

The following represents a sample of the sorts of questions asked in the English Selective Eligibility Test. The sample does not represent all of the question types used in recent years but should provide an idea about the level of difficulty and the way the questions are laid out.

Sample 1: Punctuation – a series of sentences in which common punctuation is missing. Candidates choose from five options to indicate which punctuation mark is required.

Example:

Group A was pleased with its work group B was less so.

- A. apostrophe
- B. exclamation mark
- C. comma
- D. semi-colon
- E. speech marks

The answer is D as a semi-colon is sometimes used to link two independent clauses in a sentence.

Sample 2: Spelling – a sentence with a gap in it along with five spellings of the missing word is presented. Candidates choose which spelling for the missing word is correct.

Example:

The child's _____ from school was having a detrimental effect on his performance.

- A. absence
- B. abscence
- C. absince
- D. absents
- E. absance

The answer is A, because the other spellings are all incorrect

Sample 3: A definition of a word is given and candidates choose the correct word that matches the definition.

Example:

Definition – to make something clear

- A. to bedazzle
- B. to infer
- C. to confuse
- D. to eradicate
- E. to clarify

The answer is E, because clarify means to make something clear

Sample 4: A sentence contains a word that is highlighted in bold and candidates have to choose the closest synonym to the word from a list of five.

Example:

“Stop being so **obtuse**.”

- A. dull
- B. annoying
- C. angular
- D. dim-witted
- E. calm

The answer is D as the closest synonym to “obtuse” is dim-witted

Sample 5: A sentence contains a word that is underlined and candidates are asked to identify which part of speech the word comes from.

Example:

Her spelling was, alas, riddled with errors.

- A. adjective
- B. preposition
- C. interjection
- D. conjunction
- E. adverb

The answer is C because the word “alas” is an interjection

Sample 6: A group of words contains one word, which does not fit with the other four. Candidates identify which word is the odd one out.

Example:

- A. exciting
- B. dynamic
- C. illuminating
- D. entice
- E. stupendous

The answer is D, because D is a verb and the others are all adjectives

Sample 7: Candidates read a text from which several words have been removed. For each gap in the text, they select the most appropriate word from a set of five words and write the corresponding letter.

Example: Read the following text entitled “Signs that a Civilisation is ending” and decide which word or phrase for each gap would be most appropriate.

Luke Kemp is a __ [1] __ based at the Centre for the Study of Societal Risk at the University of Cambridge. He __ [2] __ the lifespans of nearly 100 historic global __ [3] __ from Egypt to the Byzantine Empire.

The average __ [4] __ was 336 years, and they all displayed common conditions when __ [5] __ drew near. Today, he warns, many of those signs are flashing red – but being __ [6] __ by the media and the public.

1.

- A. student
- B. research
- C. DJ
- D. researcher
- E. teacher

The answer is D, because although some of the others are possible, the most appropriate answer is “researcher”. B is wrong because it is the wrong form of the word.

2.

- A. counted
- B. designed
- C. analysed
- D. will compare
- E. likes

The answer is C. D does not fit because the tense is wrong.

3.

- A. civilisations
- B. countries
- C. companies
- D. republics
- E. holiday destinations

The answer is A as it fits most appropriately into the rest of the text.

4.

- A. age
- B. lifespan
- C. period
- D. era
- E. eon

The answer is B. It refers back to the sentence in the previous paragraph.

5.

- A. end
- B. disasters
- C. evening
- D. collapse
- E. alliances

The answer is D; the text is about civilisations ending and so “collapse” fits most appropriately in this gap.

6.

- A. ignoring
- B. exaggerated
- C. ignored
- D. written
- E. reported

The answer is C; although the warning signs are there, people are ignoring them. Sometimes the possible answers do not work because they are grammatically incorrect (e.g. A)
