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This handbook is intended principally for teachers and course designers who are, or intend to become, involved in preparing candidates for the Cambridge Preliminary English Test (PET). There are separate handbooks for other Cambridge ESOL examinations.

The introductory part of the handbook provides a general background to the Cambridge ESOL examinations and an overview of the work of Cambridge ESOL, including a description of current procedures for test design, production and marking. It is hoped that this will be of interest both to those who are familiar with the Cambridge ESOL examinations, and to those who are coming to them for the first time.

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## **UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE ESOL EXAMINATIONS**

### **Introduction to Cambridge ESOL**

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) is a part of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which has provided examinations in English for speakers of other languages since 1913. Cambridge ESOL offers an extensive range of examinations, certificates and diplomas for learners and teachers of English. In 2002 over 1.2 million people took these examinations at centres in over 130 countries.

Cambridge ESOL was formerly known as UCLES EFL. The title ESOL – English for Speakers of Other Languages – was adopted in October 2002, reflecting the increasing diversity of the candidature.

Cambridge ESOL examinations can be taken by anyone whose first language is not English. They are suitable for learners of all nationalities, whatever their first language and cultural background, and there are examinations suitable for learners of almost any age. The range of Cambridge ESOL

examinations includes specialist examinations in Business English and English for Academic Purposes, as well as tests for young learners and a suite of certificates and diplomas for language teachers.

The examinations cover all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They include a range of tasks which assess candidates' ability to use English, so that in preparing for the examinations, candidates develop the skills they need to make practical use of the language in a variety of contexts. Above all, what the Cambridge ESOL examinations assess is the ability to communicate effectively in English.

Cambridge ESOL is committed to providing examinations of the highest possible quality. This commitment is underpinned by an extensive programme of research and evaluation, and by continuous monitoring of the marking and grading of all Cambridge ESOL examinations. Of particular importance is the rigorous set of procedures which are used in the production and pretesting of question papers, and these are described in the following section.

### **The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)**

Cambridge ESOL is a member of the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), which was formed in 1990. The members are all providers of language examinations and certificates from countries within Europe.

The principal objectives of ALTE are as follows:

- to promote the transnational recognition of certification, especially in Europe
- to establish common standards for all stages of the language testing process, i.e. test development, question and materials writing, test administration, marking and grading, reporting of test results, test analysis and reporting of findings
- to collaborate on joint projects and in the exchange of ideas and know-how.

Cambridge ESOL examinations fulfil the Code of Practice established by ALTE. This Code of Practice focuses on the responsibilities of both examination providers and examination users and covers four main areas:

- developing examinations
- interpreting examination results
- striving for fairness
- informing examination takers.

For more information on ALTE please visit [www.ALTE.org](http://www.ALTE.org)

## Key features of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

Cambridge ESOL undertakes:

- to assess language skills at a range of levels, each of them having a clearly defined relevance to the needs of language learners;
- to assess skills which are directly relevant to the range of uses for which learners will need the language they have learnt, and which cover the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – as well as knowledge of language structure and use;
- to provide accurate and consistent assessment of each language skill at the appropriate level;
- to relate the examinations to the teaching curriculum in such a way that they encourage positive learning experiences and to seek to achieve a positive impact wherever possible;
- to endeavour to be fair to all candidates, whatever their national, ethnic and linguistic background, gender or disability.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are designed around four essential qualities: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. Validity is normally taken to be the extent to which a test can be shown to produce scores which are an accurate reflection of the candidate's true level of language skills. Reliability concerns the extent to which test results are stable, consistent and accurate, and therefore the extent to which they can be depended on for making decisions about the candidate. Impact concerns the effects, beneficial or otherwise, which an examination has on the candidates and other users, whether these are educational, social, economic or political, or various combinations of these. Practicality can be defined as the extent to which an examination is practicable in terms of the resources needed to produce and administer it. All these factors underpin the development and production of Cambridge ESOL examinations, and have been taken into consideration in developing the updated PET examination in 2004.

## The Production of Cambridge ESOL Question Papers

The production process for question papers for Cambridge ESOL examinations begins with the commissioning of material and ends with the printing of question papers.

For the majority of Cambridge ESOL question papers there are five main stages in the production process:

- commissioning
- editing
- pretesting
- analysis and banking of material
- question paper construction.

This process is represented in the diagram on the right.

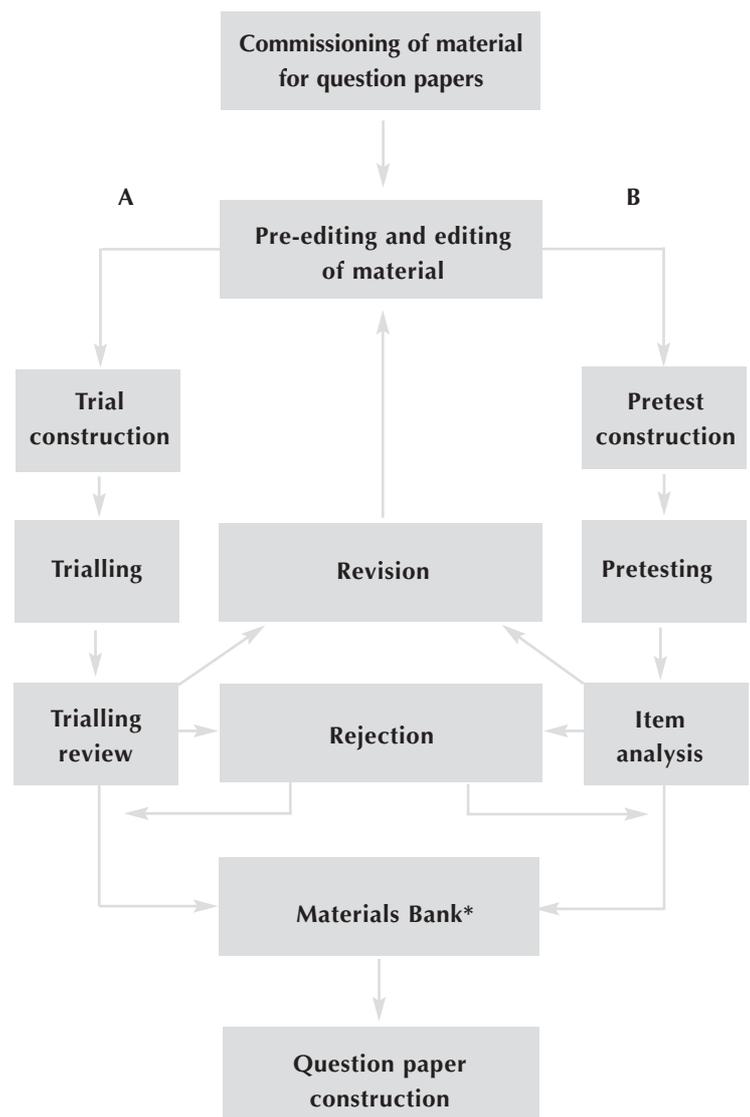
Cambridge ESOL employs teams of item writers to produce

examination material, and throughout the writing and editing process strict guidelines are followed in order to ensure that the materials conform to the test specifications. Topics or contexts of language use which might introduce a bias against any group of candidates of a particular background (i.e. on the basis of sex, ethnic origin, etc.) are avoided.

