



Guidance Notes for Teachers of Candidates with Special Requirements: Cambridge English Listening Tests

Please read through the following information about modified versions of Cambridge English Listening Tests and make sure your student:

- is familiar with the tasks and task instructions in these versions
- practises with any sample material available.

Further advice and support can be obtained through your local Cambridge English Centre Exams Manager, or by contacting the Helpdesk (<https://support.cambridgeenglish.org>).

What is available?

For most Cambridge English Listening Tests, the following modified versions are available for candidates with disabilities or other special requirements:

- Special Requirements (SR) versions
- Modified Large Print (MLP) versions
- Hearing Impaired (Lip-reading) versions

Special Requirements (SR) versions of Listening Tests

What is a Special Requirements version of a Listening Test?

Many of the questions in Listening Tests ask candidates to make notes while they listen to a recording on CD. Although 'thinking time' and time to record or transfer answers is built into standard Listening Tests, candidates who are blind, have visual difficulties, are physically disabled in other ways or have specific learning difficulties usually require extra time. In Special Requirements Listening Tests candidates are given a specially-recorded version of a Listening Test. Exam supervisors are instructed to pause the CD at various points during the test. In this way Special Requirements versions of Listening Tests are a way of giving candidates extra time in a Listening Test where needed.

Please make sure your student is aware that they will usually be doing a *different* version of the relevant Listening Test from the standard version taken by other candidates at the same centre. In particular, they should be told they will be using a *different* question paper and hearing a *different* recording from other candidates.

NB The material will be at the same level and with the same task-types as in the standard test – rubrics (instructions for each part of the test) and occasionally tasks are changed or omitted if necessary.

What happens?

The candidate takes the test alone in a separate room with a Supervisor who administers the test.

Candidates who are blind or partially-sighted can ask to write their answers in various ways: for example, using a Braille typewriter, a Braille notetaker, by dictating to an amanuensis, etc.

Please see *Special Circumstances – help for candidates with visual difficulties*.

(<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-qualifications/special-circumstances/>)

The standard pre-printed answer sheet issued by Cambridge English will not be used for most Special Requirements versions of Listening Tests. If your student is taking one of the following examinations: Cambridge English Key, Cambridge English Key for Schools, Cambridge English Preliminary, Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools, Cambridge English First, Cambridge English First for Schools, Cambridge English Advanced and Cambridge English Proficiency, please make sure they know that they must write their answers for the Listening Test on a separate piece of paper or dictate their answers to an amanuensis (if appropriate).

The Supervisor has a special booklet which contains a script with everything heard by the candidate on the CD. Supervisors are asked to study this booklet before the examination and to practise pausing the CD where indicated. **The CD must be paused, not stopped.**

The booklet starts by giving instructions for administering the test. Here are the instructions to Supervisors for Parts 2, 3 and 4 of an Cambridge English First Special Requirements version of the Listening Test.

Parts Two, Three and Four

- Pause the CD **before** each of Parts Two, Three and Four of the test to give the candidate adequate time to read through the questions. An asterisk (*) in the script will remind you when to do this.
- First hearing: play the whole of each part without pausing the CD.
- Second hearing: pause the CD where indicated at each asterisk (*) on the script. Give the candidate time to write one or more answers.
- Pause the CD **after** each part to give the candidate adequate time to check their answers. An asterisk (*) in the script will remind you when to do this.

Please tell the candidate that a pause does not necessarily mean that an answer is required at that point.

The lengths of pauses are at the discretion of the Supervisor. However, please ensure candidates have sufficient time to read questions or write their answers.

Do not replay any part of the CD.

Note that:

- candidates hear each text (piece) once through without pauses. During the second hearing of the same piece, the CD is paused from time to time.
- length of pauses is at the discretion of the Supervisor. The Supervisor operating the CD player pauses the recording at each prescribed point for as long as required. Some candidates may require longer pauses to locate information e.g. candidates using Braille – others not so long.
- Supervisors will agree a signal for the candidate to give when they are ready to 'move on' i.e. re-start the recording. This could be a nod, or raising the head, etc.

