

## Report 15 – Preparing for TEA

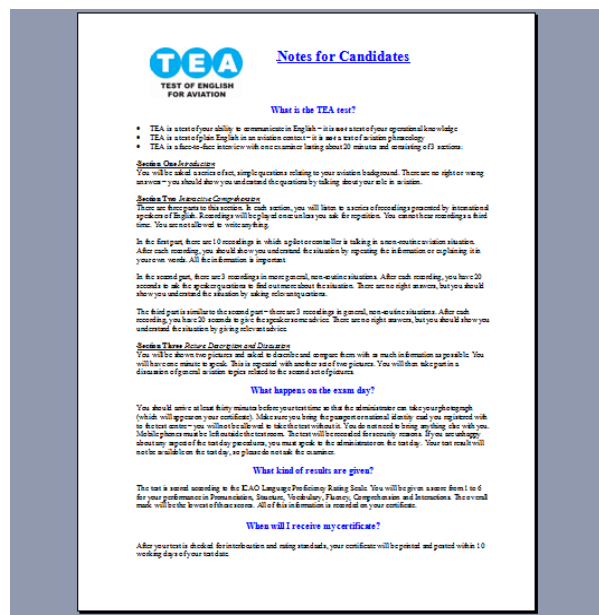
To enable candidates to perform their best in TEA and hopefully reduce unnecessary anxiety – thereby improving the reliability of test scores – several methods of learning more about TEA are offered. Principally, these resources are:

- *TEA Notes for Candidates*
- the TEA website
- *Preparing Candidates for TEA – Notes to Teachers.*

Each resource is presented here in turn.

### TEA Notes for Candidates

Upon registration, all TEA candidates are given a document called *TEA Notes for Candidates* by the TEA Centre Administrator. It contains important information about the test, the test day, the results and certification and is considered an important aspect of test administration since it guides candidates towards their best performance and to key information (answers to frequently asked questions).



The Notes for Candidates has been revised twice since TEA Version 2010 was introduced in April 2010. With each draft, previous test candidates were consulted on content and wording in order to best inform future candidates. The wording of *Notes for Candidates 2011* is copied below:

# Notes for Candidates



## What is the TEA test?

- TEA is a test of your ability to communicate in English – it is **not** a test of your operational knowledge
- TEA is a test of plain English in an aviation context – it is **not** a test of aviation phraseology
- TEA is a face-to-face interview with one examiner lasting about 20 minutes and consisting of 3 sections:

### Section One Introduction

You will be asked a series of set, simple questions relating to your aviation background. There are no right or wrong answers – you should show you understand the questions by talking about your role in aviation.

### Section Two Interactive Comprehension

There are three parts to this section. In each section, you will listen to a series of recordings presented by international speakers of English. Recordings will be played once unless you ask for repetition. You cannot hear recordings a third time. You are not allowed to write anything.

In the first part, there are 10 recordings in which a pilot or controller is talking in a non-routine aviation situation. After each recording, you should show you understand the situation by repeating the information or explaining it in your own words. All the information is important.

In the second part, there are 3 recordings in more general, non-routine situations. After each recording, you have 20 seconds to ask the speaker questions to find out more about the situation. There are no right answers, but you should show you understand the situation by asking relevant questions.

The third part is similar to the second part – there are 3 recordings in general, non-routine situations. After each recording, you have 20 seconds to give the speaker some advice. There are no right answers, but you should show you understand the situation by giving relevant advice.

### Section Three Picture Description and Discussion

You will be shown two pictures and asked to describe and compare them with as much information as possible. You will have one minute to speak. This is repeated with another set of two pictures. You will then take part in a discussion of general aviation topics related to the second set of pictures.

