CAMBRIDGE English

Information for candidates

Cambridge English Qualifications

B1 Preliminary

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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About the exam

What is B1 Preliminary?

B1 Preliminary is a qualification for learners who have an intermediate level of English. The exam:

- ✔ tests your knowledge and ability in English at Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).
- ✔ is for candidates at any age but the topics are more suitable for older teenagers and adults.
- ✔ You can take B1 Preliminary as a paper-based or a computer-based exam. You can find out more information about the computer-based exam on our website.

What's in the exam?

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

Paper details	What's in the paper?	What do you need to do?
Reading 45 minutes	The Reading paper has six parts: Part 1: five short texts such as messages, notices and signs; you match each text to the correct option A, B or C Part 2: match five short descriptions of people to the correct short text Part 3: a longer text with five questions where you choose the answer from options A, B, C or D Part 4: a longer text with five spaces and you match sentences to the space Part 5: a shorter text with six spaces and you choose a word from options A, B, C or D to fit the space Part 6: a shorter text with six spaces where you write a word for each space. The words can be grammar words, phrasal verbs or fixed expressions.	You need to be able to: • understand real-world messages • read and choose the correct word or answer • choose the correct words to complete a text • understand details, general meaning, writer's attitude and opinion • show understanding of how a text is organised.
Writing 45 minutes	The Writing paper has two parts: Part 1: writing an email to respond to information Part 2: writing an article or a story on a topic.	You need to be able to: • write texts of about 100 words • respond to an email and include all the content points • *either* write an article on a topic *or* write a story following the first sentence, which you are given.
Listening 30 minutes	The Listening paper has four parts: Part 1: seven short audios, with a question and three images each. You listen and choose the correct image. Part 2: six short dialogues (two people talking to each other). You listen and choose the correct answer from A, B, C or D. Part 3: listen to a monologue (one person talking) and complete notes or sentences about the audio. Part 4: listen to an interview and choose the answer from A, B or C.	You need to be able to: • listen for important information and details in short monologues and long conversations • listen for the main idea in short dialogues • listen and write down important information and spell words correctly • identify attitudes and opinions in an interview.
Speaking About 12 minutes	The Speaking test has four parts: Part 1: you give personal or factual information for example, about where you live, what you like and don't like, or about your family and friends, or daily routines. Part 2: you describe a colour photograph for about 1 minute Part 3: you and the other candidate(s) are given some images or information to talk about together for about 4 minutes Part 4: candidates have a general conversation with each other and the examiner.	You need to be able to: • answer questions about yourself • describe a photograph for about 1 minute, organising what you say • discuss a situation with your partner, using pictures to help you • talk about likes, opinions, experiences, habits, etc.

You don't need to pass all of the papers to pass the whole exam. For example, if you do very well in the Reading, Writing and Speaking papers, but you don't do so well in the Listening paper, it is still possible to pass. Your scores for Paper 1 (Reading) + Paper 2 (Writing) + Paper 3 (Listening) + Paper 4 (Speaking) ÷ 4 = your exam result.

Preparing for the exam

There are four things you need to do to prepare for the exam:

1. Practise your English in all four of the language skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.
2. Improve your grammar and vocabulary.
3. Make sure you know what to expect in the exam.
4. Make sure you know the practical arrangements for the exam.

The most important of these is to practise communicating clearly. For example, in the Speaking test, the examiner will be interested in how you ask your partner questions, and how you answer their questions.

To help you prepare for B1 Preliminary, our website has a lot of free exam preparation material, including:

- sample papers and a computer-based practice test
- skills practice activities
- language practice activities.

To help you prepare for the exam, Cambridge University Press & Assessment have developed a wide range of official preparation materials including coursebooks and practice tests. You can purchase these in both print and digital formats.

Support for computer-based exams

We also have lots of resources to support you with the computer-based exams, including sample tests, FAQs, a tutorial video and a video to show you what it's like to take the exam.
cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/preliminary-for-schools/preparation

What are the benefits of taking the computer-based exams?

The exam formats are the same for both the paper-based and computer-based exams. However, there are features of the computer-based exam that you may prefer.

For the Reading & Use of English paper, you can:

- look at the text and the questions on one page
- highlight text and make notes, on screen or on paper (provided by the centre)
- see which questions you haven't answered yet
- easily change your answers.

