

# Enhancing Reading Skills through Business English Certificate (BEC) Program at Preliminary Level

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**Abstract:** *Academic Skills like Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing are extremely important for successful career. However, of all the four skills, Reading skills are often restricted to text book reading and classroom notes. Apart from classroom learning, there are different competitive examinations like TOEFL, GMAT, SAT, BEC etc. that give much prominence to effective Reading. This paper discusses the importance of acquiring mastery in Reading skills through Business English Certificate (BEC) Program at Preliminary Level.*

**Keywords:** Reading Skills, Business English Certificate (BEC) Program, Competitive Examinations, International Recognition, Preliminary Level

## 1. Introduction

LSRW skills became extremely important for effective communication. However, all these skills are not given equal prominence. Despite the importance of these skills for academic success, professors seldom teach them (Bean, 1996). They generally take them for granted; as they tend to presuppose that all students already acquired these skills either as part of their secondary education or elsewhere in college (Erickson, Peters, & Strommer, 2006). The research shows that all the four skills play a vital role in building professional career in this globalised era. Apart from classroom learning, the students can opt for different competitive examinations to improve and test their English language skills. One among them is BEC program.

Business English Certificate (BEC) is designed by the University of Cambridge ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) to assess business English proficiency for work. It is an internationally recognized requirement by many professional organizations, educational institutions, employers, ministries, government bodies. It has three levels – Preliminary, Vantage and Higher level. Every level tests LSRW skills and grading will be given from poor to excellent based on the candidate's performance. The present paper focuses its attention on improving Reading skills through BEC program at Preliminary level.

## 2. Reading Skills at Preliminary Level

Reading is a cognitive process and mastery of this skill is necessary for overall professional development. Different techniques like skimming, scanning, extensive and intensive reading are identified by different researchers. BEC at the Preliminary level tests the learner's reading skills by exposing him/her to seven different tasks.

**Task 1:** It emphasises on short notices, messages, emails, advertisements, internet news bulletin, an instruction, a warning, a business card, phone messages etc.

The learner deals with 5 multiple choice questions.

Eg:

<i>Faculty required</i> Training offered to qualified applicants Needed: experience
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Aspirant should possess

- Recognized training
- Required qualification
- Relevant experience

**Task 2:** The learner is given a text followed by 5 questions. He should match each question with different options from A–H. More options are provided to distract the attention of the learner. This task mainly focuses on various texts like the items in a catalogue, contents page in a directory, different departments in a shop etc. The learner is required to interpret the meaning of different parts of a text.

Eg:

A. Meeting legal requirements B. Funding agencies C. Market Research D. Final auditing E. Cleaning fluid F. Bank Locker G. Calculating costs H. Well trained staff
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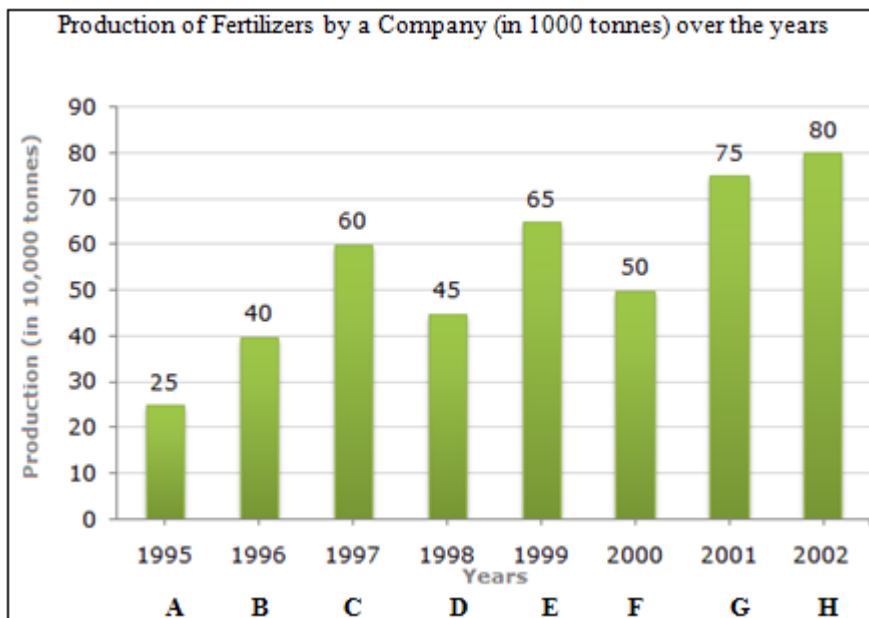
- Raj went to SBI bank to put the jewellery
- During breakfast, Anna spilled the milk on the floor
- Bani wanted her costumers to get prompt attention without any delay
- Palema's business requires a lot of funding
- The launch of the product will be scheduled based on the customer needs

**Task 3:** The learner is required to interpret visual information. This task mainly focuses on understanding and analysing various trends and changes either in sales, profit, loss, growth of any business. The learner needs to make a detailed study of a given graph, pie or bar chart etc.

Eg: Study the bar chart. It gives the details of production of fertilizer's by a company.

For each question, mark one letter (A –H)

Do not use any letter more than once.



- In this year there was 33% decline in the production of fertilizers.
- In which year was the percentage increase in production as compared to the previous year the maximum?
- There was 220% increase in production of fertilizers compared to that in 1995.
- The year that has showed an average production of fertilizers.
- There was 44.4% increase in production compared to previous year

**Task 4:** The learner has to read a text and answer seven questions that decide whether the given statements are right, wrong and don't say anything. This tests the learner's ability to pick out specific information.

**Letter of application**

I would like to apply for the post of Personnel Officer with Anglia Bank, as advertised in the Daily News on 10 October.

