



We believe fair tests should be as *accurate* as possible

The purpose of assessment is to precisely capture a test taker's true level of ability. We believe PTE Academic is the most accurate test of academic English in the world.

As the world's leading education company, we understand how important it is to have complete confidence in the qualifications you use as part of your admissions policies.

When it comes to English language testing, the key factor for most institutions is how accurate the test is, i.e. that it provides an accurate and precise measure of students' language ability.

PTE Academic was specifically developed to provide institutions with a more accurate measure of academic English.

What this means for you and your institution:

- The high level of accuracy of PTE Academic means you take fewer risks in the student selection process when it comes to ensuring students have the right level of English to study at your institution
- The greater precision and accuracy of PTE Academic means you can trust the English ability of your students
- Students who don't have the appropriate level of English may hinder the teaching process and lower overall standards at your institution. With PTE Academic, students are more likely to thrive in their studies with you

We demonstrate the accuracy of PTE Academic in the following ways:

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Standard Error of Measurement (SEM)

All tests contain an element of error. According to Classical Test Theory¹, a test taker's observed score – that is, the score reported as a result of a test – comprises their true score and an error component. Typically the true score remains unknown, which means the observed score constitutes the sole record of a test taker's ability.

In order to obtain an accurate measure of this ability, it is important that the observed score is as close as possible to the true score, and to achieve this a test needs to contain the smallest possible error component. The size of the error component is a function of the reliability of a test and is known as the Standard Error of Measurement (SEM).

SEM is therefore used to track proximity between observed and true scores. The range of scores in which the true score is expected to be found represents the confidence interval associated with an observed score. Generally speaking, an interval of one or two SEMs around the observed score is used to discuss accuracy within the academic-testing world.

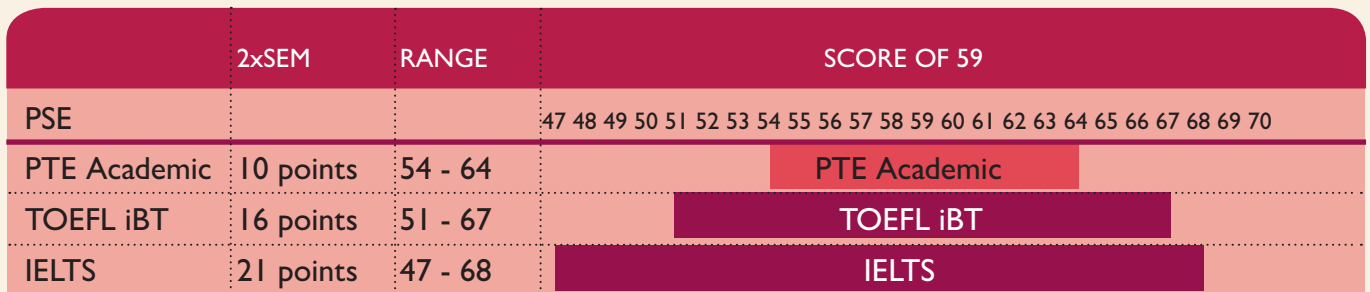
So, if we imagine a test where a test taker obtains a score of 50 out of 100 and the SEM is given as 2 points, then using one SEM would give a true score range of 50 plus or minus 2; that is, between 48 and 52. Statistically, there is a 68% certainty that the true score will lie within the observed score, plus or minus one SEM, and a 95% certainty within plus or minus two SEMs. Therefore, we could say that in this case we are 68% certain that the test taker's true score would be between 48 and 52, and 95% certain that it would be between 46 and 54. The smaller the SEM, the more accurate the test.

Each of the major academic English tests reports its SEM. To compare these SEMs, we need to transfer all scores onto the same scale to make sure we are comparing like with like. Using the concordance tables in the PTE Academic Score Guide², TOEFL iBT and IELTS scores can be placed on the same scale as PTE Academic. The scale used is the Pearson Scale of English, which runs from 10 to 90.

In the tables below, we use a 95% confidence level and an example score of 59. This shows that for PTE Academic, you can be 95% confident that the test taker’s true score falls within the 10-point range shown in the table. For TOEFL iBT the range is 16 points, and for IELTS it is 21 points.

Comparison tables: Confidence intervals for PTE Academic, TOEFL iBT and IELTS on a common scale (Pearson Scale of English)

TEST	SEM	EXAMPLE SCORE	ROUNDED FROM	MIN	MAX	95% INTERVAL
PTE Academic	2.32 ²	59	58.5-59.4	54	64	10 points
TOEFL iBT	5.28 ³	87	86.5-87.4	76	98	22 points
TOEFL on PSE		59		51	67	16 points
IELTS	0.22 ⁴	6.5	6.25-6.74	5.8	7.2	1.4 band
IELTS on PSE		59		47	68	21 points



This demonstrates that PTE Academic has the smallest SEM and is therefore the most accurate test of academic English.

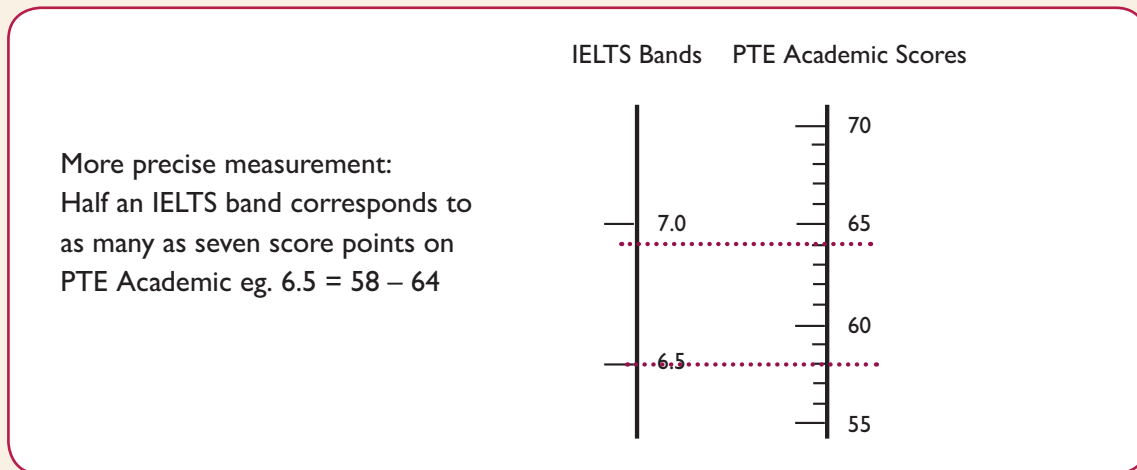
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Precision of scores

The three tests mentioned above each use a different reporting scale. PTE Academic and TOEFL iBT both use a numerical score scale, whereas IELTS⁵ uses bands. Both Pearson² and ETS (TOEFL iBT)⁶ have published studies comparing their scores with IELTS.

Pearson shows that within a single IELTS half band there can be up to seven PTE Academic score points. For example, if an IELTS candidate gets an overall band score of 6.5, this could be equivalent to a PTE Academic score of anywhere from 58 to 64 (see table below).

Comparison table: Difference in score precision between IELTS and PTE Academic



This demonstrates that PTE Academic provides a greater level of score precision.

References

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