## What happens on the exam day?

You should arrive at least thirty minutes before your test time so that the administrator can take your photograph (which will appear on your certificate). Make sure you bring the passport or national identity card you registered with to the test centre – you will not be allowed to take the test without it. You do not need to bring anything else with you. Mobile phones must be left outside the test room. The test will be recorded for security reasons. If you are unhappy about any aspect of the test day procedures, you must speak to the administrator on the test day. Your test result will not be available on the test day, so please do not ask the examiner.

## What kind of results are given?

The test is scored according to the ICAO Language Proficiency Rating Scale. You will be given a score from 1 to 6 for your performance in Pronunciation, Structure, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interactions. The overall mark will be the lowest of these scores. All of this information is recorded on your certificate.

## When will I receive my certificate?

After your test is checked for interlocation and rating standards, your certificate will be printed and posted within 10 working days of your test date.

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### The TEA website

The website [www.TEA-test.com](http://www.TEA-test.com) contains useful information for potential TEA candidates, including test recordings and guides to best performance.

Candidates are reminded of TEA's purpose and format:

T.E.A. is:

- designed to assess a candidate's spoken and listening ability according to the ICAO Descriptors.
- an English communication test – it is not a test of operational knowledge.
- a test of plain English in an aviation context – it is not a test of aviation phraseology.
- conducted in the form of a one-to-one interview between the candidate and the examiner.
- a test comprising 3 sections and lasting approximately 20 minutes.

Throughout the three sections of the test the examiner assesses the candidate's ability based on the following six ICAO language proficiency requirements: Pronunciation, Structure, Vocabulary, Fluency, Comprehension and Interactions.

The candidate is awarded a score of 1 - 6 for each of the six skills.

Many candidates had falsely believed that the Language Proficiency Requirements were also related to the testing of phraseology or technical language.

The site content also contains a summary of each section of TEA which is then exemplified through a hyperlink to an audio excerpt from a sample TEA test. The test materials used in all recordings available on the site have been withdrawn from use (i.e. they are no longer 'live'), or they were example forms.

#### **Section One** *Introduction* (5-6 minutes)

The candidate is asked a series of questions on common, concrete and work-related topics relating to his/her aviation background. [Click here to listen to an example.](#)

#### **Section Two** *Interactive Comprehension* (8-12 minutes)

**Part 2A:** Candidates listen to aviation-specific recordings of non-routine and emergency situations. Candidates are required to explain what they understand about the situation. [Click here to listen to an example.](#)

**Parts 2B & 2C:** Candidates listen to a series of problem-solving role-play scenarios. In Part 2B, the candidate is required to ask questions to the speaker. In Part 2C, the candidate is required to give advice to the speaker. [Click here to listen to an example.](#)

#### **Section Three** *Description and Discussion* (8 minutes)

Candidates are presented with a series of aviation-related images and are asked to describe and compare what they see. The examiner will then ask further questions related to the images. [Click here](#) to listen to an example.

There are also several links of interest to future TEA candidates:



The *Guide for TEA Candidates and their teachers* is a downloadable pdf document which describes each section of the test in more detail, giving examples of test answers, allowing candidates the chance to think about strong and weak responses, and offering a few key tips to enable best performance.

For example, the following is written about Part 2A:

There are 10 recordings in which a pilot or controller is talking in a non-routine aviation situation. After each recording, the examiner will ask: “*What was the message?*”. Tell the examiner what you understand about the situation. You can use your own words or readback, but all the information is important.

Listen to these 5 example recordings:

*Situation 1 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 2 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 3 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 4 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 5 - [click here](#)*

Now listen to this candidate answering these same 5 recordings:

*Situation 1 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 2 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 3 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 4 - [click here](#)*  
*Situation 5 - [click here](#)*

Here are the tape-scripts - do you think he answered the questions well?

1. *I cannot hear what you are saying. Please say each word twice.*  
(Yes – it is clear that the candidate understood the meaning here)
2. *We can smell smoke from the toilets. We think a passenger has a cigarette.*  
(Yes – he passed on all the information correctly).
3. *We’ve just gone through some bad turbulence. We need to check if the passengers are OK.*

(No – he understood that they had passed through turbulence, but he didn't understand the second part)

4. *The first officer has a severe head injury. Request diversion to the nearest aerodrome.*

(Yes, he successfully conveyed understanding.)