After selection and editing, the items are compiled into pretest papers. Pretesting plays a central role as it allows for questions and materials with known measurement characteristics to be banked so that new versions of question papers can be produced as and when required. The pretesting process helps to ensure that all versions conform to the test requirements in terms of content and level of difficulty.

Each pretest paper is supplied to candidates with an additional anchor test. The anchor items are carefully chosen on the basis of their known measurement characteristics, and their inclusion means that all new items can be linked to a common scale of difficulty.

Pretest papers are despatched to a wide variety of schools and colleges which have offered to administer the pretests to

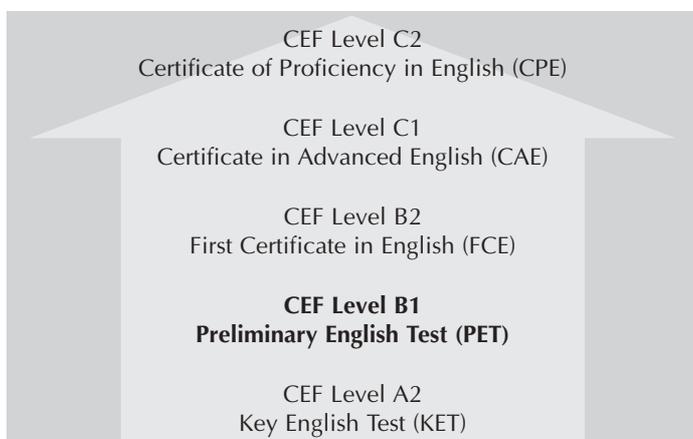


candidates of a suitable level. After the completed pretests have been returned to the Pretesting Section at Cambridge ESOL, a score for each student is provided to the centre within two weeks of receiving the completed scripts. The items are marked and analysed, and those which are found to be suitable are banked.

Material for the productive components of the examinations is trialled with candidates to assess its suitability for inclusion in the Materials Bank.

## The Cambridge ESOL Main Suite: a Five-Level System

Cambridge ESOL has developed a series of examinations with similar characteristics, spanning five levels and linked to the levels of the Common European Framework (CEF) established by the Council of Europe. Within the series of five levels the Preliminary English Test (PET) is at CEF Level B1.



## PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST (PET)

### Background

PET was introduced in the late 1970s and tests competence in Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking. The language level of PET is approximately two thirds of the way towards that of the First Certificate in English. PET is based on the Council of Europe Threshold Level (1990) by van Ek and Trim.

In 1999, a review of PET was undertaken involving key clients and stakeholders. The result of this review is the updated PET, applicable from March 2004.

### The Level of PET

PET is at level B1 of the Common European Framework, and a description of this level is given below in terms of:

- what material learners can handle;
- what learners can be expected to be able to do.

At this level a learner should be able to cope linguistically in a range of everyday situations which require a largely predictable use of language. A Threshold Level user will be

able to use English in their own or a foreign country in contact with native and non-native speakers of English for general purposes as described below.

### Materials a Threshold User can deal with

The text types which can be handled by the learner at this level include street signs and public notices, product packaging, forms, posters, brochures, city guides and instructions on how to do things, as well as informal letters and newspaper and magazine texts such as articles, features and weather forecasts. The kinds of listening texts the learner needs to understand are announcements made at railway stations and airports, traffic information given on the radio, public announcements made at sporting events or pop concerts and instructions given by police or customs officials. At this level, candidates need to be able to not only pick out facts, but also to understand opinions, attitudes, moods and wishes.

### What a Threshold User can do

Learners at this level, if travelling as tourists, can get all the information needed from a tourist information centre, as long as it is of a straightforward, non-specialised nature. Similarly, if taking part in a guided tour, they can understand the main points of a commentary and ask questions in order to get more information, as long as no specialised technical language is needed. They can deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through a travel agent or when actually travelling. In the context of work they can state requirements within their own job area, and ask questions of a fact-finding nature. In a meeting, they can take part in a discussion which involves the exchange of factual information or receiving instructions, but they may have difficulty dealing with anything unpredictable or unfamiliar.

Where telephone calls are concerned, predictability is also important at this level, and as long as only routine matters are involved, the learner can receive and pass on messages. They can write simple personal letters such as 'thank-you' letters, but only within a more or less standard format.

Several of the examinations provided by members of ALTE at this level are used as measures of language ability for official or institutional purposes, such as acquiring citizenship or entry to courses of study.

### PET Candidature

In 2002, there were over 96,000 candidates for PET. Information is collected about the PET candidature at each session, when candidates fill in Candidate Information Sheets. These provide essential information, which is needed, for example, to see whether certain types of question cause difficulties for candidates in particular age ranges or from particular language backgrounds. The information provided is treated as confidential and is covered by the Data Protection

Act of the United Kingdom. The answers that a candidate gives to the questions on the Candidate Information Sheet will not affect his/her result in any way.

### **Nationality**

PET is taken in over eighty different countries, with the majority of candidates coming from Europe and South America.

### **Age**

About 70% of PET candidates are aged 20 or under. A further 20% are in the 21–30 age group.

### **Gender**

Approximately 60% are female.

### **Employment**

Most candidates are studying full-time.

### **Exam Preparation**

Approximately 80% of the candidature attend preparation classes. On average, they study English for about four and a half years in total prior to entry.

### **Reasons for taking PET**

Candidates enter for a variety of reasons. About 55% of candidates indicate that they are taking PET for personal interest reasons, while nearly 50% state that they are taking PET to improve their future employment prospects. Nearly 30% of candidates also indicate that they are interested in further study of English.

## **What sort of test is PET?**

In real life, language is used in context, and the forms of language vary according to that context. The assessment aims of PET and its syllabus are designed to ensure that the test reflects the use of language in real life. The question types and formats have been devised with the purpose of fulfilling these aims. PET corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English, without neglecting the need for clarity and accuracy.

