
Proficiency in Language Skills and Skill Areas to Score Marks in Versant English Test (VET):

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ABSTRACT:

Novice applicants and some candidates try to avoid companies that require Versant English Test as part of the recruitment process for fear of failing the test. Inability to follow a simple instruction may result in failing the test leads to non-selection of placement. This study focuses on proficiency in the four language skills (LSRW) and mastering four skill areas to achieve excellent scores in VET and to gain placement.

Keywords: *Language Skills, LSRW, Versant English Test (VET), Spoken English Tests (SET), etc.*

INTRODUCTION:

Versant English Test (VET) is the system automated test conducted as a part of recruitment process. It is a reliable, practical test of all four skills and it is beneficial in measuring the spoken and written communication skills in business settings. Candidates aspiring for good job placement require finer proficiency in Language Skills (LSRW) and focusing on four skill areas will aid them to attain excellent marks in Versant English Test. To learn a language and to communicate with others the four language skills are essential at any environment in our lives.

VERSANT ENGLISH TEST (VET)

Versant tests are fully automated tests of spoken language to assess the spoken language skills of non-native speakers. The Versant English Test is formerly known as the Spoken English Tests (SET) that may be taken at any time from any location administered by a telephone or a computer. The Versant English Test has six item types: Reading Aloud, Repeat, Short Answer Questions, Sentence Builds, Story Retelling, and Open Questions.

The Versant English Test can be taken on a computer or by a phone in approximately 8-10 minutes. To start the test, the participant needs to enter Test Identification Number (TIN) in the box on computer screen or in the phone. Finally, completes the audio volume check and microphone check before the test starts.

Throughout the test, test takers listen to recorded item prompts read by a variety of native speakers. The delivery of the recorded item prompts is interactive – the system detects when the candidate has finished responding to one item and then presents the next item. The administrator retrieves scores online within minutes.

Different companies such as Call Centers, Customer Service, Technical Support, Sales, Cashiers/Clerks, Receptionists, etc require Versant, a completely automated test of spoken English as part of the recruitment process to test applicant's English oral language proficiency. It is also most widely used by academic institutions, corporations, and government agencies throughout the world to test applicant's and employees' language skills, to evaluate the ability to understand spoken English and to express themselves clearly and appropriately in English.

Versant English Test is delivered automatically by the Versant testing system, the test can be taken at any time, from any location by phone or via computer. A human examiner is not required. The computerized

scoring allows for immediate, objective, and reliable results that correspond well with traditional measures of spoken English performance.

As a result, Versant English Test can be used to identify the right candidate for the job from a large pool of applicants, by testing spoken language proficiency and create thresholds appropriate for a successful work scenario.

LANGUAGE SKILLS (LSRW)

The Versant English Test measures the Oral Language Proficiency of non-native English speaking candidates. It mainly aims at testing and evaluating proficiency in four major skills of English Language. They are:

- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing

LISTENING:

Listening is major component of four language skills. Listening is the fundamental skill and the best way to strengthen language learning. Being receptive skill, it is most tested and expected skill in the recruitment process. In the process of getting accustomed to a language, people need to understand simple everyday conversational speech and identify the general messages when it is spoken clearly.

Listening skill can be learned and acquired but it only requires constant attention and observation to the surroundings and serious practice. In workplace candidates aspiring to master over listening skill need to understand the straightforward factual information about job-related topics, identifying specific details clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent.

Good command over listening to conversations likely to be encountered in social, professional, or academic life enhances a smooth flow of rich communication. Poor listening may cause either wrong assumptions or misunderstanding in the workplace. To avoid this problem candidates have to pay keen attention to detail and figure out the main points from extended discussion clearly articulated in standard dialect from one's surroundings.

One of the most integral parts of the exam is to listen very closely to the voice recording that a machine will produce. To score good marks in VET, the applicants really need to open your ears about it and need to comprehend the information from the content of recorded or broadcasted audio material on topics of personal interest delivered in clear standard speech. One can practice listening by watching English Movies trying to hear each words correctly and understand what they are saying.