5. There are vehicles close to the runway. Stand by for instructions.

(Yes, almost perfect read-back.)

**Part 2a Tips!**

1. Ask for repetition if you do not understand well. Often it is clearer the second time. The examiner will not play it a second time unless you ask.

2. Do not panic if you do not understand a recording. You do not need to get all 10 correct. Relax, forget about it, and think about the next recording.

3. Give all the information that you can (from the recording). Do not fail to say something, just because it seems obvious. The examiner needs to know that you heard it and understood it.

Via the links on webpage, candidates can also listen to a full test delivered to a candidate who received Level 4, they can learn more about registering for a test, see what a certificate contains, and view some test statistics.

## Preparing Candidates for TEA – Notes to Teachers

The following *Notes* were produced to enable teachers of plain English for aviation to prepare their students for a TEA Test. One key element of the guide was the development of a ‘student-friendly’ rating scale – one that teachers who could help students understand in simpler terms so that they may better understand the language proficiency requirements:

	Pronunciation	Structure	Vocabulary	Fluency	Comprehension	Interactions
Expert 6	Pronunciation <sup>1</sup> almost never causes a problem for understanding	Uses both simple <sup>2</sup> and complex <sup>3</sup> grammar well almost all of the time.	Has enough vocabulary to talk about any topic without needing to paraphrase. Is able to use idiomatic <sup>4</sup> language.	Able to speak clearly and easily about any topic. Uses a variety of discourse markers <sup>5</sup> easily.	Can understand nearly everything well.	Can interact easily in all situations, giving useful and appropriate replies to all types of prompt.
Extended 5	Pronunciation <sup>1</sup> rarely causes a problem for understanding.	Uses basic <sup>2</sup> grammar well. Makes mistakes with complex <sup>3</sup> grammar, which sometimes cause a problem for understanding.	Has enough vocabulary to talk about common, work-related topics. Can paraphrase when necessary. Uses idioms <sup>4</sup> sometimes.	Can speak easily about common topics. Can use correct discourse markers <sup>5</sup> .	Can understand well in work related situations, and understand nearly everything in less common situations. Can understand a range of English dialects and accents.	Can respond quickly, with useful and appropriate replies. Can control a conversation.
Operational 4	Pronunciation <sup>1</sup> only sometimes causes a problem for understanding.	Uses basic <sup>2</sup> grammar quite well. Makes mistakes with basic <sup>2</sup> grammar, which sometimes cause a problem for understanding.	Usually has enough vocabulary to talk about common, work related topics. Can often paraphrase <sup>6</sup> when necessary.	Can sometimes speak freely and easily. Slow speaking does not cause a problem for communication. Can sometimes use discourse markers <sup>5</sup> correctly. Fillers <sup>7</sup> do not cause a problem.	Can usually understand work related situations, if the accent is clear. In more complex situations, or with unclear accents, may need time or repetition to understand.	Can usually respond quickly with useful replies. Can communicate even in surprising situations. Fixes misunderstandings by checking or confirming or clarifying.
Pre-Operational 3	Pronunciation <sup>1</sup> frequently causes a problem for understanding.	Makes a number of mistakes with basic <sup>2</sup> grammar which frequently cause a problem for understanding.	Often has enough vocabulary to talk about common, work related topics but often uses wrong words. Cannot paraphrase <sup>6</sup> often.	Often speaks too slowly, and this may cause a problem for communication. Fillers <sup>7</sup> are sometimes a problem.	Can often understand work situations, if the accent is clear.	Sometimes responds quickly with useful replies. Can communicate in familiar situations. Generally can not respond in surprising situations.
Elementary 2	Pronunciation <sup>1</sup> almost always causes a problem for understanding	Uses only a few memorized sentences and grammar structures	Only knows some individual words or memorized phrases	Can say some memorized phrases, but is very slow to search for expressions or to say unfamiliar words. Fillers <sup>7</sup> are a big problem.	Can understand some simple phrases, if they are spoken slowly and clearly.	Responds slowly with replies that are not useful. Can only manage simple, routine conversations
Pre-Elementary 1	Performs like a beginner at English	Performs like a beginner at English	Performs like a beginner at English	Performs like a beginner at English	Performs like a beginner at English	Performs like a beginner at English

