

Cambridge English Preliminary

Practical English for everyday use

Information for candidates



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

Preliminary English Test (PET)

www.cambridgeenglish.org/preliminary

How to use this guide

You can print this document if you wish, it is better to read it on screen. Click the links in the document to access other useful online resources such as videos and practice tests, and to find the information you need.

What is Cambridge English: Preliminary?

Cambridge English: Preliminary is at Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The test includes exactly the same tasks and question types as *Cambridge English: Preliminary for Schools*. For both tests, candidates need to use English in everyday situations. The only difference is that *Cambridge English: Preliminary* uses topics and content that is more likely to be of interest to candidates who have left school and may be working. You can take *Cambridge English: Preliminary* as a paper-based or computer-based test.

About the exam

Here's a summary of what's in the exam:

| Paper details | What's in the paper? | What do I need to be able to do? |
|---|---|--|
| Reading & Writing 1 hour 30 minutes 50% of the total marks for the exam <i>continued overleaf</i> | There are five Reading parts. The tasks involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• answering multiple-choice questions on five short texts• matching descriptions of people to short texts• answering true/false questions about a longer text• reading a long text and answering multiple-choice questions that test understanding of different things such as writer opinion• doing a multiple-choice cloze task (a text with gaps and you need to choose the right option to fill in each gap). | The skills you need include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• reading for the main idea• finding specific information and reading for detail• understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose• reading for gist, inference and global meaning• understanding the vocabulary and grammar in a short text. |



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| <i>Continued from previous page</i> | <p>There are three Writing parts. The tasks involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sentence transformations (completing a sentence so that it has the same meaning as another sentence) • writing a short message to communicate some information • doing a longer piece of writing – either a story or an informal letter. | <p>The skills you need include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control and understanding of B1 grammatical structures • the ability to write a short message which includes certain information • the ability to write a longer piece of text (a story or an informal letter). |
| <p>Listening</p> <p>About 30 minutes</p> <p>25% of the total marks for the exam</p> | <p>The Listening paper has four parts and the tasks include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • answering multiple-choice questions on short listening texts and on a longer monologue (one person speaking) or interview • completing a gap-fill while listening to a monologue • answering true/false questions on a dialogue (two people speaking). | <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • listen for key information in short and long conversations and monologues • listen for detailed meaning and to identify the attitude and opinions of the speakers. |
| <p>Speaking</p> <p>About 10–12 minutes</p> <p>25% of the total marks for the exam</p> | <p>The Speaking test has four parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the first part the examiner asks the candidate 'getting to know you' type questions. • In the second part candidates talk to each other about a situation. • In the third part the candidate has to speak for an extended amount of time about a picture. • In the fourth part, the candidates interact with each other again, discussing themes from Part 3 of the test. | <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discuss your current situation, your past experiences and your future plan • discuss a situation with a partner • talk about a picture for an extended period of time • talk about your likes, dislikes, the things you prefer and your habits. |

You don't need to pass all three papers in order to pass the whole exam. For example, if you do very well in Reading & Writing and Listening, but you don't do so well in Speaking, it is still possible to pass the exam.

- ➔ **Download a complete sample paper.**
- ➔ **Try a computer-based practice test.**

Before the exam – preparation

Although knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is important, you will be assessed on a range of skills and on your ability to communicate. So, for example, in the Speaking test you are assessed on your ability to interact with your partner and to continue a conversation for a period of time, as well as your use of language.

To help you feel really prepared for *Cambridge English: Preliminary*, **our website** has a lot of free exam material available, including:

- tips and FAQs for each exam paper
- sample papers and a computer-based practice test
- links to further books for study.

You can also buy **official preparation materials**, including coursebooks and practice tests, to help you prepare for the exam.



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How much do you know about studying for *Cambridge English: Preliminary*?

Can you answer these questions?

1. *What do I have to do in each part of the test?*
2. *How important are practice tests?*
3. *What kinds of things should I read apart from coursebooks?*
4. *How can I improve my writing skills?*
5. *How will the examiner assess my writing?*
6. *How can I use more vocabulary and grammar structures?*
7. *How can I improve my listening skills?*
8. *What is the best way to develop my speaking skills?*

Find the answers on the next page

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Studying for Cambridge English: Preliminary

1. *What do I have to do in each part of the test?*

You can download a sample paper and find more information about each part of the test on the **Cambridge English Language Assessment website**. If you are taking a computer-based exam, you can **try a computer-based practice test**.

2. *How important are practice tests?*

It is very useful to do some practice tests as it will help you to become familiar with the different types of tasks. It is also important to practise doing a test within the time limits. When you have finished, look at the answers and think carefully about the ones you got wrong and the reasons why. You can practise doing a Writing test then compare your answer to other sample answers. You could also do a practice Speaking test with a friend.