## **Marking and Grading**

The final mark a candidate receives in PET is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (Reading/Writing, Listening and Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers.

PET has two passing grades:

- Pass with Merit
- Pass

and two failing grades:

- Narrow Fail
- Fail

'Pass' ordinarily corresponds to approximately 70% of the total marks, and 'Pass with Merit' to approximately 85%. A 'Narrow Fail' result indicates that a candidate was within 5% of the 'Pass' boundary.

Statements of Results contain a graphical display of a candidate's performance in each component. These are shown against a scale of Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each paper.

## **Administration**

Candidates mark or write all their answers on OMR (Optical Mark Reader) answer sheets. For Paper 1 (Reading and Writing) there are two answer sheets, and candidates must fill in these sheets within the time allowed for the Paper as printed on the front cover of the question paper.

In Paper 2 (Listening), candidates write their answers on the question paper as they listen to the tape, and are given 6 additional minutes to transfer their answers to the answer sheet.

Samples of the OMR answer sheets for the Reading/Writing and Listening Papers are provided on pages 33, 34 and 46 of this Handbook and it is useful for candidates to practise filling these in before the date of the examination so that they are familiar with PET test procedure.

## **Time and Place**

PET is usually available six times a year on fixed dates in March, May, June (twice), November and December.

Current information on dates and the administrative details of the examination are provided separately to centres. A copy can be obtained from your nearest Cambridge Examination Centre. A list of Cambridge Examination Centres is obtainable from Cambridge ESOL (address follows) or from the nearest office of the British Council. All PET entries must be made through an authorised centre.

## **Special Circumstances**

Special circumstances covers three main areas: special arrangements, special consideration and malpractice.

### **Special arrangements**

These are available for disabled candidates. They may include extra time, separate accommodation or equipment, braille transcription, etc. Consult the Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary in your area for more details.

### Special consideration

Cambridge ESOL will give special consideration to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Special consideration can be given where an application is sent through the centre and is made within ten working days of the examination date. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving special consideration are in cases of illness or other unexpected events.

### Malpractice

The Malpractice Committee will consider cases where candidates are suspected of copying/collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of regulations. Centres are notified if a candidate's results have been investigated.

### PET Support

#### Course materials

A list of UK publishers which produce coursebooks and practice materials related to the examinations is available from Cambridge ESOL and is on the Cambridge ESOL website. PET requires an all-round language ability and this should be borne in mind when selecting course materials.

Most coursebooks will be supplemented; care should be taken to ensure that coursebooks and practice materials selected accurately reflect the content and format of the examination.

N.B. Cambridge ESOL does not undertake to advise on textbooks or courses of study.

#### Past Papers and Examination Reports

Cambridge ESOL produces past examination papers, which can be used for practice, and examination reports, which provide a general view of how candidates performed overall and on each paper and offer guidance on the preparation of candidates. Details of how to order past papers and examination reports, and how to download an order form, are available from [www.CambridgeESOL.org](http://www.CambridgeESOL.org)

#### Seminars for Teachers

Cambridge ESOL offers a wide range of seminars designed for teachers concerned with the examinations; some are also suitable as introductions for administrators, school directors etc. Some seminars are intended to provide information and support for teachers who are familiar with the examinations, and others can be used to introduce teachers to established examinations and also to new or revised examinations. Contact Cambridge ESOL for further details.

## PET CONTENT: AN OVERVIEW

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test Focus
Paper 1	Reading/ Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	Reading: Five parts which test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts.  Writing: Three parts which test a range of writing skills.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level.  Assessment of candidates' ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.
Paper 2	Listening	30 minutes (approx.)	Four parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics.
Paper 3	Speaking	10–12 minutes per pair of candidates	Four parts: In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner; In Parts 2 and 4 they interact with another candidate; In Part 3, they have an extended individual long turn.	Assessment of candidates' ability to express themselves in order to carry out functions at <i>Threshold</i> level. To ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses. To talk freely on matters of personal interest.

### Aims and Objectives

Candidates who are successful in PET should be able to communicate satisfactorily in most everyday situations with both native and non-native speakers of English. This aim corresponds to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's Threshold Specification.

### Reading

Using the structures and topics listed in this Handbook, candidates should be able to understand public notices and signs; to read short texts of a factual nature and show understanding of the content; to demonstrate understanding of the structure of the language as it is used to express

notions of relative time, space, possession, etc.; to scan factual material for information in order to perform relevant tasks, disregarding redundant or irrelevant material; to read texts of an imaginative or emotional character and to appreciate the central sense of the text, the attitude of the writer to the material and the effect it is intended to have on the reader.

## Writing

Students should be able to give information, report events, and describe people, objects and places as well as convey reactions to situations, express hopes, regrets, pleasure, etc. They should also be able to use the words they know appropriately and accurately in different written contexts, and be capable of producing variations on simple sentences.

## Listening

Students should be able to understand and respond to public announcements; to show precise understanding of short factual utterances and to make identifications on the basis of these; to extract information of a factual nature (times, dates, etc.) from speech which will contain redundancies and language outside the defined limits of PET; to understand the sense of a dialogue and show appreciation of the attitudes and intentions of the speakers.

## Speaking

Students should be able to express themselves in order to fulfil the functions listed in the Syllabus in situations which simulate authentic communication. They should be able to ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses, and should be able to talk freely in order to express emotions, reactions, etc.

## Language Specifications

### Inventory of Functions, Notions and Communicative Tasks

Note that 'talking' is used below to refer to BOTH speaking and writing.

greeting people and responding to greetings (in person and on the phone)

introducing oneself and other people

asking for and giving personal details: (full) name, age, address, names of relatives and friends, occupation, etc.

understanding and completing forms giving personal details

understanding and writing letters, giving personal details

describing education, qualifications and skills

describing people (personal appearance, qualities)

asking and answering questions about personal possessions

asking for repetition and clarification

re-stating what has been said

checking on meaning and intention

helping others to express their ideas

interrupting a conversation

starting a new topic

changing the topic

resuming or continuing the topic

asking for and giving the spelling and meaning of words

counting and using numbers

asking and telling people the time, day and/or date

asking for and giving information about routines and habits

understanding and writing diaries and letters giving

information about everyday activities

talking about what people are doing at the moment

talking about past events and states in the past, recent

activities and completed actions

understanding and producing simple narratives

reporting what people say

talking about future or imaginary situations

talking about future plans or intentions

making predictions

identifying and describing accommodation (houses, flats, rooms, furniture, etc.)

