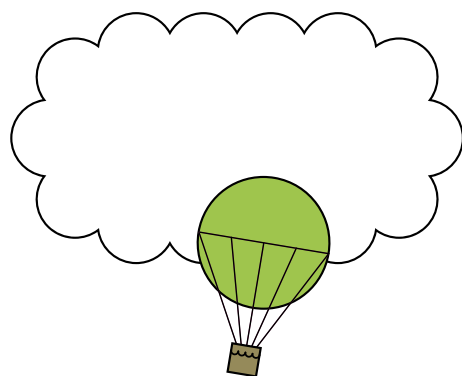




CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

Cambridge English **First** *for Schools*

Information for candidates



How to use this guide

You can print this document if you wish, but 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.



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What does Cambridge English: First for Schools involve?

Cambridge English: First for Schools is for learners who have an upper-intermediate level of English, at Level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is taken internationally and thousands of colleges and universities around the world, as well as employers, recognise it as proof that you can use everyday spoken and written English. Cambridge English Language Assessment carries out extensive research to make sure that you get the fairest, most accurate result, and that the exam is relevant to the different ways that you may need to use English. The test includes exactly the same tasks and question types as *Cambridge English: First*. The only difference is that *Cambridge English: First for Schools* uses topics that are of interest to candidates who are at school. You can take *Cambridge English: First for Schools* 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?	Skills assessed
Reading 1 hour 20% of total marks	<p>There are three parts in the Reading paper. There is one long text with eight multiple-choice questions, a gapped text which you must complete by choosing the correct sentence, and a multiple-matching activity.</p> <p>There is a wide range of different texts and all of them are about topics which are relevant to school-aged students.</p>	<p>You need a range of different reading skills, such as reading for detailed comprehension, understanding opinions and feelings or understanding how a text is organised.</p> <p>You also need to be able to read a text quickly to get the general idea.</p>
Writing 1 hour 20 minutes 20% of total marks	<p>The Writing paper has two parts. The first is compulsory, and you must write a letter or email which responds to a text and some notes.</p> <p>Then you have a choice between five questions, and you must choose one. Two of the questions are always about a set text (a story or film), which you can read or watch and prepare for before the exam. Find out what the set texts are here.</p>	<p>In both questions, you'll be assessed using the assessment criteria: <i>Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language</i>.</p> <p>See page 14 for more detail.</p>
Use of English 45 minutes 20% of total marks	<p>This paper tests how well you can use vocabulary and grammar. First, there are three short texts with different tasks. You have to complete the gaps with different kinds of words. The fourth part doesn't use a text. You have to rewrite sentences in a different way.</p>	<p>Parts 1 and 3 mainly test your knowledge of vocabulary. Part 2 mainly tests your knowledge of grammar. Part 4 tests both vocabulary and grammar, especially in paraphrases.</p>
Listening Approximately 40 minutes 20% of total marks	<p>There are four parts in the Listening paper, and there is a mixture of monologues (one speaker) and dialogues (two or more speakers). The tasks include answering multiple-choice questions about short and longer texts; completing notes while you listen to a longer text; and matching options to short monologues.</p>	<p>This paper tests different real-life listening skills, such as listening for information, opinion or detail, or listening for the general meaning of the whole text.</p>
Speaking 14 minutes Paired: two candidates together 20% of total marks	<p>The Speaking test starts with general conversation between the examiner and each candidate. Then you take turns to speak for 1 minute about two photographs. In Part 3, you discuss a decision-making task with the other candidate. Finally you will discuss topics related to the task in Part 3.</p>	<p>You are tested on different aspects of speaking, such as pronunciation, how well you use grammar and vocabulary, how you organise your ideas and how well you participate in discussions with other people.</p> <p>See page 14 for more detail.</p>



You don't need to pass all five papers in order to pass the whole exam. For example, if you do very well in Reading, Writing, Use of English 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.](#)



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Before the exam – preparation

When you're preparing for the exam, one thing you must do is to get to know all the papers and tasks, so that you know what to expect on the day of the test. This will also help you to do your best in the exam – the tasks are carefully designed to let you show all your language skills, but you need to be fully prepared for everything you need to do. For example, in the Use of English test you must understand what you need to do in each of the questions, so you can follow the instructions carefully.