Other Special Requirements versions of Listening Tests are administered in a similar way. Teachers should make sure they help students to become familiar with the format of the relevant Special Requirements versions of Listening Tests, using sample tests where available.

Remember:

- the CD will be paused **before** each text hearing [Reminder – each text is heard twice.] This is for the candidate to read through the questions.
- the CD will be paused **from time to time during the second hearing** of each text so that the candidate can re-read the questions, make notes, and write answers.
- the CD will be paused **after** each text hearing. This is for the candidate to write and, for example, check their answers.

Here is an extract from a Supervisor's Booklet: Part 2 of an Cambridge English First Listening Test, starting with the question rubric. Note the asterisks where the supervisor will pause the CD.

You'll hear part of a radio interview with a woman who enjoys entering 'adventure races'. For questions 9-18, complete the sentences. The CD will now be paused to give you time to read the questions. *

Interviewer:

Now, have you ever heard of adventure races? This is the latest kind of sporting competition. In the studio today we have Susan Oliver. Susan lives in London, and has spent the past 10 years working as a fashion model. * Tomorrow she heads off, with three team-mates, into the Australian outback to take part in Eco-Challenge: a week-long adventure race across 480 kms of forests and deserts with only the company of snakes and spiders to look forward to. * [continues]

WHAT OTHER CHANGES ARE MADE?

1. Changes are made to rubrics of multiple-matching tasks. (Rubrics are the instructions at the beginning of each task or part.)

Multiple-matching tasks are tasks where candidates hear five separate speakers talking i.e. five monologues in the form of short extracts and have to match each speaker with one out of a set of six (or more) options.

The Cambridge English First Special Requirements Listening task has one set of six options. Cambridge English Advanced Listening Tests contain a more complex version of the task with two sets of eight options i.e. two tasks based on the same set of recordings.

Here is the adapted rubric for a Cambridge English Advanced multiple-matching task:

Now look at the fourth and last part of the test. Altogether, you will hear five short extracts in which different people are talking about newspapers. Look at Task One. For questions 24 – 28, match the extracts as you hear them with the main reason why each speaker reads the newspaper, listed A – H. For example, if you think the first speaker's main reason is for a break from routine jobs, write A for question 24.

Now look at Task Two. For questions 29-33, match the extracts as you hear them with each speaker's opinion about newspapers, listed A – H.

You will hear the recording twice and while you listen, you must complete both tasks.

To make sure candidates taking Special Requirements versions understand what they have to do, **an example** is always given in the instructions for this type of multiple-matching Listening task.

2. Changes are made to the layout of multiple-matching tasks.

For multiple-matching tasks, e.g. Cambridge English Advanced Listening Part 4, the questions are set out in portrait format (i.e. vertically) with Task 2 following Task 1.

3. Changes are made to texts.

For Special Requirements and Modified Large Print versions of Listening Tests, although the content of Listening Tests may differ from the standard versions being taken by other candidates, texts are not simplified in any way. The material will be at the same level and with the same task-types as in the standard test – rubrics (instructions for each part of the test) and occasionally tasks are changed or omitted if necessary.

All recordings are heard twice, as in the standard version.

4. Some sections are omitted

Note that the following sections are **omitted** from SR versions:

Cambridge English Preliminary Listening, Part 1
Cambridge English YLE Listening, Part 5 (Cambridge English Movers and Cambridge English Flyers)

Modified Large Print versions of Special Requirements Listening Tests

What are Modified Large Print versions?

Modified Large Print versions of Special Requirements Listening Tests contain the standard texts, adapted rubrics (instructions), a simplified layout and standardised fonts.

Adapted rubrics (instructions) are generally the same as for the corresponding Special Requirements version. The same Supervisor's Booklet (containing script and prescribed pauses) and CD as for the Special Requirements version are used.

Please make sure your student is aware that they will normally be doing a *different* version of the relevant Listening Test from the standard version taken by other candidates at the same centre. In particular, they should be told they will be using a *different* question paper and hear a *different* recording from other candidates.

NB The material will be at the same level and with the same task-types as in the standard test – rubrics (instructions for each part of the test) and occasionally tasks are changed or omitted if necessary.

