



Guidance Notes for Teachers of Candidates with Special Requirements: Cambridge Assessment English Writing Papers

Please read through the following information about Braille and Modified Large Print versions of Cambridge Assessment English Writing papers and make sure your student:

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

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

Braille Versions of Writing Papers

WHAT CHANGES ARE MADE?

1. Some changes may be made to the content or wording of the questions.

Sometimes, a question (or part of a question) may not be appropriate for a blind candidate, and it is changed.

For example:

The standard paper asks:

*Describe what you can **see** when you go into your favourite garden.*

The adapted task asks:

*Describe what you can **hear** when you go into your favourite garden.*

2. Changes are made to instructions for email writing tasks.

For email writing tasks, the instructions include header information (because the candidate is not writing on the following page in the booklet).

For example, an email-writing task might include the following instruction:

Start your email like this:

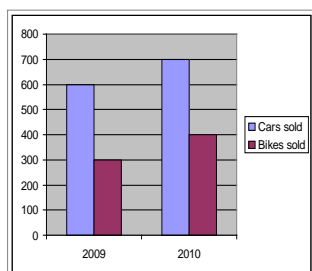
To: Mike Smith
Sent: 7 December
Subject: Shopping

3. There may be changes to tasks which use bar charts, or graphs, for input.

If input for the writing task is in graphical form or presented as a bar chart/pie chart/graph, etc. the task will usually be adapted so that the input is presented in written or list form.

For example:

Standard version



Special Requirements version

Year: 2009

Cars sold: 600

Bikes sold: 300

Year: 2010

Cars sold: 700

Bikes sold: 400

4. There may be other changes to rubrics (the instructions at the beginning of each task or part).

For sections of Writing papers where candidates choose one from a selection of tasks, rubrics are changed. e.g. *First Writing, Part 2*:

Write an answer to one of the questions **2 – 5** in this part. Write your answer in **120 – 180** words in an appropriate style on your answer sheet, together with the number of the question.

5. Set-book text questions are printed in a separate booklet.

Please make sure blind students know that questions on set-book texts will usually be printed **in a separate booklet**.

For questions which ask candidates to choose one from two options e.g. *Proficiency*, Questions 5a and 5b, the rubric is simplified:

Answer **one** of the following two questions based on one of the titles below. Write **5(a)** or **5(b)** at the beginning of your answer.

6. Extra headings may be inserted to make sure blind candidates can find the correct information.

Some tasks may include two or three separate pieces of information as input material. Each piece of input is given a separate heading in the Braille version to help blind candidates easily locate that piece of information.

Below is the Braille version of a *Key* task, with three headings:

Read the notice and the email.
Fill in the information in Alicia's notes.
For questions 51 – 55, write the information on your answer sheet.

NOTICE

TENNIS COMPETITION
for 11–14-year-olds
[etc.]

EMAIL

From: Jenny
To: Alicia
Hi Alicia
[text]

ALICIA'S NOTES

TENNIS COMPETITION

Where to go: _____ Bandon Tennis Club
Who with: 51 _____ [etc.]

7. Speech bubbles, etc. are presented differently in Braille versions.

Tasks where people's comments are given in a 'speech bubble' (or similar) are changed so that the comments are numbered separately in a list down the page.

OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT BRAILLE VERSIONS OF WRITING PAPERS

1. Extra time

Reference to the candidate's additional time allowance is made on the cover/first page:

TIME: 50 minutes plus your additional time allowance.

2. Use of access (assistive) technology.

Blind candidates may apply to use various types of access technology to enable them to read the paper and write their answers.

Please see *Special Requirements – I have visual difficulties*.

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements/>

3. Candidates may apply to dictate their answers.

Candidates who are blind can ask for permission to dictate their answers to a person who will write their answers down. This person is called an *amanuensis* or *scribe*. The amanuensis will ask the blind candidate to spell some less common words.

The amanuensis will usually write the candidate's answers on the lined answer pages inside the print version of the Braille question paper booklet.

Candidates (or the amanuensis/scribe) must make sure each page of their answer sheet has the correct name and candidate number written on it and that each answer is clearly numbered.

Modified Large Print versions of Writing Papers

What are Modified Large Print versions?

Modified Large Print versions of Writing papers contain adapted material, a simplified layout and standardised fonts.

Who are these versions for?

Modified Large Print versions are for:

- candidates with visual difficulties
- any candidate who has a physical difficulty which makes it difficult for them to read smaller print
- candidates with specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) and other disabilities.

How may candidates using Modified Large Print versions of Writing papers write their answers?

Candidates using Modified Large Print versions can choose to write their answers:

1. on the Question paper on the lined answer pages.
2. on a separate sheet of paper.

They may also apply to dictate their answers to an amanuensis.

MAIN CHANGES MADE TO MODIFIED LARGE PRINT VERSIONS OF WRITING PAPERS.

