



**SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

# **PROFICIENCY GUIDEBOOK**

## **ATTENTION**

- Please be informed that this material only contains practical information about the English Proficiency Exam of Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University School of Foreign Languages. There are no exam samples or practice questions in the booklet.
- Consult the ILC Staff if you need help or advising about how to study and improve your language skills.



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## OVERVIEW

- ***What is the Proficiency Exam?***

It is actually called **AGE** (Assessment in General English) or **YDMS** (Yabancı Dil Muafiyet Sınavı) in Turkish. You need to pass this exam in order to begin the studies at your department. It is held four times a year: In January, June, August and September.

- ***How many times can you take the exam?***

You may take the exam as many times as you like (provided you meet the eligibility requirements) during your time at the School of Foreign Languages, but you cannot be enrolled at the school for more than two years.

- ***What level do you need to take the exam?***

In order to qualify for the exam, you must have passed the B+ level with a general score of at least 64.5 (or have passed the B level with a general score of at least 79.5) for the January and June AGE. You must have passed the A+ level with a general score of at least 64.5 to take the August AGE. In September, all students can take the AGE exam regardless of their levels and scores.

- ***What score do you need to pass?***

In order to pass the exam, you need a score of 69.5.

- ***What does AGE consist of?***

The exam is graded out of 100 points and consists of Listening (25 pts.), Reading (25 pts.), Writing (25 pts.), and Speaking (25 pts.). The length of the written part of the exam (Listening, Reading, and Writing) is around 150-160 minutes, and the Speaking Exam, which is held on one of the following days, takes about 7-10 minutes per student (students take the Speaking Exam individually). The Listening and Reading sections consist of 25 questions, each worth 1 point. Students are required to write an opinion essay in the Writing section, and there are two speaking tasks in the Speaking Exam.

- ***Can I see exam samples?***

A sample of the most up-to-date version of the AGE is accessible on the AYBU SFL website:

[https://aybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/tr/sayfa/2777/Yeni%2DÖrnek%2DYDMS%2D\(Muafiyet%2DSınavı\)](https://aybu.edu.tr/yabancidiller/tr/sayfa/2777/Yeni%2DÖrnek%2DYDMS%2D(Muafiyet%2DSınavı))

# LISTENING SECTION

## Overview of the Listening Section

- 25 Listening questions
- Each listening part will be heard twice

**Listening Section is worth 25% of the total AGE exam score.**

Appropriate to the B+ level of English according to the Common European Framework (CEFR)

## Know the Specific Purpose of the Listening Section

The AGE Listening Section is designed to test a candidate's ability to:

1. Understand the main ideas of complex speech for both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect.
2. Follow extended lectures, dialogues, and complex lines of argument if the topic is reasonably familiar.
3. Follow the essentials of lectures, talks, and reports and other forms of academic and/or professional presentation.
4. Understand most radio documentaries and most other recorded or broadcast material delivered in a standard dialect. The candidate should also be able to identify the speaker's mood, tone, attitude, etc.
5. Use a variety of strategies to achieve comprehension including listening for the gist by using contextual clues.

## Know what Skills the Listening Section Questions Focus on

- Listening for the gist
- Listening for specific information
- Listening for important details
- Listening for main ideas and supporting details
- Listening to infer meaning from the context

## Be Familiar with the Listening Section Format

- You will hear different recordings (e.g., a short talk, a conversation, or a lecture).
- Each of the recordings will be played twice.

--- Recordings will be monologues or dialogues. Possible examples include interviews, lectures, talks, reports, announcements, pre-recorded messages, documentaries, news items, speeches, telephone conversations, instructions, or advertisements.

--- Each recording is followed by questions.

--- The type of questions asked will include multiple choice, gap-filling and open-ended items.

The first part of the listening section includes gap-filling questions. You need to listen and fill in the sentences with one word or a number from the talk. The second and third parts of the section, which include multiple-choice items, necessitate listening and choosing the correct answer among the choices. The last part contains listening and note-taking to answer the questions. You are supposed to listen and take notes before you see the questions. After taking notes on provided points, you will use your notes to answer the questions.

## Scoring

The Listening Section counts for 25% of the AGE total score.

## Test-Taking Tips

You will be given a few minutes to read the questions before each recording is played. Use this time to read the questions so you have an idea what information you will need to listen for in order to be able to answer the questions.

- **Tips for gap-filling questions:**

Be aware of signals and signposts. Analyze the type of word (noun, adjective, etc.) needed in the gap. Pay particular attention to the words that come before and after the gap to help you notice when the word is spoken. Try to guess what may go in the gap - whether it is a place, name, number, or something else.