Who are these versions for?

Modified Large Print versions of Special Requirements Listening Tests are primarily designed for candidates with visual difficulties e.g. partial sight, but also may be taken by candidates with other disabilities (see below). As for Special Requirements versions, these tests are designed as a means of providing extra time for candidates in Listening Tests.

Other candidates who may benefit from taking a Modified Large Print version of a Listening Test include:

- candidates who have a physical disability which makes it difficult for them to read normal-sized print
- candidates with specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia
- candidates with other visual perception difficulties
- candidates with hearing difficulties who may need extra time to process instructions etc. if an audio recording is appropriate.

How may candidates using Modified Large Print versions of Special Requirements Listening Tests write their answers?

For the following Listening Tests, Cambridge English Key, Cambridge English Key for Schools, Cambridge English Preliminary, Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools, Cambridge English First, Cambridge English First for Schools, Cambridge English Advanced, and Cambridge English Proficiency, candidates are asked to write their answers **on a separate sheet of paper**. If appropriate, candidates may write their answers first on the question paper, before transferring them to their separate answer sheet. Candidates must make sure that each answer is clearly numbered or that it is clear which option they have chosen.

Candidates (or the Supervisor/amanuensis) must also make sure each page of their answer sheet has the correct name and candidate number written on it.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties are not allowed to dictate their answers to an amanuensis (scribe) but may apply for a copier (transcriber) if their handwriting is difficult to read. This means that someone copies (*makes a transcript of*) their work at the end of the exam – they will read out their answers to the copier, including all the punctuation. The copier will write down an **exact copy** of the candidate's written answers, including any mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation.

Are candidates allowed to use access (assistive) technology?

Yes. Candidates may also apply to use screen magnifier/CCTV systems and other reading devices as an alternative (or in addition) to printed question papers. It is recommended that candidates do not use screen-reading software for Listening Tests, since the introduction of a second sound source may impede comprehension of the original texts.

If using a computer to write their answers, candidates may not use spellcheck, grammar check or thesaurus functions if these are available.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia, are not allowed to use electronic screen-reading software (except as a magnifier) or to have a reader or an amanuensis (a person who can read out questions and/or write down answers).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHANGES MADE TO MODIFIED LARGE PRINT VERSIONS OF SR LISTENING TESTS?

1. All Modified Large Print versions of Listening Tests include the following features:

(a) The same enlarged **print (font) size** is used throughout. It looks like this:

Arial 18 point bold.

(b) As far as possible, all instructions and texts on a page are **aligned left**.

(c) The following are generally placed in **capital letters**:

- **headings, titles and section indicators** e.g. **PART 1**, key words in bold in the original paper.

(d) **Underlining** is kept to a minimum and only used where essential. References in rubrics to question or page ranges are underlined. For example, here is a typical rubric used in Cambridge English First Listening, Part 4:

PART 4

QUESTIONS 24 – 30

You will hear an interview with a teenager called Luke Fuller, who's talking about working as a junior reporter for his local radio station.

For questions 24 – 30, choose the best answer (A, B or C).

2. Other layout changes are made.

(a) For multiple-matching tasks, each task is set out on a separate page.

(b) For sentence completion tasks, if a question continues on to a second or third line, each line is aligned to the left.

For example:

**On his land, Gerald Sharp 17 _____
a large factory for the people who were going
to work for him.**

Hearing Impaired (Lip-reading) versions of Listening Tests

These tests are produced for candidates who have severe hearing difficulties. Candidates should only apply for a Lip-reading version of a Listening Test if they are capable of lip-reading in English and their level of hearing impairment prevents them from taking a test recorded on a CD.

Please see *Special Circumstances – help for candidates with hearing difficulties.*
(<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-qualifications/special-circumstances/>)

What happens?

The candidate takes the test in a separate room, normally on their own, with a Supervisor (or Invigilator) who conducts the test.

Instead of playing a recording, the Supervisor reads out the instructions (rubrics) and texts to the candidate who lip-reads. A special version of the question paper is produced with

different rubrics. Asterisks in the script indicate where the Supervisor should pause. See notes below.

