

Exam Practice and Techniques

Unit 2: Practical Skills

Aims

- To raise students' awareness of exam techniques
- To give students an opportunity to practise exam techniques in a non-exam environment
- To provide an opportunity to build students' confidence with relation to the practical skills exam
- To give students an opportunity to practise new skills under exam conditions

Materials

- EPT2.1. Student's File Practical Skills Word Web
- EPT2.2.a. Student's File How's your maths?
- EPT2.2.b. Student's File Which question first?
- EPT2.3. Student's File Reading for the Practical Skills exam.
- Texts 1 and 2
- EPT2.4. Student's File Reading for the Practical Skills exam
- Text 3
- EPT2.5. Student's File Writing in Style
- EPT2.6. Student's File The good, the okay and the not so good.
- EPT2.7. Teacher's Resource Kit Sentences for IEC Examination Unit
- Practical Skills exam paper Marking Scheme

Lesson Agenda

- Activate students' background knowledge of the practical skills exam
- Look at exam techniques/skills with relation to the practical skills exam
- Practise the skills under non-exam conditions
- Practise the skills under exam conditions
- Students provide feedback on how well they think they have done and whether they tried any new techniques.

Procedure

1. Tell the students they are going to do some work on the Practical Skills exam. Write the title up in the centre of the board. Refer students to EPT 2.1., a blank page with PRACTICAL SKILLS printed on it. Tell them they have a few minutes to build up a word web using *Practical Skills* as a base.

The students should be familiar with this technique by now.

2. After a few minutes tell the students to compare their word webs with the person next to them or in small groups of four or five. Give them another couple of minutes to do this and then ask for feedback. Write up students' suggestions on the board to build up a class web. Suggest to students that they should add to their own webs anything they think is useful.

It is quite possible that you will get a lot of negative type comments:

"Very difficult", "not enough time", "too much to read", "difficult vocabulary", etc.

The aim is to try to reduce the negative attitude your students may have towards practical skills and boost their confidence.

3. If you have not got this information on the board from your word web, ask the following questions.
 - A) How long is the practical skills paper?
 - B) How many tasks do you need to do?
 - C) Do you have a choice of questions?
 - D) Do all the questions carry the same marks?
 - E) How many texts are there in the data file?

You should know the answers, BUT:

- A) *The exam in its present state lasts for 1 3/4 hours (105 minutes)*
- B) *There are three tasks to complete.*
- C) *No, you don't have a choice of questions. You must answer them all, but you can do them in any order you like.*
- D) *No, usually the writing task – letter or report – carries the highest marks. Tasks that simply require data transfer, filling in tables, etc., carry fewer marks. The total is usually about 100 marks.*
- E) *Lots! Far too many to read in detail and usually at least one text that has nothing to do with any of the tasks. It is a distractor.*

4. You should now have a good deal of information on the exam and what your students think about it. The next stage is to look at the basic exam skills that they need to be able to complete the exam.

Ask if any of the students study maths. You are bound to have one or two. If not then see if you have any scientists or accountants or economists. Tell them that you have a very difficult mathematical problem for them to solve.

Write up $105 - 50 = ?$ Answer is 55

Then write $55 - 30 = ?$ Answer is 25

Then write $25 - 20 = ?$ Answer is 5

Tell them they have just worked out how many minutes they should spend on the tasks for an average practical skills exam. They have five minutes left over to check their work.

5. Ask them to look at the first part of EPT 2.2. It contains a series of marks that have been allocated for the tasks in practical skills examinations. Ask the students to work out how long they should spend on each question. A simple subtraction may not be suitable each time.

EPT 2.2.a. How's your maths? Time = 105 minutes.

1996 Paper E

Task 1 54 Marks How long? = 53

Task 2 25 Marks How long? = 24

Task 3 23 Marks How long? = 23

1994 Paper E

Task 1 27 Marks How long? = 28

Task 2 47 Marks How long? = 50

Task 3 21 Marks How long? = 22

1995 Paper E

Task 1 41 Marks How long? = 45

Task 2 20 Marks How long? = 22

Task 3 30 Marks How long? = 33

1993 Paper E

Task 1 49 Marks How long? = 54

Task 2 18 Marks How long? = 20

Task 3 24 Marks How long? = 26

These times are approximate, but the proportions should be right. If half the marks are available for a task then students should be encouraged to take half, but only half, of the exam time on it!

6. The next thing students need to decide is what order to do the questions in. Ask them to look at EPT 2.2.b. again and decide, just by looking at the marks allocated to each question which order they would have done the questions in for each year.