buying and selling things (costs, measurements and amounts)

talking about food and ordering meals

talking about the weather

talking about one's health

following and giving simple instructions

understanding simple signs and notices

asking the way and giving directions

asking for and giving travel information

asking for and giving simple information about places

identifying and describing simple objects (shape, size, weight, colour, purpose or use, etc.)

making comparisons and expressing degrees of difference

talking about how to operate things

describing simple processes

expressing purpose, cause and result, and giving reasons

drawing simple conclusions and making recommendations

making and granting/refusing simple requests

making and responding to offers and suggestions

expressing and responding to thanks

giving and responding to invitations

giving advice

giving warnings and prohibitions

persuading and asking/telling people to do something

expressing obligation and lack of obligation

asking and giving/refusing permission to do something

making and responding to apologies and excuses

expressing agreement and disagreement, and contradicting people

paying compliments

criticising and complaining

sympathising

expressing preferences, likes and dislikes (especially about hobbies and leisure activities)

talking about physical and emotional feelings

expressing opinions and making choices

expressing needs and wants

expressing (in)ability in the present and in the past  
talking about (im)probability and (im)possibility  
expressing degrees of certainty and doubt

## **Inventory of Grammatical Areas**

### **Verbs**

regular and irregular forms

### **Modals**

can (ability; requests; permission)  
could (ability; possibility; polite requests)  
would (polite requests)  
will (offer)  
shall (suggestion; offer)  
should (advice)  
may (possibility)  
might (possibility)  
have (got) to (obligation)  
ought to (obligation)  
must (obligation)  
mustn't (prohibition)  
need (necessity)  
needn't (lack of necessity)  
used to + infinitive (past habits)

### **Tenses**

Present simple: states, habits, systems and processes (and verbs not used in the continuous form)  
Present continuous: future plans and activities, present actions  
Present perfect simple: recent past with just, indefinite past with yet, already, never, ever; unfinished past with for and since  
Past simple: past events  
Past continuous: parallel past actions, continuous actions interrupted by the past simple tense  
Past perfect simple: narrative, reported speech  
Future with going to  
Future with present continuous and present simple  
Future with will and shall: offers, promises, predictions, etc.

### **Verb Forms**

Affirmative, interrogative, negative  
Imperatives  
Infinitives (with and without to) after verbs and adjectives  
Gerunds (-ing form) after verbs and prepositions  
Gerunds as subjects and objects  
Passive forms: present and past simple  
Verb + object + infinitive give/take/send/bring/show + direct/indirect object  
Causative have/get  
So/nor with auxiliaries

### **Compound Verb Patterns**

Phrasal verbs/verbs with prepositions

### **Conditional Sentences**

Type 0: An iron bar expands if/when you heat it.  
Type 1: If you do that again, I'll leave.  
Type 2: I would tell you the answer if I knew it.  
If I were you, I wouldn't do that again.

### **Simple Reported Speech**

Statements, questions and commands: say, ask, tell  
He said that he felt ill.  
I asked her if I could leave.  
No one told me what to do.  
Indirect and embedded questions: know, wonder  
Do you know what he said?  
I wondered what he would do next.

### **Interrogatives**

What, What (+ noun)  
Where; When  
Who; Whose; Which  
How; How much; How many; How often; How long; etc.  
Why  
(including the interrogative forms of all tenses and modals listed)

### **Nouns**

Singular and plural (regular and irregular forms)  
Countable and uncountable nouns with some and any  
Abstract nouns  
Compound nouns  
Complex noun phrases  
Genitive: 's & s'  
Double genitive: a friend of theirs

### **Pronouns**

Personal (subject, object, possessive)  
Reflexive and emphatic: myself, etc.  
Impersonal: it, there  
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those  
Quantitative: one, something, everybody, etc.  
Indefinite: some, any, something, one, etc.  
Relative: who, which, that, whom, whose

### **Determiners**

a + countable nouns  
the + countable/uncountable nouns

### **Adjectives**

Colour, size, shape, quality, nationality  
Predicative and attributive  
Cardinal and ordinal numbers  
Possessive: my, your, his, her, etc.  
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those  
Quantitative: some, any, many, much, a few, a lot of, all, other, every, etc.

Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular):

(not) as . . . as, not . . . enough to, too . . . to

Order of adjectives

Participles as adjectives

Compound adjectives

### **Adverbs**

Regular and irregular forms

Manner: quickly, carefully, etc.

Frequency: often, never, twice a day, etc.

Definite time: now, last week, etc.

Indefinite time: already, just, yet, etc.

Degree: very, too, rather, etc.

Place: here, there, etc.

Direction: left, right, along, etc.

Sequence: first, next, etc.

Sentence adverbs: too, either, etc.

Pre-verbal, post-verbal and end-position adverbs

Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular)

### **Prepositions**

Location: to, on, inside, next to, at (home), etc.

Time: at, on, in, during, etc.

Direction: to, into out of, from, etc.

Instrument: by, with

Miscellaneous: like, as, due to, owing to, etc.

Prepositional phrases: at the beginning of, by means of, etc.

Prepositions preceding nouns and adjectives: by car, for sale, at last, etc.

Prepositions following (i) nouns and adjectives: advice on, afraid of, etc. (ii) verbs: laugh at, ask for, etc.

### **Connectives**

and, but, or, either . . . or

when, while, until, before, after, as soon as

where

because, since, as, for

so that, (in order) to

so, so . . . that, such . . . that

if, unless

although, while

Note that students will meet forms other than those listed above in PET, on which they will not be directly tested.

## **Topics**

Clothes

Daily life

Education

Entertainment and media

Environment

Food and drink

Free time

Health, medicine and  
exercise

Hobbies and leisure

House and home

Language

People

Personal feelings, opinions  
and experiences

Personal identification

Places and buildings

Relations with other people

Transport

Services

Shopping

Social interaction

Sport

The natural world

Travel and holidays

Weather

Work and Jobs

## **Lexis**

The PET examination includes items which normally occur in the everyday vocabulary of native-speakers using English today.

Candidates should know the lexis appropriate to their personal requirements, for example, nationalities, hobbies, likes and dislikes.

Note that the consistent use of American pronunciation, spelling and lexis is acceptable in PET.

## Paper 1: Reading and Writing

### *Paper Format*

The Reading component contains 5 parts. The Writing component contains 3 parts.

### *Number of questions*

Reading has 35 questions; Writing has 7 questions.

### *Task Types*

Matching, multiple choice, true/false, transformational sentences, guided writing and extended writing.

