

# Cambridge English Preliminary

## Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET) *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)*

**Is there a wordlist for Cambridge English: Preliminary exams?**

Yes. There is a [Cambridge English: Preliminary \(PET\) vocabulary list](#) available.

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

No. Your grade is based on your overall score in all the papers.

### *Reading and Writing*

#### **DO**

- ✓ Look at practice tests so that you know all the task types.
- ✓ Do lots of general reading practice in class and at home, especially the kinds of texts used in the *Cambridge English: Preliminary* exam.
- ✓ Keep a vocabulary notebook to write down new words and make notes about how to use each word.
- ✓ Read the instructions and study any examples carefully.
- ✓ Make sure that you can skim and scan (read a text quickly for the main ideas or to find specific information).
- ✓ Check your answers and make sure that you have written them in the correct place on the answer sheet.
- ✓ Make sure that your handwriting is clear and easy to read.
- ✓ Read each text carefully before you try to answer the questions.
- ✓ Use a pencil, not a pen, on the answer sheet.

#### **DON'T**

- ✗ Don't leave answer spaces blank, even if you are not sure what the answer is.
- ✗ Don't worry if there is a word you don't know – try to guess its meaning.
- ✗ Don't write a full rough copy for Writing Parts 2 and 3. Just write quick notes to plan your answer.
- ✗ Don't worry too much about making grammar mistakes in Writing Parts 2 and 3. Communicating is the important thing.

**Will I be penalised if I write more than 100 words in Writing Part 3?**

You are advised to write about 100 words, as instructed. Although you won't be penalised for writing more, you may have included information that is not relevant, which could have a negative effect on the reader, and you could lose marks for this. If you write less than 100 words, your score could be affected because you may not have used an adequate range of language and/or provided all the information required.

### Can I use a pre-learned answer in Writing Part 3?

No. You must write either a letter to a friend or a story which is a response to the instructions and information given. You also need to make sure that your response is either clearly a letter or clearly a story, depending on which question you choose to answer.

### How are extended responses in Writing Part 3 assessed?

Examiners mark tasks using assessment scales developed with explicit reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The scales, which are used across the Cambridge English General and Business English Writing tests, are made up from four sub-scales, which focus on:

- **Content** – how well have you fulfilled the requirements of the task; have you done what you were asked to do?
- **Communicative Achievement** – how appropriate is your writing style for the task, and have you pitched it at the appropriate register for its intended audience?
- **Organisation** – how have you put together the piece of writing (in other words, is it logical and ordered, for example)?
- **Language** – how good is your vocabulary and grammar (i.e. the nature and range of your language, as well as how accurate it is)?

Each response is marked from 0 to 5 on each of the four sub-scales. These scores are then combined to give a final overall mark for the Writing test.

### In the exam, if I don't understand a word on the paper, can I ask what it means?

No. In the exam, you can ask if you don't understand what you have to do in a task (the instructions), or if you don't know how to fill in your answer sheet, and so on. However, you cannot ask about anything such as the meaning of a word in a text. If you don't understand a word, you can try to guess the meaning (for example, from the context). Remember, you might not need to understand this word to answer the questions.

### Will I get extra time to write my answers onto the answer sheet?

No. Before 1 hour and 30 minutes is up, you have to finish writing your answers onto the answer sheet.

## Listening

### DO

- ✓ Read the instructions carefully for each part.
- ✓ Look at the questions, text and pictures and think about what kind of information you are going to hear.
- ✓ Listen to and look at the example question.
- ✓ Answer as much as you can when you hear the recording for the first time.
- ✓ Check your answers and find any missing answers when you hear the recording for the second time.
- ✓ Answer all the questions, even if you are not sure – you probably understand more than you think and even a guess might be correct (and always better than leaving a blank).
- ✓ Only transfer your answers to the answer sheet when you are told to do so, at the end of the test.
- ✓ Take care to transfer your answers to the answer sheet accurately.
- ✓ Use a pencil, not a pen, on the answer sheet.

