

**Integrated English Proficiency Exam
Practice Test**

Instructions Overview: What to Expect in This Test

Tasks 1 and 2: 60 minutes

- You will read two sources that are each about 900 words
- Source 1 will present a problem
- Source 2 will present a solution to the problem in Source 1
- You must identify five main idea sentences in each reading text
- You must answer five multiple choice questions
- Finally, you must write a summary for each reading text

Task 3: 30 minutes

- You will listen one time to an 8-10 minute lecture
- Source 3 will present another solution to the problem in Source 1
- You must then answer five multiple choice questions about the listening text
- Finally, you must write a summary of the listening text

Task 4: 30 minutes

- In one or two paragraphs, you must write your opinion about which solution you believe is the most effective solution to the problem in Source 1
- You must refer to ideas from all three sources to support your answer
- If you have any extra time at the end, you may go back and check your answers for the other tasks

Turn the page to begin Task 1.

Source 1: Problems

Read the following passage and answer the questions below. Then write a one-paragraph summary about Source 1. When you are finished, move on to the next task.

The U.S. News and World Report Best Colleges Ranking

^A ¹Every year, millions of high school seniors and their families turn to the *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking as they make decisions about where to attend college. ²The *U.S. News* ranking compares U.S. colleges annually based on an algorithm which changes each year. ³Overall, about 80% of the algorithm is determined by school data such as class size, standardized test scores, and graduation rates. ⁴The remaining 20% is determined by peer assessments from other college administrators. ⁵The *U.S. News* ranking began as a money-making strategy in 1983 when *U.S. News* was in dire financial straits. ⁶This strategy turned out to be very profitable. ⁷In 2010, the company stopped publishing their newsmagazine and now publishes other rankings – for high schools, hospitals, and cars, among other things. ⁸Although the *U.S. News* ranking is very popular among the general public, it is frequently criticized by experts for its faulty algorithm, its harmful effects on schools, and its harmful effects on students.

^B ⁹The central problem that critics have identified with the *U.S. News* rankings is that the algorithm is essentially meaningless because it relies on inappropriate data. ¹⁰For example, a substantial percentage of the algorithm is based on peer assessments from other college administrators. ¹¹This assessment is based largely on administrators' subjective opinions about other universities' reputations. ¹²In addition, the algorithm puts undue emphasis on input variables instead of output variables. ¹³Input variables include measures of anything that enters the university, like donations, freshman test scores, and funding. ¹⁴Output variables include measures of anything that exits the university, such as graduation rates, student satisfaction surveys, and post-graduation employment. ¹⁵While input variables are easier to measure, arguably output variables are more important to most students when they seek to choose a place to study because they reflect a university's ability to help its students achieve their goals. ¹⁶The *U.S. News* rankings do include some output variables, like graduation rates for full-time students, but historically their algorithm has been weighted heavily towards input variables.

^C ¹⁷Additionally, the *U.S. News* rankings foster an environment that rewards cheating and competition between universities. ¹⁸In some of the worst examples, colleges have blatantly lied to the newsmagazine about their data. ¹⁹Since *U.S. News* doesn't have a fact-checking department, no one can ensure that the universities are telling the truth. ²⁰However, most universities are not so bold; instead, they may use some subtle strategies to boost their rankings. ²¹These strategies may have little to do with academic excellence, but they can be a quick way to improve rankings. ²²For example, *U.S. News* only collects test scores of students who enter in the fall. ²³Therefore, universities can boost their average test scores by offering spring enrollment to students with lower test scores. ²⁴Another variable that can be **“gamed”** is class size. ²⁵Many universities have reduced their class sizes to improve their ranking, but then need to hire more instructors to teach those classes. ²⁶To do this

cheaply, they hire part time or adjunct faculty to teach those classes. ²⁷These adjunct faculty often have no health insurance or job stability, so they have to work multiple jobs and have less time to offer to their students, which defeats the purpose of having a smaller class size. ²⁸If universities don't engage in these shortcut strategies and simply try to improve their metrics in a natural way, they may be punished. ²⁹Since the rankings compare schools against each other, it is not enough for universities to simply improve their score slightly on each of these metrics. ³⁰Universities must improve even faster than their competitors or they will fall behind in the rankings.

D ³¹Perhaps most critically, many scholars are concerned that the *U.S. News* rankings raise the cost of tuition and therefore make it harder for students to afford an education. ³²Many of the variables in the *U.S. News* algorithm are tied to money. ³³Some are tied directly, such as donations, faculty salaries, and spending per student; others are only indirectly related. ³⁴For example, test scores and graduation rates are generally higher for wealthy students. ³⁵Most of these metrics can be gamed by throwing money at them. ³⁶For example, one way to attract new students is to build new dorms, spend money on sports teams, or pay for more advertisements. ³⁷All of this means that it is very expensive for a university to try to improve their rankings, and ultimately those costs are passed on to students. ³⁸The rising cost of tuition is a burden for everyone, but particularly for students whose parents aren't wealthy. ³⁹This makes it less likely that those students will be able to afford an education at a highly ranked school. ⁴⁰In short, the *U.S. News* ranking system seems to unduly favor the wealthy.