The Supervisor has a special booklet with instructions, and a script to read out to the candidate. Supervisors are asked to study this booklet before the exam. Here are the instructions for giving a candidate a Hearing Impaired version of Cambridge English First Listening:

Ask the candidate to read the instructions on the cover of the question paper.
Ensure the candidate understands what he/she must do.

Procedure:

Read the question before each passage (or extract) once.

Give the candidate time to refer back to the question paper.

Then read each passage (or extract) at natural speed.

Read the passage (or extract) again, stopping at each asterisk (*).

When you stop, give the candidate time to look at the question paper and answer the questions / make notes, etc.

Do not start reading again until the candidate looks up.

Finally, read through the whole passage (or extract) again (without stopping).

Repeat the same procedure for each part of the paper.

These instructions are repeated on the script before each part.

At the end of each part, give the candidate adequate time to write his/her answers, and at the end of the test give the candidate time to transfer his/her answers to their answer sheet.

Please tell the candidate that he/she does not necessarily need to write an answer each time you pause.

Notes:

- The Supervisor reads each text (piece) once through without pauses.
- The Supervisor reads through the same piece a second time, and pauses from time to time.
- Finally, the Supervisor reads through the same piece a third time without pauses.
- The length of pauses is at the discretion of the Supervisor. Some candidates may require longer pauses to locate information – others not so long.
- Supervisors will agree a signal for the candidate to give when they are ready to move on i.e. re-start lip-reading. This could be a nod, or raising the head, etc.

Other Hearing Impaired versions of Listening Tests are administered in a similar way.

Teachers should make sure students know what to expect by practising with sample tests.

Print versions of some question papers and Supervisor's Booklets can be downloaded from the Cambridge English website.

Please make sure your student is aware that they will be doing a *different* version of the relevant Listening Test from the standard version taken by other candidates at the same centre. In particular, they should be told they will be using a *different* question paper from other candidates.

NB The material will be at the same level and with the same task-types as in the standard test – rubrics (instructions for each part of the test) and occasionally tasks are changed or omitted if necessary.

WHAT OTHER CHANGES TO STANDARD LISTENING TESTS ARE MADE?

Changes are made to some texts.

Some dialogues may be converted to monologues, particularly when the second speaker says very little or briefly 'prompts' what the main speaker is saying.

Rubrics will reflect these adjustments. For example, a rubric may start 'You will hear part of a talk by ...' instead of 'You will hear part of an interview with...'

Other layout changes are made.

For multiple-matching tasks where candidates are asked to match a series of short extracts with a series of five or more options, an example is given, and tasks are set out in portrait rather than landscape format (see notes above re: Special Requirements/Braille versions).

Some sections are omitted.

Note that the following sections are **omitted** from Hearing Impaired versions:

- Cambridge English Advanced Listening, Part 3
- Cambridge English Proficiency Listening, Part 4

How much time should candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing spend practising lip-reading in English?

It is most important that candidates are familiar with lip-reading in English, particularly those who have little residual hearing.

Candidates should be given extensive practice in lip-reading the standard rubrics as spoken by their teacher. It may be possible for candidates to meet and spend some time with the Supervisor who will be conducting their test. Contact your local Cambridge English Centre for advice.

For information, here are a set of instructions supplied to Supervisors, which may be useful to keep in mind when practising with your hearing-impaired student:

- You will need a quiet, separate room to administer a Lip-reading version of a Listening Test. Do not stand with the light e.g. from a window behind you as this makes it difficult for the candidate to see your lips.
- If you are male, make sure that your lips are clearly visible, and not obscured by a beard/moustache.
- Stand close to the candidate so they can see your lips easily. However, do not stand so close that they can see or be distracted by the tapescript.

- Asterisks (*) in the tapescript show where you must pause to allow the candidate time to read, write or check the questions/answers. Agree a signal beforehand which the candidate will use when they are ready to continue, e.g. putting their hand up.

FAQs

How much extra time is allowed?