Once they have done this individually, get them to check with their partners or groups.

There are two schools of thought on the order question. One says that you should do the easiest question first. This is usually the one with the least marks available. This is because you can guarantee finishing it quickly and have marks in the bag. The other school says that you should do the hardest, the one with the most marks first. The reasoning here is that you are more likely to pick up marks quickly if there are lots to get.

Obviously the only clear message coming out is: don't do the middle task first.

See what the consensus of opinion of the class is. My opinion would be that if there is a table to complete then I would do that first, making sure that I didn't spend more than the allotted time for it.

7. As regards the skills for this exam, ask the students what skills they need for this exam.

Write up their answers on the board.

They should at least come up with "READING" and "WRITING".

Ask them what they have to read. Again write up any answers they give you.

What they actually have to read is: the instructions, the questions, the tasks, the texts, their answers.

Reading. The sub-skills they will need are: skimming — reading for general understanding, scanning — looking for particular words, numbers, names, etc., and intensive reading — reading to fully understand something. They will also need proofreading skills.

Writing. The types of writing they will be expected to produce are: short reports, formal letters, letters to the editor of a newspaper, memos, completing notes, writing numbers, etc.

This is not meant to frighten the students, but make them aware of what they need to be able to do.

8. The next stage will be to do a little practice using these skills. Refer students to EPT 2.3 and EPT 2.4. There are three different types of text.

You are going to ask the questions for the students to answer. They are:

For text one What is the passage about? *A girl who stopped growing when she was two years old and has just started to grow again at the age of 17.*

How many numbers are mentioned in the article? What are they? *15 numbers. They are 17, first, 15, two years, 65, 4.4, 1980, 57, 3.5, three, two centimetres, 400, 67, 4.8. You could accept 14 numbers as two is repeated, you could classify 'a' as a number - one.*

- For text two Where are millions of people struggling? Why? *Nuijuan, Ningxia. They are struggling to get out of poverty.*
- Who was Brigitte Bardot once married to? Jacques Charrier.
- Who could get some money on page 6? *Hong Kong Schools that show great improvement.*
- For text three How many countries have the dollar as their currency? Seven
- What is the buying rate of the Portuguese Escudo? 0.47
- What is the selling rate of the Finnish Markka? 1.710
- What is the currency of Saudi Arabia? Riyal
- If you want to buy 100 New Zealand Dollars, how many Hong Kong dollars will you need? *You will need \$547.30 because the bank is selling you the money at their selling rate.*

You could do this in a number of ways:

- a) A reading race in teams, with students calling out the answers, or running up to write them on the board.
- b) An individual race, with answers being called from the floor.
- c) As a group competition with groups bringing up answers once all questions have been asked.
- d) A simple question and answer session.

The emphasis should be on students reading quickly though.

9. We have now looked at the main reading skills needed for the practical skills exam. We have already looked at the type of writing that they have to do, so now it is time to look at this in a little more detail.

The standard type of text that the students are asked to write is a letter. Although they have a different intended audience, ie the editor of a newspaper, a group of concerned citizens, and so on, they are all formal in style. With this in mind we need to do a bit of work on the conventions of formal letters.

Refer the students to EPT 2.5. task 1. The students need to decide which of the extracts could be from a formal letter and which from an informal letter.

Fairly obvious which is which. *Formal - A, C, E, H, I*
 Informal - B, F, G
 Both - D

D could be either and we would need more of the letter to decide accurately.

- 10 Task 2 looks at the starts and finishes which you might use in a letter. Again ask the students to decide which would be for a formal letter and which for an informal one.

Formal A,D,E,G,I,J

Informal B,C,F,H

Matches A-D,B-C,E-I,G-J,F-H

You can rearrange the informal ones if you want, but I doubt anyone writing to their mother would sign off "Your loving Kitten"!

Often letters to the editor of a newspaper begin "Sir," and end "NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED".

- 11 The final thing for this section is a list of must do, should do and should not do in the practical skills exam. Find these sentences in the Resource Kit 2.7. You will need to make one set per group. If you don't want to do that, then you could do this activity as a reading race, a running dictation, or a teacher dictation. If you do it this way, then you will have to allow more time as the students will have to get the sentences before they can categorise them.

Copy a set of sentences for each group of students – say six students in each group. Cut them up into strips and put them in an envelope for the groups. Hand one set out to each group and tell them to categorise the statements under one of the following headings:

In the practical skills exam I:

MUST DO THIS

SHOULD DO THIS

SHOULD NOT DO THIS

Tell the students they should not just decide on which statements go under which headings, but try to think of "WHY?"