### Key

- 1 – Pronunciation includes stress, rhythm and intonation.
- 2 – Simple grammar includes Present Simple (I do...), Present Continuous (I am doing...), Past Simple (I did...) and modal verbs such as Can, Will, Should, Must.
- 3 – Complex grammar includes Conditionals (if sentences), Passive voice (It is done...) and Reported Speech (he promised that he would...)
- 4 – Idiomatic language includes phrasal verbs (e.g. put out a fire) and other informal language.
- 5 – Paraphrasing is using alternative words to explain what is meant (e.g. What is TCAS? It is a device which detects future collisions and takes avoiding action).
- 6 – Discourse markers are words which help to organize a longer response: (e.g. firstly, in my opinion, but, because, so)
- 7 – Fillers are words or sounds used to avoid silence (e.g. ummmm, errrr)

TEA is an oral proficiency test, with a listening component. It is designed to test candidates’ abilities against ICAO’s Rating Scale in 9835.

This guide is for teachers who are preparing candidates for TEA, giving some advice and suggestions on how best to help candidates reach the required standards.

### **Part 1**

This part of the test is a face-to-face interview with the examiner, where the candidate will be asked about “common, concrete, work-related topics”, such as their role and function in aviation, and the practicalities of controlling or flying aeroplanes.

The part will last approximately 5 minutes.

In order to perform well in the test, candidates will need:

- Clear pronunciation
- Sufficient grammatical / structural control to describe routines and experiences (e.g. present simple, past simple)
- Vocabulary regarding their job, and the ability to explain or paraphrase as required.
- The ability to construct longer turns, involving more than one sentence.<sup>7</sup>
- To demonstrate understanding of the question, and seek clarification as required.
- The ability to paraphrase unknown vocabulary, or to explain.

Preparation for this part of the test may involve candidates describing and explaining what they do at work, describing and explaining how certain devices used in their work operate, describing and explaining routine procedures, comparing different aspects of their roles in aviation.

### **Part 2A**

This part of the test involves the candidate listening to 10 recordings, of between 1 and 3 sentences each, delivered in a variety of accents. Each recording is of a pilot or a controller talking in a non-routine situation. The situations each involve a different “language function” (e.g. giving an order, requesting clarification, refusing permission).

The candidate must report to the examiner the meaning of each message. The recording can be replayed once, if the candidate asks.

In order to perform well in the test, candidates will need:

- To display comprehension of at least half of the messages.
- Accuracy in word choice to relay the meaning of the message, including its illocutionary force (e.g. whether the message was a request or an order)
- To ask for repetition or clarification as necessary.

Preparation for this part of the test may include exposing candidates to different varieties of spoken English pronunciation, practising “bottom up” listening skills (identifying individual words in connected speech), expanding vocabulary of non-routine situations, practising the grammatical structures associated with language functions (orders, request, refusals, etc).

Particular emphasis should be placed on:

- being able to provide accurate readback of short messages
- being clear and concise
- seeking repetition or clarification where necessary.

### **Parts 2B & 2C**

In these parts, the candidate will hear three speakers with more general problems, which may be related to technical, weather and environmental, health or behavioural issues.

In part 2B, the candidate must respond to the recording with a question, to elicit more information. In part 2C, the candidate should react to the recording with advice or suggestions on what to do next.