Remember, doing practice tests should only be part of your exam preparation. Think about your English ability and the things that you are good at and not so good at. Try to improve your English, not just for the exam but for life after the exam!

3. *What kinds of things should I read apart from coursebooks?*

The Reading paper contains a range of texts so try to look at different texts that you can find around you or on the internet, not just in your coursebook. Some things that would be useful to look at include:

- signs and notices
- notes and text messages from friends or the things that people write on social media websites
- information leaflets (you may be able to find leaflets in English in the library or in a tourist information office)
- **graded readers** (books that are written for people learning English)
- articles and interviews (written for people studying English).

The Reading paper tests reading in different ways, so prepare yourself for this. For example:

- try to read a text quickly to get the main idea (this is called 'skimming')
- read a text to find out certain information, for example, reading a TV guide to find out if there is a certain type of programme on today (this is called 'scanning')
- try to read some texts carefully so you understand everything.

You will need to read in all of these different ways in the Reading test so if you can practise like this it will really help you. Another useful thing you can do when you are reading is try to guess the meaning of words you don't know.



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4. How can I improve my writing skills?

Some useful tips for preparing for the Writing paper are:

- Write short messages or emails to friends and encourage them to write back to you.
- Try to learn how to do things in your writing like describing, inviting, reminding, suggesting and thanking.
- Practise writing a message (Writing Part 2) that is 35–45 words long so that you have a good idea of what that amount of text looks like.
- When practising answering exam questions, try not to use the language that is in the question; write this in your own words instead.
- Look at model answers in coursebooks to see what is expected at B1 level. This will help you to see what a 'good' answer looks like.
- Practise writing with the same time limit as in the exam, so that you get used to it.

5. How will the examiner assess my writing?

When an examiner marks your letter or story in Writing Part 3, they think about four things. These are: *Content*, *Communicative Achievement*, *Organisation* and *Language*.

- **Content** means how well you completed the task, in other words, if you have done what you were asked to do.
- **Communicative Achievement** means how appropriate the writing is for the task (for example, is the style right for a letter to a friend?), and whether you have used the right register, for example, formal or informal.
- **Organisation** focuses on the way you put together the piece of writing, in other words, if it's logical and ordered.
- **Language** focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes using a range of vocabulary and grammar as well as using it accurately.



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6. How can I use more vocabulary and grammar structures?

Try to do the following:

- Keep a vocabulary book in which you note down new words that you see in past papers and your coursebook. Try to write words that go together in phrases so that you become more aware of collocation, e.g. 'have a rest'.
- Practise your spelling. If you spell words incorrectly, try to practise writing the words again and again until you can remember the correct spelling.
- Learn the different forms of common irregular verbs (like 'I run', 'I ran', 'I have run').
- Try to use a monolingual dictionary while you are preparing for the exam as this will help you increase your vocabulary and learn how words are used.
- You can also play the **Cambridge English online games Funland and Academy Island** as this will test what you know and introduce you to new words and phrases.
- Make sure you know vocabulary about many different topics. Try to use English in different ways and with different people, and learn the words you need. Ask your teacher about the topics that can appear in the exam.
- Reading lots of texts will also help you to understand how grammar and vocabulary are used within written text.

7. How can I improve my listening skills?

Try listening to real people speaking. You can find many different things to listen to online and you may find it easier to watch videos so that you can see the person speaking at the same time as listening to them. You could listen to:

- videos on the **Cambridge English TV** YouTube channel
- news, dramas and documentaries on English TV channels
- sample chapters from **Cambridge University Press graded readers**
- episodes of our audio series **Virtually Anywhere**. Each of the seven episodes comes with activities so you can practise the language used.

8. What is the best way to develop my speaking skills?

The best thing to do is to take every opportunity to speak English. Try to use English to talk about different topics and with different people. Make sure you are familiar with the things you will need to do in the Speaking test. For example, it is a good idea to practise talking about a picture for a minute so you can get an idea of how long that is and the kinds of things you can say to keep talking.

How much do you know about practical things to do before the exam?

Can you answer these questions?

1. *How can I find practice tests?*
2. *When will my exam be?*
3. *What is the Notice to Candidates?*
4. *What do I need to take with me on exam day?*
5. *How do I register for results online?*

Find the answers on the next page

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Practical things to do before the exam

1. *How can I find practice tests?*

Cambridge English books of practice tests are **available to buy online** or from bookshops. There is also a **free sample online test**.

2. *When will my exam be?*

Ask your teacher. If your school or college does not register students for the exam, you can **find an exam centre near you** using our website.

3. *What is the Notice to Candidates?*

It's a list of things you can and can't do in the exam room. Your exam centre will give you a copy, but you can also **see a copy online**.