## **DON'T**

- ✗ Don't worry if you don't hear clearly enough to answer the first time. Everything is played twice.
- ✗ Don't panic if you don't understand everything in the text – you probably don't need to.
- ✗ Don't change your answers when you are transferring them to the answer sheet.

### **I have hearing difficulties – could this cause me to lose marks?**

No. You or your teacher must contact your Cambridge English centre to make special arrangements.

### **What types of listening skills are tested in the Listening paper?**

You will need to show that you can listen for gist (that is, the main point), listen for specific information, and recognise the attitudes and opinions of the speakers. You will hear individual people talking (monologues) and two people talking to each other (dialogues).

### **Does it matter if I make a spelling mistake?**

No, as long as it is possible to recognise the word – unless it is a common, high-frequency word (like Monday, for instance), or where the spelling of the word is dictated.

### **Can I wear headphones for the Listening paper?**

Ask your centre whether you can use headphones or not – it depends how they choose to run the exam.

## **Speaking**

### **DO**

#### **In general**

- ✓ Practise your English, in and out of the classroom, as much as you can.
- ✓ Listen carefully to the examiner's questions.
- ✓ Ask the examiner if you don't understand what you have to do.
- ✓ Speak clearly so that both examiners and your partner can hear you.
- ✓ Remember that both the examiners want you to do well in the test.

#### **In Part 1**

- ✓ Talk to the examiner, not your partner.
- ✓ Make sure that you can spell your name out loud.
- ✓ Try to give more than one-word answers.

#### **In Parts 2 and 4**

- ✓ Talk to your partner, not the examiner.
- ✓ Ask your partner questions.
- ✓ Listen to your partner's answers and look at them to show that you are interested in what they are saying.
- ✓ Give your partner a chance to speak too.

### In Part 3

- ✓ Talk about everything you can see in the photograph – for example, colours, clothes, time of day, weather.
- ✓ If you don't know a word, try to explain what you mean using other words.

## DON'T

### In general

- ✗ Don't worry too much about making grammatical mistakes.
- ✗ Don't worry too much if you don't know a word.
- ✗ Don't worry if your partner is a stronger or weaker speaker than you. The examiners assess you individually.
- ✗ Don't sit in silence in the test, even if you are nervous – the examiners can't give you marks if you don't speak.

### In Parts 2 and 4

- ✗ Don't speak for too long without involving your partner.

### In Part 3

- ✗ Don't try to talk about things or ideas outside the photograph.
- ✗ Don't stop talking if there is a word you don't know, just talk about something else you can see.

### What's in the Speaking paper?

The *Cambridge English: Preliminary* Speaking test has four parts and you take it together with another candidate. There are two examiners. One of the examiners talks to you (the interlocutor) and the other examiner listens and completes the mark sheet (the assessor).

### Can I take the test alone?

No. You are examined in pairs (i.e. two students together) with two examiners. At centres with an uneven number of candidates, the last three candidates take the test together. The test is longer when three candidates take the test. Candidates cannot choose to take the test in a group of three.

### Why are there two examiners?

One examiner (the interlocutor) speaks to you, and the other (the assessor) does not take part in the test, but listens to you speaking and interacting with the other candidate. Both examiners give you a mark, but the assessor gives more detailed marks than the interlocutor.

### What happens if the other candidate does not let me speak?

Examiners know how to deal with this situation, and ensure that both candidates have opportunities to speak. It is important both to talk and to give the other candidate the chance to talk. Remember, there is also a time in the test when you speak on your own.

### What should I do if I do not understand what the examiner asks me to do?

You can ask the examiner to repeat the instructions. However, you should listen carefully and try to understand them the first time. Don't worry if you don't understand a particular word. You can ask your partner to explain a word in Parts 2 and 4 – but, you must always talk in English.

**Do I have to pass the Speaking test to pass the Cambridge English: Preliminary exam?**

No. If you do well in the other papers, you can still pass the exam.

**Will my speaking be compared to my partner's speaking?**

You are assessed on your own speaking, and not compared to your partner.

**Do the Part 1 Phase 2 questions remain the same each year, or do they vary?**

They vary, but they will always be on general topics.

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

[www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/preliminary](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/preliminary)