

PT

Philosophy Test

SECTION BREAKDOWN

Comprehension

Read the entire text first. The first time round you want to optimise for understanding. Make sure you understand the argument, they want you to reformulate it in your own words, not to rearrange it. For the next sub question read over the passage again highlighting the parts that are relevant.

Logic

You will be given a series of questions make sure to respond with full answers not just one-word responses.

Essay

Always start off with a plan of what you want to argue then answer the question. Make sure you answer the question and everything you say contributes to your answer of the question. You should be able to summarise your answer in one concise sentence.

USEFUL LINKS

The most important thing is to visit the website (link attached below). You can find practice questions and it is recommended to go through them in order to nail down your timing and looking over your answers with your teachers. There are some outlines of model answers on the website as well but only one for each section so use it sparingly.

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/admissions-tests/philosophy-test>

Wilfrid Hodges' book LOGIC is recommended on their website as a starting guide to help with the logic question.

WHAT IS THE PT?

The PT is 60 minutes long and comprises of two sections - Part A & B.

Part A is a comprehension style question; Part B has two options: one logic style question and one essay question. You can only choose one.

PREPARATION TIPS

In terms of the essays read what they are looking for on the website they describe it explicitly in the first section. They are not looking for quotes of famous philosophers whose opinions they most likely already know. They are looking for you to demonstrate that you can put forward simple persuasive reasoned arguments. The only way to cultivate this skill is through practice. Take some time out and think about those classic philosophical problems like free will, for example. Try and form your own opinion, think what other people might say in response. Of course, in all likelihood you will not prompt the question but the point is not to prepare an answer in advance but to develop that flexibility to be able to confront topics you are unfamiliar with. This flexibility will ensure you answer the question directly and not read into the page your own question; the answer to which you have already memorised. Talk about these topics with friends and family if you can; apply to and read the entries of previous winners of essay competitions, there are an abundance online if you google them.

For logic it is recommended to go through the papers, it is very much like revising for maths, you only get better by practice. Complete them with and without timed conditions. Marks schemes are not available for all of them (only two) but you can look up explanatory videos on YouTube and go through it with your teachers. For logic, the marks schemes are a lot more useful because you can have a right or wrong answer unlike an essay, but there are a vast number of different topics they could choose from and marks schemes are quite hard to come by so you still need to maintain that adaptability.

With regards to choosing between the logic and the essay question in Section B, logic, in most cases, either comes easily to people or it doesn't. After doing a few questions you can quickly see to which category you belong to. If you like logic, it is easier to keep to time and you can have more confidence of getting the question correct.

WHAT IS CONSIDERED TO BE A "GOOD SCORE"?

The results for the Philosophy Test are not automatically published so it is difficult to find out what you get. Ultimately, do your best! It is very hard to gauge how well you have done in these types of tests as you can see by the vagueness of the marks scheme, so it is not very helpful to aim for marks.