

Cambridge English Advanced

Cambridge English: Advanced (CAE) *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*

Is there a wordlist for Cambridge English: Advanced exams?

No. Examinations that are at CEFR Level B2 (independent user), or above – such as *Cambridge English: Advanced* – do not have particular language specifications or vocabulary lists.

Do I have to pass each paper in order to pass the whole examination?

No. Your overall performance is calculated by averaging the scores you achieve in Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and Use of English. The weighting of each of the four skills and Use of English is equal.

Reading and Use of English

DO

Parts 1–4

- ✓ Read extensively to build up a wide range of vocabulary in different contexts.
- ✓ Check your spelling in all parts of the test.
- ✓ Make sure that you transfer your answers to your answer sheet as you finish each part.
- ✓ Read the surrounding context before giving an answer.
- ✓ Read the instructions, the information about the texts, the titles and the texts before starting to answer.
- ✓ Read the texts again to check that your answers make sense.
- ✓ Check that the answer has the right meaning and that it fits in with both the local grammatical context and with the text as a whole (Parts 1, 2 and 3).

Parts 5–8

- ✓ Read the instructions very carefully – they set the scene and give you initial orientation.
- ✓ Skim through the text for general understanding.
- ✓ Highlight or underline important words in the questions.
- ✓ Decide what type of question you are answering and then employ the correct reading skill, especially in the multiple-choice part.
- ✓ Link the questions to areas or sections in the text before reading closely.
- ✓ Remember that questions come in the same order as the answers in the text in the multiple-choice part of the paper.
- ✓ Experiment with the order of the parts and the questions within the parts. Come back to them later if necessary.
- ✓ Select your answer based on meaning and then check that it fits with the language in the text. Use the coherence and cohesion in the text to help you with this.

- ✓ Use a wide context in the text to help you find answers. Do not read narrowly or just a few lines before and after the point where you find your answer.
- ✓ Use paraphrasing of ideas rather than individual words in the questions to help you identify the answer in the text.
- ✓ Check that your selected answer fully answers the question and not only in part.
- ✓ Answer all the questions – no marks are deducted for incorrect answers.
- ✓ Decide why the three ‘distractors’ are wrong in each multiple-choice question and make sure that the extra paragraph does not fit (Part 7).
- ✓ Reread the whole text when you have placed all the paragraphs (Part 7).

DON'T

Parts 1-4

- ✗ Don't leave any questions unanswered.
- ✗ Don't give alternative answers for any questions.
- ✗ Don't wait until the end to copy all your answers onto your answer sheet.
- ✗ Don't copy the words onto your answer sheet. Only one letter (A, B, C or D) is necessary (Part 1).

Parts 5-8

- ✗ Don't use your world knowledge or personal opinions to answer the questions.
- ✗ Don't select an answer after reading only one section in the multiple-matching parts of the paper.
- ✗ Don't spend too much time on any one part of the paper.
- ✗ Don't forget to transfer all your answers to the answer sheet.
- ✗ Don't be put off by or get stuck on difficult vocabulary – it may become clear by reading on or by later rereading.
- ✗ Don't reread every section for every question (Parts 5 and 8).

Will I get one or two scores for the Reading and Use of English paper?

Your Statement of Results will show two scores for this paper – one for Reading and one for Use of English. They are equally important when calculating your overall score.

How are the separate scores for Reading and Use of English determined?

On your Statement of Results and your certificate, you will receive a Cambridge English Scale score for Reading and a separate Cambridge English Scale score for Use of English (as well as Writing, Listening and Speaking). On the Reading and Use of English paper, the Reading score is derived from Parts 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8, and the Use of English score is derived from Parts 2, 3 and 4.

What kinds of texts are included in the Reading tasks?

The four texts are taken from newspapers, magazines, journals, non-literary books, leaflets, brochures, etc. They are generally authentic but some may have been edited for clarification. They may be informational, descriptive, narrative or discursive. Each text is 550–850 words long, with a total of about 3,000 words across the whole paper.

What reading skills are involved?

The Reading and Use of English paper tests your reading skills and your underlying knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. You will be assessed on a wide range of language at word, phrase, sentence and text level, reading for main ideas, specific information, text structure, implication and tone.