But practice tests alone aren't enough to help you perform really well. It's important to concentrate on improving your language and communication skills, to give you the best chance of achieving your goal.

To help you feel really prepared for *Cambridge English: First for Schools*, there's a range of **free exam preparation resources**, including:

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

To support learners as they prepare for their exams, Cambridge English Language Assessment and Cambridge University Press have developed **a range of official preparation materials** including coursebooks and practice tests.



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

Can you answer these questions?

1. Where can I find out exactly what I have to do in the test?
2. What can I do to improve my reading skills?
3. What should I do when I find words I don't understand?
4. How will my writing be assessed?
5. How can I improve my writing for the Writing tasks?
6. What can I do to prepare for the Use of English paper?
7. What's the best way to improve my listening skills?
8. How will my speaking be assessed?
9. How can I develop my speaking skills?
10. How important is it to do lots of practice tests?

Find the answers on the next page



ANSWERS

Studying for Cambridge English: First for Schools

1. *Where can I find out exactly what I have to do in each part of the test?*

You can **download a sample paper here**, and the Cambridge English Language Assessment **website** has more information. If you are taking a computer-based exam, you can **try a computer-based practice test here**.

2. *What can I do to improve my reading skills?*

The best way to improve your reading skills is to read as much as possible, and to read a wide range of different texts. This will also help you in the Writing and Use of English papers. Try reading:

- graded readers, graphic novels and short stories
- articles from teen magazines and newspapers
- informational texts such as websites about sport or fashion, or online encyclopaedias
- reviews of music, films or technology.

If you have a special interest or hobby, try reading about it in English as much as you can.



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3. What should I do when I find words I don't understand?

Generally, you should continue reading and try to understand as much as possible without worrying about what these words mean. If you always stop to look up words you don't know, you can lose the general meaning of the text. Also, in the exam you can't use a dictionary, so it's important to be able to read without one. Sometimes when you read, your purpose may be to improve your vocabulary. If there are words which you meet often, check their meaning then record them, with an example, in a vocabulary book.

4. How will my writing be assessed?

Click [here](#) for information about how *Cambridge English: First for Schools* examiners assess writing.

5. How can I improve my writing for the Writing tasks?

One way is to use example answers, which you can find in **coursebooks or practice test books**. First of all, look at how the writer answers the different parts of the question. Then choose one of the assessment criteria to explore – perhaps an area that you find more difficult. If this is *Organisation*, look at how the writer organises their ideas into paragraphs. Then think about how they develop these ideas, and how they link ideas in each paragraph and between the paragraphs. You can do similar things for *Language* and *Communicative Achievement*.

6. What can I do to prepare for the Use of English paper?

By reading a wide range of different texts, just as you need to do for the Reading paper. Reading will help you with aspects of English such as collocation (which words go together), phrasal verbs and how to use linkers. You'll also become more aware of the kind of language writers use, including paraphrase. All of these are important for the Use of English paper, as well as the Reading and Writing papers.

Another tip is to use a monolingual dictionary while you're preparing for the exam. These dictionaries have detailed information about how words and phrases are used, as well as the meaning. This is particularly helpful for the Use of English paper.

7. What's the best way to improve my listening skills?

Try to listen to as many different things as possible. There is a huge range of recordings and videos on the internet, such as video clips, podcasts, talks, TV channels, radio stations and also websites specially designed for English-language learners. Make sure you listen to different kinds of recordings and also to different accents. As with reading, if you have an interest or hobby, try to find video clips or podcasts about it.



8. How will my speaking be assessed?

Click [here](#) for information about how *Cambridge English: First for Schools* examiners assess speaking.

9. How can I develop my speaking skills?

Speak English as much as possible! Like all language skills, your speaking will improve if you practise more. Speak to different people, in different situations and about different topics. You can also practise for Part 2 of the Speaking test by using podcasting or video websites to record yourself, and listen back to see what you could improve.

10. How important is it to do lots of practice tests?

Doing practice tests is only one part of your preparation. You need to be familiar with all the tasks and question types of all the papers, so you know what to expect. However, you should balance this with lots of language and skills practice. Before you do any practice tests, make sure you know exactly what you need to do in each part. Don't try to memorise answers for the Writing or Speaking tests, because they almost certainly won't answer the questions you're being asked. It's good to set yourself time limits when you do practice tests, so that you practise completing the tasks and filling in the answer sheet in the time you'll have in the exam.

