



Kadir Has University

School of Foreign Languages

PROFICIENCY EXAM STRATEGIES and
PREPARATION GUIDE



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Using This Document



This guide is designed to help you succeed in the Kadir Has University Proficiency Exam. In this guide there are targeted strategies and practical tips for each section. You can also have a look at some sample exam tasks here <https://www.khas.edu.tr/en/ydy-khas-level-placement-and-proficiency-exam-khas-lppe/>

To help you use this document more effectively, we have the following suggestions:

1. Understand the Purpose

Each section of this guide explains what is being tested, the skills you need to demonstrate, and actionable strategies to improve your performance. Use it to identify your strengths and areas for improvement.

2. Study Strategically

Rather than reading the entire document in one sitting or jumping straight to the sample exams, focus on the sections most relevant to your preparation needs.

For example:

- If reading is your weak point, spend extra time on the Speed Reading and Detailed Reading sections.
- If writing is a challenge, review the Writing Section strategies and practice using the suggested techniques.

3. Practice Regularly

Many of the strategies, such as skimming and scanning or active listening, require consistent practice. Use mock exams or sample questions to apply what you've learned from this guide in a realistic context.

4. Personalize Your Approach

Adapt the advice in this document to suit your learning style and preferences.

For instance:

- If you prefer visual aids, highlight or annotate key points in the guide.
- If you learn best through repetition, create flashcards or summaries of the strategies for quick review.

5. Prepare Effectively

This document is a companion to your preparation, not a substitute for practice. Pair it with:

- Practice tests
- Feedback from teachers or peers
- Additional resources, such as grammar and vocabulary exercises or listening practice

6. Stay Organized

Keep track of your progress by noting which strategies you've practiced and where you've seen improvement. Use this guide as a checklist to ensure you're covering all the necessary skills.

7. Review Before the Exam

In the days leading up to the exam, revisit key sections of this guide to refresh your memory and boost your confidence. Focus on areas where you feel less secure to ensure you're well-prepared.

By following these steps and utilizing the strategies outlined in this guide, you can approach the Kadir Has University Proficiency Exam with confidence and achieve your best possible result. Good luck!

General Exam Tips



These general tips apply to the entire exam and are useful for any test-taking situation:

1. Familiarize Yourself:

Read all instructions carefully before starting any section to avoid mistakes.

2. Pay Attention to Timings:

Keep track of how much time you have for each section.

3. Stay Calm:

If you're unsure of an answer, move on and return to it later. Staying on one question can waste valuable time.

4. Prepare Your Materials:

Bring pens, pencils, and erasers.

5. Practice with Mock Tests:

Simulate exam conditions to become comfortable with the format and timing.



The Format of the Kadir Has Proficiency Exam



Section	Purpose	Description	Number of Questions
Reading Part 1 (Skimming & Scanning)	Assesses a candidate's ability to quickly identify key information and to find specific details such as names, dates, or data within an academic text.	Students are given limited time to answer questions that test their ability to extract this information efficiently without reading the entire text closely.	4-8 questions
Reading Part 2 (Careful Reding)	Evaluates candidates' ability to comprehend and interpret texts of moderate complexity, suitable for learners who will undertake an undergraduate program at an English as a medium of instruction university.	Using the same texts from Reading Part 1 (Text A), and one additional text (Text B) students answer questions designed to assess a range of reading skills, such as identifying main ideas, understanding specific details, drawing inferences, understanding vocabulary in context, and recognizing logical organization.	10-12 per text
While-Listening	Evaluates a test-taker's ability to comprehend semi-formal academic conversations in a university context.	Students listen to a 10–15-minute pre-recorded natural, semi-formal academic conversation between a professor and a student discussing a specific topic or problem related to the student's studies. They answer questions as they listen.	10-12
Note-Taking	Assesses the students' ability to comprehend and take notes on academic content presented orally, in a lecture format, and to use their notes to answer questions.	Students listen to a 10–15-minute pre-recorded academic lecture with an outline of main headings and subheadings to guide their notetaking. Afterwards, they use their notes to answer questions. Their notes are not graded.	10-12
Writing	Assesses students' ability to organize and articulate their thoughts clearly and coherently in writing. Evaluates their capacity to express and support opinions through effective paragraphs.	One 1-2 paragraph response of 250-300 words in which the students are asked about their opinion on a topic.	N/A

Reading Section



Part 1: Skimming & Scanning

What are we testing?