All Modified Large Print versions of Writing papers include the following features:

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

Arial 18 point bold

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

3. The following are generally in **capital letters**:

- **headings, titles and section indicators** e.g. **PART 1**
- **words in bold** in the original question paper.
- **italicised words** in the original question paper e.g. titles of newspapers or books

Additionally, titles for stories or first lines of stories, which are in italics in the standard question paper, are presented in **single quotes**. Below is an example.

Standard version:

You have decided to enter a short story competition in an international magazine, called *Global News*. The story must **begin** with the following words:

Ellen felt stronger than ever and knew that she could succeed.

Write your **story**.

Modified Large Print version:

You have decided to enter a short story competition in an international magazine, called GLOBAL NEWS. The story must BEGIN with the following words:

‘Ellen felt stronger than ever and knew that she could succeed.’

Write your STORY.

4. Some numbers are underlined to make sure candidates notice them. For example:
First Writing, Part 1:

You MUST answer this question. Write your answer in 140 – 190 words in an appropriate style on pages 5 – 7 (or on a separate answer sheet).

5. **Page numbers** are placed at the centre and **bottom** of each page.

6. **TURN OVER** is only placed at the bottom of a page where absolutely necessary to make sure candidates do not miss a small final part of the question placed on the next page, e.g. a whole final sentence of a text or the final question in a set.

7. Occasionally, candidates may be given a more detailed instruction, which is placed at or near the top of a blank page, for example:

DO NOT TURN OVER UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

8. Generally, tasks which have been modified in Braille versions will also be used in Modified Large Print versions if this will also help partially-sighted candidates and other candidates with special requirements using these versions, e.g. a bar chart or graph will usually be presented in written or list form.

9. Set-book text questions are usually printed in a separate booklet.

Please make sure candidates using Modified Large Print Writing papers know that questions on set-book texts may be printed **in a separate booklet**.

10. Extra headings may be inserted to make sure partially-sighted and other candidates with special requirements can easily locate the correct information.

Longer writing tasks e.g. Part 1 of *First* and *Advanced* Writing papers usually provide two or three separate pieces of information as input material. Each piece of input is given a separate heading in the Modified Large Print version to help candidates to locate the piece of information easily.

FAQs

How much extra time is allowed?

Blind candidates are allowed up to 100% extra time.

Candidates using Modified Large Print versions are normally allowed 25% extra time but may be allowed more.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties are also normally allowed 25% extra time but may apply for more if their difficulty is severe.

If appropriate, candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing may also apply for extra time when taking a Writing paper (normally 25%).

Please contact your local Centre Exams Manager for more details.

Can candidates with special requirements apply to use a computer to write their answers?

Yes. Candidates with special requirements (including candidates with specific learning difficulties) may apply to write their answers using a computer if they are unable to write their answers by hand. If using a screen-reading program, candidates **may not use** any spellcheck, grammar check or thesaurus functions.

For reasons of test security, in the first instance, the exam centre's hardware should be used e.g. PC, laptop. However, use of the candidate's own laptop may be permitted where necessary, if all security requirements can be shown to have been complied with (please refer to the exam centre for further advice).

Can partially-sighted candidates apply to read modified large print versions of Writing papers and write their answers using 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.

For Writing papers, candidates with **visual or physical difficulties** may use screen-reading software to magnify text or to read out all material in the question paper, as well as to write and revise their written answers. If using a screen-reading program, candidates **may not use** any spellcheck, grammar check or thesaurus functions. Candidates may also have a human reader and/or amanuensis to read out material in the question paper and to write down their answers.

For reasons of test security, in the first instance, the exam centre's hardware should be used e.g. PC, laptop. However, use of the candidate's own laptop may be permitted where necessary, if all security requirements can be shown to have been complied with (please refer to the exam centre for further advice).

Candidates with specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia are **not** allowed either to use electronic screen-reading software or to have a reader or an amanuensis.

Can partially-sighted candidates or candidates with specific learning difficulties request use of coloured overlays?

Yes. Candidates may request permission to use their own coloured overlays.

What if a candidate's handwriting is very difficult to read?

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

How are a blind candidate's Braille answers transcribed?

Centres will arrange for blind candidates' answers to be transcribed from Braille – normally by dictation at the end of the examination. Candidates should be given practice in spelling out words and indicating punctuation.

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 that the transcript is complete and accurate.

Preparation Tips for Teachers for all Special Requirements versions Writing papers

1. Most of the advice applicable to standard versions of Writing papers will be relevant and useful for preparing candidates for Special Requirements versions.

2. Make sure your student practises with any sample papers available so that they are familiar with:

- changed rubrics (instructions)
- layout of questions.

These can be converted to Braille using a Braille embosser, or accessed in Braille via a Braille display linked to a computer. Students may also access the paper using a screen-reader.

Currently available sample Braille and Modified Large Print versions can be downloaded from:

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements/>

3. It is important that all students plan their answers. If you teach a blind student and they use a Braille note-taker, they may apply to use this equipment in the examination.

4. Students, particularly those allowed extra time, should note how many marks are set aside for each question and not spend too much time on one question.

5. Partially-sighted students should tell the centre if they would prefer to write their answers on a separate blank sheet of paper (rather than on the lined answer pages inside the question paper).