In order to perform well in the test, candidates will need:

- To react in an appropriate, timely way.
- To avoid generic, non-responses (e.g. “get help”)
- To clarify or identify misunderstandings with the speaker.

Preparation for this part of the test may include pair work that requires candidates to interact with one another in order to complete tasks, developing vocabulary for health, technical, weather and human behavioural problems and their solutions.

### **Part 3 - Pictures**

In this part of the test, the candidate will be presented with a pair of pictures linked to a theme described in the “lexical domains” section below.

The candidate should describe and – where possible – compare the two pictures in as much detail as they can, within a one minute time limit.

The candidate will then receive a second, linked pair of pictures, and should repeat the task.

In order to perform well in the test, the candidate will need:

- To demonstrate an ability to speak uninterrupted
- To use appropriate structures to compare and contrast differences
- To use appropriate prepositions and phrases to describe the location of items in the pictures
- To use appropriate structures to describe actions in progress, speculate on causes.

Preparation for this part of the test may include, expanding vocabulary within the lexical domains, practising using prepositions to accurately locate objects in space and relative to other objects, practice discourse management strategies to enable a longer, multi-sentence, turn.

### **Part 3B - Discussion**

In the final part of the test, the candidate will be asked a series of questions on a topic drawn from the “lexical domains” section below.

The candidate should demonstrate an ability to discuss more abstract ideas, develop answers, challenge and defend points of view and suggest reasons.

In order to perform well in the test, the candidate will need:

- To demonstrate an ability to express and justify opinions.
- To speak fluently, but also respond to questioning.
- To demonstrate an ability to use different grammatical structures.
- Clear pronunciation
- To demonstrate a wider range of vocabulary than in part one, and / or the ability to paraphrase more complex ideas

Preparation for this part of the test may include: classroom debates or discussions on how the lexical domains relate to aviation, activities involving students taking longer turns in discussion, language for giving and justifying opinions, discourse management strategies.



### Priority Lexical Domains

Candidates should be able to display vocabulary in the following areas:

Activities on the field	Industrial action
Administrative problems	Lack of fuel
Aerodrome/airfield environment	Missed approach
Aids for VFR flights	Misunderstandings
Aircraft breakdowns	Parachute jumping/dropping activity
Aircraft proximity + pilot complaints	Passenger behaviour + unlawful interference
Airfield facilities/installations	Pilot familiarity with airfield
Approach delays	Pilot's temporary disability
ATC system breakdowns	Problems linked to flight plans
Belly landings	Procedures
Bird risk/hazard	Request to relay
Bomb threat/alert/scare	Re-routing/diversion
Cargo problems/dangerous goods	Special conditions on arrival
Changes in flight plan	Special flights
Collisions	Take-off incidents
Fire on board	Unauthorized manoeuvres
Ground movement incidents	VFR flights lost/in difficulty
Ground services	VIP flights
Health problems	Weather/MET problems
Incidents on landing	

### Language Functions

Candidates should be able to use exponents in order to achieve the following language functions:

Apologise / Express Difficulty (or a Concern)	Offer Assistance / Assist
Ask about Needs or Intentions	Predict
Ask for Information / Help	Provide Information about the Past
Check Clarify Confirm	Provide Information Generally or about the Present
Compare States	Reassure / Encourage
Compare Times	Request Action
Correct	Request Information
Declare Non-understanding	Request Repetition
Deduct/Reason	Speculate about the Past
Describe a Procedure	Speculate Generally or about the Present
Describe a Sequence or Process	Speculate about the Future
Describe a State or Position	Stage (set context of next utterance; verbalise a thought process)
Describe an Action in Progress	State Possible Consequences
Elaborate (elaborate on or modify an assertion)	State Preferences or Likes
Explain	Summarise & Relay (reword or paraphrase; readback)
Express Needs or Wishes	Warn
Express Opinion	
Give Advice / Suggest	
Give or Deny Approval or Permission	
Give an Order	