

Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English 1

*Examination papers from the
University of Cambridge
Local Examinations Syndicate*



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To the student

This book is for candidates preparing for the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) examination. It contains four complete tests which reflect the most recent CPE specifications (introduced in December 2002).

The CPE is part of a group of examinations developed by UCLES called the Cambridge Main Suite. The Main Suite consists of five examinations which have similar characteristics but which are designed for different levels of English ability. Within the five levels, CPE is at Cambridge Level 5.

Cambridge Level 5 Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
Cambridge Level 4 Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)
Cambridge Level 3 First Certificate in English (FCE)
Cambridge Level 2 Preliminary English Test (PET)
Cambridge Level 1 Key English Test (KET)

The CPE examination consists of five papers:

Paper 1	Reading	1 hour 30 minutes
Paper 2	Writing	2 hours
Paper 3	Use of English	1 hour 30 minutes
Paper 4	Listening	40 minutes (approximately)
Paper 5	Speaking	19 minutes

Paper 1 Reading

This paper consists of four parts with 40 questions, which take the form of three multiple-choice tasks and a gapped text task. Part 1 contains three short texts, Part 2 contains four short texts and Parts 3 and 4 each contain one longer text. The texts are taken from fiction, non-fiction, journals, magazines, newspapers, and promotional and informational materials. This paper is designed to test candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level.

To the student

Paper 2 Writing

This paper consists of two writing tasks in a range of formats (e.g. letter, report, review, article, essay, proposal). Candidates are asked to complete two tasks, writing between 300 and 350 words for each. Part 1 (Question 1) consists of one compulsory task based on instructions and a short text. Part 2 (Questions 2–5) consists of one task which candidates select from a choice of four. Question 5 has a task on one of each of three set texts. Assessment is based on achievement of task, range and accuracy of vocabulary and grammatical structures, organisation, content and appropriacy of register and format.

Paper 3 Use of English

This paper consists of five parts with 44 questions. These take the form of an open cloze, a word formation task, gapped sentences, key word transformations and two texts with comprehension questions and a summary writing task. The paper is designed to assess candidates' ability to demonstrate knowledge and control of the language system by completing these tasks which are at text and sentence level.

Paper 4 Listening

This paper consists of four parts with 28 questions, which take the form of two multiple-choice tasks, a sentence-completion task and a three-way matching task. Part 1 contains four short extracts and Parts 2 to 4 each contain one longer text. The texts are audio-recordings based on a variety of sources including interviews, discussions, lectures, conversations and documentary features. The paper is designed to assess candidates' ability to understand the meaning of spoken English, to extract information from a spoken text and to understand speakers' attitudes and opinions.

Paper 5 Speaking

The Speaking Test consists of three parts, which take the form of an interview section, a collaborative task and individual long turns with follow-up discussion. The test is designed to elicit a wide range of language from both candidates. Candidates are examined in pairs by two examiners, an Interlocutor and an Assessor. The Assessor awards a mark based on the following criteria: Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. The Interlocutor provides a global mark for the whole test.

Marks and results

The five CPE papers total 200 marks, after weighting. Each paper is weighted to 40 marks.

A candidate's overall CPE grade is based on the total score gained in all five papers. It is not necessary to achieve a satisfactory level in all five papers in order to pass the examination. Pass grades are A, B or C, with A being the highest. D and E are failing grades. The minimum successful performance in order to achieve Grade C corresponds to about 60% of the total marks. Every candidate is provided with a Statement of Results which includes a graphical display of their performance in each paper. These are shown against the scale Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each paper.

The CPE examination is recognised by the majority of British universities for English language entrance requirements.

Further information

For more information about CPE or any other UCLES examination write to:

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In some areas, this information can also be obtained from the British Council.