

READING EXAM GUIDE

Everything you need to know about the reading component

Basic Exam A1 / Integration Exam A2

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Which exam do you take?

There are two reading exams. Which one you take depends on your route.

	A1 Basic Exam	A2 Integration Exam
Route	Basic Exam (MVV / abroad)	Integration Exam 2013 or B1-route 2021
Level	A1	A2 (2013 law) or B1 (2021 law)
Duration	35 minutes	65 minutes (A2)
Texts	9 texts, 19 questions	8-10 texts, 25 questions
Pass mark	14 of 19 (74%)	19 of 25 (76%)
Dictionary	Not allowed	Not allowed
Format	Computer, text left, questions right	Computer, multiple choice 3-4 options
Cost	EUR 50	EUR 50

Not sure which exam you take?

Check your PIP (Personal Integration Plan) from the municipality. Are you abroad applying for a visa? Then you take the Basic Exam A1 at the Dutch embassy.

Quick start (no time? do these three things)

1. Read the question before you read the text.
2. Find the key word from the question in the text.
3. Read only the sentence around it. Watch for niet, geen, nooit, wel.

How does the reading exam work?

The reading exam is on a computer. You see a text on the left side of the screen. On the right side you see the questions. You select an answer by clicking on the letter.

What kind of texts can you expect?

A1 exam: short stories and descriptions about everyday topics. For example about a house, an animal, the weather, or a person.

A2 exam: functional texts from daily life. Not just stories but also advertisements, forms, timetables, emails, letters, websites, and announcements.

What kind of questions can you expect?

- Who or what: Who does something? What is there? Who has something?
- Where and when: Where does something happen? When is something?
- How many: How many people? How many years? How many euros?
- What does someone think: Does someone like something or not?
- Yes/no or true/not true: Is a statement about the text correct?

No dictionary allowed.

You may not use a dictionary during the reading exam. Learn words beforehand. But if you do not know a word, use the rest of the text to understand it from context.

The smartest way to read

The biggest mistake people make: they read the whole text from start to finish, word by word. That wastes too much time. Use this strategy instead:

Step 1: Read the question first.

Read the question before you read the text. That way you know what you are looking for.

Step 2: Find the key word from the question in the text.

The key word is the most important word in the question. Look for that word or a similar word in the text.

Step 3: Read only the sentence around the key word.

Do not read the whole text. Read only the sentence where the key word appears.

Step 4: Choose the answer.

Choose the answer that matches what is in that sentence. Not what you think or already know.

Example:

Question: 'Waar slapen de varkens?' (Where do the pigs sleep?)

Key word: slapen (sleep)

You look for the word 'slapen' in the text. The sentence says: 's Nachts slapen ze in de woonkamer op de bank.' (At night they sleep on the sofa in the living room.)

Answer: In de woonkamer (In the living room). It says so literally in the text.

What goes wrong most often?

1. You read the whole text from beginning to end. That costs too much time. Read the question first, then search for the answer in the text.
2. You choose an answer based on what you know, not what the text says. The answer is always in the text.
3. You choose an answer because it contains a word that also appears in the text, but that word is not the answer. Read the whole sentence around the word.
4. You miss small words like 'niet' (not), 'nooit' (never), 'soms' (sometimes), 'altijd' (always). These completely change the meaning.
5. You spend too much time on a difficult question. Skip it and move on. Come back to it at the end.
6. You try to translate every word. That is not necessary. Understand the general idea and search for the specific answer.

Pay extra attention to:

'niet' (not), 'nooit' (never), 'geen' (no/none), 'maar' (but), 'toch' (still/yet), 'wel' (do/does). These words change the meaning of a sentence completely. Question: 'What does someone like?' Check whether 'niet' (not) appears in the text.

Time management

You have limited time. Use it wisely.

A1 exam: 35 minutes, 19 questions

That is an average of 1 minute 50 seconds per question, including reading the text.

- Short texts, no complex language. You need to read quickly.
- Start with the question, not the text.
- If a question is difficult: skip it, move on, come back later.

A2 exam: 65 minutes, 25 questions

That is an average of 2 minutes 36 seconds per question, including reading.

- There are more texts and they are slightly longer. But the strategy is the same.
- Functional texts like timetables and advertisements: scan for names, times, and numbers.
- Personal letters and emails: find who the writer is and what they ask or say.

Useful tip:

Practice reading Dutch for 10 minutes every day. Visit the Dutch news website nos.nl. Read the headlines and the first sentence of each article. You do not need to understand everything. Building reading speed takes time and daily habit.

Common text types in the A2 exam

In the A2 exam you do not only get stories. You also get functional texts. These are the most common:

Advertisements

What is being sold or offered? What does it cost? When is it?

- Read: name of the product, price, date or time.
- Ignore: decorative words and slogans.

Emails and letters

Who is writing? To whom? What is the message or request?

- Read: the greeting (who), the first sentence (why), the closing (what does the reader need to do).

Timetables and schedules

When is something? What time? Which day?

- Scan: find the day or time that appears in the question.
- Do not read the whole timetable. Only find what you need.