4. *What do I need to take with me on exam day?*

Just your passport for identification. A bottle of water is a good idea. You can take pens and pencils, but your centre will also provide these.

5. *How do I register for results online?*

When you register for the exam, you will receive a Confirmation of Entry. This will show the web address for our Results Online site, as well as your ID number and secret number, which you will need to use to register to receive your results online. It's a good idea to register a few weeks before your exam – we may send you useful information by email.



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Exam day shouldn't make you nervous if you are well prepared, so it's important to know what to expect on the day.

- You may be given a sheet of candidate data to fill in. Don't worry – this is just to allow us to keep accurate records on ages and nationalities taking each exam.
- When you do the actual exam, it is very important that you know how to fill in the answer sheets. Doing practice tests and completing the online sample test as part of your preparation will help you to do this more easily on the exam day.
- For the Speaking test, you will go in with a partner and there will be two examiners: the interlocutor, who will ask you questions and give you a global mark, and the assessor, who will just listen and give you marks by using the assessment criteria.
- If you have registered for the exam yourself (rather than through a school), you can contact your local centre with any practical queries. You can find your local centre [here](#).
- Before you take your exam, be sure to visit the **What to expect on exam day** web page and read the **Summary Regulations for Candidates**.



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EXAM DAY TIPS

- ✓ Make sure you have a good night's sleep before exam day as you will need to concentrate hard.
- ✓ With **Reading**, make sure you look carefully at the instructions, title and subtitle of each text as these will tell you where the text comes from and will give you an idea of what it is about. As Reading and Writing are together on one paper, it is important that you don't spend too long on the Reading section - you should spend about 50 minutes on this part.
- ✓ Leave yourself enough time to do the **Writing** part of the paper. There are a total of 25 marks for Writing, but Part 3 carries 15 marks so it is important that you spend more time answering the Part 3 question than Part 1 and Part 2. Think about who your reader is and write clearly. Give yourself time to plan, write, check and edit your work. If you do make any changes, make sure your corrections are clear.
- ✓ In the **Listening** paper you will hear each recording twice. Use any pauses to read the instructions and questions. Try to answer questions the first time you hear the recording and then use the second time to check your work and fill in any missing answers. At the end of the test copy your answers carefully onto the answer sheet and use any spare time to check your work.
- ✓ With **Speaking**, make sure that you listen to what the examiner says as well as what your partner is saying. Try to respond to the comments your partner makes to show that you are good at communicating.



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How much do you know about results and next steps?

Can you answer these questions?

1. How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?
2. What information will be on my Statement of Results?
3. What exactly is the online Results Verification Service?
4. What does my exam result say about my level?
5. What can I do with my Cambridge English: Preliminary qualification?
6. How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Preliminary?

Find the answers on the next page



“ I studied for *Cambridge English: Preliminary*. My goal was to progress to the higher level Cambridge English exams and my exam was a great way to experience Cambridge English. If you want to get a job, you need a good level of English.

Josue Garcia Alvarez, Spain

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Results and next steps

1. *How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?*

Statements of Results are usually available four to six weeks after the test for paper-based exams, and two to three weeks after the test for computer-based exams, and you can see your results online. To do this, put in your candidate ID number and secret number. These can be found on the Confirmation of Entry sheet given to you by your centre. We will send your certificate about three weeks after the results are available.

2. *What information will be on my Statement of Results?*

You will see your grade, the marks required to get each grade, and then your own 'candidate profile'. This will show your performance in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking: Exceptional, Good, Borderline or Weak. You do not pass or fail individual papers – your grade will show how you did across all four skills.

Please see **Understanding your Statement of Results**.



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3. What exactly is the online Results Verification Service?

This service lets universities, colleges or employers view and check exam results. You will need to provide your candidate ID number and secret number. If you've lost these numbers, the centre where you took the exam can provide them.

4. What does my exam result say about my level?

If you pass *Cambridge English: Preliminary*, you will receive the *Preliminary English Test* certificate at **Level B1**. If you do exceptionally well at the exam, you will receive a *Preliminary English Test* certificate that says that you showed ability at Level B2. If your performance is below B1 level, but you show ability at A2 level in the exam, you will receive a Cambridge English certificate stating that you demonstrated ability at Level A2.

5. What can I do with my Cambridge English: Preliminary qualification?

The certificate you receive shows that you have mastered English at preliminary level and that you can use English for everyday social and study purposes.

The certificate is accepted by thousands of leading businesses and educational institutions worldwide. Find out more about **who accepts Cambridge English exams here**.

6. How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Preliminary?

After you have passed *Cambridge English: Preliminary*, you can go on to take *Cambridge English: First* (B2 level), then *Cambridge English: Advanced* at C1 level. You can see **all of the Cambridge English exams here**.



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