### *Sources*

Authentic and adapted-authentic real world notices;

newspapers and magazines; simplified encyclopedias; brochures and leaflets; websites.

### *Answering*

Candidates indicate answers by shading lozenges (Reading), or writing answers (Writing) on an answer sheet.

### *Timing*

1 hour 30 minutes.

### *Marks*

Reading: Each of the 35 questions carry one mark. This is weighted so that this comprises 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Writing: Questions 1–5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of 5; and question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25 which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Reading			
Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of questions
1	Three-option multiple choice. Five very short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, e-mails, labels etc., plus one example.	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.	5
2	Matching. Five items in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.	5
3	True/False. Ten items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Processing a factual text. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	10
4	Four-option multiple choice. Five items with an adapted-authentic long text.	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	5
5	Four-option multiple-choice cloze. Ten items, plus an integrated example, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexico-structural patterns in the text.	10

## Preparing for the Reading Component

### **Introduction**

Paper 1 lasts one and a half hours and contains two components, Reading and Writing. The Reading component consists of 35 questions, with five separate reading tasks in all, Parts 1–5. Together, these parts are designed to test a broad range of reading skills. Texts are drawn wherever possible from the real world and are adapted as necessary to the level of the PET examination. To this end, item writers work with a grammatical syllabus and a vocabulary list, which is updated annually to reflect common usage.

The topics of the texts fall within the list of topics given on page 8. Every effort is made to ensure that all texts used in PET are accessible worldwide and of interest to different age

groups. Each exam task is pretested on large numbers of students before going live, to monitor its suitability and level.

To prepare for the Reading component, students should be exposed to a variety of authentic texts, drawn from newspapers and magazines, non-fiction books, and other sources of factual material, such as leaflets, brochures and websites. It is also recommended that students practise reading (and writing) short communicative messages, including notes, cards and e-mails.

As the Reading component places some emphasis on skimming and scanning skills, it is important for students to be given practice in these skills, working with texts of different lengths to obtain specific information. It should be stressed to students that they do not need to process every

word of the text: they may read an article on history purely to find particular dates or a brochure to check on different locations.

It is essential that candidates familiarise themselves with the instructions on the front page of the question paper and read the individual instructions for each part very carefully. Where an example is given, it is advisable to study it before embarking on the task. Candidates should also know how to mark their answers on the separate answer sheet, so that in the examination they can do this quickly and accurately. No extra time is allowed for the transfer of answers on Paper 1 and candidates may prefer to transfer their answers at the end of each part.

When doing final preparation for the examination, it is helpful to discuss timing with students and to get them to consider how to divide up the time between the various parts of the paper. Broadly speaking, it is envisaged that candidates will spend approximately 50 minutes on the Reading component and 40 minutes on the Writing component.

### **Part 1**

Part 1 tests the candidate's understanding of various kinds of short texts: authentic notices and signs, packaging information (for example, instructions on a food package or a label on a medicine bottle), and communicative messages (notes, e-mails, cards and postcards). Accompanying the text is one multiple-choice question with three options, A, B and C.

When candidates attempt a question in this part, they should first read the text carefully and think about the situation in which it would appear. A text is often accompanied by visual information as to its context, for example showing its location, and this may also help candidates to guess the purpose of the text. After thinking about the general meaning in this way, candidates should read all three options and compare each one with the text before choosing their answer. As a final check, candidates should re-read both text and their choice of answer, to decide whether the chosen option is really 'what the text says'.

### **Part 2**

Part 2 tests the candidate's detailed comprehension of factual material. Candidates are presented with five short descriptions of people and have to match this content to five of eight short texts on a particular topic. The topic is usually to do with goods and services of some kind, for example purchasing books, visiting museums, staying in hotels or choosing holidays. Candidates should begin Part 2 by reading through the five descriptions of the people. They should then read through all eight texts carefully, underlining any matches within them. In order to choose the correct text, candidates will need to check that all the requirements given in the description are met by it. Candidates should be warned against 'wordspotting' – that is, they should avoid making quick matches at word level and instead read each

text carefully, thinking about alternative ways of saying the same thing, i.e. paraphrasing.

### **Part 3**

Part 3 tests the ability to work with a longer, factual text, looking for precise information. The information to be found is usually practical in nature, resembling the type of task with which people are often confronted in real life. Frequently, these texts take the form of brochure extracts, advertisements in magazines and website information.

There are ten questions, which are single-sentence statements about the text. The task is made more authentic by putting these questions before the text, in order to encourage candidates to read them first and then scan the text to find each answer. The information given in the text follows the same order as the content of the questions.

In this part, candidates may well meet some unfamiliar vocabulary. However, they will not be required to understand such vocabulary in order to answer a question correctly. When they meet an unfamiliar word or phrase, therefore, they should not be put off, and should concentrate on obtaining the specific information required from the text.

### **Part 4**

Part 4 presents candidates with a text which goes beyond the provision of factual information, and expresses an opinion or attitude. There are five multiple-choice questions with four options, A, B, C and D. In answering these questions, candidates will demonstrate whether they have understood the writer's purpose, the writer's attitude or opinion, or an opinion quoted by the writer, and both the detailed and global meaning of the text.

This part requires candidates to read the text very carefully indeed. After a first fairly quick reading, to find out the topic and general meaning of the text, candidates should think about the writer's purpose and the meaning of the text as a whole. Having established this, candidates should read the text once again, this time much more carefully. After this second reading of the text, candidates should deal with the questions one by one, checking their choice of answer each time with the text. It may be more practical for candidates to consider the first and last questions together, in that the first focuses on writer purpose and the last on global meaning. The other three questions follow the order of information given in the text and one of the three will focus on attitude or opinion.

### **Part 5**

In Part 5, candidates read a short text containing ten numbered spaces and an example. There is a four-option multiple-choice question for each numbered space, given after the text. The spaces are designed to test mainly vocabulary, but also grammatical points such as pronouns, modal verbs, connectives and prepositions.

Before attempting to answer the ten questions, candidates should read through the whole text to establish its topic and general meaning. After this, they should go back to the beginning of the text and consider the example. Then they should work through the ten questions, trying to select the correct word to fit in each space. It may often be necessary

to read a complete sentence before settling on their choice of answer. Once candidates have decided on an answer, they should check that the remaining three options do not fit in the space. Having completed all ten questions, candidates should read the whole text again with their answers, to check that it makes sense.