For the Writing paper:

- you can use paper to plan and make notes during the Writing paper (provided by the centre)
- but you type answers directly on the screen
- you can easily copy and paste, delete and edit your writing
- there's a word count, so you know how many words you've written.

For the Listening paper, you can:

- listen with headphones, so the sound quality is good
- adjust the volume of the audio
- adjust the size and colour of the font
- easily change your answers.

And, you have two minutes to review your answers at the end.

But you don't have to transfer their answers to a separate answer sheet.

For the Speaking paper:

The speaking test is the same for both the paper-based and computer-based exams and is a face-to-face test.

Learn more about the exam

sample paper

computer-based practice test

video of Speaking test

examiner's comments on speaking performances

Studying for the exam

How can I improve my reading?

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

- signs, notices and packaging information
- short newspaper and magazine articles
- notes, text messages and emails
- brochures and leaflets (you may be able to find leaflets in English in a library or a tourist information office)
- websites
- graded readers, both fiction and non-fiction (books that are written for people learning English).

The Reading paper tests how well you can read in different ways, so you need to practise these skills.

- Try to read a text quickly to get the main idea. (This is called 'skimming'.) It's a good idea to skim any text you're going to read.
- Read a text to find out specific information. For example, visit a cinema website to find out when a film is on. (This is called 'scanning'.)
- Read some texts carefully, so that you understand as much as possible, including what the writer thinks or feels about the topic.

You will need to read in all of these different ways in the Reading test.

Another useful thing to do is to try to guess the meaning of words that you don't know. This is an important skill to help you cope with higher level texts. Sometimes you can try to guess the meaning of these words, or you can decide whether you can understand the text well enough without knowing all the words.

How can I improve my writing?

Here are some ideas for preparing for the Writing tasks.

- Write short messages or emails to friends, family or colleagues, and encourage them to write back to you.
- Learn how to do things in your writing like describing, inviting, suggesting, thanking and reminding.
- Practise writing emails, articles and stories that are at least 100 words, so that you know what this number of words looks like.
- When you practise 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 good answers at B1 level are like.
- Practise writing with the same time limit as in the exam.
- Always check your writing for spelling, grammar and vocabulary mistakes. The examiner will look at these when they mark your writing, as well as how clear your message is. You can use our online tool Write & Improve to help you.

How can I improve my listening?

Try listening to people speaking as much as you can, even if you can't understand everything. You can find many different things to listen to online. You may find it easier to watch videos so that you can see the person speaking while you're listening. You could listen to:

- videos on the Cambridge English TV YouTube channel
- listening activities in the Learning English section of the Cambridge English website
- episodes of our audio series Virtually Anywhere – there are seven episodes, each with activities to practise the language used
- sample chapters from Cambridge University Press & Assessment graded readers
- listening activities on language learning websites such as the BBC or the British Council.

Listen to monologues (one speaker) as well as dialogues with two speakers.

Practise the letters of the alphabet and long numbers, such as telephone numbers and dates.

Listen to people speaking in different accents (American, Australian, British, Irish), as you may hear different accents in the test. You can use the internet to find podcasts or radio or TV programmes from different countries around the world.

What is the best way to improve my speaking?

The best way to improve your speaking is to speak as much English as you can with your friends, family, colleagues and teacher. Try to talk about different things. Practise asking questions to find out what other people think.

You could look at a picture and practise talking about it for about a minute. If you record yourself, you can listen back and find ways to improve your language, vocabulary and pronunciation.

To help improve your pronunciation, try our activities for learners.

Watch an example of a Speaking test, so you know what to expect on the day. If you read the examiner's comments, you will understand what the examiners are looking for in your Speaking test.

How can I learn to use more vocabulary and grammar?

These ideas will help you to improve your grammar and to use more interesting vocabulary.

- Tip for learning new words: Write it! Use it! Remember it! Keep a vocabulary book.
- Write down new words in your vocabulary book that you see in your coursebook or in past exam papers. Try to write words that go together and write an example sentence so that you can learn them, e.g. *enter a competition – he entered a competition because the prize was a trip to Disneyland*.
- Make sure you know vocabulary about many different topics. Ask your teacher about the topics that can be in the exam. You could also look at the B1 Preliminary vocabulary list.
- Try to use a monolingual dictionary (English–English) while you're preparing for the exam. This will help you to increase your vocabulary and learn how words are used.
- Learn the different forms of irregular verbs (e.g. *I break*, *I broke*, *I have broken*).
- Learn which prepositions go with different words (e.g. *blame someone for something*, *be in charge of something*).
- Practise your spelling. If you have problems with spelling a word, practise writing it again and again until you can remember the correct spelling.
- Play our English language games and join our social media. It's a fun way to learn and practise vocabulary and grammar.