SPEAKING:

One of the best strategies to develop and hone speaking skill is to practice speaking English in front of the mirror. While practicing, try to speak loud and clear; give a short pause in commas. This method can also boost your confidence on speaking on a phone during the test. Be natural in speaking and pronouncing the words. Never fake your accent unless you're really comfortable with different accents.

When the machine produces a range of meaningful sentences, candidates is expected to repeat the content by speaking with adequate rhythm but with some inappropriate phrasing and pausing, and to produce many vowels and consonants in a clear manner.

Candidates attempting to pass the test should follow clearly articulated speech and communicate with confidence on familiar routine and non-routine matters related to his/her interests and professional field. Try to avoid very idiomatic usage and articulate clearly.

READING:

Reading though seen as passive skill contributes to the growth and development of another major skill writing. Most of the candidates find trouble with reading because they struggles to recognize letters, match letters to sounds and blend sounds into speech. Therefore, they have difficulty in pronouncing words. Developing strong reading skill will be helpful in one's career in future.

One part of the test will test the ability of applicants to read English sentences. The reason is that reading with the mind is different from reading aloud. Candidate reads, understands and responds to simple written texts, but has difficulty dealing with more complex texts. To overcome this problem, try reading out loud with correct articulation and pronunciation. Look up the dictionary for correct pronunciation and practice reading out loud smoothly and naturally in a clear voice.

WRITING:

The applicants strongly require language skill to write clearly, connected texts on a variety of subjects using a sufficient range of grammatical structures and a good range of common English words. Versant English Test assesses basic knowledge and skills in usage and mechanics of language (e.g. punctuation, basic grammar and usage, and sentence structure). Practice all the essential elements of grammar to have power over the writing skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a typical entry-level in the recruitment process or in training.

Developing Writing Skill at own pace will decide and design bright career for young applicants. Here are some simple steps to improve your written English and impress people with your writing skills.

Having a bank of a good active vocabulary helps you to express clearly. Try learning new words with example sentences to bolster your writing skill.

Incorrect spelling changes the meaning of your sentence and makes it difficult for the reader to understand what you've written. Know how to spell the words correctly.

We can learn to write best by reading. Read books or articles with topics of your interest to make sure you understand how to use new words and expressions in the text. It is a great way to get an idea of the different styles of writing and see how to use words appropriately.

To improve the quality of your writing, it is important to keep track of grammar. Always proof-read your writing twice. Always use the appropriate tense and remember to use punctuation. Punctuation is a great way to make your writing clear and fluent.

SKILL AREAS

The Ordinate testing system uses speech processing technology to assess applicants under 4 diagnostic categories. Focusing on the four major skill areas is the key to score marks in Versant English Test. They are:

- Fluency
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Sentence Mastery

FLUENCY:

Most of the people confuse fluency with speed reading. Fluency reflects the rhythm, phrasing and timing evident in constructing, reading and repeating sentences. Frequent obvious pauses could result in an irregular speech rate and some disconnected phrases. Practice speaking with a person who is really good at conversing in English to correct your pronunciation and grammatical errors in your speech. Boosting your confidence about speaking in English will help you to communicate fluently.

PRONUNCIATION:

Pronunciation is mostly intelligible. Pronunciation reflects the ability to produce consonants, vowels and stress in a native-like manner in sentence context. Stress may be placed incorrectly in some words, or stress placement may be ambiguous, but the candidates will need to adjust to the accent. However, the performance depends on knowledge of the phonological structure of everyday words.

Candidates consistently need to focus on developing a clear pronunciation and intonation to handle many utterances using a variety of words and structures, to follow and sometimes participate in a native-paced conversation.

VOCABULARY:

VET also tests how wide your vocabulary is, so it is a good thing to have a big bank of words. Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations. Even lexical limitations cause repetition and even difficulty with formulation at times. Mastery over language with sufficient vocabulary helps to express without some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.

