

Reading Task 1: Complete the Words

Looks like a spelling test

Not a spelling test

Testing three things

Vocabulary knowledge

Understanding of context

Grammatical awareness inside a sentence

Meaning of the sentence

Missing word usually becomes obvious

S 3 Let's take a look at reading task one, 'Complete the Words'. You need to know what this task is really testing. On the surface, 'Complete the Words' looks like a spelling test. It is not a spelling test. This task is testing three things at the same time. First, it is testing your vocabulary knowledge, it examines your understanding of context, and finally, it tests your level of grammatical awareness inside a sentence. If you understand the meaning of the sentence, the missing word usually becomes obvious.

Short paragraph

Ma__ universities are now plac__ greater empha__s on interdisciplinary studies. Th__ approach encoura__ students to com__e knowledge from differ__ academ__ fields. As a resu__, graduates often deve__ p stronger probl__-solving skills.

Academic

Semi-academic

Several words with missing letters

Need to type the missing letters

Complete each word

Not asked to guess random letters

Sentence tells you

What the word must be

S 4 This is what you will see on the test. It is a short paragraph (often academic, sometimes semi-academic), and as you can see in this sample, there are several words with missing letters, and you will need to type the missing letters to complete each word. Please keep in mind that you are not asked to guess random letters. The sentence tells you what the word must be.

Every blank word	Determined by the sentence
Only one word	Fits the meaning Fits the grammar Fits the letter pattern
X letters	Start with meaning

S 5 Also keep in mind that every blank word is already determined by the sentence. That means first, only one word fits the meaning, only one word fits the grammar and only one word fits the letter pattern. Do not start with letters. You should start with meaning.

Step-by-step strategy

Read the full sentence

What the sentence is talking about

Academic

Factual

Explanatory

Predict the word

Before thinking about spelling

Noun, verb, adjective, or adverb

Use the given letters to confirm

First letter

Last letter

Word length

Type carefully

Spelling matters

Grammar matters

Extra or missing letters = wrong answer

S 6 Here is a step-by-step strategy. First, read the full sentence, and decide what the sentence is talking about, and is the tone academic, factual, or explanatory. Predict the word before thinking about spelling. Ask yourself if the word is a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb, or what kind of word is needed here? Then use the given letters to quickly confirm the first letter, the last letter, and the word length. No guessing here, just confirmation. Finally, type carefully, because spelling matters, grammar matters, and any extra or missing letters are considered a wrong answer.

Common mistakes

Starting with letters

Instead of meaning

A word that “almost” fits

Ignoring grammar

Singular/plural, verb tense

Rushing because

Task looks easy

If you understand the sentence, you can solve the word

S 7 Here are a few common mistakes that you should look out for in this section. The first one is starting with letters instead of meaning, followed by filling in a word that “almost” fits, along with ignoring grammar, for example, is the noun singular or plural, or not checking the verb tense. Finally, many have trouble because they rush because the task looks easy. Please keep this in mind, if you understand the sentence, you can solve the word.

Complete the missing letters in each word. Use the context of the sentence to help you.

Ma_ _ universities are now plac_ _ _ greater emphas_ _ _ on
interdisciplinary studies. Th_ _ approach encoura_ _ _
students to combine knowledge from differ_ _ _ academ_ _
fields. As a resu_ _ , graduates often devel_ _ _ stronger probl_ _
-solving skills.

S 8 Here we go with our first practice. One quick glance will tell us that this is an academic passage with a reference to universities, studies and graduates. The word 'universities' provides a hint to solving the first word. Universities is a plural noun, so the first word should be 'many'. The word that starts with 'plac' is a verb and since it is in the present tense and we need three letters, we can consider it a continuous verb and add 'ing' to make 'placing'. For the next word, it may seem clear to TOEFL students that 'empha' is a great hint. Since it is a noun in the sentence, we will add 'is' to make 'emphasis.' The next sentence discusses the approach mentioned in the first sentence. So, is the next word 'this' or 'that'? It's your call, but since we are working in the present tense here, I think the word should be 'this'. The next word also needs three letters and is an easily recognizable word, being used as a present tense verb, so let's add 'ges' to make the word 'encourages'. See, this is not very difficult at all. The next word is an adjective and needs three letters. When you look at the beginning of this word, what comes to mind? That's right 'different'. We see field is a noun, so the word before it is an adjective, so we type in 'ic' to make 'academic'. I think you have already guessed that the last three words are 'result', 'develop', and 'problem'. That is why I included a suffixes practices information on pages 67 and 68 in the Study Skills textbook.

Complete the missing letters in each word. Use the context of the sentence to help you.

In recent decades, scientists have increa_ ingly studied how climate patterns affect global ecosystems. We mi_ _ _ think th_ _ environmental changes occur slow_ _ , but evidence suggests otherwise. Rising temperatures infl_ _ ence weather events and alter natural habitats. These shifts can lead to reduced b_ _ diversity and disr_ _ t food chains. As a result, researchers emp_ _ size the need for long-t_ _ _ environmental planning.

S 9 You can see every correct answer came from understanding the sentence, and that we aren't really guessing letters. We try to look at the word meaning, and see that grammar can help us choose the correct forms for the words in the passage. Let's do another practice, with less hints this time. Ok, the first word is easy, we need an 's' right? What is the next phrase... could it be 'might think that? Correct again! Slow is an adverb, so we need an 'ly' right? The next word only needs a 'u' to make 'influence'. Since the passage discusses environmental changes and ecosystems', what kind of 'diversity' would fit with the first letter 'b'? That's right. The complete word is 'biodiversity.' The word following is a verb and with 'disr' and a final 't', the word we are looking for is 'disrupt'. Now we by mere chance, I assure you, have the letters 'emp - size', so all we need is an 'ha' to complete the word 'emphasize'. Finally, What would be better here, 'long time' environmental planning, or 'long term' environmental planning? You are absolutely correct and we can move on.