What to prepare before entering a Singapore school: an English readiness checklist

Entering a new school in a different country comes with academic and language demands. For students whose first language is not English, the transition can be especially challenging. Singapore schools follow a curriculum taught in English, so a solid command of the language is essential for classroom participation, understanding instructions, and completing assignments. This checklist helps you identify what to focus on so you can feel more confident before the school term begins.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand what you read, not just decode words. Singapore school texts often contain factual passages, narrative stories, and informational articles. Students are expected to answer questions that require them to infer meaning, identify main ideas, and understand cause and effect. To prepare, read short articles or stories daily and ask yourself questions about the text. Focus on understanding the context even when vocabulary is unfamiliar. This skill also helps with following written instructions in tests and assignments.

Vocabulary building

A strong vocabulary helps you express ideas clearly and understand what others say. In Singapore classrooms, teachers use subject-specific terms in science, mathematics, and social studies. Start by learning common academic words such as "compare," "contrast," "explain," and "describe." Create a personal word list with definitions and example sentences. Use new words in your own writing and speech. Reading widely - from news articles to short stories - naturally exposes you to more words in context.



Grammar and sentence structure

Grammar is the framework that makes your writing and speaking clear. Singapore school assessments often test grammar through gap-filling exercises, error correction, and sentence rewriting. Focus on verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and conjunctions. Understanding how to form complex sentences with clauses will help you write more mature responses. Practise writing short paragraphs and check for common errors such as missing articles or incorrect word order.

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Written expression

Written expression goes beyond grammar and vocabulary. It involves organising ideas logically, using appropriate tone, and supporting points with examples. For composition tasks, you may be asked to write a narrative, a descriptive piece, or an opinion essay. Practise planning your writing before you start. Write an introduction that states your main idea, body paragraphs that develop it, and a conclusion that summarises or reflects. Pay attention to paragraph structure: each paragraph should focus on one main point.

Question interpretation

Misunderstanding a question can lead to an incorrect answer even when you know the material. Singapore exam questions often use phrases like "give reasons," "explain with examples," or "compare and contrast." Learn what each instruction expects from you. Practise reading questions carefully and underlining keywords. If a question asks for two reasons, provide exactly two, not one or three. This precision matters in both open-ended and multiple-choice sections.

Reading speed and fluency

Reading speed affects how quickly you can process information during lessons and exams. In a timed test, slow reading can leave you with less time to think and write. Build reading fluency by reading aloud for ten minutes each day. Choose texts that are slightly challenging but not frustrating. Track your reading time and gradually increase the length of passages. Fluency also improves comprehension because your brain spends less energy on decoding words and more on understanding meaning.

Language fluency in speaking

Oral communication is part of many Singapore school assessments. You may be asked to read aloud, share opinions, or discuss a topic with a partner. Fluency means speaking without long pauses and using connected sentences rather than single words. Practise by talking about everyday topics in English - describe your morning, explain a hobby, or retell a short story. Record yourself and listen for areas where you hesitate. Focus on pronunciation of common words and clear expression of ideas.



One effective approach is to follow a guided preparation for English assessment plan that covers these areas systematically. Such a plan typically includes regular practice in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, with feedback on your progress. Many students find that working through structured exercises helps them identify weak points and build confidence over time. This **guided preparation for English assessment** can be tailored to your current level and the specific requirements of the school or exam you are aiming for.

United Ceres College is also on YouTube.

Practical study habits

Consistency matters more than cramming. Set aside 20 to 30 minutes daily for English practice. Mix activities: one day focus on a grammar exercise, another day write a short paragraph, and another day read and answer comprehension questions. Keep a notebook for new words and grammar rules you learn. Review past material regularly so it stays fresh. If you struggle with a particular area, spend extra time there before moving on to something new.

