

Preparing for the YELT

The York English Language Test (YELT) evaluates your English language proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking at the university level. Unlike many other standardized English language tests, the YELT **does not** include questions about English vocabulary, grammar, or structure. Instead, it asks you to understand and use English in ways that all university students are required to do in their studies.

Language Evaluation

The evaluation consists of two parts: Part 1) a Reading/Writing test (90 minutes) and Part 2) a Listening/Speaking test (20 minutes). Only those applicants whose results for Part 1 are satisfactory are invited to Part 2.

YELT's Reading/Writing test requires you to answer, using your own words, five questions based on two reading passages from university-level materials (60 minutes) **and** to write an essay in which you are required to provide your thoughts and opinions on the topic related to the reading passages (30 minutes). To assist you in understanding the reading passages, a glossary will be provided at the end of the readings.

Test Reporting

Approximately one week after you have completed the written part of the YELT, you will find out if you were successful in Part 1 of the YELT. If your results for the Reading/Writing test are **not satisfactory**, a report will be mailed to you recommending that you take an English as a Second Language (ESL) course in order to prepare for your university studies (e.g. a YUELI course). You may reapply for the YELT after at least two months have elapsed, or after successfully completing an ESL course.

If your results for the written part of the test are **satisfactory**, you will be invited for a Listening/Speaking test in which your ability to understand spoken English and to express yourself orally will be evaluated. The test lasts 15-20 minutes and will include questions about your studies and your English language learning experiences. In addition, you will also be encouraged to discuss some issues or concepts related to the topic of the reading comprehension passages in Part 1.

Your final results will be mailed to you three to four weeks after the date of your written test. The report you receive will give you your overall result for the test. Please note that the YELT report cannot tell you whether you will be admitted to York University. Only the Admissions Office can make that decision and their decision will be based on several factors in addition to English facility. The YELT Office will automatically forward the results of your English proficiency test to the Admissions Office. Questions concerning admission should be directed to the York Admissions Enquiry Service at (416) 736-5000.

Test Day

Remember to bring your valid photo identification (passport, driver's license, Ontario health card) **and** your *Ticket of Admission* to the test. Arrive at least 15 minutes before the appointed time. You will not be allowed to write the test if you arrive late.

A sample reading passage and questions follow. They are similar in level of difficulty to the two passages and five questions you will encounter when you take the YELT. Typical answers are also given to assist you in preparing for the evaluation of your English skills.

Technological Advance (Sample YELT)

A rapid pace of technological advance has been accepted by many manufacturing industries for some time now, but for the office worker, who has led a sheltered existence in comparison, radical changes are a new experience. With the advent of electronic data processing techniques, and especially computers, this situation has altered very swiftly. Office staff are suddenly finding themselves exposed to the traumatic consequences of scientific progress.

Most offices, by the very nature of their structure and function, are geared to stability or slow change. Accelerated change of the kind that a computer brings is likely to prove disrupting and disturbing. This is because people in stable organizations tend to expect a steady continuation of existing arrangements, and because departments unaccustomed to change frequently find they have become too inflexible to assimilate it without stress. Social as well as technical factors are therefore highly relevant to a successful adaptation to new techniques.

Research into the social and organizational problems of introducing computers into offices has been in progress in the Social Science department at Liverpool University for the past four years. My colleagues and I have shown that many firms get into difficulties with their new computers partly because of the lack of technical knowledge and experience, but also because they have not been sufficiently aware of the need to understand and plan for the social as well as the technical implications of change. In the firms we have been studying, change has usually been seen simply as a technical problem to be handled by technologists. The fact that the staff might regard the introduction of a computer as a threat to their security and status has not been anticipated. Company directors have been surprised when, instead of cooperation, they encountered anxiety and hostility.

Once the firm has signed the contract to purchase a computer, its next step, one might expect, would be to "sell" the idea to its staff, by giving reassurance about redundancy, and investigating how individual jobs will be affected so that displaced staff can be prepared to move elsewhere. In fact, this may not happen. It is more usual for the firm to spend much time and energy investigating the technical aspects of the computer, yet largely to ignore the possibility of personnel difficulties. This neglect is due to the absence from most firms of anyone knowledgeable about human relations. The personnel manager, who might be expected to have some understanding of employee motivation, is in many cases not even involved in the changeover.

Again, because the changeover is seen only as a technical problem, little thought is given to communication and consultation with staff. Some firms go so far as to adopt a policy of complete secrecy, telling their staff nothing. One director told us: "If we are too frank, we may create difficulties for ourselves." This policy was applied to managers as well as clerks because, it was explained, "our managers will worry if they find out they will lose workers and so have their empires reduced". Several months after the arrival of the computer, the sales manager in this firm had still not been given full information on the consequences of this change.

Reading Comprehension

In your own words and using complete sentences, answer the following questions, relying only on the information given in the text.

- a) How do the structure and function of most offices affect the worker's ability to assimilate rapid technological change?
- b) In your own words, summarize the author's reasons for believing that "firms get into difficulties with their new computers."

Essay

Write an essay about the effects that the Internet or any other technological development has had (or could have) on your own life and work.

Sample Answers to a Reading Comprehension Question

To give you a very general idea of how your own facility in English compares with that of other YELT candidates, here are some sample answers (with commentaries) for the above reading comprehension question.

Question (a):

How do the structure and function of most offices affect the worker's ability to assimilate rapid technological change?

Answer “A”:

Rapid pace of technological change like that a computer brings will be disrupting and disturbing to most offices because the workers expect stability and slow change. They have become too inflexible to assimilate change without stress.

Commentary: This candidate has copied too much from the reading passage (the underlined phrases) for the assessor to be able to judge his/her English language proficiency and will have to take another test.

Answer “B”:

The instalment of modern machine such as the electronic typewriter, The introduction of computer both can assimilate rapid technological change in office.

Commentary: This answer does not show an understanding of the question or of the reading passage. There are numerous errors in word choice, sentence structure and mechanics. This candidate is probably not ready to study at an English-speaking university.

Answer “C”:

The structure and function of offices will be mixed up a little bit because people are not used to work with the computer. The computer changes ordinary way of work in the offices, but the workers are to inflexible to absorbe major changes of the routine.

Commentary: This candidate demonstrates an adequate understanding of the reading passage although there are a few minor errors (“not used to work” instead of “not used to working”) and some misspellings (“to inflexible” and “absorbe”). With some extra help in English, such as is available to students enrolled in York classes, this applicant should be able to improve and to attain passing grades.

Answer “D”:

I think the real problem here is habit together with bureaucracy. Changes come very slowly in most offices, and because the computer is revolutionary in the sence that it initiates a complete change, it frightens people.

Commentary: This answer demonstrates a clear understanding of the text and does so in an original way while containing only one error (spelling of “sence”). Such a candidate is not likely to need additional support with English in his/her studies.