Reading section Part 1 assesses your ability to quickly identify main ideas and to locate specific information within an academic text.

Skills to be Assessed

- Main Idea Identification
- Locating Specific Information

Part 1: Skimming and Scanning - Strategies

Strategy	Description
Preview the Text	Read the title, headings, and any visuals (charts, diagrams) to get a sense of the topic and structure.
Focus on Keywords	Underline key phrases in the questions and look for related words or synonyms in the text. Watch for signal words like 'however,' 'therefore,' or 'in contrast' to understand the flow of ideas.
Read the First and Last Sentences	Pay attention to the opening and closing sentences of paragraphs, as they often contain the main idea.
Use Scanning for Details	When looking for specific information like names, dates, numbers, or short facts, scan the text by moving your eyes quickly over it without reading every word.
Separate Timing	The exam separates skimming and careful reading questions, so use the allocated time for each efficiently.
Eliminate Wrong Answers	If unsure, narrow down choices by ruling out obviously incorrect options.
Handle Unknown Words	Use context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words rather than skipping over them.
Recognize Distractors	Be cautious of misleading options in multiple-choice questions and rely on evidence from the text.

Part 2: Careful Reading

What are we testing?

Reading Section Part 2 evaluates your ability to comprehend and interpret texts of moderate complexity.

Skills to be Assessed

- General Comprehension: Grasping main ideas and key points
- Detailed Understanding: Identifying specific information and details
- Understanding of Cohesion: Recognizing cohesive devices and logical flow. Identifying Transitions Between Paragraphs
- Contextual Vocabulary Interpretation: Interpreting unfamiliar words through context
- Inference and Interpretation: Recognizing implied information, tone, and conclusions

Part 2: Detailed Reading: Strategies

Strategy	Description
Read Questions First	Understand what to look for before reading the text to save time.
Take Notes	Mark key points or jot down ideas in the margins, especially for questions about details, inferences, or vocabulary.
Separate Timing	Detailed reading questions will be given out after completing the speed-reading section. Allocate the provided time (approximately 60 minutes) to thoroughly read and analyse the text.
Identify Relationships	Look for connections like cause-effect, comparisons, or contrasts within the text. Words like "because," "similarly," or "on the other hand" can guide your understanding.
Answer Order	Questions generally follow the sequence of the text, so use this to your advantage.
Recognizing Distractors	Be cautious of misleading options in multiple-choice questions and rely on evidence from the text. If you don't know what a distractor is, we have created a short guide below.
Handling Unknown Words	Use context clues to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words rather than skipping over them.
Review	If you have enough time, revisit your answers to ensure clarity and accuracy. Double-check any skipped questions.

What is a distractor?

Too General or Too Specific:

A distractor might overgeneralize a point or focus too narrowly, missing the broader meaning.

Half-True Statements:

Distractors may include partially correct information but fail to answer the question fully or correctly.

Emotional Words:

Words like "always," "never," or "completely" may signal an extreme or unlikely option.

Same-word trap:

Distractors may repeat exact words or phrases from the text or audio, tempting you to choose them. However, these options often misrepresent the actual meaning or context. Don't rely on word-matching—focus on understanding the full message.

Synonym Traps:

Distractors often include synonyms that seem to match the text or audio but do not reflect the correct meaning.