Writing			
Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of questions
1	Sentence transformations. Five items, plus an integrated example, that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences using a different structural pattern so that the sentence still has the same meaning.	Control and understanding of Threshold/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.	5
2	Short communicative message. Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, e-mail etc. The prompt takes the form of a rubric to respond to.	A short piece of writing of 35–45 words focusing on communication of specific messages.	1
3	A longer piece of continuous writing. Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story. Candidates are primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.	Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.	1

## Preparing for the Writing Component

### Part 1

Part 1 focuses on grammatical precision and requires candidates to complete five sentences, all sharing a common theme or topic. There is an example, showing exactly what the task involves. For each question, candidates are given a complete sentence, together with a 'gapped' sentence below it. Candidates should write between one and three words to fill this gap. The second sentence, when complete, must mean the same as the first sentence. Both sentences are written within the range of grammar and structures listed on pages 7–8. There may be more than one correct answer in some cases.

As stated above, it is essential for candidates to spell correctly and no marks will be given if a word is misspelled. Candidates will also lose the mark if they produce an answer of more than three words, even if their writing includes the correct answer.

### Part 2

Part 2 is a new task, introduced in March 2004 to replace the previous form-filling task. Candidates are asked to produce a short communicative message of between 35 and 45 words in length. They are told who they are writing to and why, and must include three content points, which are laid out with bullets in the question. To gain top marks, all three points must be present in the candidate's answer, so it is important that candidates read the question carefully and plan what they will include. Candidates are also assessed on the clarity

of the message they produce; minor, non-impeding errors are not penalised.

Candidates will need practice in writing to the word length required. They will lose marks if their answers fall outside the limits: a short answer is likely to be missing at least one content point, an overlong one will lack clarity, by containing superfluous information. Practice should be given in class, with students comparing answers with each other and redrafting what they have written as a result. The General Mark Scheme below is used in conjunction with a Task Specific Mark Scheme (see pages 28 and 29).

### General Mark Scheme for Writing Part 2

Mark	Criteria
5	All content elements covered appropriately. Message clearly communicated to reader.
4	All content elements adequately dealt with. Message communicated successfully, on the whole.
3	All content elements attempted. Message requires some effort by the reader. <b>or</b> One content element omitted but others clearly communicated.
2	Two content elements omitted, or unsuccessfully dealt with. Message only partly communicated to reader. <b>or</b> Script may be slightly short (20–25 words)
1	Little relevant content and/or message requires excessive effort by the reader, or short (10–19 words).
0	Totally irrelevant or totally incomprehensible or too short (under 10 words).

### Part 3

Part 3 now offers candidates a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter may be written. Both tasks require an answer of about 100 words. For answers that are below length (fewer than 80 words), the examiner adjusts the maximum mark and the mark given proportionately. Longer answers are not automatically penalised, but may contain some irrelevant material. Candidates should be advised to keep to the task set, rather than include 'pre-learned' text, which may well not fit as part of their answer.

For the story, candidates are given either a short title or the first sentence. The answer must be recognisably linked in content to the question and candidates should pay particular attention to any names or pronouns given in the title or sentence. If, for example, the sentence is written in the third person, the candidate will need to construct his or her story accordingly.

To gain practice and confidence in story-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write short pieces for homework on a regular basis. They will also benefit from reading simplified readers in English, which will give them ideas for how to develop and end a story.

For the informal letter, candidates are given an extract of a letter from a friend of theirs, which provides the topic they must write about: for example, a couple of questions may be included, to focus their ideas. Candidates must keep to the topic or they will lose marks.

To practise their letter-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write to penfriends or 'e-pals' on a regular basis. In addition, they should have opportunities in class to think about the language and organisation of such a letter, with examples of appropriate opening and closing formulae provided, as well as useful phrases of greeting and leave-taking.

As already stressed, it is important for candidates to show ambition. They could gain top marks by including a range of tenses, appropriate expressions and different vocabulary, even if their answer is not flawless. Non-impeding errors, whether in spelling, grammar or punctuation, will not

necessarily affect a candidate's mark, whereas errors which interfere with communication or cause a breakdown in communication are treated more seriously.

In order to help teachers to assess the standards required, there are several sample answers to the Writing Part 3 questions on pages 30–33, with marks and examiner comments. Marks for Part 3 are given according to the Mark Scheme below. The band score is translated to a mark out of 15.

Band	Criteria
5	Very good attempt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Confident and ambitious use of language</li><li>• Wide range of structures and vocabulary within the task set</li><li>• Well organised and coherent, through use of simple linking devices</li><li>• Errors are minor, due to ambition and non-impeding</li></ul> Requires no effort by the reader.
4	Good attempt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fairly ambitious use of language</li><li>• More than adequate range of structures and vocabulary within the task set</li><li>• Evidence of organisation and some linking of sentences</li><li>• Some errors, generally non-impeding</li></ul> Requires only a little effort by the reader.
3	Adequate attempt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language is unambitious, or if ambitious, flawed</li><li>• Adequate range of structures and vocabulary</li><li>• Some attempt at organisation; linking of sentences not always maintained</li><li>• A number of errors may be present, but are mostly non-impeding</li></ul> Requires some effort by the reader.
2	Inadequate attempt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Language is simplistic/limited/repetitive</li><li>• Inadequate range of structures and vocabulary</li><li>• Some incoherence; erratic punctuation</li><li>• Numerous errors, which sometimes impede communication</li></ul> Requires considerable effort by the reader.
1	Poor attempt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Severely restricted command of language</li><li>• No evidence of range of structures and vocabulary</li><li>• Seriously incoherent; absence of punctuation</li><li>• Very poor control; difficult to understand</li></ul> Requires excessive effort by the reader.
0	Achieves nothing: language impossible to understand, or totally irrelevant to task.

## Paper 2: Listening

### Paper Format

This paper contains four parts.

### Number of questions

25

### Task Types

Multiple choice, gap-fill, true/false.

### Text Types

All texts are based on authentic situations.

### Answering

Candidates indicate answers either by shading lozenges (Parts

1, 2 and 4) or writing answers (Part 3) on an answer sheet. Candidates record their answers on the question paper as they listen. They are then given six minutes at the end of the test to copy these on to the answer sheet.

### Recording Information

Each text is heard twice. Recordings will contain a variety of accents corresponding to standard variants of native speaker accents.

### Timing

About 30 minutes, plus 6 minutes to transfer answers.

