

Cambridge English Advanced

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

Information for candidates



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)

www.cambridgeenglish.org/advanced



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: 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.

About the exam

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

Paper details	What's in the paper?	Skills assessed
<p>Reading and Use of English</p> <p>1 hour 30 minutes</p>	<p>There are eight parts and 56 questions altogether.</p> <p>Parts 1–3 are text based and involve choosing or supplying a missing word, or forming a new word.</p> <p>Part 4 is sentence based and involves writing a sentence in a different way.</p> <p>Parts 5–8 are text based and are accompanied by comprehension tasks. The task types are multiple choice, a gapped text with missing paragraphs, and multiple matching. In one part you will need to read across four short texts. The texts are not for a specialised readership and can be fiction or non-fiction, but are often academic in nature.</p>	<p>The Reading and Use of English paper tests your reading skills and your underlying knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. You will be assessed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a wide range of language at word, phrase, sentence and text level reading for main ideas, specific information, text structure, implication and tone.



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Paper details	What's in the paper?	Skills assessed
Writing 1 hour 30 minutes	<p>There are two parts and you will write 220–260 words for each part. Part 1 is a compulsory task where you will write an essay based on two points given in an input text, explaining which point is more important and giving reasons for your opinions.</p> <p>In Part 2 you have a choice of task and will write one of the following: a letter, proposal, report or review. There will be a clear context, topic, purpose and target reader for your writing.</p>	<p>You will be assessed using the criteria <i>Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language</i>.</p> <p>See page 14 for more detail.</p>
Listening Approximately 40 minutes	<p>There are four parts and 30 questions, 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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
Speaking 15 minutes Paired: two (occasionally three) candidates together	<p>There are four parts in the Speaking test. It 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. In Part 3 you will discuss some ideas based on written prompts with the other candidate. 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.</p>	<p>You're tested on many things. Apart from grammar and vocabulary, you are assessed on your pronunciation as well as your ability to organise your thoughts, initiate and maintain a discussion, and reach a decision through negotiation.</p> <p>See page 13 for more detail.</p>

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.

- ➔ **Download a complete sample paper.**
- ➔ **Try a computer-based practice test.**
(Please note you will need to use the Firefox or Chrome browser to view these sample tests.)
- ➔ **Watch a video of a Speaking test.**
- ➔ **Read an examiner's comments on the candidates' performances.**

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.

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. *How can I practise grammar and vocabulary to prepare for the test?*
4. *What kinds of things should I be reading apart from coursebooks?*
5. *How can I improve my writing skills?*
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 and find more information about each part of the test on the [Cambridge English Language Assessment website](#).

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. *How can I practise grammar and vocabulary to prepare for the test?*

There are many ways to improve your awareness of vocabulary and grammar for the test. 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*.

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.



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

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

- articles from newspapers and magazines, and non-technical journals, reports and reviews
- biographies, novels and short stories.

All of these types of text can be found online.


Remember that the reading tasks test 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.

5. 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 (i.e. reports, proposals, reviews, letters and essays). 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.
- 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*.

You can find more information about how *Cambridge English: Advanced Writing* is assessed [here](#).

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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
- You can also listen to our audio series **Virtually Anywhere**.


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*.

You can find information about how *Cambridge English: Advanced Speaking* is assessed [here](#).

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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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“

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

”

ANSWERS

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 are also **free sample tests on our website**.

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, you can find a centre that offers your exam **here**. 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 identification, for example your passport or national ID card. 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 candidate 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.



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The 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 local centre [here](#).

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 and 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, don't forget to always use the key word exactly as it is given.
- ✓ With **Reading and Use of English**, 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 **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.
- ➔ Read an examiner's comments on the candidates' performances.

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How much do you know about
results and 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 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 to three 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 send your certificate to your centre about three weeks after your result is available online. If you need to check when you will receive your certificate, contact your centre.


2. 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) and Use of English
- score on the Cambridge English Scale for the overall exam
- grade for the overall exam
- CEFR level for the overall exam.


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. 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](#).

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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 with good use of linking devices.
- **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 your 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.

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

If you achieve a Cambridge English Scale score of 200 or more (grade A) in your exam, this means you performed exceptionally well and that your English is above Level C1. 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 score between 180 and 199 (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 Level B2.

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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, Ireland 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.

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“ 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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