



MarTEL

Maritime Test of English Language

Phase 1 Standards Study Guidelines

with support from all partners



Study Guidelines for MarTEL Phase 1

OFFICER CADETS

INTRODUCTION

The *MarTEL Phase 1 Test* aims to assess the English language proficiency of those wishing to enter maritime training institutions as officer cadets. It is designed to test general English, and is set in a maritime context. However, because test takers will, at this stage in their career, have had little or no experience of working at sea, knowledge vocation-specific vocabulary is not required. Where such vocabulary is used, the test taker will be able to deduce meaning through the context of the question.

The test is designed for learners who have had the underpinning knowledge of a nationally recognised high school diploma or equivalent, and is designed for test takers who possess an intermediate level of English.

The test consists of five sections:

- Structure:* One part, 20 questions, 20 minutes, 20% of the total score.
- Reading Skill:* Two parts, 10 questions, 30 minutes, 20% of the total score.
- Listening Skill:* Two parts, 10 questions, 20 minutes, 20% of the total score.
- Speaking Skill:* Three parts, three questions, 15 minutes, 20% of the total score.
- Writing Skill:* One part, 30 minutes, 20% of the total score.

The *MarTEL Phase 1 Test* is computer based. It is executed in one sitting and has a total duration of approximately two hours. While taking the test, it is possible to go back and forth through the questions of each part of a section, but once a part has been completed and submitted, it is not possible to return. The test taker can choose which section to start with, but a section cannot be quitted until all of its parts are submitted. No section may be re-visited. Test takers are advised to be sure of their answers before moving on to another part.

	STRUCTURE	LISTENING	READING	SPEAKING	WRITING
Suggested topics	Topics are generally related to issues associated with daily routines, free-time activities, environmental and socio-political issues.				
Tasks	No. of questions: 20 20 min duration	No. of listening tasks: 2 Number of Qs per task: 5 10 min. duration per task	No. of reading tasks: 2 Number of Qs per task: 5 15 min. duration per task	No. of speaking tasks: 3 Variable duration (C. 15 min)	No. of writing tasks: 1 30 min. duration
Skills required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applying logic to choose the correct word to fit the sentence Deducing the correct form of words based on the tense of the sentence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deducing meaning from context Following the main points of a discussion Following speech in an everyday conversation Understanding straightforward factual information Identifying both general messages and specific details Following a simple lecture or a talk on a maritime related matter Understanding simple technical information Understand the information content of simple broadcast audio material about some simple maritime related topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finding and understanding general information in straightforward material Searching one long or several short texts to locate specific information Recognising significant points in straightforward texts Identifying the main points in clearly written argumentative texts. Recognising the general line of argument in a text but not necessarily in detail. Understanding a simple description of events Understanding clearly written straightforward instructions for a piece of equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making comparisons Describing experiences Describing events Describing hopes and ambitions Giving reasons and explanations for opinions Giving reasons and opinions for plans Summarising text and describing personal reaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passing on routine factual information Stating reasons for actions. Describing experiences, feelings, and events in detail. Describing basic details of unpredictable occurrences, e.g., an accident. Describing hopes and ambitions. Taking messages describing enquiries, problems, etc. Summarising a text and describing personal reaction. Briefly giving reasons and explanations for opinions, plans, and actions.
Task types	Multiple choice questions	Multiple choice questions	Multiple choice questions	Non-interactive speaking (response to a specific task, integrated reading & speaking)	Writing an essay-type piece (response to a specific question) Writing a letter (response)
Marking Criteria	Criterion Referencing and Percentage Marks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a 60% minimum pass mark for each skill. An overall mark of 60% is required for the final pass grade. 				
Rubrics	Instructions for the test are written, spoken, or both.				

TEST SECTIONS

STRUCTURE

Introduction

English grammatical structures are tested in the *MarTEL Phase I Test*. Grammar forms the core of language proficiency, and solid knowledge of the grammatical structures of English is needed for cadets to express themselves clearly. Grammar plays an important part in the four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) assessed in other sections of the MarTEL Phase 1 Test.

Content of the structure section

The section consists of 20 multiple choice questions. For each question, the test taker must complete the sentence by choosing from the options provided. In this section, the test taker must apply logic to choose the correct word to fit the sentence, and deduce the correct form of the word. One question appears at a time. The test taker has 20 minutes to complete this part, and may go back and forth through the questions using the 'back' and 'next' buttons on the screen.

Sample structure questions

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Complete the sentences by choosing the correct option. There are 20 questions. You have 10 minutes to complete this part.