E ⁴¹Of course, there are some benefits to the rankings system as well. ⁴²The *U.S. News* rankings are very convenient, have high name recognition, and may encourage positive changes in universities. ⁴³Recently, the algorithm has changed to focus on more outcome variables and even added a measure of student debt. ⁴⁴These changes, though small, are taking steps in the right direction to measure things that students actually care about. ⁴⁵Arguably, the *U.S. News* rankings are not all bad. ⁴⁶However, most experts agree that we can do better.

Source 1 Sentence Identification

Answer the following questions by writing the number of the sentence that contains the information.

1. Sentence Number _____ contains the main idea of Source 1.
2. Sentence Number _____ explains the first problem with the U.S. News college rankings.
3. Sentence Number _____ explains the second problem with the U.S. News college rankings.
4. Sentence Number _____ explains the third problem with the U.S. News college rankings.
5. Sentence Number _____ explains three advantages of the U.S. News college rankings.

Source 1 Reading Inference Questions

Select the best answer to the following questions.

1. What is the best definition for the verb “to game” in Sentence Number 23?
 - a. to intentionally lie in order to win
 - b. to use clever tricks to win without lying
 - c. to win without tricks because of natural skills
 - d. to improve slightly without winning
2. Why are input variables easier to measure than output variables?
 - a. Output variables require additional data collection.
 - b. Input variables are often larger than output variables.
 - c. Output variables are often larger than input variables.
 - d. Input variables require additional data collection.

Turn to the next page.

Source 2: Solution 1

Read the following passage and answer the questions below. Then write a one-paragraph summary of Source 2. When you are finished, wait for instructions.

Alternative College Ranking Systems

A ¹The *U.S. News and World Report* Best Colleges Ranking has attracted a substantial amount of criticism in the last several decades. ²Critics allege that it unduly focuses on quantifiable but meaningless metrics, creates a competitive atmosphere in which colleges are tempted to cheat and view each other as opponents, and contributes to the skyrocketing cost of tuition in the U.S.. ³In response to this criticism, several alternative ranking systems have arisen in the last few years. ⁴These alternative ranking systems seek to address some of the most serious shortcomings of the *U.S. News* rankings by putting more emphasis on output variables, choosing variables that are harder to cheat on, and including metrics that are more financially-conscious.

B ⁵The *U.S. News* algorithm tends to place emphasis on input variables which can be easily counted. ⁶These don't always directly correlate with educational quality, however. ⁷The most immediate way in which alternative rankings systems have sought to address the shortcomings of the *U.S. News* rankings has been through prioritizing more output variables in the algorithm. ⁸Contrast the algorithm created by *Washington Monthly* in 2006. ⁹Its algorithm focuses on three categories of variables which estimate how well a school fulfills its mission of contributing to research, community service, and the greater good. ¹⁰The research category counts several variables including the number of papers published each year by the school's faculty members, and the number of undergraduate students at that school who go on to receive a PhD. ¹¹The community service category counts variables including the number of students at each school who volunteer with organizations like the Peace Corps, and the percentage of students each year who register to vote. ¹²The last category focuses on the school's ability to assist lower income students. ¹³It measures the percentage of students at the school who qualify for federal Pell grants (a financial assistance package that is only available to low income students). ¹⁴The algorithm also includes a separate measure to track the retention and graduation rates for the Pell grant students. ¹⁵This ensures that schools don't simply seek to attract these students and then forget about them. ¹⁶It also looks to see what salary these students are earning ten years after graduation. ¹⁷Taken together, these measures represent outcomes that are more directly connected to a university's mission than the amount of donations it receives each year.

C ¹⁸Another way in which alternative rankings systems can address the problems of *U.S. News* is by selecting metrics which are harder for schools to cheat on. ¹⁹Typically this would involve giving more specific instructions about the type of data that schools need to report. ²⁰For instance, one of the measures in the current *U.S. News* algorithm is the average faculty salary. ²¹However, the instructions don't specify whether universities need to report the mean or the median. ²²Because of this, most universities report the mean salary, as it tends to **inflate** the numbers. ²³At most universities, a few star professors may earn as much as \$200,000 a year, while

the majority of faculty earn closer to \$40,000. ²⁴If universities were required to report the median instead of the mean, their numbers would better reflect the true salary of the majority of faculty members. ²⁵This would be a clearer depiction of how well a university supports its faculty. ²⁶Another example would be requiring schools to report the standardized test scores, GPAs, and graduation rates for all students. ²⁷That would include part-time students, transfer students, and students who begin in the spring and summer semesters. ²⁸This is the practice of the ranking system developed by *Money* magazine. ²⁹In contrast, the *U.S. News* algorithm only collects data for full-time freshman students who begin in the fall semester. ³⁰Requiring universities to report data about all students would reflect a clearer picture of how a university supports all its learners.