Knowing what to expect in the exam

It's also really important that you know what to expect in the exam. That way, you'll be more confident and relaxed on exam day.

What do I have to do in each part of the exam?

You can download sample papers and find more information about each part of the exam on our website. You can find sample papers for both the paper-based and the computer-based exams. You can also buy a book of authentic practice tests online or from bookshops.

Looking at sample papers means that you'll know what you'll have to do in each part of the exam.

How important are practice tests?

It is very useful to do some practice tests, so you'll know exactly what is in the exam. You should also practise filling in the answer sheets, so that you know how to do this on exam day.

It's also important to do a timed exams. This will show you how much time you have for each part.

When you've finished the practice test, look at the answers and think carefully about the ones that are wrong, and reasons why.

After you've done the writing part, compare your answers to the sample answers.

When you practise doing a Speaking test, try this with a friend.

Remember, doing practice tests is only part of the work you need to do to get ready for the exam. Think about what you are good at and not so good at when you use English. Try to improve your English, not just for the exam but for life after the exam!

Practical arrangements for the exam

When and where will my exam be?

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

Make sure you arrive at the exam centre at the right time. Check how long it will take you to travel there. The centre will ask you to arrive before the start time of the exam, so they can perform ID/security checks and explain what you should do.

How do I register for results online?

When you register for the exam, you will receive a Confirmation of Entry. This will show the link to our Online Results Service, as well as your Candidate ID number and Secret Number, which you will need to use to register to receive your results online.

You should register for the results service before you take the exam so that you get your results more quickly.

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

You need to take your identification, e.g. your passport or other photographic ID. It must be the original and it must be valid on the day of the exam. This is so that the centre can check who you are.

You should take pens and pencils. Your centre will also give you extra pens or pencils if you need them.

You can take a clear bottle of water, but don't bring any other food or drink.

So that the exam is fair to everyone, you cannot take your bag, your mobile phone or other electronic items in the exam room. Check with your centre if it's better to leave anything valuable at home.

Who do I ask if I have any questions before the exam?

You can ask your teacher questions about the exam. If you've registered for the exam yourself (not through a school), you can contact your local centre with any questions. You can find your nearest centre on our website.

Exam day

When you arrive:

- Make sure you are well prepared for exam day. Get a good night's sleep and arrive at the centre on time.
- When you arrive at the centre, you may be asked to fill in a sheet of candidate data. Don't worry – this is just information for us at Cambridge English.
- Get your photo ID ready for checking. The centre may also take your photo for identification.
- The centre will show you where to put your bags, phones, etc.
- There will be a clock in the exam room, and a timer on your screen for computer-based exams.

In the exam room:

- Listen carefully to the instructions which the invigilator will give you. Make sure you follow all the instructions.
- If you have any questions, need help or want to leave the room, raise your hand to ask for help. Do not talk to other people, or try to see what other candidates are writing.
- For computer-based exams, follow the instructions on your computer screen carefully.

At the end of the exam:

- For paper-based exams, stop writing as soon as the invigilator tells you to.
- Leave all papers in the exam room, including any notes you make.
- Stay in your seat until the invigilator tells you to leave the room.

Here are some tips for what to do in each part of the exam.

Reading

- Look carefully at the instructions for each part. They will tell you what to do.
- Look at the titles of the longer texts. The titles will help you to understand what the text is about and where it comes from.
- Read the texts and the questions carefully, and make sure that you answer the questions. Don't just choose an answer because you see one word.
- If you don't know the meaning of a word, don't worry. Try to guess what it means.
- Answer all the questions, even if you're not sure. Always choose an answer for each multiple-choice question.
- Take your time and don't hurry. There is plenty of time to answer all of the questions.

For paper-based exams:

- Use a pencil to complete the answer sheet (not a pen).
- Check that you have marked your answers in the correct place on the answer sheet.
- If you make a mistake, use an eraser to rub it out.

For computer-based exams:

- You will watch a short tutorial before the test begins.
- To prepare for the computer-based exam, practise reading on a screen and highlighting text on a computer.
- You can find answers to questions that candidates often ask about the computer-based exams in our Frequently-Asked-Questions booklet.