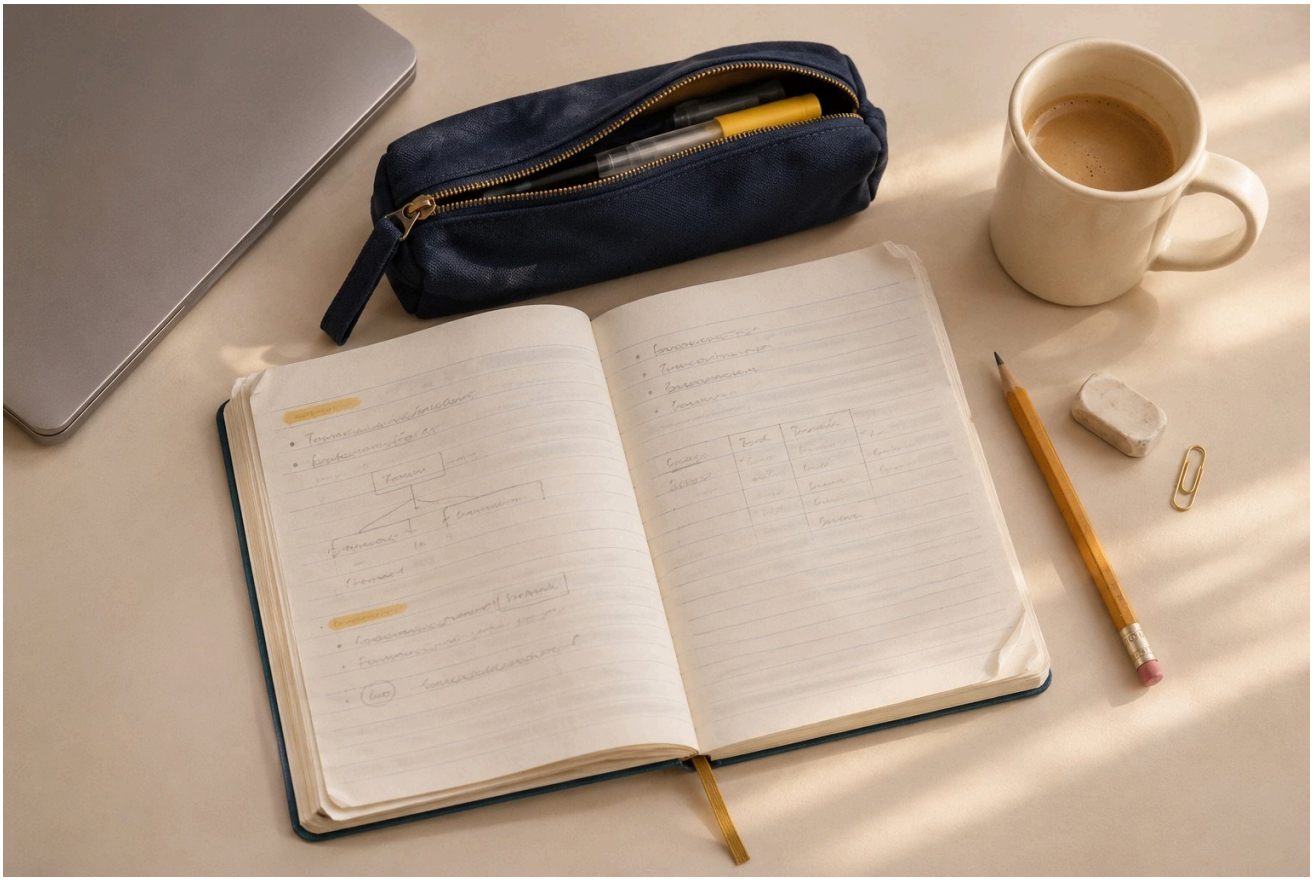
Understanding the school's expectations

Each school may have its own approach to English instruction and assessment. Some schools use placement tests, while others rely on continuous assessment. Find out whether your

school uses an exam like the AEIS or a school-based English test. Knowing the format - multiple choice, short answer, composition, or oral - helps you prepare more effectively. Ask the school or consult an educational advisor to get specific information about the test structure and sample questions.

Getting ready for the AEIS

The Admissions Exercise for International Students (AEIS) is a common entry route for students who wish to study in Singapore schools. The English paper tests reading comprehension, vocabulary, grammar, and writing. Preparing for it requires a focused effort on the skills mentioned above. Many students benefit from taking practice papers under timed conditions. This helps you get used to the pace and reduces anxiety on test day. Review your answers to understand why you made mistakes and how to avoid them next time.



If you need additional support, you can contact United Ceres College at 37 Middle Rd, #05-00, Singapore 188946, phone +65 8699 3609, for more information about their English language programmes.