The shipping world _____ a lot recently.

- a) will change
- b) should change
- c) had changed
- d) is changing
- e) has changed

Have you _____ to sea before?

- a) be
- b) went
- c) been
- d) to go
- e) going

If I pass my exams, I _____ work on a ship.

- a) can't
- b) am
- c) will
- d) maybe
- e) want

Oil tankers are usually _____ than sailing boats.

- a) biggest
- b) bigger
- c) most big
- d) more big
- e) big

Tonight we will go _____ the port

- a) at
- b) to
- c) in
- d) on
- e) near

How to succeed in this section

In this section, test takers must use their knowledge of English grammatical structures to choose the correct distracter in order to complete the sentence in each of the questions. As only one answer is acceptable, candidates must be able to decide which one fits, based on the information contained in the rest of the sentence. To succeed, test takers must be able to decide which form is appropriate.

Test takers are advised to revise the use of the grammatical structures provided in appendix 1, and revise common regular and irregular verbs. Many books and websites containing grammar exercises are available for this purpose.

In addition to receiving professional English language tuition, test takers are also advised to try to immerse themselves in the English language as much as possible before the test. This may help them to improve their grammar. This can be done by:

- watching films in English
- reading books in English
- conversing with English speaking friends
- exchanging letters or emails with English speaking friends

This list is not exhaustive, but these are some ways in which a potential test taker could practise their English. Exposure to authentic language can help students to bridge the gap between the classroom and the outside world, which may help them to consolidate what they have learned during lessons or self-study.

READING

Introduction

During the course of their studies at their maritime academy, cadets will need to read English language texts on a range of nautical topics. Professional mariners need to be able to read and understand a range of texts relating to their work, such as reports and manuals. These texts will contain specialised maritime vocabulary, which the cadets will learn in their Maritime English lessons at their academy. The MarTEL Phase 1 reading section assesses the ability of the test taker to comprehend two straightforward texts, which contain general English vocabulary. These texts are drawn from a variety of sources. There are with five multiple choice questions for each text.

Content of the section

The reading section lasts for 30 minutes. Test takers have 15 minutes to read each text and answer the five questions. The text will remain on the screen for test takers to refer to as they answer the questions, which appear one after another. Test takers can cycle through the questions to check their answers by clicking ‘back’ and ‘next’.

Sample reading question

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Read the text and answer the 5 multiple choice questions. You have 15 minutes for this part.

Shipwrecks Discovered

A team of marine archaeologists has discovered four ancient ship wrecks dating all the way back to the first century, off the tiny Italian island of Zannone.

The remains of the vessels are located 165 metres underwater and although the timber structures have been eaten away by marine organisms, their enormous depth has kept them preserved from being disturbed by fishermen over the centuries.

Annalisa Zarattini, an official from the archaeological services section of the Italian culture ministry said, “The deeper you go, the more likely you are to find complete wrecks. The ships sank, and they came to rest at the bottom of the sea. The wood disappeared, and you find the whole ship, with the entire cargo. Nothing has been taken away.”

The ships were discovered by Italian authorities and the Aurora Trust, a U.S. foundation that promotes exploration of the Mediterranean. The vessels were carrying a variety of products including wine, fruit, and pungent fish sauce, which was a favourite ingredient in Roman cooking.

Many people now believe that Italy’s west coast was an important junction for ships bringing supplies to Rome. The vessels found are the second “fleet” of ships to have been discovered in the area of the Pontine Islands.

The Pontine area has many natural harbours. Zarattini is confident that the area will attract many tourists soon, after the authorities agreed to leave the wreckage in place.

"We think that these islands, which are very small, were important for trade in the region because they had good natural harbours"

Zarattini said, "We think the sea, which is particularly beautiful around these islands, can become a real museum. Soon a lot of people will be able to go down and see the wreckages themselves."

1. The text is about:

- a. A new ship which has just been built
- b. four ships which sank during the first world war
- c. a shipwreck which was discovered 1900 years ago by the Romans
- d. a maritime museum in Italy which has four excellent shipwrecks
- e. four shipwrecks which were discovered more than 150 metres underwater

2. The ships were carrying:

- a. food
- b. weapons
- c. timber
- d. minerals
- e. fabric

3. Which of the following statements is correct?

- a. The shipwrecks are in bad condition because they were disturbed by fishermen
- b. The shipwrecks which were found are made from steel, and are in good condition
- c. Although the wood is gone, everything else is still there
- d. The shipwrecks have been looted and there is nothing left except for the hull
- e. Fishermen discovered the shipwrecks many years ago, but didn't tell anyone about them

