Your Language Level

We’ve mentioned several times that you should have about a European Level B2 to start studying English. If you’ve taken a standardized English Exam lately, here are some tests comparisons: level B2 is roughly the same as a very good good to excellent grade on the Cambridge FCE or BEC Vantage, or the internet TOEFL.

In particular, you need to be able to read and write in English at this level from the very first semester. All your coursework, all your reading and your writing, will be in English. To study English at The English Department at the University of Tübingen you need to know English, not just be able to speak it.

To test whether or not you know English, please try our sample language test which focuses on reading and writing skills. This test is similar to what you would be asked to do in a B.A. seminar. Our students are only allowed to use an English monolingual dictionary during exams, so please only use an English monolingual dictionary while answering these questions.

Sample Language Test

Directions: Please read the following text and answer the questions after it.

One Out, a Quarter Out (The Economist, April 30, 2009)

Few have noticed, but strikes have closed a lot of France’s universities

“The university is going up in smoke,” says a handwritten banner strung from a tree at the entrance to the University of Nanterre, near Paris. On the ground, a brazier is indeed burning. A cluster of students brandish bright pink flares. In the social-science tower block, where posters promote Olivier Besancenot’s New Anti-Capitalist Party, others have stacked piles of desks and chairs in the entrance hall, in a bid to make teaching impossible.

Militant workers who kidnap their bosses and big union-led protests of the sort planned for May 1st may hog the headlines. But a less visible battle has been disrupting as many as 20 of France’s 83 universities—including the Sorbonne—for over two months. Campuses have been blocked by strikes. In certain subjects, particularly the social sciences, lectures have been cancelled altogether, leaving students unsure whether they will be able to take their end-of-year exams.

The protests, by both students and lecturers, are ostensibly against higher-education reforms that grant more autonomy to universities. Lecturers object to new rules that impose regular performance evaluations and give more powers to university presidents to manage, promote and pay staff. Although there are neither tuition fees nor selection at entry, students are against any hint of competition and what they call the “privatisation” of universities, which can now raise private money. They fear the creation of a two-tier system, with worthless degrees for those at “dustbin universities”. Researchers particularly mistrust President Nicolas Sarkozy, who mocked their output early this year and who likes to deride French intellectuals. A previous bid to reform the rules for lecturers and researchers was withdrawn only after fierce resistance.
Valérie Pécresse, the higher-education minister, says that university exams will be postponed to the summer holidays if necessary, to allow time for extra classes. "There will be no discount degrees," awarded due to half-cancelled courses, she promises. A few lecturers have been improvising to catch up. On sunny days, some at Nanterre have taught outside on the grass. One enterprising teacher at a university in Avignon held a statistics exam in a local McDonald’s restaurant, though it was invalidated by the administration.

In truth, many students are fed up with the disruption. Marc Gontard, president of Rennes II, one of the most strike-hit universities, says that those actively trying to block faculties are a small minority, led by hard-left elements. Others dream of reliving the student uprising of May 1968, sparked off when students occupied a building on the campus at Nanterre, earning it the nickname “Nanterre the red”. “They feel they have a reputation to live up to,” comments a security official at Nanterre, coolly watching the protesters. He notes that these would-be revolutionaries have thoughtfully brought along two fire extinguishers, just in case. It is a mark of how regular disruption has become that students streaming in from the nearby station scarcely turn their eyes to see their peers protesting and burning flares.

There are signs that student disruption at some universities is starting to have unintended consequences. The most radical campuses, including Rennes II, Toulouse II-Le Mirail and Lille III, have recently seen falling enrolment. Between 2004 and 2007, according to research by the National Inter-University Union, a centre-right student association, enrolment at the 11 most strike-prone universities fell three to five times faster than the national average. In more ways than one, it seems, French students are voting with their feet.

Part 1: Reading comprehension questions for “One out, a quarter out”

Directions: Please answer the following questions using complete sentences. Limit your answers to 3-5 sentences per question. Your answers will be graded on both content and language.

1. According to the text, what is the cause of the protests?

2. According to the text, why might people be turned off by the protesting?

3. What does the following sentence from the text mean? “In more ways than one, it seems, French students are voting with their feet.”
4. Do you think the protests at French universities will have lasting effects? Use the text to help support your answer.

Part 2: Language 1

For the five sentences below, please do the following:

a. Say if the sentence is grammatically correct or incorrect.
b. If the sentence is incorrect, briefly say what the problem is.
c. If the sentence is incorrect, rewrite the sentence and make it grammatically correct.

