously **b** boldly  
**c** unsystematically **d** prematurely

Author

**Carsten Bösel** is a writer, translator, and independent expert on US college and university admissions. He had to take the TOEFL himself many years ago to become a graduate student in English at Duke University (North Carolina, USA). In his work as a study abroad counselor, he has heard German students refer to the test as "Töffl", "Tofu" or even "Teufel" test! But don't worry, it really isn't that devilish.

Sources: University of California passage adapted from Fiske Guide to Colleges 2014, p. 88, London Tube passage adapted from "London's underground love affair celebrates 150 years", Global Post, 9 Jan 2013, bit.ly/1zTS6bB

Read the following conversation between two US college students and answer the questions below:

- Dan: Hey Steve, are you going to the party tonight?  
 Steve: Sorry, I can't. Gotta cram for my government final.  
 Dan: Oh, shucks, don't be silly! I'm sure you'll ace that one.  
 Steve: I'm not so sure. Been slacking off lately. And I've flunked that class before.  
 Dan: Really? Well you'd better hit the books then.  
 Steve: Yeah. I guess I'll be pulling an all-nighter.  
 Dan: Oh my gosh! Then why don't you cut psychology class tomorrow morning? I'll tell Professor Warwick you're sick.  
 Steve: Good idea. Thank you, Dan.  
 Dan: No problem, man. I'll see you at the frat house tomorrow.

- 23** Steve says he cannot go to the party because
- a** he has to read a book for psychology class
  - b** he has to study for an important exam
  - c** he has to prepare a report for the government
  - d** he doesn't like staying up all night

- 24** Which of the following statements best describes Dan's reaction?
- a** Dan thinks that Steve is being silly and insists that he join him for the party.
  - b** Dan suggests that Steve do some reading, then go to the party and pretend that he is sick the next morning as an excuse for missing class.
  - c** Dan eventually understands Steve's situation, agreeing that it is probably better for him not to attend the party.
  - d** Dan suggests that Steve stay at home, because there will be another party in the frat house tomorrow.

## Understand your score:

Are you ready to study at an English-speaking institution?

### 19–24 correct answers

Congratulations! You read very well in English. You have an advanced understanding of grammar and style, an extensive vocabulary, and the ability to handle complex language and detailed reasoning. In other words, it seems you are ready to do challenging academic work in an English-speaking environment. Go out and get an official TOEFL or IELTS score to prove it!

### 10–18 correct answers

Good job! Your score indicates solid English reading skills, which however may not be quite sufficient for university-level studies at this point. To enhance your skills, try reading as much and as often as possible, preferably academic texts on a variety of topics. Continually practice using new words you encounter while speaking and writing, and review some of the most common grammar errors.

### 0–9 correct answers

Okay, let's face it: Your English is probably good enough to help you get by as a tourist, but when it comes to advanced academic reading, you still have a long way to go. If your plan is to apply to an English-speaking university, you better grab that grammar book now, subscribe to a major English newspaper such as The International New York Times, and take some extra lessons at your high school or university language center.

That's it! We hope you enjoyed our quiz.

Now it's time to find out how well you did. Scan the QR code to the left with your smartphone or visit the following website for the correct answers and explanations: [go-out.de/answers](http://go-out.de/answers)