Writing

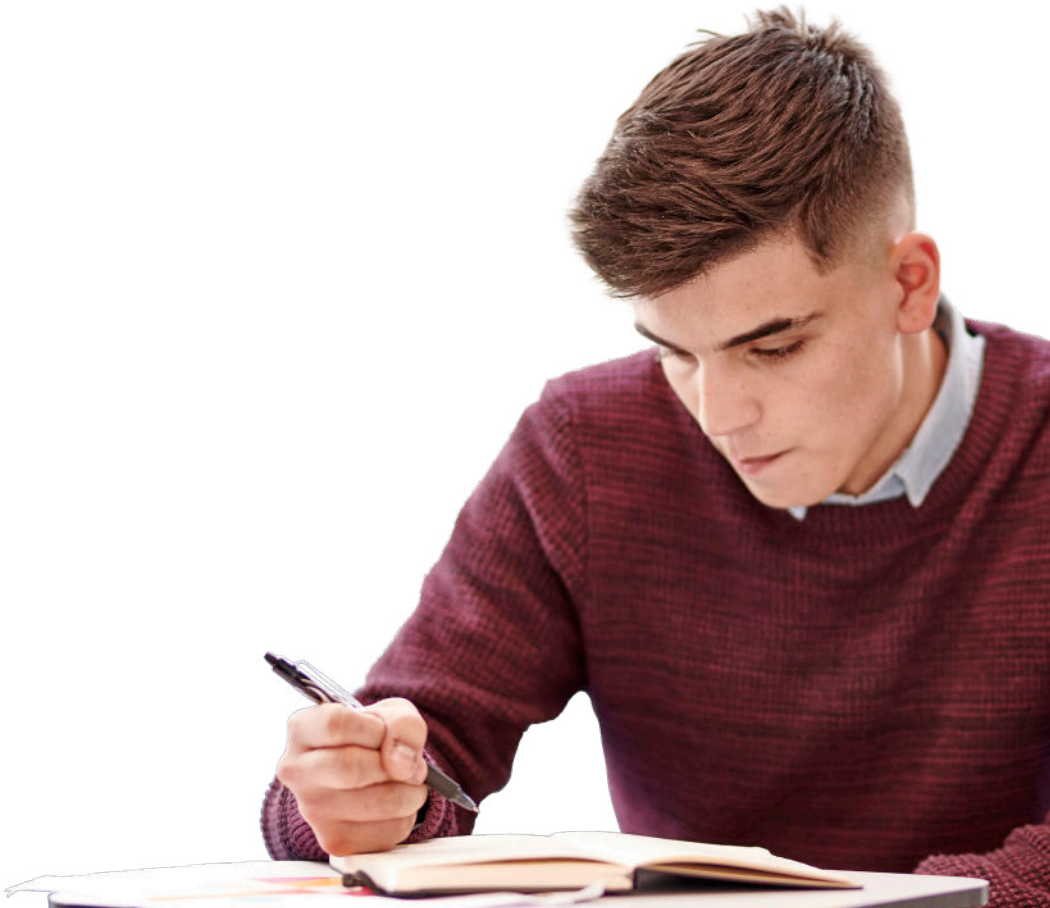
- Check your spelling carefully.
- Give yourself time to write, check and edit your work. If you do change anything, make sure that your writing is easy to read.
- Write about 100 words for each question, which is the required number. This will mean that you should be able to include all the relevant information without writing so much that your message isn't clear.

For paper-based exams:

- Make sure you write your answer on the correct part of the answer sheet. Use a pen, not a pencil.

For computer-based exams:

- You can make notes on paper during the exam and leave these notes on your desk at the end of the exam.
- To prepare for the computer-based Writing paper, you should get used to typing on a keyboard and editing your work on a computer.
- You can find answers to questions that candidates often ask about the computer-based exams in our Frequently-Asked-Questions booklet.



Listening

- Check that you can hear the test properly. If you can't hear the recording, raise your hand immediately.
- You will hear each recording twice.
- Your centre will tell you whether you can use headphones for the Listening paper.
- Use any pauses to read the instructions and the questions. Read the instructions carefully.
- Try to answer the questions the first time you listen, then use the second listening to check your answers and to fill in any answers that you didn't hear the first time.
- Answer all the questions, even if you're not sure. Always choose an answer for each multiple-choice question.
- Don't worry if you make a spelling mistake, unless the word is very common e.g. *Monday*, or if the spelling of the word is dictated in the recording.