### Marking

Each item carries one mark. This gives a total of 25 marks, which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Number of questions
1	Multiple choice (discrete). Short neutral or informal monologues or dialogues. Seven discrete three-option multiple-choice items with visuals, plus one example.	Listening to identify key information from short exchanges.	7
2	Multiple choice. Longer monologue or interview (with one main speaker). Six three-option multiple-choice items.	Listening to identify specific information and detailed meaning.	6
3	Gap-fill. Longer monologue. Six gaps to fill in. Candidates need to write one or more words in each space.	Listening to identify, understand and interpret information.	6
4	True/false. Longer informal dialogue. Candidates need to decide whether six statements are correct or incorrect.	Listening for detailed meaning, and to identify the attitudes and opinions of the speakers.	6

## Preparing for the Listening Paper

### Introduction

The Listening paper consists of four parts and a total of ten listening texts. The paper has a standard structure and format so that candidates will know what to expect in each part. The range of texts and task types reflects the variety of listening situations which candidates at this level can be expected to deal with.

The instructions for each task are heard on the tape, as well as being written on the page. In the case of Part 1, there is also an example text and task to show candidates how their answers should be recorded. In parts 2, 3 and 4, the instructions are followed by a pause, during which the candidates should read the questions in that part. Candidates should use this time to think about the context and the questions, as this will help them to understand the listening text when they hear it. This reflects what happens in real-life

listening situations when we bring knowledge of context, speaker, etc. to what we hear.

Classroom activities which help candidates to identify and understand the type of text they are listening to, and the purpose of the task they are asked to do, will help them to adopt the most appropriate listening strategies. This, in turn, will help them approach the tasks with confidence.

The best preparation for the listening paper is exposure to, and engagement with, authentic spoken English at an appropriate level of difficulty. Classroom discussion activities provide a good authentic source of listening practice, as does listening to the teacher, but this should be supplemented with listening texts on tape, drawn from a range of contexts, that give practice in understanding different voices and styles of delivery.

Candidates should be familiar with the format of the paper and the task types. It is, therefore, valuable to work through a

sample paper before the examination takes place. This also gives students some practice in completing the answer sheets.

### **Part 1**

The first part of the test comprises seven short listening texts, each accompanied by a question and three visual images. Candidates listen to the text and then choose the visual image which best answers the question in the context of what they have heard. Candidates indicate the correct answer by ticking the box beneath the appropriate visual. There is also a text and question as an example.

Part 1 texts, which may be monologues or dialogues, are short extracts taken from daily life. They may include, for example, conversations at home or between friends, radio announcements, parts of talks, exchanges in shops, etc. The task requires candidates to listen for specific information in the text which will answer the question. Each text is repeated on the tape. Candidates should be encouraged to listen for gist initially, choosing the best option as they do so. They should then check carefully on the second listening to ensure that their answer is correct. Candidates will need to understand the key information in the text in order to arrive at the correct answer.

### **Part 2**

In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which may be either a monologue, or an interview with questions from a radio presenter. Texts are taken from a range of contexts, and will be largely informational in focus. Some may be informational monologues, such as radio announcements and recorded messages, providing information about places and events, whilst others may be extracts from talks or radio programmes, in which people are talking about their lives, interests or experiences. The text is heard twice.

Candidates have to answer six multiple-choice questions as they listen to the text, choosing the correct answer from a choice of three options. Most questions require candidates to locate and understand specific information from the text, although occasionally a question may focus on a very clearly stated attitude or opinion. To arrive at the correct answer, candidates will need to understand the detailed meaning of the text. They should therefore listen for gist initially, choosing the best option for each question as they do so. They should then check carefully that their answers are correct as they listen for the second time.

### **Part 3**

In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which will take the form of an informational monologue. Texts are taken from a range of contexts, and may be radio announcements and recorded messages, providing information about places and events, or they may be extracts from talks or radio programmes, in which people are talking about courses, trips or holiday activities. The text is heard twice.

Candidates are presented with a page of notes summarising the content of the text, from which six pieces of information have been removed. As they listen, candidates fill in the numbered gaps on the page with words from the text which complete the missing information.

Most keys are single words, numbers or very short noun phrases and candidates should be discouraged from attempting longer answers. Recognisable spelling is accepted, except with very high frequency words, e.g. 'Monday', or where spelling is dictated. Only concrete pieces of information are tested, so that candidates are not being tested on their ability to manipulate grammatical structures, nor are they expected to interpret or reproduce language in elliptical note form. In all cases, the words that candidates need to write will be heard on the recording in the form that they need to be written.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the information on the page to guide them through the text as they listen. Having listened to the rubric, candidates should read through the written information in the pause before the text is played. This should enable them to make predictions about the sort of language and information they are going to hear, which will help them to feel prepared for the answers when they come.

The task requires candidates to locate and record specific information from the text, whilst ignoring other parts of the text that include redundant information.

### **Part 4**

In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which will take the form of an informal dialogue, usually between two people of similar age and status. There is generally one male and one female speaker to aid identification and the conversation typically focuses on everyday concerns that affect the speakers. The conversation is informal in nature and generally involves speakers discussing their attitudes and opinions on a given topic, as they agree and disagree on certain points.

As candidates listen to the text they look at a series of six statements which report the attitudes and opinions of the speakers. Candidates must decide whether these statements are true or false in the context of what they hear, and tick the appropriate box. The text is heard twice.

The task calls for an understanding of the gist of a conversation containing less formal language and the correct identification of attitudes, opinions and agreement. Candidates will need to locate and understand detailed meaning in order to make the correct choice for each question. They should therefore listen for gist initially, choosing the best option for each question as they do so. They should then check carefully that their answers are correct as they listen for the second time.

## Paper 3: Speaking

### Paper Format

This paper contains four parts.

The standard format is two candidates and two examiners.

One examiner acts as both assessor and interlocutor and manages the interaction by asking questions and setting up the tasks. The other acts as assessor and does not join in the conversation.

### Task Types

Short exchanges with the examiner; a collaborative task

involving both candidates; a one-minute long turn and a follow up discussion.

### Timing

10–12 minutes per pair of candidates.

### Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test.

There are a total of 25 marks in Paper 3, making 25% of the total score for the whole examination

Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Timing
1	Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor. The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.	Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.	2–3 minutes
2	Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other. Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.	2–3 minutes
3	Extended turn. A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for up to a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.	Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.	3 minutes
4	General conversation. Candidates interact with each other. The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits etc.	3 minutes

## Preparing for the Speaking Test

### Introduction

In the PET Speaking Test, candidates are examined in pairs by two examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction. Examiners change roles during the course of an examining session, but not during the examining of one pair. There are a number of different 'packs' of material that examiners can use.

The test takes between ten and twelve minutes and consists of four parts which are designed to elicit a wide range of speaking skills from the candidates. Where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the final Speaking test will be a group of three rather than a pair. The group of three test is not an option for all candidates, but is only used for the last test in a session, where necessary.

