

A Guide to PET

The PET examination is part of a group of examinations developed by Cambridge ESOL called the Cambridge Main Suite. The Main Suite consists of five examinations which have similar characteristics but are designed for different levels of English language ability. Within the five levels, PET is at Level B1 (Threshold) in the *Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. It has also been accredited in the UK as an Entry Level 3 ESOL certificate in the National Qualifications Framework.

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

PET is a popular exam with candidates who are learning English out of personal interest and for those who are studying for employment reasons. It is also useful preparation for higher level exams, such as FCE (First Certificate in English), CAE (Certificate in Advanced English) and CPE (Certificate of Proficiency in English).

If you can deal with everyday written and spoken communications (e.g. read simple textbooks and articles, write simple personal letters, make notes during a meeting), then this is the exam for you.

Topics

These are the topics used in the PET exam:

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

PET content: an overview

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test focus
Paper 1	Reading/ Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	<p>Reading: Five parts which test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts.</p> <p>Writing: Three parts which test a range of writing skills.</p>	<p>Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level.</p> <p>Assessment of candidates' ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.</p>
Paper 2	Listening	35 minutes (approx.)	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.

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.

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Writing: Questions 1–5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of five; and Question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25 which 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 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 will probably lose marks.

The General Mark Scheme below is used with a Task-specific Mark Scheme (see pages 104, 117, 129 and 141).

General Mark Scheme for Writing Part 2

Mark	Criteria
5	All content elements covered appropriately. Message clearly communicated to reader.
4	All content elements adequately dealt with. Message communicated successfully, on the whole.
3	All content elements attempted. Message requires some effort by the reader. or One content element omitted but others clearly communicated.
2	Two content elements omitted, or unsuccessfully dealt with. Message only partly communicated to reader. or Script may be slightly short (20–25 words).
1	Little relevant content and/or message requires excessive effort by the reader, or short (10–19 words).
0	Totally irrelevant or totally incomprehensible or too short (under 10 words).

Part 3

You have a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter. You need to write about 100 words. Answers below 80 words will receive fewer marks. Answers longer than 100 words may receive fewer marks.

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.

Mark Scheme for Writing Part 3

Band 5 – the candidate's writing fully achieves the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language will be confident and ambitious for the level, including a wide range of structures and vocabulary within the task set. Coherence, within the constraints of the level, will be achieved by the use of simple linking devices, and the response will be well organised. Errors which do occur will be minor and non-impeding, perhaps due to ambitious attempts at more complex language. Overall, no effort will be required of the reader.

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Band 4 – the candidate’s writing will achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language will be fairly ambitious for the level, including a range of structures and vocabulary within the task set. There will be some linking of sentences and evidence of organisation. Some errors will occur, although these will be generally non-impeding. Overall, only a little effort will be required of the reader.

Band 3 – the candidate’s writing may struggle at times to achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language, including the range of structure and vocabulary, will be unambitious, or, if ambitious, it will be flawed. There will be some attempt at organisation but the linking of sentences will not always be maintained. A number of errors may be present, although these will be mostly non-impeding. Overall, some effort will be required of the reader.

Band 2 – the candidate’s writing struggles to achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language, including the range of structure and vocabulary, will tend to be simplistic, limited, or repetitive. The response may be incoherent, and include erratic use of punctuation. There will be numerous errors which will sometimes impede communication. Overall, considerable effort will be required of the reader.

Band 1 – the candidate’s writing has a negative effect on the target reader. The use of language will be severely restricted, and there will be no evidence of a range of structures and vocabulary. The response will be seriously incoherent, and may include an absence of punctuation. Language will be very poorly controlled and the response will be difficult to understand. Overall, excessive effort will be required of the reader.

Band 0 – there may be too little language for assessment, or the response may be totally illegible; the content may be impossible to understand, or completely irrelevant to the task.

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 Threshold/PET 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 primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.	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.

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

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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 test, you are assessed on your language skills, not your personality, intelligence or knowledge of the world. You must, however, be prepared to develop the conversation, where appropriate, and respond to the tasks set. Prepared speeches are not acceptable.

You are assessed on your own individual performance and not in relation to each other. Both examiners assess you. The interlocutor awards a mark for global achievement; the assessor awards marks for: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to the accurate use of grammatical forms and appropriate use of vocabulary. It also includes the range of vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in dealing with the tasks.

Discourse Management

This refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each individual's contribution. On this scale, the ability to maintain a coherent flow of language is assessed, either within a single utterance or over a string of utterances. Also assessed here is how relevant the contributions are to what has gone before.

Pronunciation

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. This includes stress, intonation, and individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of the non-language specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate. Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian, etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

Interactive Communication

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to use language to achieve meaningful communication. This includes initiating and responding without undue hesitation, the ability to use interactive strategies to maintain or repair communication, and sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking.

Further information

More information about PET 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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Test 1

PAPER 1 READING AND WRITING TEST (1 hour 30 minutes)

READING

Part 1

Questions 1–5

Look at the text in each question.

What does it say?

Mark the correct letter **A**, **B** or **C** on your answer sheet.

Example:

0



A Buy three films for the price of two.

B Get a free film with every one you buy.

C Films bought here are printed free.

Answer:

0	A	B	C
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1



Who should Lisa contact if she wants to go to the concert?

A Yvonne

B Marie

C Sally

Reading

2

Parking Form

Complete and place in lower left-hand corner of windscreen

Car registration

Date

- A** Register your car here by filling in this form.
- B** Put this form in your car windscreen after filling it in.
- C** Place the completed form at the top of your car windscreen.

3

NOTICES

Boat Trip to Woodley Place

Due to high water levels, this trip will now take place by coach at no extra cost. The pick-up time from the hotel remains unchanged.

What has changed about the trip to Woodley Place?

- A** the transport
- B** the price
- C** the departure time

4

Mum,
 Could you pick up my skirt from the dry cleaner's when you collect your jacket? I'll pay you back this evening.
 Thanks.

Sonja

What will Sonja's mother do?

- A** receive money for the dry cleaning from Sonja tonight
- B** fetch Sonja's jacket from the dry cleaner's for her
- C** deliver her own clothes to the dry cleaner's

5

Allow at least two hours for your visit to the castle



- A** Each tour of the castle lasts less than two hours.
- B** Two hours is the minimum time recommended for a visit to the castle.
- C** Visitors are only allowed to spend two hours inside the castle.