Special Requirements versions of Listening Tests are designed to provide as much extra time as required. Supervisors have discretion to pause recordings or stop speaking until candidates are ready to continue. It is worth warning candidates that if they take too long over any one question they may lose the overall sense of the recording.

How may candidates write their answers?

For Special Requirements, Modified Large Print and Lip-reading versions of Cambridge English Key, Cambridge English Preliminary, Cambridge English First, Cambridge English Advanced, and Cambridge English Proficiency (including Cambridge English Key for Schools, Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools and Cambridge English First for Schools) candidates are asked to write their answers **on a separate blank sheet of paper**.

For other Cambridge English exams, candidates may choose to write their answers on the standard answer sheet or on a separate plain sheet of paper. If using a separate blank sheet of paper, it is important that candidates make sure that each answer is clearly numbered or that it is clear which option they have chosen.

Blind candidates may use Braille keyboards, computers or word-processors, or dictate their answers to an amanuensis. If your student uses a Braille note-taker, they may ask for permission to use their equipment in the examination.

Candidates (or the Supervisor/amanuensis) must make sure each page of their answer sheet has their name and candidate number written on it. Each answer must begin with the appropriate question number.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties are not allowed to have an amanuensis (someone they can dictate their answers to during the test). They may, however apply for permission for a copier (transcriber) if their handwriting is difficult to read. This means that someone copies (*makes a transcript of*) their work **at the end of the exam**. The copier will write down an **exact copy** of their answers, including any mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation.

Does each asterisk (pause) in the script mean another answer is required?

No. For both types of Listening Test, asterisks are placed at convenient breaks in the text. Normally pauses are inserted at the end of fairly short 'chunks' of text or paragraphs, so that the sense of what the speaker is saying is not disrupted.

A pause does not necessarily mean an answer is required. Sometimes no answer is required. Sometimes more than one answer is required. The aim is not to disadvantage candidates by giving them too long a 'chunk' of text.

What about Skills for Life Speaking and Listening Tests?

Special Requirements versions of the listening section of some Skills for Life Speaking and Listening Tests are available, including Hearing Impaired versions.

How will my student's Braille answers be transcribed?

Centres will arrange for blind candidates' answers to be transcribed – normally by dictation at the end of the examination.

Some screen-reading programs include a facility for translation from Braille. If the transcript is being produced in this way, the candidate will be asked to check the transcript is complete and accurate.

Are spelling mistakes penalised?

Spelling mistakes may be penalised when marking Listening Tests, although minor errors are disregarded in some tests e.g. Cambridge English Key, Cambridge English Preliminary, and Cambridge English First (including Cambridge English Key for Schools, Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools and Cambridge English First for Schools) Listening Tests.

Are mistakes with capital letters penalised?

Capital letters are indicated in Braille versions. Mistakes with capitals when writing answers to questions in Listening Tests are not usually penalised.

What about Hearing Impaired versions of Listening Tests where two speakers are required?

Normally, dialogues are converted to monologues (see above). However, for Lip-reading versions of YLE, Cambridge English Key, Cambridge English Preliminary, (as well as Cambridge English Key for Schools, Cambridge English Preliminary for Schools), the short dialogues are read out by two supervisors.

Is signing allowed in Listening Tests?

Signing is not permitted in Cambridge English examinations.

Signing is not allowed because, on the whole, deaf sign languages are independent of oral languages and follow their own paths of development, including having a different grammar to the equivalent hearing language. For example, [British Sign Language](#) and [American Sign Language](#) are quite different and mutually unintelligible, even though the hearing people of Britain and America share the same oral language.

Preparation Tips for Teachers for all Special Requirements versions Listening Tests

1. Most of the advice applicable to standard versions of Listening Tests will be relevant and useful for preparing candidates for Special Requirements versions.
2. Make sure your student practises with any sample tests available. These can be converted to Braille using a Braille embosser, or accessed in Braille via a Braille display linked to a computer.
3. Students should note how many parts make up their Listening Test and not spend too much time on one question.
4. Students should remember that they do not need to write an answer each time the CD is paused or, for Hearing Impaired versions, the supervisor pauses. However, it will be useful practice for students to identify exactly where the answer to each question is to be found in the script for each part.