

Cambridge English: Preliminary 7

WITHOUT ANSWERS

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A Guide to Cambridge English: Preliminary

Cambridge English: Preliminary, also known as the *Preliminary English Test (PET)*, is part of a comprehensive range of exams developed by University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL). Cambridge English exams have similar characteristics, but are designed for different purposes and different levels of English language ability. *Cambridge English: Preliminary* is at Level B1 (*Threshold*) of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It has also been accredited in the UK as an Entry Level 3 ESOL certificate in the UK's National Qualifications Framework.

Examination	Council of Europe Framework Level	UK National Qualifications Framework Level
Cambridge English: Proficiency <i>Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)</i>	C2	3
Cambridge English: Advanced <i>Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)</i>	C1	2
Cambridge English: First <i>First Certificate in English (FCE)</i>	B2	1
Cambridge English: Preliminary <i>Preliminary English Test (PET)</i>	B1	Entry 3
Cambridge English: Key <i>Key English Test (KET)</i>	A2	Entry 2

Cambridge English: Preliminary is accepted by employers, and further education and government departments for business, study and immigration purposes. It is also useful preparation for higher level exams, such as *Cambridge English: First*, *Cambridge English: Advanced* and *Cambridge English: Proficiency*.

Cambridge English: Preliminary is ideal for learners who need to use English in a practical everyday way to communicate, e.g. read simple textbooks and articles, write simple personal letters, and deal with most of the situations you might meet when travelling in an English-speaking country.

Cambridge English: Preliminary is also available in a version with exam content and topics specifically targeted at the interests and experience of school-aged learners. *Cambridge English: Preliminary for Schools*, also known as *Preliminary English Test (PET) for Schools*, follows exactly the same format and level, and leads to the same certificate as *Cambridge English: Preliminary*.

Topics

These are the topics used in the *Cambridge English: Preliminary* exam:

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Clothes	Hobbies and leisure	Relations with other people
Daily life	House and home	Services
Education	Language	Shopping
Entertainment and media	Natural world	Social interaction
Environment	People	Sport
Food and drink	Personal feelings, opinions and experiences	Transport
Free time	Personal identification	Travel and holidays
Health, medicine and exercise	Places and buildings	Weather
		Work and jobs

Cambridge English: Preliminary content – an overview

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test focus
Paper 1	Reading/ Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	Reading: Five parts which test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Writing: Three parts which test a range of writing skills.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level. Assessment of candidates' ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.
Paper 2	Listening	35 minutes (plus 6 minutes transfer time)	Four parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics.
Paper 3	Speaking	10–12 minutes per pair of candidates	Four parts: In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner; In Parts 2 and 4, they interact with another candidate; In Part 3, they have an extended individual long turn.	Assessment of candidates' ability to express themselves in order to carry out functions at <i>Threshold</i> level. To ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses. To talk freely on matters of personal interest.

Paper 1: Reading and Writing

Paper format

The Reading component contains five parts. The Writing component contains three parts.

Number of questions

Reading has 35 questions; Writing has seven questions.

Sources

Authentic and adapted-authentic real world notices; newspapers and magazines; simplified encyclopaedias; brochures and leaflets; websites.

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Answering

Candidates indicate answers by shading lozenges (Reading), or writing answers (Writing) on an answer sheet.

Timing

1 hour 30 minutes.

Marks

Reading: Each of the 35 questions carries one mark. This is weighted so that this comprises 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Writing: Questions 1–5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of five; and Question 7/8 is marked out of 20. This gives a total of 30 which is weighted so that it represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Preparing for the Reading component

To prepare for the Reading component, you should read a variety of authentic texts, for example, newspapers and magazines, non-fiction books, and other sources of factual material, such as leaflets, brochures and websites. It is also a good idea to practise reading (and writing) short communicative messages, including notes, cards and emails. Remember, you won't always need to understand every word in order to be able to do a task in the exam.

Before the examination, think about the time you need to do each part. It is usually approximately 50 minutes on the Reading component and 40 minutes on the Writing component.

