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Cambridge English Advanced

Information for candidates



*English for high achievers in the
academic and professional world*

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

How to use this guide

You can print this document if you wish, but the best way to use *Information for candidates* is 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 does Cambridge English: Advanced involve?

Cambridge English: Advanced is at Level C1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is accepted by universities, employers and government departments worldwide as an indication that you have achieved a high level of skill in the English language. Preparing for *Cambridge English: Advanced* helps learners develop the skills to make the most of studying, working and living in English-speaking countries. It can be taken in both paper-based and computer-based formats.


Cambridge English Language Assessment carries out extensive research to ensure that you get the fairest, most accurate result, and that the exam is relevant to the range of uses for which you need English.

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

Paper details	What's in the paper?	Skills assessed
Reading 1 hour 15 minutes 20% of total marks	There are four parts containing texts with comprehension tasks. The task types are multiple choice, a gapped text with missing paragraphs and multiple matching. Texts are not for a specialised readership; they are about interesting things in the real world.	The skills you will need include reading for main idea, detail, opinion, attitude, implication, text structure, cohesion and coherence.
Writing 1 hour 30 minutes 20% of total marks	There are two parts in the Writing paper. The first part is a compulsory task where you will write an article, report, proposal or letter in response to an input text you are given. For the second part you are given a choice from various tasks, including a choice of tasks on a set text. Find out what the set texts are here.	You will be assessed using the criteria <i>Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language</i> . See page 10 for more detail.
Use of English 1 hour 20% of total marks	The Use of English paper has five parts. Parts 1 to 3 are text based and involve choosing or supplying a missing word, or forming a new word. Parts 4 and 5 are sentence based and involve supplying a missing word to complete three sentences, and writing a sentence in a different way.	This paper tests your underlying knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Parts 1, 3 and 4 are mainly lexical, Part 2 is mainly grammatical, and Part 5 involves both grammatical and lexical knowledge. You will be tested on a wide range of language at word, phrase, sentence and text level.
Listening Approximately 40 minutes 20% of total marks	There are four parts in the Listening paper, covering short extracts, a long monologue, an interview or discussion and short monologues on a particular theme. Tasks include multiple choice, completing sentences, and multiple matching.	This tests your ability to listen for a wide variety of real-life purposes. You might be listening for the gist of a whole extract, for specific information, or the speaker's opinion, attitude or feeling.
Speaking 15 minutes Paired: two candidates together 20% of total marks	The Speaking test starts with a brief introductory exchange between each candidate and the examiner. In the second part, you are given some pictures to talk about on your own. Then you work together with another candidate to discuss a different set of pictures. Finally there will be a discussion related to the themes in Part 3, in which you will need to give and justify opinions and discuss topics in more depth than in earlier parts of the test.	You're tested on many things. Apart from grammar and vocabulary, you are assessed on your pronunciation, intonation and speed of delivery as well as your ability to organise your thoughts, initiate and maintain a discussion. See page 10 for more detail.

- ➔ [Download a complete sample paper here.](#)
- ➔ [Try a computer-based practice test here.](#)
- ➔ [Watch a video of a Speaking test here.](#)
- ➔ [Read an examiner's comments on the candidates' performances here.](#) 2

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Before the exam – preparation

It is important to familiarise yourself with the tasks and what they demand of you, and to get accustomed to doing them. They are designed to enable you to show what you can do in English, but you will only be able to do this if you understand what is involved and what is being tested. For example, in the Writing test if you are not familiar with the type of tasks, do not know which particular skills are being assessed or are not used to writing within a time limit, then you may not be able to demonstrate your true ability.

Although knowledge of grammar and vocabulary is certainly important, it is essential to realise that you are being assessed on a range of skills and on your communicative ability. So, for example, in the Speaking test you are assessed on your ability to interact with your partner and keep a conversation going, as well as use of language.

To help you feel really prepared for *Cambridge English: Advanced*, there is 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: Advanced*?

Can you answer these questions?

1. Where can I find out exactly what I have to do in each part of the test?
2. How important is it to spend time doing practice tests?
3. What kinds of things should I be reading apart from coursebooks?
4. How can I improve my writing skills?
5. What can I do to prepare for the Use of English paper?
6. What can I listen to outside the classroom to improve my listening skills?
7. What is the best way to develop my speaking skills?

Find the answers on the next page

ANSWERS

Studying for Cambridge English: Advanced

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](#) also has more information. If you are taking a computer-based exam, you can [try a computer-based practice test here](#).

2. *How important is it to spend time doing practice tests?*

It is very useful to do 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 set time limits. When you look at the answers, think carefully about the ones you got wrong and why. When doing practice Writing and Speaking tests, it is important to look at how you will be assessed. Remember, though, that doing practice tests should be just part of your exam preparation. You need to take a long-term approach to your communicative language ability, analysing your own strengths and weaknesses across **all** language skills and thinking about how you can improve. This approach can help you develop the skills you need beyond the exam, as well as improving your exam performance.