D ³¹One last change in alternative college rankings has attracted a lot of attention. ³²Several alternative ranking systems intentionally include measures that encourage tuition rates to go down. ³³The popular business magazine *Forbes* created an alternative college ranking system in 2008 which includes a measure of student indebtedness. ³⁴This measure looks at two things: the average amount of money that a student owes after getting a four-year degree, and the average number of students who graduate with debt. ³⁵These two measures together indicate how expensive the school is. ³⁶Having a measure like this in the ranking algorithm is important to balance out other measures which promote heavy spending. ³⁷Unlike the *U.S. News* algorithm, the *Forbes* algorithm does not reward schools for practices which drive tuition rates up.

E ³⁸Skeptics raise concerns that these alternative rankings don't have enough name recognition to replace the better-known *U.S. News* rankings. ³⁹Rankings gain power only when they are popular enough to influence people's decisions. ⁴⁰Many of these alternative rankings are unfamiliar to prospective students and their families, and therefore don't factor in to their decisions about where to study. ⁴¹If a ranking system doesn't influence many students, then administrators at a college might decide that they can safely ignore it. ⁴²Though it may sound cynical, many administrators will only make changes to their policies if they realize that they are losing students. ⁴³However, the very existence of such alternative rankings shows that the reign of *U.S. News* might be coming to an end. ⁴⁴If nothing else, the existence of competition in the rankings market has pressured the *U.S. News* to make some important changes to its ranking algorithm. ⁴⁵In 2021, they added a measure of student indebtedness for the first time (although this measure weighs only 5% in the *U.S. News* algorithm, compared to 20% of the *Forbes* algorithm). ⁴⁶Though to date no ranking system can compete with *U.S. News* in name recognition, alternative ranking systems are doing their part to better represent the true values of education consumers.

Turn to the next page.

Source 2 Sentence Identification

Answer the following questions by writing the number of the sentence that contains the information.

1. Sentence Number _____ contains the main idea of Source 2.
2. Sentence Number _____ explains the first advantage of alternative college rankings.
3. Sentence Number _____ explains the second advantage of alternative college rankings.
4. Sentence Number _____ explains the third advantage of alternative college rankings.
5. Sentence Number _____ explains one reason that alternative college rankings may not succeed.

Source 2 Reading Inference Questions

Select the best answer to the following questions.

1. What is the best definition for the verb “inflate” in Sentence Number 23?
 - a. artificially lower
 - b. artificially raise
 - c. intentionally control
 - d. intentionally confuse
2. What can we conclude about Pell grant students?
 - a. They qualify for many other scholarships besides Pell grants.
 - b. They typically graduate at higher rates than other students.
 - c. Most schools include a high number of Pell grant students.
 - d. Some schools admit Pell grant students but then ignore them.
3. Based on Source 2, we can predict that, if all college rankings required universities to report faculty salary medians instead of means, universities would feel pressured to . . .
 - a. . . pay their low-earning faculty more.
 - b. . . pay their high-earning faculty more.
 - c. . . pay all their faculty much more.
 - d. . . continue paying the current salary rate.

Turn to the next page.

Source 3: Solution 2

Listen to the following lecture one time. You may take notes while you listen and use them later. Do not turn the page until the lecture is finished. After the lecture is finished, turn the page to answer the five questions below. Finally, write a summary about Source 3. You may use your notes to help you answer the questions and write the summary.

Transparent Reporting of Academic Data

Notes:

When you are told to do so, turn to the next page.

Source 3 Listening Questions

Select the best answer to the following questions.

1. According to Source 3, the best definition for “open source data” is data that . . .
 - a. . . is open about the sources that it uses for reference.
 - b. . . is open for all people to access without charge.
 - c. . . uses sources that are free for others to access.
 - d. . . uses sources that are available on the internet.

2. According to Source 3, what is the best definition for “relative”?
 - a. of close and familiar relationship, such as a family member
 - b. of value determined by its relationship to another thing
 - c. of value that increases regardless of the position of other things
 - d. of relationship that is comparatively distant and informal

3. A public database would be better than the Forbes rankings because the public database . . .
 - a. . . allows us to look at tuition directly.
 - b. . . includes a measure of student indebtedness.
 - c. . . favors schools which accept wealthy students.
 - d. . . measures which parents pay for tuition.

4. According to Source 3, colleges don’t need to compete with each other because . . .
 - a. . . there is low demand for their services.
 - b. . . there is high demand for their services.
 - c. . . their primary funding source comes from tuition.
 - d. . . their primary funding source is from donations.

5. Based on Source 3, if we see that a college president’s salary is tied to the school’s ranking, we can conclude that . . .
 - a. . . the college will have a high ranking.
 - b. . . the president will have a high salary.
 - c. . . the president will have high pressure.
 - d. . . the college will have high enrollment.

Turn to the next page.