Focus on Evidence:

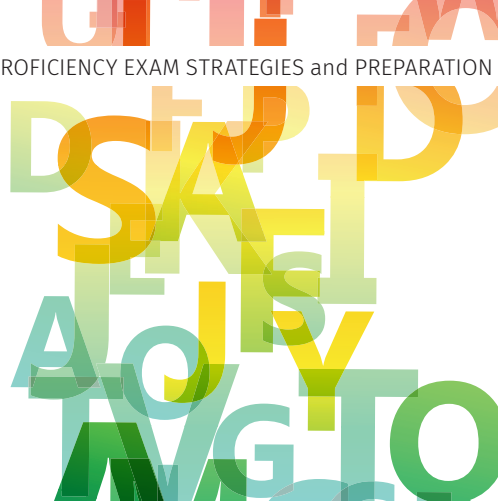
Base your answers on clear evidence from the material. Avoid guessing based on familiarity or assumptions.

Recheck Paraphrasing:

Often, correct answers are paraphrased, while distractors might use identical wording but in an incorrect or misleading way.



Listening Section



Part 1: While Listening

What are we testing?

Listening Section Part 1 evaluates your ability to comprehend semi-formal academic conversations in a university context.

Skills to be Assessed

- Identifying the overall topic or main point of a conversation
- Recognizing specific information within a conversation
- Making inferences based on information, tone, or attitude expressed in the conversation.
- Understanding the purpose of a speaker's statement or the intention behind certain advice, questions, or suggestions.
- Understanding the sequence of events or the order of actions suggested in a conversation.
- Recognizing synonyms or paraphrased information within the conversation

Part 1: While Listening: Strategies

Strategy	Description
Preview Questions	Use the time before the audio starts to read and underline key words in the questions. Anticipate the type of information you need to listen for.
Listen for Keywords	Focus on specific details, attitudes, and main points during the conversation. Words emphasized by the speaker may indicate importance.
Listen for Synonyms	Be aware that the words in the audio may differ from those in the questions, so listen for paraphrased ideas.
Don't Hesitate	If you miss a question, move on and revisit it during the review time.
Use Context	Pay attention to tone, attitude, and expressions to infer answers where needed.
Recognize Distractors	Be cautious of misleading options in multiple-choice questions and rely on evidence from the audio.
Practice with Diverse Accents	Familiarize yourself with various English accents, such as British and American, as these may appear in the exam.

Part 2: Note-Taking

What are we testing?

Listening Section Part 2 assesses your ability to comprehend and take notes on academic content presented orally, in a lecture format, and to use your notes to answer questions.

Skills to be Assessed

- Listening for Main Ideas: Identifying the main points and purpose of the lecture
- Listening for Specific Details: Understanding and recording key examples, details, or supporting points
- Organizational Skills: Structuring notes in accordance with the provided outline (your notes are not graded or directly assessed)
- Recall and Interpretation: Using notes to accurately answer comprehension questions about the lecture content

Part 2: Note-Taking: Strategies

Strategy	Description
Use the Outline	Follow the provided headings and subheadings to organize your notes. This can help ensure you capture the most relevant information.
Abbreviate	Use shorthand to save time, but ensure you can understand your notes later. For example, use symbols like "+" for "important" or ">" for "therefore."
Focus on Key Points	Prioritize main ideas, supporting details, and examples. Avoid trying to write down every word.
Revisit Notes	After the audio, refine your notes to prepare for answering questions. Fill in gaps or clarify any shorthand you used.
Recognize Distractors	Be cautious of misleading options in multiple-choice questions and rely on evidence from the audio.
Practice Active Listening	Train yourself to focus during long lectures or conversations by practicing with sample audio clips.
Practice with Diverse Accents	Familiarize yourself with various English accents, such as British and American, as these may appear in the exam.
Notes are Not Graded	Remember, your notes are not graded, so focus on making them useful for answering the questions rather than perfect.

Writing Section



What are we testing?

The writing section assesses your ability to organize and articulate your thoughts clearly and coherently in writing. It also evaluates your capacity to express and support opinions through effective paragraphs.