1. If you would want to make a good impression on a first date, you have to be prepared to listen more and speak less.
   a. Correct or Incorrect?
   b. 
   c. 

2. Women like men who can listen them.
   a. Correct or Incorrect?
   b. 
   c. 

3. First, you have to practice to ask interesting and short questions about her life and future plans.
   a. Correct or Incorrect?
   b. 
   c. 

4. Don’t forget asking about her job.
   a. Correct or Incorrect?
   b. 
   c. 

5. Especially modern women like to be admired by their work.
   a. Correct or Incorrect?
   b. 
   c. 


Part 3: Language 2

1. Choose the correct sentence:
   a. ____ The book, what was written by a famous critic, is a study of British literature.
   b. ____ The book, written by a famous critic, it is a study of British literature.
   c. ____ The book, that was written by a famous critic is a study of British literature.
   d. ____ The book, written by a famous critic, is a study of British literature.

2. Choose the correct sentence:
   a. ____ Kristina wants to travel to Spain, to visit the museums, and to explore Spanish culture.
   b. ____ Kristina wants to travel to Spain, visiting the museums, and exploring Spanish culture.
   c. ____ Travelling to Spain, visiting the museums, and to explore Spanish culture is what Kristina wants.
   d. ____ Kristina wants to travel to Spain, visit the museums and to explore Spanish culture.

3. Choose the correct sentence:
   a. ____ There are written many helpful sentences in this optional assignment.
   b. ____ There is written many helpful sentences in this optional assignment.
   c. ____ Many helpful sentences in this optional assignment is written.
   d. ____ There are many helpful sentences in this optional assignment.

4. Choose the correct sentence:
   a. ____ If it were raining, I would be wet.
   b. ____ If it would be raining, I would be wet.
   c. ____ If it rained, I will be wet.
   d. ____ If it would rain, I would be wet.

Sample Language Test - Answers

Compare your answers with the following answers. In most cases, whether your answer is right or wrong is clear. In the cases where the answers are less straightforward, compare yours and ours and judge how far off the grammar, coherence and content of your answers are. If this were an exam in one of our Sprachpraxis courses, you would need 60% of all possible points just to pass!
Part 1: Answers for Reading Comprehension: “One out, a quarter out”

The answers below are example answers. Your answers (especially for number four) may look different.

1. The protests at French universities are the result of a negative reaction to higher-education reforms that “want to grant more autonomy to universities” (“One out, a quarter out”). Staff and students are opposed to the idea that university presidents might receive more power, and they reject the idea of a hierarchical system of universities as a result of privatizing universities.

2. People might be turned off by the protesting because of the disruptions the protests might cause. Exams could be postponed, and lectures or tests might have to be held in unusual places such as McDonalds.

3. Although unintended, many French students are simply choosing not to enroll, which could mean that they are studying elsewhere or not studying at all. Enrollment at the 11 most strike-prone universities fell three to five times faster than the national average. Students will not put up with the new reforms or the shenanigans of worthless protests, so they are simply not enrolling.

4. Two possible answers:
   a. (If your answer is YES): The protests at French universities could have lasting effects due to the current situation of decreasing enrollment. Although France does not have tuition fees or selected entry, private donations to universities may decrease or stop completely if the enrollment rate continues to fall or if the university turns into a strike-prone institution.
   b. (If your answer is NO): The protests at French universities will most likely not have last effects. The majority of students are fed up with the protests, and these students do not even think twice when they walk by burning braziers and protesters. The majority will most likely overrule the minority and convince those students to stop their protests.

Part 2: Answers for Language 1

1. Incorrect; Verb form in conditional; If you want to make a good impression on a first date, you have to be prepared to listen more and speak less.

2. Incorrect; Missing preposition for the verb “listen” – listen to; Women like men who can listen to them.

3. Incorrect; Infinitive used instead of gerund after “practice”; First, you have to practice asking interesting and short questions about her life and future plans.

4. Incorrect; Gerund used instead of infinitive after “forget” – this makes the sentence have a different meaning that the one that was intended; Don’t forget to ask about her job.
5. Incorrect; ‘Especially’ at the beginning of the sentence is considered poor style in written, academic English; In particular, modern women like to be admired by their work.

Part 3: Answers for Language 2
1 – d; 2 – a; 3 – d; 4 – a