What kinds of tasks are there?

The Reading and Use of English paper has eight parts and includes tasks such as multiple choice – Parts 1–3 are text based and involve choosing or supplying a missing word, or forming a new word. Part 4 is sentence based and involves writing a sentence in a different way. Parts 5–8 are text based and are accompanied by comprehension tasks. These task types are multiple choice, a gapped text with missing paragraphs, and multiple matching.

In the Reading and Use of English paper, are marks deducted for incorrect answers?

No, marks are not deducted if candidates give an incorrect answer. A candidate is either awarded the mark for the correct answer, or gets no mark if the answer is incorrect. You are advised not to leave any question unanswered.

How do candidates record their answers?

Candidates write their answers on the answer sheets provided by shading a lozenge or by writing words. The answer sheet is marked according to a mark scheme and then scanned by computer. You must transfer your answers to the answer sheet within the time given for the paper (1 hour 30 minutes).

How important is spelling in the Reading and Use of English paper?

All spelling must be correct in this paper. Candidates will not get a mark for answers that are not spelled correctly. American spelling will not be penalised if used consistently.

In the open cloze task (Part 2), are words like 'doesn't' and 'isn't' counted as one or two words?

Two words. To count the number of words, you should take the full form into account, e.g. *didn't* = *did not* = two words.

How long should I spend on each part of the test?

There are no recommended timings for parts of the test. But you must transfer all your answers to the answer sheet during the 1 hour and 30 minutes of the test. The tasks do not have to be dealt with in the same order as they appear on the paper. You may feel more confident with certain text or task types and may want to do these first and faster. Doing some practice tests should help you with timing your answers.

How can I prepare generally?

You should read widely and for interest from the same sources as the texts in the test. You should be able to distinguish different types of writing, and understand the writer's purpose and the main ideas in the text. This will help you to predict the types of question you will find in the Reading tasks, and recognise collocations and tense use, for example in the Use of English tasks. Overall, reading widely should help to increase your confidence about the test itself.

You should also practise your time management when preparing for the paper. Practising answering questions and completing tasks within a set time limit will help you when sitting the exam.

Writing

DO

- ✓ Read the task carefully and plan an answer that addresses all the content points of the task. Try to develop each point fully.
- ✓ Demonstrate a good range of vocabulary and structures, as well as writing accurately, to get a good mark.
- ✓ Consider who the 'target reader' is and the genre (e.g. newspaper article, formal letter) for each question and try to write in an appropriate style and tone.
- ✓ Think carefully about whether the task requires you to persuade or justify your opinion, and make sure that you do this in your answer.
- ✓ Read the opening paragraphs and instructions in Part 1 very carefully to make sure that you know what your role is and who you are writing to (Part 1).
- ✓ Plan your answer. Remember, you do not necessarily need to use all the input information. Usually, part of the task is to select the appropriate information (Part 1).
- ✓ Use your own words if you choose to use information from the input (Part 1).
- ✓ Select your question carefully. Consider the vocabulary, grammatical structures and register required by the task (Part 2).
- ✓ Allow time to check through what you have written.
- ✓ Use a pen, not a pencil.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't write answers that are much longer than the word limit as this means you may have included a lot of irrelevant material. Plan your answer carefully to avoid this.
- ✗ Don't copy the information from the input (Part 1) in the words given. Copying the information will not result in more marks; instead you should write the information in your own words, or write your own ideas in your own words.

How many questions do I have to answer?

You need to answer two. The question in Part 1 is compulsory (and is always an essay) and you have a choice of questions in Part 2.

How much do I have to write?

You will need to write 220–260 words for the first question and 220–260 words for the second question.

Can I use a pencil?

No. Answers for the Writing paper must be written in pen.

How much time do I have?

You have 1 hour 30 minutes to do the paper.

Can I have a little extra time at the end of the examination to check my work?

No. As with all the papers, time limits are strictly observed by the examination centre administrators.

What kind of texts do I have to write?

Part 1 is always an essay. Part 2 contains a variety of task types which ask you to write different kinds of texts: letter, email, proposal, report or review.

Where can I find model answers?