4. According to Annalisa Zarattini, complete shipwrecks are most likely to be found:

- a. If they are not covered in sand
- b. In shallow water
- c. by fishermen
- d. In deep water
- e. In museums

5. Zarattini thinks that the Pontine islands will become popular with tourists because:

- a. The authorities decided not to move the shipwreck
- b. The islands are a good place to catch fish
- c. The sea around the islands is very warm
- d. A large luxury resort will be built on the island of Zannone
- e. The authorities agreed to move the shipwreck

How to succeed in this section

To succeed in this section, the test taker must show that they have read and understood the text by answering the multiple choice questions correctly. The test taker is expected to read

for both gist and specific detail. The test taker will need to recognise the significant points in the text, and answer accordingly.

In preparation for the test, and in addition to reading graded material provided by tutors or found during self-study, it is advised that the test taker spends time reading authentic English language texts such as books, news stories, and websites, as this may help them to improve their vocabulary and reading skills.

LISTENING

Introduction

There is no place for ambiguity in the maritime working environment, therefore it is vital to have the ability to comprehend the commands and given tasks precisely. Lack of clarity in communication may result in safety failures and jeopardise the safety of the vessel and the crew. Listening is an integral part of effective communication and execution of tasks on board.

Content of the listening section

The listening section consists of two independent parts. Each part contains a recording, which is around one minute long. There are five multiple choice questions for each part. Part one of the listening section will be a recording of a dialogue between two or more people. Part two will be a recorded monologue on a maritime related topic, such as a lecture. In keeping with the rest of the test, although the recordings are on a maritime topic, vocation specific vocabulary is not included. All information needed to answer the questions is in the recording itself. No prior knowledge of the subject matter is required.

Sample listening question (part one type)

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: You will hear a dialogue between two people. You have 10 minutes to listen to the dialogue and answer the five questions. You are advised to take notes while listening.

(The text disappears and a picture of the seafarer and the local appears.)



Seafarer:	Excuse me, could you please tell me how to get to the port? I have to get back to my ship.
Local:	Well, there are two ports in this city. Which one are you asking about?
Seafarer:	Just a second, please... I wrote it on a piece of paper...and I think I put it somewhere in my pocket...Let me find it....Yes, here it is.....I'm looking for Port Venus.
Local:	Oh. Port Venus. You're lucky, it's very close. It's off Apple street.
Seafarer:	Ok, thanks! How far is it to Apple street?
Local:	It's not very far away. Walk straight down this road, which is called Pear street. Take the first left, then after 200 metres turn left again. You will see a factory on your right. The port is behind the factory. You can't miss it.

Seafarer:	OK, I see. After turning left, I have to walk for 200 metres, then turn left again and I will see the factory on the right.
Local:	Yes, exactly.
Seafarer:	Does it take long on foot?
Local:	No, it takes about ten minutes to walk there. But do you see those big black clouds in the sky? We are expecting a lot of rain. I would take a taxi if I were you!
Seafarer:	Thanks a lot. I'll take your advice! I don't want to walk in the rain. Bye!
Local:	Bye!

1. The seafarer wants to...

- a. take a taxi to the factory
- b. go for a walk
- c. return to his ship
- d. explore the town
- e. go to visit a port

2. Where is his destination?

- a. 10 minutes away by taxi
- b. Behind the factory
- c. At the end of Pear street
- d. In front of the factory
- e. Near the port

3. After turning left, how far must the seafarer go?

- a. 100 metres
- b. 200 metres
- c. 300 metres
- d. 400 metres
- e. 500 metres

4. What is the weather like?

- a. It is foggy.
- b. It is windy.
- c. It is sunny.
- d. It is raining heavily.
- e. It is going to rain soon.

5. How will the seafarer get to his destination?

- a. Take a taxi
- b. Walk there
- c. Take a bus
- d. Drive there in his car
- e. Take the train

How to succeed in the section

To succeed in this section, the test taker must show that they have understood the audio recording by answering the multiple choice questions correctly. The test taker is expected to listen for both gist and specific detail. The test taker will need to recognise the significant points in the recording, and answer accordingly.

In part one, test takers will listen to an everyday conversation on a maritime topic, and will need to show that they have followed the main points of the discussion and identified specific details by selecting the correct answer from the five choices. In part two, test takers must comprehend straightforward information on a given topic. In both parts, test takers will be required to deduce meaning from context.