Main areas of focus

- Clarity of Ideas
- Development and Organization of Ideas
- Language Use

Writing Section: Strategies

Planning your Writing (10 minutes)

Plan Your Response	Spend the first 10 minutes brainstorming and organizing your ideas. A well-structured outline can make writing faster and clearer. Your planning notes will not be graded so focus on making them useful for writing a good response to the prompt rather than being perfect.
Focus on Two Main Points	Select two ideas to develop in detail, supported by examples. For example, if asked about product success, focus on "marketing" and "customer needs."
Use the Prompt	Ideas are provided in the question, so consider how you can expand on them with your own examples or reasoning.

Writing your Response (50 minutes)

Clear Structure	Use an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Start each paragraph with a clear topic sentence.
Stay Relevant	Address the question directly and avoid unnecessary information. For example, avoid tangential ideas that don't support your main argument.
Use Variety	Incorporate diverse vocabulary and sentence structures to showcase your language ability. Avoid repeating the same phrases or words too often.
Be Objective	Avoid overly casual language or personal anecdotes unless the question specifically asks for them.

Reviewing your Response

Check Your Work	Spend the last 5 minutes reviewing grammar, spelling, and clarity. Look for sentence fragments, run-ons, or misplaced modifiers.
Word Count	Aim for 250-300 words; avoid writing too little or too much. Use your judgment to balance conciseness with completeness.
Polish Your Language	Replace simple words with academic alternatives (e.g., "good" with "beneficial") where appropriate.
Common Errors to Avoid	Watch for issues like inconsistent verb tenses, run-on sentences, or unclear pronoun references.

Studying Grammar and Vocabulary



The Kadir Has Proficiency Exam is an academic skills-based exam. This means that grammar and vocabulary are not tested through separate, isolated questions. However, they will play a role in your overall success. To fully understand the reading and listening texts and to produce a clear, accurate, and well-organized written response, you need a good command of both grammar and vocabulary.

To help you prepare effectively, we recommend focusing on two key areas:

Vocabulary: Concentrate on the K1–K4 word lists and the Academic Word List (AWL). These contain many of the most common and useful words in academic English. You are not expected to memorize every word. Your goal should be to increase your familiarity and confidence when seeing or using them in context.

Grammar: Focus on accuracy and range in common grammar structures. This includes verb tenses, sentence structure, articles, and connectors. All of these are essential for writing clearly and understanding texts.

What Vocabulary do I need to study before the exam?

To succeed in your exam, we recommend focusing on two key areas of vocabulary: the **K1-K4 word lists** and the **Academic Word List (AWL)**. These lists contain many words, and it's completely normal not to know all of them. The goal is to increase your familiarity and confidence with as many as possible, not to memorize everything.

Why are these important and how can they support your preparation?

K1-K4 Word Lists:

These are the most frequently used words in English, categorized by how commonly they appear.

- **K1 and K2:** Everyday words that are essential for understanding instructions and questions (e.g., “house,” “effort,” “run”).
- **K3 and K4:** Slightly less common but still very important, especially for more advanced or formal contexts.

What we recommend: Focus on mastering these words to ensure you can confidently understand and respond to all exam tasks.

Academic Word List (AWL):

This list includes vocabulary that appears frequently in academic texts but is not part of the most basic English vocabulary (e.g., “analyze,” “significant,” “structure”).

What we recommend: Make these words a priority, as they are often used in writing prompts, reading passages, and academic lectures and discussions.

Why This Matters:

The exam will test your ability to handle both general and academic English. Without familiarity with **K1-K4**, it's easy to misunderstand instructions or basic content. Without a solid grasp of the **AWL**, academic tasks may feel more difficult than they need to.

Our Advice:

- **Review these lists:** Identify words you don't know and focus on those first.
- **Practice actively:** Use these words in sentences, writing tasks, or flashcards.
- **Integrate them:** Include them in your practice to build confidence.