There is a range of official preparation materials available that provide model answers. Find them now on the Cambridge University Press website (www.cambridge.org/gb/cambridgeenglish).

Listening

DO

- ✓ Listen to and read the instructions to understand what you have to do.
- ✓ Think about the topic, the speaker(s) and the context as you read the questions.
- ✓ Use the pause to read the questions and try to predict the answers.
- ✓ Remember that the order of information matches between the information/questions on the page and the order of information in the recording (Parts 1–3).
- ✓ Check your answers during the pause between the first and second listening.
- ✓ Copy your answers carefully onto the answer sheet and check that you have followed the numbering correctly.
- ✓ Try to use the actual words you hear on the recording (Part 2).
- ✓ Check that your answer makes sense in the gap. Look at the information both before and after the gap when checking your answer (Part 2). Check that your answer is correctly spelled (Part 2).
- ✓ Copy only the missing words onto the answer sheet (Part 2).
- ✓ Read through both tasks in multiple matching in the pause before you hear the recording for the first time (Part 4).
- ✓ Remember that there are two questions for each speaker (Part 4).

DON'T

- ✗ Don't try to write very long answers (Part 2).
- ✗ Don't worry if you miss a question. Continue with the next question then listen again for the missing information when you hear the recording for the second time.
- ✗ Don't leave a blank space on the answer sheet. If you are not sure, guess.
- ✗ Don't repeat information that is already in the sentences (Part 2).
- ✗ Don't panic. There is plenty of time to write your answers as you listen (Part 2).

What aspects of listening are tested in the Listening test?

You may be tested on your understanding of gist, main points, agreement, detail or specific information, or your ability to deduce meaning from a text. You may listen to monologues or interacting speakers from a variety of sources.

How many times do candidates hear each text?

You will hear each text twice.

How do candidates record their answers?

You must write all your answers on a separate answer sheet. You can write on the question paper as you listen, but you must transfer answers to the answer sheet. Five minutes are allocated at the end of the test for candidates to do this.

Speaking

DO

- ✓ Show that you can communicate effectively.
- ✓ Give full and extended responses.
- ✓ Raise the level of your language above the ordinary.
- ✓ Listen carefully to what the examiner has asked you to do.
- ✓ Remember the instructions and focus on the task set.
- ✓ Speculate on the content of the visual materials, even if you are not sure what they show.
- ✓ Involve your partner in the conversation and create opportunities for them to speak.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't panic if you cannot remember, or do not know, a particular word. Just keep going and paraphrase instead.
- ✗ Don't merely describe the visuals.
- ✗ Don't speak during your partner's 'long turn'.
- ✗ Don't let your partner always 'take the lead'. You must also initiate at times.
- ✗ Don't waste your opportunities to show the examiners what you can do.
- ✗ Don't speak too quietly. Remember, the examiners need to hear what you are saying.

My speaking is much weaker than my writing. Do I have to pass the Speaking test to pass the exam?

No. Your overall performance is calculated by averaging the scores you achieve in Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking and Use of English. If you perform poorly on one paper, you can compensate by performing well on the other papers.

Can I be examined by my own teacher?

No. Examiners go through a rigorous process of training and are not allowed to examine their own students or anybody they know socially.

Can I take the test alone?

No. The standard format is two candidates and two examiners. If at the end of the session there is an odd number of candidates, the final group will be a three. Only in exceptional circumstances can a person take the test by themselves.

Why are there two examiners?

Having two examiners ensures fairness as it allows for two independent assessments. Each examiner has a different role. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment of your performance. The other, the assessor, does not take part in the interaction, but focuses solely on listening to, and making an assessment of, your oral proficiency.

What happens if the other candidate won't let me speak?

Examiners are trained to deal with such situations and to provide both of you with equal opportunities to speak. They will ensure that neither of you is disadvantaged by the other. There are also opportunities in the test for you to speak on your own.

What should I do if I do not understand the instructions?

You should ask the examiner to repeat the instructions. You will not be penalised for this. The examiner will be happy to repeat instructions but, for reasons of fairness, they cannot change the way in which they are worded.

For more information about *Cambridge English: Advanced*, visit our website:

www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/advanced