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

The Reading paper will contain a wide range of texts. Try to read as many types of text as possible, such as:

- newspapers and magazines, including articles, written interviews, biographies, reports and reviews
- information leaflets
- novels and short stories.

All of these types of text can be found online.

Remember that the Reading paper tests reading in different ways, so prepare yourself for this. For example, sometimes try just skim reading an article, setting yourself time limits to force yourself to read quickly for main ideas. You can then try practising reading in detail; make sure you understand everything within each paragraph. Varying the way you read will help you to develop the different skills you will need in the exam.

4. *How can I improve my writing skills?*

Some useful tips for preparing for the Writing paper are:

- Read widely to familiarise yourself with the conventions and styles of different types of writing (e.g. reports, articles, reviews, etc.). The internet is an excellent place to look for these different text types.
- Write 10-minute plans for a variety of questions in past papers, so that planning becomes automatic and quick.



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- Look at model answers in coursebooks to see what is expected at C1 level. This will help you to see how answers should be structured and to get an idea of the variety of grammatical structures and range of vocabulary that is required.
- Practise writing under exam time conditions so that you get used to writing accurately to a time limit.
- Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria – *Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language*.

[Click here](#) for more information about how *Cambridge English: Advanced Writing* is assessed.

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

There are many ways to improve your awareness of vocabulary and grammar for the Use of English paper. Apart from looking at past papers, it is very useful to use a monolingual dictionary while you are preparing for the exam. These dictionaries contain the kind of information that you will need to know in all parts of this paper, including information about:

- collocations and fixed phrases (words that go together) – e.g. *have a rest*
- dependent prepositions – e.g. *apply for*
- register and style – e.g. formal, informal, literary
- idiomatic language – e.g. *to put your foot in it*
- word families and affixes – e.g. *act, react, reaction*
- homographs (words that look the same but have different meanings) – e.g. *key* (for a door), and *key* (on a piano).

Reading widely will also help you as it will increase your awareness of how language is used in terms of grammar and vocabulary within written text.

6. *What can I listen to outside the classroom to improve my listening skills?*

Try to listen to as wide a variety of things as possible and get used to listening to people with different accents. Internet podcasts are very useful, as are English TV channels and radio stations. Listen to a range of programmes, including:

- news broadcasts
- interviews and discussion programmes
- documentaries
- talks
- plays and drama.

7. *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 in a wide range of contexts – different topics, different people and different purposes for speaking. Also remember to familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria used in the speaking exam: *Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication*. The official [Online Speaking Practice](#) will help to improve your speaking skills and exam technique.

[Click here](#) for information about how *Cambridge English: Advanced Speaking* is assessed.



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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. *How do I register for the exam or find a centre?*
3. *Can I delay taking a particular paper if I don't feel ready for it?*
4. *What is the Notice to Candidates?*
5. *What do I need to take with me on exam day?*
6. *How do I register for results online?*

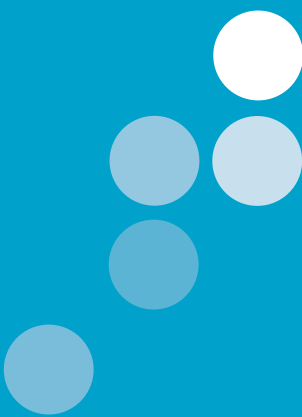
Find the answers on the next page

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Practical things to do before the exam

1. *How can I find practice tests?*

Official books of practice tests are available **online** or from bookshops. There is also a **free sample test available online**.

2. *How do I register for the exam or find a centre?*

If you are already at a school that offers a course in your exam, speak to your school about your exam booking. If you are registering independently, **click here** and find a centre that offers your exam. You can register directly with the exam centre. They will be able to give you advice about preparation, and tell you how much your exam will cost.

3. *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 often taken on a different day from the other papers.

4. *What is the Notice to Candidates?*

The Notice to Candidates is 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**.

5. *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.

6. *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 is a good idea to register a few weeks before your exam – we may send you useful information and important updates by email.



I will be using the *Cambridge English: Advanced* qualification mainly for work applications, but of course it means I can travel the world and communicate with many different people.

Alfonso Baquero, Spain



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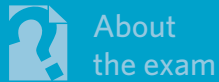
Exam day

Exam day can be a nerve-racking experience, however well you have prepared. Therefore it is important to know what to expect on the day. First of all, you should expect a photograph to be taken of you at the centre. You may also be given a sheet of candidate data to fill in. Don't worry - it's just to allow us to keep accurate records on ages and nationalities taking each exam, and to ensure that our exams are fair for everyone.

When it comes to doing the exam, it is vital that you are used to filling 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.