By focusing on these word lists, you'll not only prepare for your exam but also improve your overall English proficiency.

Remember: You don't need to know every word on these lists, but the more familiar you are with them, the better prepared you'll be!

What Grammar do I need to study before the exam?

To succeed in the Kadir Has Proficiency Exam, we recommend concentrating on key grammar areas that are essential for both receptive skills (reading and listening) and writing. Mastering these will not only help you understand texts and lectures but also produce clear and accurate writing responses. Here's what to focus on:

Grammar Point	For Reading and Listening	For Writing	Our Advice
Tenses	Tenses like the present perfect, past perfect, and various future forms (e.g., "will," "going to") help you follow timelines and sequence of events in texts or lectures.	For writing: Use the correct tense for different contexts: Present tense: Stating facts or general truths (e.g., "Water boils at 100°C."). Past tense: Describing completed studies or events (e.g., "The data was collected in 2024."). Future forms: Making predictions (e.g., "The results will show a significant change.").	Practice identifying tenses in academic materials and apply them correctly in your writing.
Passive Voice	The passive voice is common in academic texts to emphasize actions or results rather than who performed them (e.g., "The experiment was conducted in 2022.").	Essential for describing processes, research, or results (e.g., "Data was analysed using statistical software.").	Practice rewriting active sentences as passive and notice its use in academic texts.

Grammar Point	For Reading and Listening	For Writing	Our Advice
Complex Sentences	Complex structures, such as relative clauses (e.g., "which," "that," "who") and conditionals (e.g., "If climate change continues, the effects will worsen"), are key for understanding relationships between ideas.	Use them to link ideas, create arguments, and ensure coherence (e.g., "Although the sample size was small, the results are significant.").	Break down long sentences when reading, and practice combining simple ideas into complex ones when writing.
Reported Speech	Found in lectures and summaries (e.g., "The professor stated that the findings were inconclusive.").	Useful for summarizing information or presenting secondary sources (e.g., "It was suggested that further research is needed.").	Practice converting direct to reported speech, paying attention to tense and pronoun changes.
Modals and Hedging Language	Recognizing modals (e.g., "might," "should") and hedging phrases (e.g., "It is possible that...") helps interpret nuanced or cautious language in academic texts.	Essential for expressing uncertainty and maintaining a formal tone (e.g., "This may suggest a link between variables.").	Incorporate modals into your writing and notice how they're used in academic materials.
Articles and Determiners	Understand how "a," "an," and "the" specify general or specific ideas (e.g., "An experiment" vs. "The experiment").	Using articles correctly demonstrates precision and clarity.	Pay attention to article use in your reading and ensure accuracy in your writing.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	Proper punctuation can help you navigate and interpret complex sentences.	Ensure clarity and flow by using commas, semicolons, and periods correctly.	Practice punctuating your own writing to improve readability and coherence.

Why This Matters

- For **receptive skills**, understanding grammar structures helps you decode complex ideas in reading passages and lectures.
- For **writing**, accurate grammar ensures clarity, precision, and an academic tone, all of which are crucial for success in your exam.

Our Advice

1. Practice actively:

Identify grammar structures in academic texts and lectures. Break down sentences to see how grammar contributes to meaning.

2. Write regularly:

Practice essays, summaries, and reports using the grammar points above. Review your writing to spot and correct errors.

3. Review often:

Grammar mastery comes from repetition. Make time to revisit these key areas regularly.

By focusing on these grammar points, we can help you strengthen your understanding and production of academic English, ensuring you're fully prepared for your exam.

Final Advice**Practice Regularly:**

Familiarize yourself with the exam format and practice with similar materials. Use online resources or past exams for additional practice.

Stay Positive:

Confidence is key. Trust your preparation and give your best effort.

Build Stamina:

Practice full-length exams to improve your concentration and endurance.

Seek Feedback:



Review your practice answers with teachers or peers to identify areas for improvement.

Good luck on your exam!

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