SPEAKING

Introduction

On a vessel crewed by people from many different languages, major communication problems can occur if people do not understand each other's speech. Officers must be able to communicate not only in ship-to-ship, ship-to-shore, bridge-to-engine room, but also during daily tasks on board or ashore. Many work related situations necessitate vocation specific vocabulary and structures, such as Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP). SMCP is normally taught on dedicated maritime English courses and are tested in MarTEL Phase 2. The speaking section in MarTEL Phase 1 is designed to evaluate test takers' competence in general spoken English.

Content of the speaking section

The MarTEL Phase 1 speaking section requires non-interactive speaking, which is recorded by the computer and sent away for assessment. The section consists of three independent parts, which are designed to provide three different types of input for the test taker to respond to.

Part 1 - Independent speaking (describe a picture)

In this section, the test taker is asked to describe a picture. A visual prompt is provided so that test takers can display their ability to speak English by describing what they see. Marks are awarded on the test taker's pronunciation, their use of grammar and vocabulary, and the coherence and cohesion of their response.

Sample question

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Respond to the task by speaking into the microphone. Your spoken answer will be recorded. You have one minute to prepare, and two minutes to respond. Begin speaking after the beep.

Task: Describe what you can see in the picture using as much detail as possible. Begin speaking after the beep.



Image source: www.freedigitalphotos.net Photographer: Tom Curtis

Sample answer: “In the picture there is a big grey ship with a lot of windows. The lower part of the ship, near the water, is blue. The ship is called the Pride of Portsmouth, and the name of the company is written on the side in bigger letters. Behind the ship, there is a big white boat with three masts. In the background I can see a few buildings. I can see that the ship is moving. The ship might be leaving the port, or arriving.”

Part 2 - Independent speaking (respond to a question based on personal experience)

In this section, the test taker is given a prompt, which is both written and read out by the narrator. The prompt is designed so that the test taker can provide a response based on personal experience. This way, all test takers will be able to provide an answer without having to rely on their own creativity. Marks are awarded on the test taker’s pronunciation, their use of grammar and vocabulary, and the coherence and cohesion the response given.

Sample question

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Respond to the task by speaking into the microphone. Your spoken answer will be recorded. You have one minute to prepare, and two minutes to respond. Begin speaking after the beep.

Task: Explain why you decided to choose a career at sea. Begin speaking after the beep.

Sample answer: “I chose to work at sea because I think it is a very good career. My father was master on LNG carriers for many years. He travelled round the world and saved a lot of money. I would like to do this too. I think that working at sea will be hard, but I don’t mind because I will learn a lot, and I will travel round the world like my father did. I think that if I work hard then I will become master within 10 years. I would like to work on icebreaking tankers in the Barrents Sea.”

Part 3 - Integrated reading / speaking (give an opinion in relation to information provided)

In this section, the test taker is provided with a simple text on a maritime topic, which the test taker must respond to with their views. Texts used in this section contain some form of argument, which the test taker may or may not agree with. In their spoken response, test takers must refer to the text and giving reasons for their view. This tests their ability to identify the main points of the argument, and give reasons for their opinions. Pronunciation, use of grammar and vocabulary, the coherence and cohesion of their response, and reference to the comprehension text are all assessed in this part.

Sample question

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Read the text and then answer the question. You have ten (10) minutes to read the text and prepare, and two (2) minutes to respond. Begin reading now. Begin speaking after the beep.

Text:

Water Pollution

Water is one of the most valuable resources on the planet. Many people are concerned about many types of pollution that get into our seas. The sea becomes more polluted every day.

There are many people who try hard to stop the pollution of the sea. However, it is not enough to keep up with the problem of pollution, which gets worse all the time. Pollution from both shipping and pleasure boats all over the world makes this problem worse. Many shipping companies have said that they will try not to pollute the sea, and most boat owners take care not to cause pollution.

However, some small boat owners do not take responsibly for polluting the seas. One yacht owner said: "I think that it is ok to throw my used engine oil into the sea. It isn't very much oil; it won't make any difference."

"When I am in port, I don't want to have to carry the used oil to the disposal point. I'd rather spend my time relaxing. Anyway, oil spills from accidents involving big commercial tankers cause far more pollution than a small amount of oil from my little boat."

However, these small spills can add up and severely contaminate the sea. Pollution can kill or injure fish and wildlife. Birds, fish, and other animals that are caught in spilt oil will become sick and die. Plant life on land nearby can also be damaged. People caught throwing oil into the sea can get into a lot of trouble with the authorities.

Question: Do you think that throwing small amounts of oil into the sea is wrong? Explain your view, referring to the text and giving reasons for your opinion. Begin speaking after the beep.