### Part 1

The test begins with a general conversation led by the interlocutor, who asks the candidates questions about their

personal details, daily routines, likes and dislikes, etc.

Candidates are addressed in turn and are not expected to talk to each other at this stage. At an appropriate point, candidates are asked to spell all or part of their name.

The purpose of this conversation is to test the language of simple social interaction, and to enable each candidate to make an initial contribution to the test, using simple everyday language. As they are talking about themselves using familiar language, this conversation should help to settle the candidates, enabling them to overcome any initial nervousness.

Although the interlocutor's questions are designed to elicit short rather than extended responses, candidates should be discouraged from giving one-word answers in this part. Especially when asked about their daily routines or their likes and dislikes, candidates should be encouraged to extend their answers with reasons and examples.

This part of the test assesses the candidates' ability to take part in spontaneous communication in an everyday setting. Candidates who find opportunities to socialise with others in

an English-speaking environment will be well prepared for this part of the test. Where this is not possible, however, such situations need to be recreated in the classroom through structured speaking tasks that practise appropriate language in a similar context. Candidates should be discouraged, however, from preparing rehearsed speeches as these will sound unnatural and will probably fail to answer the specific questions asked.

### **Part 2**

This part of the test takes the form of a simulated situation where the candidates are asked, for example, to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement with their partner. It is not a role-play activity, however, as candidates will always be giving their own views and opinions about an imaginary situation, rather than assuming an unfamiliar role.

In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, repeating the instructions whilst candidates look at the prompt material. The interlocutor then takes no further part in the interaction. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other.

A sheet of visual prompts is given to the candidates which is designed to generate ideas and provide the basis for the discussion. Candidates may, however, introduce their own ideas if they wish. Candidates are assessed on their ability to take part in the task, rather than on the outcome of their discussions, and so it is not necessary for them to complete the task in the time given. Candidates are assessed on their use of appropriate language and interactive strategies, not on their ideas.

All classroom discussions in pairs and groups will provide preparation for this part of the text. Candidates should be encouraged to make positive contributions that move the discussion forward by picking up on each other's ideas. Candidates should learn to discuss the situation fully with their partners, using the range of visual prompts to extend the discussion, before coming to a conclusion. It is useful to point out to candidates that if they rush to reach a conclusion too soon, opportunities to demonstrate their language skills may be lost – and it is these skills rather than the outcome of the discussion which is being assessed.

### **Part 3**

In this part of the test, each candidate is given one colour photograph to describe. The photographs will depict everyday situations and candidates are asked to give a simple description of what they can see in their photograph.

This part of the test allows candidates to demonstrate both their range of vocabulary and their ability to organise

language in a long turn. Their descriptions are expected to be simple, however, and candidates at this level are not expected to speculate about the context or talk about any wider issues raised by the scenes depicted.

Candidates should be encouraged to describe the people and activities in the photographs as fully as possible. They should imagine that they are describing the photograph to someone who can't see it, naming all the objects and including illustrative detail such as colours, people's clothes, time of day, weather, etc.

Whilst the photographs will not call for difficult or specialised vocabulary, candidates will be given credit for the ability to use paraphrase or other appropriate strategies to deal with items of vocabulary which they do not know or cannot call to mind. Candidates should therefore be given plenty of classroom practice in both the language of description and strategies for dealing with unknown vocabulary.

The photographs will have a common theme, which candidates will be told, but will differ in terms of their detailed content. Although this theme establishes a common starting point for Part 4, the photographs are returned to the interlocutor at the end of Part 3 and play no further part in the test.

### **Part 4**

In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, then takes no further part. The theme established in Part 3 is now used as the starting point for a general conversation in which the candidates discuss their own likes and dislikes, experiences, etc. Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students with further prompts, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates should be able to talk about their interests and enthusiasms and give reasons for their views and preferences. Credit will be given for the use of appropriate interactive strategies and candidates should be encouraged to elicit the views of their partner(s), pick up on their partner's points and show interest in what their partner(s) are saying, as well as talking about themselves.

If, at any time during the test, candidates have difficulty in understanding an instruction, question or response, they should ask the interlocutor or their partner to repeat what was said. Marks will not normally be lost for the occasional request for repetition.

### **Assessment**

Throughout the test, candidates are assessed on their language skills, not their personality, intelligence or knowledge of the world. They must, however, be prepared to

develop the conversation, where appropriate, and respond to the tasks set. Prepared speeches are not acceptable.

Candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. Both examiners assess the candidates according to criteria which are interpreted at PET level. The interlocutor awards a mark for global achievement, whilst the assessor awards marks according to four analytical criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.

### ***Grammar and Vocabulary***

This scale refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical forms and vocabulary. It also includes the range of both grammatical forms and vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in dealing with the tasks.

### ***Discourse Management***

This scale refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate's individual contribution. On this scale the candidate's ability to maintain a coherent flow of language is assessed, either within a single utterance or over a string of utterances. Also assessed here is how relevant the contributions are to what has gone before.

### ***Pronunciation***

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. This includes stress, rhythm and intonation, as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of the non-language specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate. Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

### ***Interactive Communication***

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to use language to achieve meaningful communication. This includes initiating and responding without undue hesitation, the ability to use interactive strategies to maintain or repair communication, and sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking.

## **Global Achievement**

This scale refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the four separate parts of the PET Speaking Test. The global mark is an independent impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective. The interlocutor gives one global mark for each candidate's performance across all parts of the test.

## **Marking**

As mentioned above, assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The assessor awards marks for each of the four criteria listed above. The interlocutor awards each candidate one global mark.

In many countries, oral examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a team leader who may be responsible for approximately fifteen oral examiners. Team leaders give advice and support to oral examiners, as required.

The team leaders are responsible to a senior team leader who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the speaking tests. Senior team leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team leaders are appointed by the senior team leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by team leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample speaking tests recorded on video and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on video are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

**CPE****LEVEL C2****Fully operational command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.

Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.

Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.

Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

**CAE****LEVEL C1****Good operational command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most situations.

Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.

Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.

Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.

L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

**FCE****LEVEL B2****Generally effective command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in familiar situations.

Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.

Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.

Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.

Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

**PET****LEVEL B1 (Threshold)****Limited but effective command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.

Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.

Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.

Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.

Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

**KET****LEVEL A2 (Waystage)****Basic command of the spoken language.**

Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.

Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.

Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.

Only able to produce limited extended discourse.

Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.

Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

**Pre-Waystage Level****Zero**