

Cambridge English

BEC Vantage

Cambridge English: Business Vantage (BEC Vantage) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is there a wordlist for Cambridge English: Business Vantage?

No. Examinations that are at CEFR Level B2 (independent user), or above – such as *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* – do not have particular language specifications or vocabulary lists.

Do I have to pass each paper in order to pass the whole examination?

No. Your grade is based on your overall score in all the papers.

Reading

DO

- ✓ Pay attention to the complete meaning of the sentences in Part 1.
- ✓ Read the whole text in Part 2 and try to predict what kind of information is missing from each of the gaps, before working on the extracts.
- ✓ Look very carefully at the pronouns in the extracts in Part 2. They must refer correctly to the nouns before and/or after the gaps in the text.
- ✓ Notice linking words and phrases in Part 2. For example, however or but must link two contrasting ideas.
- ✓ Regularly check your answers in Part 2. If you are finding a question difficult, perhaps you have already used the correct answer to that question in the wrong place.
- ✓ Always leave enough time to double-check answers against the text.
- ✓ Pay attention to the general theme of the paragraphs in Part 3.
- ✓ Read the text and questions very carefully in Part 3. Remember that the options A–D in the question may mean something very similar to the text, but not the same.
- ✓ Read the question, or question stem, very carefully in Part 3. Perhaps all of the options occur somewhere in the text, but only one of them is correct with that particular question.
- ✓ Keep vocabulary lists and try to use new vocabulary that you learn. This will be particularly useful for Part 4.
- ✓ Look carefully at the sentences in Part 4. Ask yourself: does the word that you have chosen usually go together with a certain preposition or grammatical structure? Does it make a good collocation with the surrounding words?
- ✓ Remember that the extra word in Part 5 has to be grammatically wrong and not just unnecessary.
- ✓ Write your answer in capital letters in Part 5.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't choose an answer in Part 1 just because you find matching words. There are usually some similarities between sections and you need to make sure that your choice matches the complete meaning of the question.
- ✗ Don't forget that tenses in the Part 2 extracts need to fit logically with those already present in the text.
- ✗ Don't choose more than one letter for any of the answers in Parts 1-4, or more than one word in Part 5.

What aspects of reading are tested in this paper?

You are tested on your ability to understand gist, detail and text structure and to identify main points and specific information. You are also tested on vocabulary, your understanding of discourse features and your ability to identify errors.

How long should I spend on each part?

There is no time limit for each task; some tasks may take longer than others and you should be aware of how long you need for different tasks. However, it's worth remembering that some tasks have more items and are, therefore, worth more marks.

Writing

DO

- ✓ Read the question carefully and underline the important parts.
- ✓ Make a plan before you start writing.
- ✓ Write clearly and concisely.
- ✓ Write carefully, so that the examiner can read the answer.
- ✓ Check that you have included all the content elements required.
- ✓ Add relevant information and ideas of your own in Part 2.
- ✓ Remember which format to use (email, report etc.).
- ✓ Use the correct style or register (for example, formal or informal).
- ✓ Use a range of appropriate business words and expressions.
- ✓ Structure your writing with good linkers, such as *firstly, also, however, moreover, nevertheless*, and so on.
- ✓ Write in paragraphs.
- ✓ Check the question and your work again after you have finished writing.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't use white correction fluid. If you make a mistake, cross it out with a single line.
- ✗ Don't forget to divide your time appropriately between the two questions. Remember that Part 1 is marked out of 10 and Part 2 out of 20.
- ✗ Don't panic if other people in the exam start writing straight away. It's better to read the question carefully and plan before you start writing.
- ✗ Don't copy too many words and phrases from the question paper – try to use your own words.
- ✗ Don't repeat the same words and structures too often.
- ✗ Don't waste time writing addresses for a letter, as they are not required.

How many written answers do I need to give?

Two.

In what ways are Parts 1 and 2 different?

In Part 1 you are required to write an internal company communication (writing to somebody within the same company). In Part 2, you are required to write either a piece of business correspondence, a report or a proposal.

Where do I write my answers?

In the question booklet. This booklet also contains enough space for you to do your rough work.

What if I write less than the number of words stated in the task?

If you write an answer which is too short, it may not have an adequate range of language and may not provide all the information required.

What if I write more than the number of words stated in the task?

You should not worry if you write slightly more than the word limit, but if you write far more than the word limit, your message may become unclear, and have a negative effect on the reader.

How is the Writing paper marked?

The Writing paper is marked by small teams of examiners working with a Team Leader, all guided and monitored by a Principal Examiner. Each examiner is apportioned scripts chosen on a random basis from all the entries. In this way, examiners will be assessing scripts from a variety of centres and countries.

How are extended responses in Writing assessed?

Examiners mark tasks using assessment scales developed with explicit reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The scales, which are used across the Cambridge English General and Business English Writing tests, are made up from four subscales: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language:

- **Content** – focuses on how well you have fulfilled the task; if you have done what you were asked to do.
- **Communicative Achievement** – focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether you have used the correct register.
- **Organisation** – focuses on the way you have put together the piece of writing (in other words, if it is logical and ordered).
- **Language** – focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language, as well as how accurate it is.