For paper-based exams:

- At the end of the test, copy your answers carefully onto the answer sheet in pencil and check your work. Use an eraser if you make a mistake. You will have 6 minutes to do this.

For computer-based exams:

- You will watch a short tutorial before the test begins.
- To prepare for the computer-based listening exam, do lots of listening practice using headphones.
- You can find answers to questions that candidates often ask about the computer-based exams in our Frequently-Asked-Questions booklet.

Speaking

- You will do the Speaking test with a partner, and there will be two examiners. One is the interlocutor, who will ask you questions and give you a global mark. The other is the assessor, who will just listen and give you marks by using the assessment criteria.
- If there is an odd number of candidates, the last group may be a group of three (not two). In this case, the test will last for 17 minutes instead of 12 minutes for two candidates.
- Listen to what the interlocutor says and to what your partner says.
- Respond to what your partner says. Be prepared to ask them questions to start the discussion.
- Don't worry if you think your partner is better at speaking English than you, or is not as good as you, or has a different personality. The examiners mark you individually.
- Try to answer the interlocutor's questions with more than just one word.
- Always make the best use of the time you have to show your language skills, but don't interrupt your partner. It's important to let them finish.
- Speak clearly, so that both examiners can hear you.
- Ask the interlocutor to repeat the instructions, or a question, if you have not understood.
- Always try to answer the questions. The examiners can't mark you if you don't say anything.
- Don't worry if you think you've made a mistake. The important thing is that you communicate with your partner and with the interlocutor.
- Don't worry if the examiner stops you. It is important that the tests are not too long.
- Try to relax and enjoy the test. Remember that the examiners want you to do your best.
- The speaking test is the same for both the paper-based and computer-based exams and is a face-to-face test.

Working with a partner in the Speaking test

Your partner may be a student from your school, or they may be from another school. Check with your centre to find out more.

The examiners are trained to give all candidates equal opportunities to do their best.

Examiners are trained to deal with two candidates who have very different personalities (for example, one is very shy and the other is very outgoing). Everyone has the chance to show what they can do.

After the exam

Results and next steps

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

Your Statement of Results is usually available four to six weeks after the exam for paper-based exams, and two to three weeks after the exam for computer-based exams. The fastest way to get your results is to sign up to our free Online Results Service. You can see your results online by entering your Candidate ID and Secret Number. These are on your Confirmation of Entry.

Your certificate will be sent about three weeks after the results are available.

What information will be on my Statement of Results?

On your Statement of Results, you'll see:

- your score on the Cambridge English Scale for each of the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)
- your score on the Cambridge English Scale for the overall exam
- your grade for the overall exam (A, B, C or CEFR Level A2)
- your CEFR level for the overall exam.

You can find more information on understanding your Statement of Results.

To help you understand what your results mean, watch our video.

What does my overall score say about my level?

Your overall score for the exam is given on the Cambridge English Scale and shows how well you did in the exam. If you achieve a score of between 160 and 170 (A), this means you performed exceptionally well and that your English is above B1 level, the level of B1 Preliminary. Your certificate will state that you showed ability at Level B2.

If you achieve a score between 140 and 159 (B or C) in the exam, you will receive the Preliminary certificate at Level B1.

If your performance is below B1 level, but within A2 level (120–139), you will get a Cambridge English certificate stating that you showed ability at Level A2.

Sharing your results

If you want to use your results to apply for a place at university or college, or for a job, you can share them through the Online Results Service. Your selected organisation can then view your result through our Results Verification Service. You can find more information on how to share your results with a recognising organisation.

What can I do with my B1 Preliminary qualification?

Your certificate is accepted by thousands of leading businesses and educational institutions around the world. Find out more about who accepts Cambridge English Qualifications.

How can I continue my language learning after passing B1 Preliminary?

After you've passed B1 Preliminary, you can go on to take B2 First, and following that you could also take C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency. Find out more about all our Cambridge English Qualifications.

Where your world grows

Find out more at
cambridge.org/english

We believe that English can unlock a lifetime of experiences and, together with teachers and our partners, we help people to learn and confidently prove their skills to the world.

This document was initially designed for print and as such does not reach accessibility standard WCAG 2.1 in a number of ways including missing text alternatives and missing document structure.

If you need this document in a different format contact **BrandAdmin.C@cambridgeenglish.org** telling us your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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