If you are entering the exam independently, you can contact your local centre with any practical queries. You can find your centre at www.cambridgeenglish.org/find-a-centre

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

- ✓ **To start with**, get a good sleep the night before and go into the exam with a clear head - you will need to be fresh as a lot of concentration is required.
- ✓ With **Reading**, make sure you look carefully at the instructions, title and subtitle for each text as these will tell you where the text comes from and will give you an idea of what it is about.
- ✓ With **Writing**, remember that each part carries the same number of marks, so don't spend too long on one part, and avoid having to rush at the end. Give yourself time to plan, write, check and edit your work. If you do make any changes, make sure your corrections are clear.
- ✓ With **Use of English**, it is best to read the whole text in Parts 1, 2 and 3 before starting to fill in any gaps, as some of them will require an understanding of the whole text. In Part 4, remember to put just one word, and in Part 5, don't forget to always use the key word exactly as it is given.
- ✓ With **Listening**, don't panic if you miss something. Remember that each listening text will be played twice so you have a second chance. Make sure you read through the questions carefully before the recording starts; this will give you an idea of what it is about and will help you to follow it more easily.
- ✓ With **Speaking**, make sure you listen to what your partner is saying and pick up on the comments they make. Communicating is all about listening and responding appropriately.



- ➔ Watch a video of a Speaking test [here](#).
- ➔ Read an examiner's comments on the candidates' performances [here](#).


After the exam

How much do you know about results and the 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. *How is Speaking assessed?*
4. *How is Writing assessed?*
5. *What is the 'online Results Verification Service'?*
6. *What will I get if I do extremely well in the exam?*
7. *What will I get if I don't quite pass the exam?*
8. *What can I do with my Cambridge English: Advanced qualification?*
9. *How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Advanced?*

Find the answers on the next page

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Results and the next steps

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

Statements of Results are released online, 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 result online, you will need 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 then despatch your certificate to your centre up to a month after your 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.

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

You will see your grade, your score out of 100, and your own 'candidate profile'. This shows some bands on a grid and indicates whether your performance in each paper was 'Exceptional', 'Good', 'Borderline' or 'Weak'. You do not pass or fail individual papers – you will receive an overall grade based on all five papers. You can find more information in our document [Understanding your Statement of Results](#).

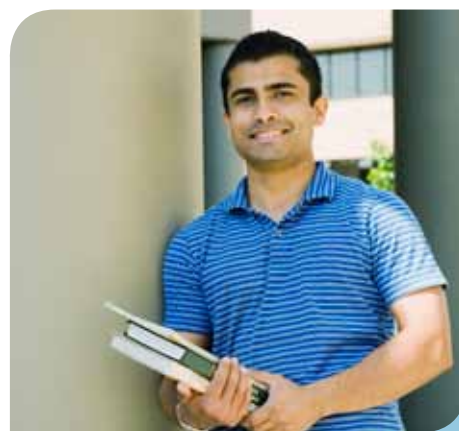
3. How is Speaking assessed?

In the Speaking exam, there are two examiners. The interlocutor, who asks the questions, gives you a mark for global achievement and the assessor, who is just listening, uses five assessment criteria: *Grammatical Resource*, *Lexical Resource*, *Discourse Management*, *Pronunciation* and *Interactive Communication*. For more details, [see these examiner's comments](#).

4. How is Writing assessed?

Writing tasks are marked using four criteria: *Content*, *Communicative Achievement*, *Organisation* and *Language*.

- **Content** focuses on how well you have fulfilled 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 and whether you have used the appropriate register, for example formal or informal.
- **Organisation** focuses on the way you put together the piece of writing, in other words if it is logical and ordered.
- **Language** focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language as well as how accurate it is.



5. What is the 'online Results Verification Service'?

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

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6. What will I get if I do extremely well in the exam?

If you achieve grade A in your exam, this means you performed exceptionally well and that your English is above C1 level. Your certificate will show that you received the *Certificate in Advanced English* and demonstrated ability at CEFR Level C2, the level above *Cambridge English: Advanced*. If you achieve grade B or C in the exam, you will receive the *Certificate in Advanced English* at Level C1.

7. What will I get if I don't quite pass the exam?

If your performance is below Level C1, but falls within Level B2, we will recognise your achievement with a Cambridge English certificate stating that you demonstrated ability at B2 level.

8. What can I do with my Cambridge English: Advanced qualification?

The *Cambridge English: Advanced* qualification is officially accepted by thousands of universities, employers and governments around the world. It can open doors to higher education, improve job prospects and, because Cambridge qualifications are so well known, increase international mobility. Find out more about who accepts Cambridge English exams [here](#).

Cambridge English: Advanced can be used for university and student visa applications in the UK and Australia. To find out more, visit our [visas and immigration web page](#).

9. How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Advanced?

Once you have passed *Cambridge English: Advanced*, you can go on to take *Cambridge English: Proficiency* (C2 level). However, there are also other possibilities depending on your area of professional expertise. These include *Cambridge English: Business Higher*, *Cambridge English: Legal* and *Cambridge English: Financial*. For teachers there are also the *TKT (Teaching Knowledge Test)* exams. [This chart](#) shows the full range of Cambridge English exams and their CEFR level.







“ I am preparing for *Cambridge English: Advanced* because I really want to study in England, and the qualification will be really helpful.

Lisa Schell, Germany

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Cambridge English
Language Assessment
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU
United Kingdom
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