Forms

What do you need to fill in? What is required?

- Read: the fields and what they contain.
- Questions are often about: name, date, address, phone number.

Announcements and rules

What may you do? What may you not do? When?

- Pay attention to: 'verboden' (forbidden), 'verplicht' (required), 'mag niet' (not allowed), 'moet' (must).

Practice texts with answers

Below are practice texts in the format of the real exam. Correct answers are marked in green.

A1 level practice texts

Text 1: Kees and the television

It is ten o'clock in the evening. Kees is sitting on the sofa. He is watching television. The programme is boring and he falls asleep. Then Kees hears his name. He slowly opens his eyes. He sees that his wife turns off the television. She gives him a kiss. Kees's wife says: 'Come to bed, dear, because you sleep in the bedroom and not on the sofa by the television.'

1) Who turns off the television?

- a. Kees
- b. His wife ✓
- c. The programme

2) Where do Kees and his wife sleep?

- a. In the bedroom ✓
- b. On the sofa
- c. In the evening

Text 2: Maria and the pigs

Maria is about seventy years old. She has no children. She is not married. She lives in her small house together with two pigs. The house has a small garden. Sometimes the pigs are in the garden, but very often they are inside. At night they sleep on the sofa in the living room. Maria and the two pigs are very happy together. But Maria's neighbours are not happy about the pigs.

1) How old is Maria approximately?

- a. 70 years ✓
- b. 17 years
- c. 2 years
- d. 77 years

2) Where do the pigs sleep?

- a. In the garden
- b. In the living room ✓
- c. The neighbours

Text 3: The mouse and the cat

A mouse is a very small animal. In almost every house a mouse sometimes walks around. A mouse always looks for something to eat. Cheese or bread is very tasty for a mouse. The cat is not afraid of a mouse. The mouse and the cat both run quickly through the house. The cat wants to catch the mouse and eat it. But often the mouse is faster than the cat.

1) Who is often faster?

- a. Cat
- b. Mouse ✓
- c. Cheese

2) What does the cat want to do with the mouse?

- a. Eat it ✓
- b. Be afraid
- c. Run
- d. Tasty

Text 4: The postman

The postman brings the post to your home. Often the postman has letters or cards. Sometimes he has a parcel. The postman walks a lot outside. He walks from house to house. On a letter or parcel there is an address. The postman reads the address. He might see your name and your address. Then he gives the post to you. The postman makes many people happy, because getting post is almost always nice!

1) Where does the postman walk?

- a. Letters
- b. Cards
- c. Outside ✓

2) How do people react to the post and the postman?

- a. Happy ✓
- b. Maybe
- c. Often
- d. Always

A2 level practice texts

In the A2 exam you also get functional texts. Here are two examples.

Text 5: Laundry day (A2)

On Monday it is laundry day. Then I do the laundry. Fortunately I have a good washing machine. Everything can go in the machine. Everything gets clean. It is not much work, because the machine does everything. When the laundry is clean, I empty the machine. On Monday afternoon I have to iron. I find that less enjoyable. Ironing cannot be done in the machine. I have to iron everything myself: T-shirts, trousers, dresses, skirts, shirts, underpants, towels and tea towels. Everything! That is a lot of work.

1) What do I do the laundry with?

- a. With a machine ✓
- b. With my hands
- c. Not in the machine
- d. With ironing

2) Which job do I not enjoy?

- a. Doing the laundry
- b. Lots of work
- c. Ironing ✓

Text 6: Jiska and the concert (A2)

It is Saturday. Jiska is going to a pop concert by Beyonce. The concert is in a large stadium. Many people want to watch and listen to Beyonce. Jiska does not often go to a concert. She finds it very special. At the stadium fifty thousand people want to get in. Jiska is standing in the queue. Everyone is nervous.

1) Which concert are many people going to?

- a. Jiska's concert
- b. Beyonce's concert ✓
- c. Jiska and Beyonce's concert

2) How does Jiska feel?

- a. Famous
- b. Tired
- c. Enthusiastic ✓

Everyone has to wait a long time. When everyone is in the stadium, the show begins. Jiska is enthusiastic. The concert is amazing!

Reading strategy summary

1. Read the question first.
2. Find the key word from the question in the text.
3. Read only the sentence around the key word.
4. Choose the answer that is in the text, not what you think.
5. Watch out for small words: niet (not), nooit (never), soms (sometimes), altijd (always).
6. Difficult question? Skip it, move on, come back at the end.

Free practice materials

Official sources

- duo.nl/examentraining: official DUO practice tests, free, same format as the real exam
- inburgeren.nl: official information portal
- nos.nl: short Dutch news articles, free, good for building reading speed

Extra practice

- knmoefenen.nl: also useful for reading comprehension exercises
- adappel.nl/oefenmateriaal: A1 and A2 reading practice tests
- TikTok [@dutchwithlucas](https://www.tiktok.com/@dutchwithlucas): short Dutch lessons
- learnwithlucas.com/inburgering: more information and upcoming group sessions

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