I have a BA in French from the University of London. I am following a part-time course in Personnel Management at the Oxford College of Management, and I hope to pass the Diploma in Personnel Management at the end of December.

When I left university, I worked for a year in a computer company near Cambridge. Then I moved back to London to work as a French teacher in a large school, where I stayed for two years. During this time, I did some part-time work as a language trainer with factory managers, which I very much enjoyed.

Three years ago, I joined Carter's Bank, where for the past year I have worked as Assistant Personnel Officer, dealing mainly with complaints from members of staff.

Having worked in a similar organisation to yours, I feel I am fully prepared for the challenges of this job.

Yours faithfully,  
Britney Goddard

- While Ms. Goddard was a school teacher, she also taught company executives.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- Ms. Goddard thinks she would be suitable for the job because of her previous experience.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- She worked as a computer operator after university.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- Ms. Goddard is applying for the job with the Daily News.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- In her present job, she has responsibility for internal personnel problems.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- She obtained a Diploma in Personnel Management in December.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say
- She enjoys working at Carter's Bank.  
a. Right b. Wrong c. Doesn't say

**Task 5:** Multiple choice questions are given to test the learner's ability in skimming, scanning, reading for the gist and specific information.

**Consumers using their credit cards again**

Consumers went back to using their credit cards in March to keep spending while student and new-car loans shot up as the value of outstanding consumer credit jumped at the

fastest rate since late 2001, data from the Federal Reserve showed on Monday.

Total consumer credit grew by \$21.36 billion - more than twice the \$9.8 billion rise that Wall Street economists surveyed by Reuters had forecast. That followed a revised \$9.27 billion increase in outstanding credit in February.

Analysts expressed some reservations whether the data reliably signaled a real pickup in demand, something that would normally fuel stronger growth, or just a need to rely more on credit in an economy generating anemic job growth.

"The optimistic read is that consumers' improved outlook on the economy and employment prospects led them to feel comfortable spending on credit, while a more downbeat interpretation is that credit is needed for consumers to keep up," Nomura Global Economics said in a note afterward.

The March rise in consumer credit was the strongest for any month since November 2001 when it soared by \$28 billion. That was shortly after the September 11, 2001 attacks when big automakers were offering zero-percent financing and other incentives to lure consumers back to their showrooms.

New-car sales and production were a key influence on the 2.2 percent annual rate of economic growth posted during the first three months this year. The government estimated that about half of that growth came from increased new car production.

(<http://www.businessenglishsite.com/readingcomprehension/business-english-reading-comprehension10.html>)

1. According to the article, the growth in consumer credit in March was \_\_\_\_\_ economists had predicted.

- about the same as  slightly lower than  twice as much as

2. By using the word "anemic", the article wants to say that the current job growth numbers are \_\_\_\_\_.

- average  poor  impressive

3. According to the article, does the increase in consumer credit mean that the economy is improving?

- Not necessarily  Yes  No, just the opposite

4. How long had it been since the consumer credit numbers increased so much in one month?

- A year  Over 10 years  About three years

5. According to the article, what played an important part in the economic growth at the beginning of this year (2012)?

- A record-breaking drop in unemployment  A decrease in tax rates

- New car production and sales

**Task 6:** This part mainly tests the learner's knowledge of vocabulary, prepositions, grammar, pronouns, link words etc.

ASSISTANT TO PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER  
Business Press is the world's most respected publisher of business news. PR and publicity play (1)..... essential part in ensuring our continued (2)..... and this is an outstanding opportunity that (3)..... also be the start of a career (4)..... Public Relations.

(5)..... directly to our PR Manager, you will run her office and learn quickly to do just about everything. Filing documents, taking calls (6)..... journalists and answering their questions are all included in (7)..... . You will help to organize events and visits, prepare reports (8)..... month and generally help to run an efficient press office.

The perfect candidate will have a (9)..... standard of education, strong communication skills and an excellent telephone (10)..... . Professional secretarial qualifications are an advantage. A minimum of two years' experience, (11)..... should be within a busy office, is essential. You will be confident, have a smart professional appearance and be in a hurry to '(12)..... things done'.

Exam Skills and Exam Practice (CUP, 2006)

1	A. An	B. each	C. the
2	A. gain	B. success	C. increase
3	A. must	B. ought	C. could
4	A. by	B. with	C. in
5	A. Reporting	B. Reported	C. Report
6	A. For	B. from	C. about
7	A. this	B. them	C. those
8	A. every	B. some	C. any
9	A. deep	B. wide	C. high
10	A. manner	B. attitude	C. approach
11	A. where	B. what	C. which
12	A. make	B. get	C. do

**Task 7:** The learner is given two texts such as memos, emails or advertisements etc. the main task is to fill in with information taken from the texts.

**MEMO**

To: Tony Petrakakos  
From: Amira Ahmed

Tony,  
I saw this training course advertised in 'Management Today'. I think it would be just the thing for Helen Kadera in Sales. See if you can get her to fill in a training request form and apply for a bit of funding. She needs to send it to Ruth Uden in the personnel department. Don't let her go until after April though, as we're going to be very busy until the end of the financial year.

Amira

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Price: Individual: £ 140.00 Corporate group rate: £ 110 per person

Exam Skills and Exam Practice (CUP, 2006)

#### TRAINING REQUEST FORM

For the attention of: **1.**-----

Training requested for: **2.**-----

Trainee's department: **3.**-----

Dates: **4.** -----

Cost (excluding travel): **5.** -----

### 3. Conclusion

Business English Certificate Program helps a learner to develop professional reading skills. The learner focuses on different components like monitoring comprehension, predicting meanings, vocabulary development, skimming and scanning. All the tasks allow the learner to become an efficient reader.

### References

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