Each response is marked from 0–5, on each of the four subscales. These scores are then combined to give a final mark out of 20.

Listening

DO

- ✓ Read the instructions and the task carefully, in the time before the first listening. Think about what you are going to hear, and underline key words in the instructions and questions.
- ✓ Use the second listening to check, confirm or alter your answers from the first listening. Remember that changing an answer in Part 2 may affect other answers in the same task.
- ✓ Remember that spelling should be correct in Part 1 (British or American spelling).
- ✓ Concentrate on an in-depth understanding of what is said in Parts 2 and 3.
- ✓ Remember that the five answers should be different in each task in Part 2.
- ✓ Answer all the questions – you won't lose marks for wrong answers, and there's a chance that you'll guess correctly.
- ✓ Carefully copy your answers in pencil onto the answer sheet during the 10 minutes at the end of the test.
- ✓ Remember to pay attention to anything that appears after the gap in Part 1 questions.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't leave any answers blank.
- ✗ Don't spend too long thinking about a question: leave it until the second listening.
- ✗ Don't attempt to rephrase unnecessarily what you hear in Part 1.
- ✗ Don't repeat information or words that already appear before or after the gap in Part 1. For example, if the word *days* is after the gap, don't write *days* in your answer.
- ✗ Don't forget that you should only choose the option that actually answers the question in Part 3 – even if an option is true, it may not answer the question that has been asked.

What sort of material is used in the test?

The recordings are scripted. They all deal with business topics and situations. Nearly all have one or two speakers.

How useful is exam preparation for improving my listening ability?

Very useful. The exam tests listening skills that are also required for general communication (i.e. not only for business).

Can I take the Listening test separately?

No, *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* has four papers; Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking. To pass the exam, you have to take all four papers in the same examination period.

Speaking

DO

- ✓ Get plenty of speaking practice in small groups, especially on topics that are likely to be used in the exam.
- ✓ Listen to native (or good) speakers of English doing similar tasks.
- ✓ Collect and keep records of words and phrases that are useful for carrying out the exam tasks.
- ✓ Ask for clarification if you don't understand the instructions/task.

- ✓ Speak clearly and loudly enough for the examiners to hear you.
- ✓ Avoid long silences and frequent pauses.
- ✓ Listen to your partner and respond appropriately.
- ✓ Make sure turn-taking is as natural as possible (taking turns to speak and listening to each other).
- ✓ Use all the opportunities you're given in the test to speak, and extend your responses whenever possible.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't memorise and practise long answers for Part 1. You only need to give short answers in this part.
- ✗ Don't try to talk much more than your partner or interrupt in an impolite way.
- ✗ Don't worry about not knowing a word or phrase – explain what you mean using other words.
- ✗ Don't worry too much about making mistakes – you don't have to be word perfect.
- ✗ Don't just respond to what has been said – be prepared to give your own ideas, ask for your partner's opinion and develop your partner's ideas and contributions.

How much do I need to know about business to be successful in the Speaking test?

Cambridge English: Business Certificates have been developed to test English language in a business context. While they are not focused on any specific branch of business (e.g. banking, or computing), you should be familiar with a wide range of business situations and the vocabulary needed for them.

What should I do if I don't understand a question, or what the examiner asks me to do?

You can ask the examiner to repeat the instructions. However, you should listen carefully and try to understand the first time.

I think I communicate well, but I am not always very accurate with my grammar and vocabulary. Can I still pass the Speaking test?

At this level, you need to be accurate enough with your grammar and choice of words to get your meaning across clearly. In other words, you do not need to be accurate all the time to pass. Also, remember that Grammar and Vocabulary is only one of the areas that are assessed in the exam. The others are Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.

What sort of topics might I be expected to speak about?

Here are some examples: personal information, the office, general business environment and routine, entertainment of clients, travel and conference meetings, using the telephone, health and safety, buying and selling, management skills, promotion, training courses. These topics are spread across the four components of the exam (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking).

Is it an advantage to know your partner in the Speaking test?

No. You should be encouraged to change partners in class so that you get used to interacting with a variety of people, including people you don't know well.

What if I am paired with someone much better than me?

All students are assessed on their own performance and not on how they compare with their exam partner. So, similarly, if you have difficulty in understanding your partner, your grade will not suffer. It is important to try to communicate and interact with your partner, whatever their level.

What if I don't know anything about any of the topics for the 1-minute presentation?

You do not need specialist knowledge for the topics used. There are three topics for you to choose from. The first topic is always the most general and is suitable for people with little or no working experience. The second topic is more related to work contexts. The third topic is most suited to people with experience of specific work situations. You are marked on your language and not on your knowledge of the topic or the originality of your ideas.

What if the two candidates have very different personalities (for example, one is very shy and one is very outgoing)?

Examiners know how to deal with this situation, and give both of the candidates an opportunity to speak – make sure you take this opportunity. It is important both to talk and to give the other candidate the chance to talk. The examiner can use the questions after the Part 3 task to encourage a quieter student to speak more.

What happens if there is an odd number of candidates left at the end of a Speaking test session?

In this case, the last three candidates would be examined as a group.

For more information about *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*, visit our website:

www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/business-certificates/business-vantage