The statements are below along with reasons.

MUST DO:

Allocate time to each task and only spend that time on the task.

Because if you don't, you might run out of time for one question.

Attempt all the tasks.

Because if you don't do one task, you won't get any marks for it.

Check your work at the end of the exam.

You could score extra marks if you are able to correct any mistakes.

Use three reading techniques: skimming, scanning, intensive reading during the exam.

Because you will only have time to do the tasks if you use these techniques, there is not enough time to read everything in great detail, and if you only skim or scan you might miss important information.

SHOULD DO:

Copy phrases or words from the passages in the data file.

It is very difficult to try to paraphrase everything.

Select only important information from the data file.

Selecting only important information shows the examiners that you have truly understood the task.

Be careful with grammar and spelling.

You can score bonus marks for good grammatical and correct English.

SHOULD NOT DO:

Copy large chunks of passages from the data file.

This shows that you have not really understood the task. It also takes a lot of time, which is very valuable in the practical skills exam.

Read every passage in the data file in great detail.

You just do not have enough time. It is also unnecessary.

Leave a question unanswered.

You won't score any marks for unanswered questions.

Read all the passages in the data file before you read the tasks.

If you read all of the passages first, you will never have enough time to answer the tasks.

Students should come to a group decision and then report to you. You could put all their answers up on the board to see if there are differences between the groups. Groups should be ready to defend their choices if there are any differences.

Once you have come to a class decision - which may well be different to the categories above - you should tell students to write the list down on worksheet five as a reference.

- 11 If you feel that you want to spend more time on this, then get the students to come up with more suggestions for the three categories with reasons why they should be included.
- 12 Do the practical skills sample exam.

Teacher's Resource Kit 2.7.

Allocate time to each task and only spend that time on the task.

Attempt all the tasks.

Check your work at the end of the exam.

Use three reading techniques: skimming, scanning, intensive reading during the exam.

Copy phrases or words from the passages in the data file.

Select only important information from the data file.

Be careful with grammar and spelling.

Copy large chunks of passages from the data file.

Read every passage in the data file in great detail.

Leave a question unanswered.

Read all the passages in the data file before you read the tasks.

Marking Scheme For Practical Skills For Work And Study Paper

Task one: letter content maximum 45 marks

Identify each content point by writing its marking scheme number in the script margin.

For certain content points you can give one or two marks. If two marks are allowed for a content point and you intend to give two marks for it, write the marking scheme number and add 'b', e.g. 5b.

Presentation marks are divided into Language (LANG) and Organisation (ORG). Total 10.

Language marks are given on the following scale:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor
5	3	1, 0

These marks cover grammatically accurate, coherent, succinct aspects.

Organisation marks are given on the following scale:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor
5	3	1, 0

These marks cover logical ordering of information and appropriate comparisons.

If a student has fewer than 7 content points, then neither Language nor Organisation marks can be more than 3.

Marking scheme number	Point	Explanation	Maximum Marks
1	Dear Sir, Sir (NOT) Dear Editor	Appropriate opening	1
2 or 2b	Introduction	A suitable introduction to the reason for the letter, the topics to be covered, the point that the aim of the letter is to give the general public the facts. 1 mark = presence of an introduction. 2 marks = particularly well done.	2
3 or 3b	Introduction to incorrect figures	1 mark for a statement to the effect that newspaper figures are wrong. 2 marks for a statement that percentages are nowhere near as high	2
3b	Juveniles V students	Point out that police figures mention juveniles and do not have specific figures for students	1
4 or 4b	Definition of juvenile	1 mark: Juvenile is a young person under the age of 16. 2 marks: comparison with newspaper definition	2
5	Presentation of data	Figures can be presented in tabular form or within the body of text. 8 marks = just correct figures quoted (1 mark for each crime + total) / 16 marks = comparison between correct and incorrect figures. See appendix A for figures	16
6 or 6b	Introduction to points on work police do for children	1 mark: Point out that the police do a lot in the way of public education and specifically for children / 2 marks: comparison with letters to newspaper	2