Sample answer: "I think that it is always wrong to throw oil into the sea, and it is right that people can get into trouble for it. The yacht owner shouldn't put his oil in the sea. He says that throwing a small amount of oil into the sea won't cause much damage, but he is wrong. Even a small amount of oil can cause a lot of damage to the environment. It can cause problems for animals and damage beaches. Yes, oil spills from big accidents cause a lot of pollution, and should be prevented, but they do not mean to spill oil. This yacht owner throws oil into the sea on purpose."

How to succeed in this section

The speaking section of the MarTEL Phase 1 test consists of non-interactive speaking into a microphone headset. Test takers will have time to prepare before answering. The time provided is not long, so test takers must be ready for this.

The following is advice to test takers:

- Read the question carefully
- Make notes during the preparation time if necessary, and use this time to your response. This may help you to convey ideas in an organised way
- Give the test your full attention
- Do not start speaking until ready, or before hearing the beep.
- Support ideas with reasons or examples, but do not make the message complex by adding unnecessary details
- Pay attention to the time limits
- Pay attention to your pronunciation, intonation, and stress patterns.

WRITING

Introduction

Professional mariners need to be able to present information in a clear, organised, and systematic way. Thus, the accurate use of syntax (sentence structure) and the appropriate use of transition signals are essential in guiding the reader effectively. A mariner's ability to communicate well in writing is of major importance. MarTEL Phase 1 assesses general English writing skills.

Content of the writing section

The MarTEL Phase 1 writing section consists of one integrated reading / writing task. In this section, test takers must write an essay in response to a text, or a reply to a letter, and support their answer with reasons and examples. The answer is typed into the on-line testing software. In their written response, test takers must refer to the question and text, and give reasons for their answer. This tests their ability to identify the main points of an argument, and give reasons for their opinions. The answer is marked on, communicative quality, lexical accuracy and range, grammatical accuracy and range, reference to the task, and the effective organisation of the answer.

Sample writing question

(Instructions are written and narrated)

Instructions: Read the text, and type 150 to 200 words in response to the task. You must refer to the text. You have 30 minutes for this part.

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Cheshunt Maritime Academy. We are an officer training college, and our courses start in September and March.

Last year, we offered officer training courses to 200 officer cadets, who all got their Certificate of Competence. This year, we are only able to offer 150 places on the course, so people who want to apply must write an excellent application. On our courses, cadets will study hard.

We would like to know if you would be interested in applying to join our next course. If you are, please could you write back and provide the following information:

- What your background is
- Why you think you would be a good candidate
- Which type of ship you would like to work on in the future
- When you would like to start

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Penelope Lafever

Recruitment Officer
Cheshunt Maritime Academy

Task: You would like to apply for this course. Write a reply to the letter, and try to get a place on the course.

Sample answer:

Dear Penelope,

Thank you for your letter. I am very interested in your officer training course. I understand that cadets at your academy will have to work hard, but this will be no problem for me, as I am a very hard worker.

I have lived in Holland all my life. I enjoy playing sports and keeping active. In my studies I have always worked hard, and I achieved good results from all of my exams at school. My best subjects were mathematics and chemistry. My hobbies include rebuilding old cars, and making amateur radio equipment.

My ambition is to work on an LNG carrier as chief engineer. This has been my ambition since I was 10 years old. I have always enjoyed fixing engines, and I believe that if I have the chance to train as an engineer officer, I will succeed.

I would like to start on the course in September.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Nilis

How to succeed in this section

As the MarTEL Phase 1 writing test involves test takers typing their answer, it is advised that they practice their typing beforehand. Test takers should refer to the topic in their answer, and write as clearly and concisely as they can. Responses will be graded on the communicative quality and the effective organisation of the answer, so test takers are advised to structure their response clearly. Some may find it helpful to make notes on a piece of paper before typing. As lexical / grammatical accuracy and range are also assessed, it is highly advisable for test takers to check what they have written before they submit their answer.

Appendices

A1: Structure and vocabulary guidelines

This list is not intended to be an exhaustive list of the contents of the Phase 1 test, rather more of a set of guidelines for test takers to refer to when preparing for the test.

Present simple
Past simple
Present continuous
Past continuous
Present perfect
Past perfect
Present perfect continuous
Future forms: will / going to
Modal verbs
Indirect / reported speech
Comparatives and superlatives
Was / were / going to
Passive forms
Conditionals (zero, first, and second)
Tag questions
Gerund and infinitive forms
Common phrasal verbs
Uses of 'get'
Affirmative and negative statements