Vocabulary reflects the ability to understand common everyday words spoken in sentence context and to produce such words as needed. Performance depends on familiarity with the form and meaning of everyday words and their use in connected speech.

In general, the language structures used in the test reflect those that are common in everyday English. To make comprehensibly sensible speech expand your repertoire of vocabulary items and broaden your range of stock phrases to gain good score in the job placement and training.

SENTENCE MASTERY:

Sentence Mastery reflects the ability to understand, recall and produce English phrases and clauses in complete sentences. Candidates require the ability to understand texts using a variety of words and structures, and given enough time can produce written texts for general purposes. Writing contains errors or inappropriate word choice, but the message is clear to a sympathetic reader. Performance depends purely on accurate syntactic processing and appropriate usage of words, phrases and clauses in meaningful sentence structures.

Candidates should be able to understand, recall and produce many English phrases and clauses in sentence context. Candidates should produce a range of meaningful sentences. Practice using a variety of linking words efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.

Having consistent grammatical and phonological control of a wide range of complex language, including controlled and appropriate use of connectors and other cohesive devices direct the way to high degree of accuracy and make your language error free.

THINGS TO AVOID IN VERSANT ENGLISH TEST (VET):

-) Avoid speaking in a low voice.
-) Avoid gap fillers such as "uhm" and "ahh"
-) Avoid dead air.
-) Avoid stuttering. Don't stammer. Never eat words.
-) Do not leave a blank space or much pause to search for expressions to articulate less familiar words.
-) Try to avoid taking notes or writing during the test.
-) Avoid taking test in open space which brings all kinds of distractions.
-) Avoid reading or speaking in a monotonic way, kill it with intonation.

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-) Avoid taking call over the loudspeaker. Pick up the receiver and talk. On loud speaker, recording will not be clear and you will lose marks.
 -) Never try to fake your accent or imitate the voice, but just speak your normal English to sound good with a fresh energetic tone.
 -) Don't wear an unusual articulation while speaking and pronouncing the words.
 -) Don't get struck when it comes to actual call, practice language skills before you start taking the call.
 -) Never get struck at the middle of the call, even if you miss something, don't panic and don't let that affect the next question.
 -) Never keep your mobile or any other electronic devices near while the test is on.
 -) Don't confuse fluency with speed. Rather, read normally to sound pleasant.
 -) Avoid using a cordless phone, cellular phone, or VoIP phone (e.g., Skype™).
 -) Never hold the phone closer to your mouth. Neither too low, nor too far away. Just hold it in front of your mouth.

DRAWBACKS IN VERSANT ROUND:

The versant testing system uses speech processing technology to measure speaking and listening skills. This system was built to handle the different rhythms and varied pronunciations used by native and non-native English speakers. A variety of voices and native-speaker accents used in the test may cause confusion for non-native speakers of English Language.

The test is delivered over the telephone or on a computer and is scored by computer using pre-determined data-driven algorithms. Hence, the credibility of a machine pretending to understand or to access human speech is inadequacy in VET.

Since VET does not engage in the grammatical accuracy of the speaker, "I was ready for the exam now." is something acceptable to Versant.

The difficulty mostly faced by the applicants is that they can hear the audio only once. Thereafter, they have to read, write and listen all at the same time.

The testing system is able to generate scores based on the words used in the spoken responses, as well as the pace, fluency, and pronunciation of those words in phrases and sentences. But, the overall scores show effective separation between the performance of native and non-native applicants.

CONCLUSION:

Assessment of spoken English for any role requires communications. As the leading test of spoken and written English, Versant English Test reasonably measures the ability of candidates to understand and communicate clearly in English. In order to actively participate in conversations, candidates should practice language skills by making simple statements on a wide range of general, academic, vocational, or leisure topics related to his/her field of interest, using some simple structures correctly to make himself/herself understood in very short utterances and endeavor to practice communicating spontaneously with good grammatical control and also adopting a level of formality appropriate to the circumstances.

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