Reading			
Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of Questions
1	Three-option multiple choice. Five short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, emails, labels, etc., plus one example.	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.	5
2	Matching. Five items in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.	5
3	True/False. Ten items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Processing a factual text. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	10
4	Four-option multiple choice. Five items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Reading for detailed comprehension: understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	5
5	Four-option multiple-choice cloze. Ten items, plus an integrated text example, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexico-structural patterns in the text.	10

Preparing for the Writing component

Part 1

You have to complete five sentences which will test your grammar. There is an example, showing exactly what the task involves. You should write between one and three words to fill this gap. The second sentence, when complete, must mean the same as the first sentence.

It is essential to spell correctly and no marks will be given if a word is misspelled. You will also lose the mark if you produce an answer of more than three words, even if your writing includes the correct answer.

Part 2

You have to produce a short communicative message of between 35 and 45 words in length. You are told who you are writing to and why, and you must include three content points. These are clearly laid out with bullet points in the question. To gain top marks, all three points must be in your answer, so it is important to read the question carefully and plan what you will include. Marks will not be deducted for minor errors.

Before the exam, you need to practise writing answers of the correct length. Answers that are too short or too long and likely to contain irrelevant information, will probably lose marks.

The General Mark Scheme below is used with a Task-specific Mark Scheme (included in the Student's Book with answers).

General Mark Scheme for Writing Part 2

Mark	Criteria	
5	All three parts of the message clearly communicated. Only minor spelling errors or occasional grammatical errors.	
4	All three parts of the message communicated. Some non-impeding errors in spelling or grammar, or some awkwardness of expression.	
3	All three parts of the message attempted. Expression requires interpretation by the reader and contains impeding errors in spelling and grammar.	Two parts of the message clearly communicated. Only minor spelling errors or occasional grammatical errors.
2	Only two parts of the message communicated. Some errors in spelling and grammar. The errors in expression may require patience and interpretation by the reader and impede communication.	
1	Only one part of the message communicated.	
0	Question unattempted, or totally incomprehensible response.	

Part 3

You have a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter. You need to write about 100 words.

Make sure you practise enough before the exam. Reading simplified readers in English will give you ideas for story writing. Also writing to a penfriend or e-pal will give you useful practice.

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Mark Scheme for Writing Part 3

Examiners look at four aspects of your writing: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, and Language.

Content focuses on how well you have fulfilled the task, in other words if you have done what you were asked to do.

Communicative Achievement focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the letter or story and whether you have used the appropriate register.

Organisation focuses on the way you put the piece of writing together, in other words if it is logical and ordered, and the punctuation is correct.

Language focuses on your vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language, as well as how accurate it is.

For each of the subscales, the examiner gives a maximum of five marks; this gives an overall maximum score of 20 for the Part 3 task.

Examiners use the following assessment scale:

B1	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices.	Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis. Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Errors do not impede communication.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task in generally appropriate ways to communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is connected and coherent, using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices.	Uses everyday vocabulary generally appropriately, while occasionally overusing certain lexis. Uses simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control. While errors are noticeable, meaning can still be determined.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.	Produces text that communicates simple ideas in simple ways.	Text is connected using basic, high-frequency linking words.	Uses basic vocabulary reasonably appropriately. Uses simple grammatical forms with some degree of control. Errors may impede meaning at times.

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B1	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed.	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>		

Length of responses

Make sure you write the correct amount of words. Responses which are too short may not have an adequate range of language and may not provide all the information that is required. Responses which are too long may contain irrelevant content and have a negative effect on the reader.

Varieties of English

You are expected to use a particular variety of English with some degree of consistency in areas such as spelling, and not for example switch from using a British spelling of a word to an American spelling of the same word.

Writing			
Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of Questions
1	Sentence transformations. Five items, plus an integrated example, that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences using a different structural pattern so that the sentence still has the same meaning.	Control and understanding of <i>Threshold/Cambridge English: Preliminary</i> grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.	5
2	Short communicative message. Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, email, etc. The prompt takes the form of a rubric to respond to.	A short piece of writing of 35–45 words focusing on communication of specific messages.	1
3	A longer piece of continuous writing. There is a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story. Candidates are assessed on four aspects of their writing: Content, Communication Achievement, Organisation, and Language.	Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.	1

Paper 2: Listening

Paper format

This paper contains four parts.