- **Tips for note-taking questions:**

Taking effective notes in lectures is an essential skill for university studies. While taking notes during listening, try to write phrases, not full sentences. Do not try to write everything you hear. Try to paraphrase and take notes in your own words. It helps you to understand and remember what you hear. Structure your notes with headings, subheadings, and numbered lists. It will be beneficial to use symbols and abbreviations. You can also use concept maps and diagrams while taking notes. Be careful about the introductory remarks, signposts, repetitions, phonological cues, and final remarks.



# READING SECTION

## Overview of the Reading Section

- Reading Passages (about 400-550 words for each passage)
- Different types of questions or tasks

--**Reading Section is worth 25% of the total AGE exam score.**

Appropriate to the B+ level of English according to the Common European Framework (CEFR)

## Know the Specific Purpose of the Reading Section

The AGE Reading Section is designed to test a candidate's ability to:

1. Identify the main points and/or detailed information to locate lacking information in the paragraphs.
2. Guess the meaning of single unknown words from the context.
3. Deduce the meaning of expressions related to a familiar topic.
4. Skim and scan the texts to find relevant facts and information.
5. Identify the referents in the texts.

## Be Familiar with the Question Types

The following types of questions may appear in the test:

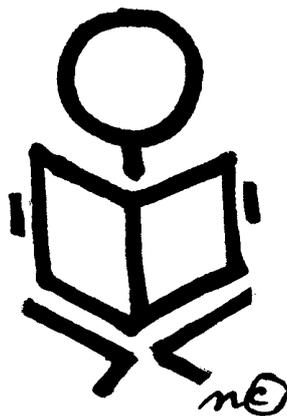
<b>Multiple Choice</b> (Can be any or all of the following)	--Grasping the main idea --Reading for details --Drawing inferences from context --Deducing the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from the context of the passage
<b>Match the Headings</b>	Matching the headings with the paragraphs
<b>True/False/Not Given</b>	Deciding if the statement is true, false or not given in the text
<b>Summary</b>	Reading for details

## Be Familiar with the Scoring

--The Reading Section counts for 25% of the total AGE exam score.

## Test-Taking Tips

- Do not worry or feel bad if a reading passage is on a topic that you are not familiar with. Stay calm and do the best you can.
- Do not spend too much time reading each passage. Remember to give yourself enough time to answer every question. It is useful to read the questions before reading the passage.
- For the Match the Heading part, first read each heading and look for keywords. It is useful to distinguish the similarities and differences between the headings. Try to read one paragraph at a time. The first and last sentences of the paragraph can give you a clue. Skimming is also an essential skill to save time while choosing the appropriate headings.
- To be successful in the **True/False/Not Given part**, you need to identify the keywords in the statements, look for similar words in the passage and evaluate whether they are synonyms or antonyms. Do not try to decide based on your previous knowledge of the topic; answer the questions only according to the information given in the text. Be aware of the words such as few, never, some, many, all, always, which can change the meaning of the sentence.



## WRITING SECTION

There is one part in the Writing section, and it is worth 25 points or 25% of the total AGE score.

### Independent Writing – Essay (25 points)

The task in the Writing section is worth 25 points. For this task, you are required to write an **opinion essay** of 250-300 words about a topic. You will have several topics to choose from. Here is an example of the Writing part of the exam:

**Task I:** Choose **ONE** of the topics below and write an opinion essay of 250-350 words on the topic. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.

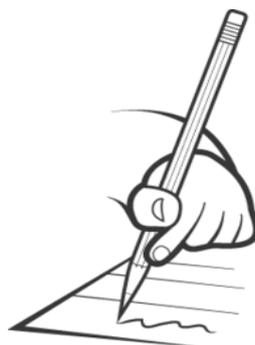
- All people should switch to using the alternative energy sources.
- OR--
- Social media has destroyed communication among friends and family.
- OR--
- Students' textbooks should be replaced by notebook computers.

### What the Examiner Looks for in the Opinion Essay:

1. Each part of the topic is answered and supported with clear and appropriate examples and/or details.
2. Every part of the essay is on topic and fully supports the student's opinion.
3. There is a clear connection between the supporting ideas between the supporting ideas in paragraphs.
4. Ideas in the essay are unified and logical.
5. The student's written word choice and language is clear, and the writer uses a variety of lexical items (words) that are suitable to the writing task, as well as a range of grammatical structures.
6. The essay is well organized, in that it has an introduction paragraph with a thesis statement, supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion paragraph.