You can find [an official book of practice tests online](#) or from bookshops. There is also a free [sample test](#) available online.



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

Can you answer these questions?

1. *How do I register for the exam?*
2. *Can I delay taking a particular paper if I don't feel ready for it?*
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



ANSWERS

Practical things to do before the exam

1. How do I register for the exam?

If you are already at a school that offers a course to prepare for *Cambridge English: First for Schools*, your school will do this for you. If you are registering independently, **click here to find a centre** that offers your exam. Then you can register directly with the exam centre. The centre will be able to give you advice about preparation, and tell you how much your exam will cost.

2. Can I delay taking a particular paper if I don't feel ready for it?

No, all papers must be taken in a single session. The Speaking test is usually taken on a different day from the other papers.

3. What is the Notice to Candidates?

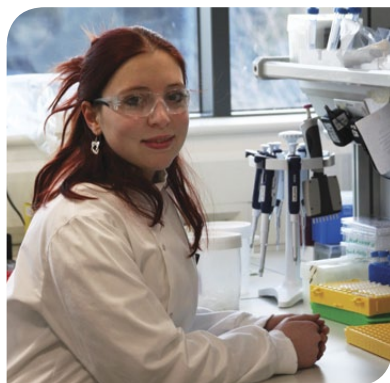
It's a list of things you can and can't do in the exam room. Your exam centre will give you a copy, but you can also see a copy online **here**.

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

You must bring 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. It also tells you 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 and important updates by email.



“

Preparing for the exam gave me the confidence and language skills to travel internationally, and get a job at a prestigious biopharmaceutical laboratory.

Anais Legent, France

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Exam day

It doesn't matter how well prepared you are, exam day can make anyone feel nervous. That's why it's really important to know what to expect on the day. Do some practice tests and practise filling in the answer sheets for the Reading, Use of English and Listening papers. You can practise this on the [online sample test](#). If you have any questions before the day of the test, contact your local centre. You can [find your local centre here](#). On the day of the test, your photograph will be taken at the centre. You may also be asked to fill in a sheet of candidate data. Don't worry – this helps us to keep accurate records of the ages and nationalities of people taking the exam, to ensure that our exams are fair to everyone.

Before you take the exam, visit the [What to expect on exam day](#) web page and read the [Summary Regulations for Candidates](#).



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EXAM DAY TIPS

- ✓ The night before the exam, get a good night's sleep. Eat sensibly and take water with you, so you can concentrate on the tasks.
- ✓ Plan your timing carefully for the **Reading**, **Writing** and **Use of English** papers. Decide before the exam how long you want to spend on each task, and don't spend longer than that. You can always go back at the end if you have time.
- ✓ You can do the tasks in these papers in any order, so you may want to start with the questions you find easier. Make sure, though, that you transfer the answers correctly onto the answer sheet.
- ✓ Allow enough time to plan, write and check your work in the **Writing** paper. If you make corrections, make sure they are clear. Don't worry about the exact number of words, just try to answer the question fully.
- ✓ In the **Listening** paper, always read the questions before you start listening. Don't worry if you miss a question – use the questions to help you find your place. You will hear each recording twice.
- ✓ In the **Speaking** test, it's fine to ask the examiner to repeat the question if you're not sure. Try to listen to your partner's comments and respond to them; this is part of good communication skills.



After the exam

How much do you know about results and next steps?

Can you answer these questions?

1. *How is Writing assessed?*
2. *How is Speaking assessed?*
3. *What information will be on my Statement of Results?*
4. *What happens if I don't pass one of the papers?*
5. *What does my grade actually mean?*
6. *What exactly is the 'online Results Verification Service'?*
7. *How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?*
8. *What can I do with my Cambridge English: First for Schools qualification?*
9. *How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: First for Schools?*

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Results and next steps

1. How is Writing assessed?

There are four assessment criteria for the Writing tasks: *Content*, *Communicative Achievement*, *Organisation* and *Language*.

- **Content** focuses on how well you have completed 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 task (for example, is the style right for a magazine article?), 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 the range of language, as well as how accurate it is.

2. How is Speaking assessed?

There are two examiners in the Speaking exam. One is the interlocutor, who speaks to you and manages the test. The interlocutor will award you a mark for global achievement, i.e. a general mark for how well you did in the whole test. The other is the assessor, who only listens. The assessor uses four assessment criteria: *Grammar and Vocabulary*, *Discourse Management*, *Pronunciation* and *Interactive Communication*.