Number of questions

25

Text types

All texts are based on authentic situations.

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Answering

Candidates indicate answers either by shading lozenges (Parts 1, 2 and 4) or writing answers (Part 3) on an answer sheet. Candidates record their answers on the question paper as they listen. They are then given six minutes at the end of the test to copy these on to the answer sheet.

Recording information

Each text is heard twice. Recordings will contain a variety of accents corresponding to standard variants of native speaker accents.

Timing

About 35 minutes, including six minutes to transfer answers.

Marks

Each question carries one mark. This gives a total of 25 marks, which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of questions
1	Multiple choice (discrete). Short neutral or informal monologues or dialogues. Seven discrete three-option multiple-choice items with visuals, plus one example.	Listening to identify key information from short exchanges.	7
2	Multiple choice. Longer monologue or interview (with one main speaker). Six three-option multiple-choice items.	Listening to identify specific information and detailed meaning.	6
3	Gap-fill. Longer monologue. Six gaps to fill in. Candidates need to write one or more words in each space.	Listening to identify, understand and interpret information.	6
4	True/False. Longer informal dialogue. Candidates need to decide whether six statements are correct or incorrect.	Listening for detailed meaning, and to identify the attitudes and opinions of the speakers.	6

Preparing for the Listening paper

You will hear the instructions for each task on the recording, and see them on the exam paper. In Part 1, there is also an example text and task to show you how to record your answers. In Parts 2, 3 and 4, the instructions are followed by a pause; you should read the questions in that part then. This will help you prepare for the listening.

The best preparation for the Listening paper is to listen to authentic spoken English at this level. Having discussions provides a good authentic source of listening practice, as does listening to the teacher. You can also listen to texts to give you practice in understanding different voices and styles of delivery.

Paper 3: Speaking

Paper format

The standard format is two candidates and two examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction.

Timing

10–12 minutes per pair of candidates.

Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test. There are a total of 25 marks in Paper 3, making 25% of the total score for the whole examination.

Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Timing
1	Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor. The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.	Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.	2–3 minutes
2	Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other. Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.	2–3 minutes
3	Extended turn. A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for up to a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.	Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.	3 minutes
4	General conversation. Candidates interact with each other. The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits, etc.	3 minutes

Assessment

Throughout the Speaking test, examiners listen to what you say and give you marks for how well you speak English, so you must try to speak about the tasks and answer the examiner and your partner's questions.

You are awarded marks by two examiners; the assessor and the interlocutor. The assessor awards marks from the Analytical Assessment scales for the following criteria:

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to how accurately you use grammar and also to the correct use of vocabulary. It also includes how wide a range of grammar and vocabulary you use.

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Discourse Management

This refers to the length, relevance and coherence of your answers. You should be able to produce sentences which are clear and easy to follow. What you say should be related to the topic and the conversation in general.

Pronunciation

This refers to the how easy it is to understand what you say. You should be able to say words and sentences that are easy to understand.

Interactive Communication

This refers to how well you can talk about the task and to your partner and the examiner. You should be able to start the conversation and keep it going, and ask for repetition or clarification if needed.

B1	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant despite some repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary to talk about familiar topics.	Produces responses which are characterised by short phrases and frequent hesitation. Repeats information or digresses from the topic.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

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The examiner asking the questions (the interlocutor) gives marks for how well you do overall using a Global Achievement scale.

B1	Global Achievement
5	Handles communication on familiar topics, despite some hesitation. Organises extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Handles communication in everyday situations, despite hesitation. Constructs longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>
1	Conveys basic meaning in very familiar everyday situations. Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitation and pauses.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>

Further information

More information about *Cambridge English: Preliminary* or any other Cambridge ESOL examination can be obtained from Cambridge ESOL at the address below or from the website at www.CambridgeESOL.org

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