## Important Points to Consider While Writing:

- **Read the instructions carefully** and write down the ideas that come to your mind as keywords. Make a quick, short outline.
- Make sure your writing is precise and to the point. **Do not repeat your ideas** or write the same point twice. Take out any sentences that are not connected to the whole paragraph.
- Use connectors, transitions, and linkers to make your writing clear and understandable.
- **IMPORTANT! Make sure your writing is on topic!** A well-written paragraph or essay that is **off-topic will result in a score of zero (0)**.
- Use the last 10 minutes of your time to proofread what you have written. In other words, read over the essay and make sure you have not made mistakes. Correct any errors you find. Pay special attention to subject/verb agreement and verb tenses.
- Make sure to give your essay a title.



## How to Prepare for the Writing Section

1. Predict possible writing topics based on your course objectives and course outline.
2. Practice writing with time constraints before the exam. In other words, set an alarm for the same amount of time that you will have during the Writing Session in the actual AGE exam. Practice writing essays by “pretending” you are taking the real exam. Stop writing when the alarm goes off. How did you do? Were you able to finish the task? Were you able to proofread before the time was up? Is the quality of your writing high? (What score do you think your teacher would give you if this were a class assignment?)
3. Brainstorm. Start with an outline. Do not start writing immediately. Take a few minutes to write down your ideas on each topic and choose the one you know best. Planning before writing will make your essay more organized and concise.
4. Finally, save a few minutes to proofread your essay.

## AGE SPEAKING EXAM PROCEDURE



- Two instructors will conduct the speaking exam. Both instructors are responsible for grading the students.
- Each student takes the exam individually. Each student will have a different topic to talk about. The exam will be video recorded for future reference. You will be asked if you agree to be recorded or not before the exam session begins.
- The score of the speaking exam is 25 out of 100 points.
- In the first part, you will answer three questions. You will begin responding immediately after the instructor asks each question. You will have no preparation time for these questions and two-three minutes to respond to them.
- In the second part, you will be given a topic (you will read the topic) and will be asked to give your opinion on it. While speaking, you are expected to provide valid details. You will brainstorm your topic for one minute and take notes, after which you will have three-four minutes to speak.
- **Task Requirement:** You are expected to provide *examples/reasons/details* for your opinions using language structures that are appropriate to the intermediate and/or upper-intermediate level(s) (grammar, vocabulary, linkers, functional structures, etc.)

## Example:

### TOPIC: ANIMALS

#### TASK 1: Responding to questions (10 points)

1. Why do you think people own pets? Explain briefly.
2. If you would like to have a pet, which one would you prefer - a cat or a dog?  
Explain why.
3. If you were a parent, would you let your child have a pet?

#### TASK 2: Expressing an Opinion (15 points)

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Give specific details and examples to support your answer.

***“Animals should NOT be used for medical purposes / treatments”.***

## Tips

- This is your chance to show how well you can speak. Don't be shy!
- Make sure you feel comfortable in your chair. Be yourself!
- Speak loudly and clearly. Smile and relax!
- If you don't understand something, say so. Say, "Sorry, I don't understand." Or ask, "Can you say that again, please?" Don't try to talk about something that you don't understand (giving off-topic speaking answers results in low scores).
- If you forget how to say something, try to think of a different way of saying it.

# Resources Available at the ILC (Independent Learning Center)

## Materials that you can keep and take home:

### 1. IDEAS FOR LEARNING PAMPHLETS

Websites and ideas for practicing various language skills are listed inside pamphlets that can be found in the two “Ideas for Learning” racks on the wall (see the LTC main hall entrance). The PDF versions of these pamphlets are accessible in the AYBUZEM ILC Class.

### 2. GUIDEBOOKS

The ILC currently offers several guidebooks, including the Proficiency (AGE) Guidebook, Writing Guidebook, and basic “survival” type of guidebooks in several second languages such as Chinese, Russian, and Italian. These materials are free. The PDF versions of these guidebooks are accessible in the AYBUZEM ILC Class.



KEEP  
CALM  
AND  
ENJOY  
YOUR EXAM

# IMPORTANT

## DON'T FORGET!

Any student wishing to take the AGE exam must register for it. Check the school website two-three weeks before the exam to make sure you do not miss the registration deadline. More information will be announced before the exam takes place.

## SPECIAL THANKS TO

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YOU WANT TO IMPROVE YOUR ENGLISH IN A FUN,  
STRESS-FREE ENVIRONMENT?

**THE ILC IS THE RIGHT PLACE FOR YOU!**



**We are social!**

**ILC**



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