3. What information will be on my Statement of Results?

You'll see your grade, your score out of 100, and your own 'candidate profile'. This shows your performance in each paper and whether it was 'Exceptional', 'Good', 'Borderline' or 'Weak'. You can find more information in our document, **Understanding your Statement of Results**.

4. What happens if I don't pass one of the papers?

You can't fail a paper; your grade is based on how you perform in the whole exam. If you don't do very well in one paper, your Statement of Results will show this. However, if you have performed well enough in the other papers, you can still pass the exam.



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5. What does my grade actually mean?

Your grade shows how well you did in the exam. If you achieve a grade A, this means you performed exceptionally well and that your English is above B2 level, the level of *Cambridge English: First for Schools*. Your certificate will show that you received the *First Certificate in English* and that you showed ability at Level C1.

If you achieve a grade B or C in the exam, you will receive the *First Certificate in English* at Level B2. If your performance is below B2 level, but within B1 level, you will get a Cambridge English certificate stating that you showed ability at Level B1. *Cambridge English: First for Schools* candidates receive the same certificate as students who take *Cambridge English: First*.

6. What exactly is the 'online Results Verification Service'?

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



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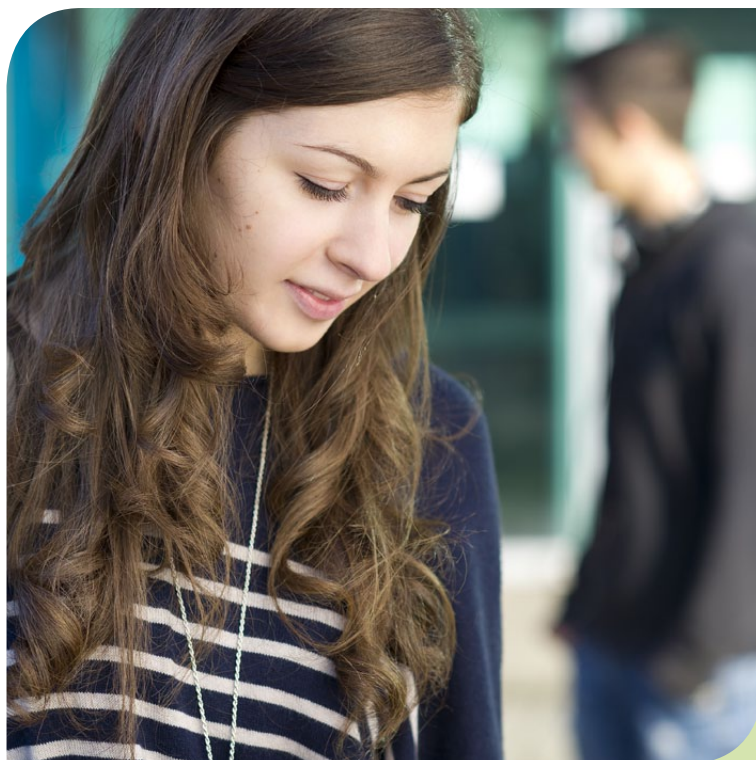
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7. *How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?*

Statements of Results are usually available approximately four to six weeks after the exam for paper-based exams, and two weeks after the exam for computer-based exams. To receive your results online, you'll need your candidate ID number and secret number. These are on the Confirmation of Entry sheet that your centre gave you. We will then send your certificate about one month after the result is available online (or two weeks for computer-based tests). If you need to check when you will receive your certificate, contact your centre.

8. *What can I do with my Cambridge English: First for Schools qualification?*

Cambridge English exams are officially accepted by thousands of colleges, universities, employers and **governments** globally. They can help you into higher education and improve your future job prospects. Because the exams are so well known all around the world, they can give you opportunities in other countries.

Find out more about who accepts Cambridge English exams.

9. *How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: First for Schools?*

Cambridge English: First for Schools shows that your English language ability is at B2 level; the next step is to work towards a qualification at C1 level. This will help you develop the skills for studying, working or living in English-speaking countries. For example, you may want to prepare for **Cambridge English: Advanced**. This **chart** shows the **full range of Cambridge English exams** and their CEFR level.