Marking scheme number	Point	Explanation	Maximum Marks
7 or 7b	Schools seminars	1 mark: mention of the programme 2 marks: that it is in its tenth year.	2
8 or 8b	Seminar details	1 mark: at least two programme details - content 2 marks: all content points	2
9	Parents' evenings	Mention of them	1
10 or 10b	Literature available	1 mark: mention Dos and don'ts for parents' guide 2 marks: with details of main headings - Keeping your children safe, Keeping your children safe from drugs, Keeping your children safe from triads. All three required for full marks	2
11 or 11b	Public education department report projects for the year	1 mark: mention any two project headings 2 marks: mention all four project headings Television advertisements, Poster campaign, Radio programmes, School seminars	2
12 or 12b	Details of above	1 mark: details of one of the programmes 2 marks: details of two or more programmes	2
13 or 13b	Areas of greatest concern	1 mark: mention unlawful society offences 2 marks: mention robberies as more worrying with shop theft and other theft also areas of concern	2

Marking scheme number	Point	Explanation	Maximum Marks
14 or 14b	Recognition of areas of concern	1 mark: note the areas are worrying 2 marks: assure public that these are being concentrated on.	2
15 or 15b	Conclusion	1 mark for evidence of concluding remarks 2 marks for particularly well done	2
16 or 16b	Ending	1 mark for name 2 marks for full rank and department	2

Appendix A

Crime	Actual Juveniles	Newspaper students	Actual Total number of arrests	Newspaper Total number of arrests	Actual %	Newspaper %
Serious assault	394	970	3157	1843	12	53
Robberies	904	1631	2342	2212	39	74
Blackmail	200	452	938	870	21	52
Shop theft	1606	2273	6008	3539	27	64
Other theft	1057	1901	4276	3734	25	51
Drug Trafficking	13	67	538	424	2	16
Unlawful society offences	254	500	727	727	35	69
Totals	4428	7794	17986	13349	25	58

Marking scheme for task two. Content marks maximum 25

For certain content points you can give one or two marks. If two marks are allowed for a content point and you intend to give two marks for it, write the marking scheme number and add 'b', e.g. 5b.

Presentation marks are for Language (LANG)

Language marks are given on the following scale:

Good	Satisfactory	Poor
5	3	1, 0

These marks cover grammatically accurate, coherent, succinct aspects.

Do's and Don'ts For Parents and Children

- 1 Don't **turn away from your children (if they say they have been interfered with)**. 1 mark if just first part. 2 marks if full explanation

Rules

- 2 Do **break rules to stay safe. (They can run away, scream, lie or kick to get away from danger)** 1 mark for first section. 2 marks for more than one example.

Do's and Don'ts for Children

- 3 Parents: **Do tell your parents where you are (going)**. 1 mark for first section. 2 marks for including "going".
- 4 Stranger: **Don't take a lift from a stranger. Don't go anywhere with a stranger**. 1 mark for one. 2 marks for both.

Children and Drugs:

- 5 Set a good example: **by not smoking or drinking heavily yourself**. 1 mark for one example. 2 marks for both examples.
- 6 If your child is on drugs: **Do seek professional assistance**. 1 mark for "seek professional assistance". 2 marks for "Do..."

Children and Triad Gangs

- 7 Friends: **Do get to know their friends**. 1 mark for "get to know their friends". 2 for "Do ..."
- 8 If you notice anything unusual: **Do discuss with your spouse and other parents or school teachers**. 1 mark for combination of spouse and one other. 2 marks for all.
- 9 If triads threaten your child: **Do report it to the police**. 1 mark if just "report to police". 2 marks if complete answer.

- 10 If your child is involved with triads: **Do seek professional assistance.** 1 mark for "seek professional assistance. 2 marks for "Do..."
- 11 Up to five marks for a suitable closing sentence about keeping children safe from dangers and talking to them about their problems.

Marking scheme for task three. Content maximum 20 marks.

Give one mark for each correct answer.

Crime Figures For 1995 Persons Arrested By Age Group

Crime	Juvenile Offenders Under 16 Male & Female	Young Offenders 16 - 20 Male & Female	Grand Total Male & Female	% of total = juvenile
Violent Crime Against Person				
Rape	(1) 3	28	86	3
Wounding	75	(2) 267	1008	7
Serious Assault	394	576	3157	12
Violent Crime Against Property				
Other Robberies	(3) 904	727	(4) 2342	39
Arson	(5) 30	(6) 18	94	(7) 32
Burglary, Theft & Handling Stolen Goods				
Theft (Shop Theft)	(8) 1606	667	(9) 6008	27
Serious Narcotic Offences				
(10) Trafficking in DD	13	(11) 54	538	2
Possession of DD	31	(12) 183	1637	(13) 2
Miscellaneous Crime				
Criminal Damage	(14) 233	283	(15) 1507	15
(16) Unlawful Society Offences	254	(17) 246	727	(18) 35
Totals	(19) 3543	(20) 3049	17104	21