

Cambridge English

BEC Preliminary

Cambridge English: Business Preliminary (BEC Preliminary)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is there a wordlist for Cambridge English: Business Preliminary?

Yes. There is a [Cambridge English: Business Preliminary vocabulary list](#) available.

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 and Writing

DO

- ✓ Spend time reading the instructions for each part carefully.
- ✓ Check the general meaning of each short text in Reading Part 1.
- ✓ Check you understand the information in the graphic(s) in Part 3 and read the whole of each question carefully.
- ✓ Read both the text and the questions in Part 4 carefully; in particular, double-check the questions where you have answered 'Doesn't say'.
- ✓ Read the texts carefully in Part 7 to make sure you have clearly understood the situation.
- ✓ Keep an eye on the clock to make sure you finish the whole question paper.
- ✓ Allow enough time to fill in your answers on the answer sheet.
- ✓ Try to allow 5-10 minutes of checking time at the end.
- ✓ Read the question paper thoroughly for the Writing tasks and underline the important parts.
- ✓ Make a plan for each answer in the Writing tasks.
- ✓ Check that you have included all the content points in Writing Parts 1 and 2.
- ✓ Expand the points in Writing Part 2 with relevant ideas and information.
- ✓ Use a range of suitable business words and expressions in the Writing tasks.
- ✓ Write clearly on the answer sheet, so that the examiner can read the answer.
- ✓ Keep within the word limit for the Writing tasks.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't rush Parts 4 and 5 - you need to read the texts carefully here.
- ✗ Don't answer questions in Part 6 without reading the whole text first.
- ✗ Don't copy a lot from the text(s) in Part 7.
- ✗ Don't guess an answer - always check the text.

- ✗ Don't add too much information to your Writing Part 1 answer.
- ✗ Don't copy too much language from the question paper.
- ✗ Don't misspell key words which appear on the question paper.
- ✗ Don't use the same words and phrases too many times – use a range of vocabulary.
- ✗ Don't mix formal and informal language in the Writing tasks.

What aspects of reading are tested in this part of the paper?

You are tested on your ability to understand gist and detail and to identify main points and specific information. You are also tested on vocabulary and your understanding of the structure and development of a text.

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, remember that some parts have more questions and are therefore worth more marks.

Where do I write my answers for the Writing tasks?

On the answer sheet provided.

In what ways is Writing Part 1 different from Writing Part 2?

Writing Part 1 is a piece of communication with a colleague or colleagues within a company. Writing Part 2 is a longer piece of business correspondence, which is usually with somebody outside the company.

How are extended responses in Writing Part 2 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 the candidate has fulfilled the task – if they have done what they were asked to do.
- **Communicative Achievement** focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether the candidate has used the appropriate register.
- **Organisation** focuses on the way the candidate puts 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 and these scores are combined to give a final mark for the Writing test.

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

If you write less than the word limit, this probably means that you have not included all the important information.

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

You should not worry if your writing is a little over the word limit. But if you write much more than the word limit, you will lose marks, because you have probably included irrelevant information, or not used the correct, concise business style.

What happens if I produce a well-written text but do not answer the question?

In order to fulfil the task, you must answer the question. If you do not answer the question, you receive no marks for that question.

What types of writing skill are assessed?

When examiners assess your writing, they think about your control of language, how effectively you communicate, and the organisation and cohesion of your writing, as well as the content you include.

If I use American spellings, will I lose marks?

No. Both British and American English are acceptable.

Listening

DO

- ✓ Read the instructions and 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 your answers from the first listening.
- ✓ Answer all the questions – you won't lose marks for wrong answers, and there's a chance that you will guess correctly.
- ✓ Carefully copy your answers in pencil onto the answer sheet during the 10 minutes at the end of the test.
- ✓ Write the exact words that you hear for your answers in Parts 2 and 3.
- ✓ Remember that spelling (British or American) should be correct (Parts 2 and 3).
- ✓ Pay attention to anything that appears after the gaps in the questions (Parts 2 and 3).
- ✓ Concentrate on a detailed understanding of what is said in Parts 1 and 4.
- ✓ Remember that the correct option must answer the question for Parts 1 and 4: wrong options may be true according to what you hear, but will not answer the question.

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 repeat information or words that already appear before or after the gap in Parts 2 and 3. For example, if the word *days* is after the gap, don't write *days* in your answer.

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).

Will I have enough time to read through the questions?

Yes. There is a pause before each part of the Listening test to give you time to look through the questions, and other pauses to let you think about your answers. You will be told in the recording how long the pause is before each part.

Can I take the Listening test separately?

No, *Cambridge English: Business Preliminary* has three papers, Reading and Writing, Listening, and Speaking. To pass the exam, you have to take all three 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.

Can I be examined by my own teacher?

No. Examiners are specially recruited and trained and are not allowed to examine their own students or anybody they know socially.

Can I take the test alone?

No. You are examined in pairs with two examiners.

Why are there two examiners?

One examiner (the interlocutor) speaks to you, and the other (the assessor) does not take part in the test but listens as you speak and interact with the other candidate. Both examiners give you a mark, but the assessor gives more detailed marks than the interlocutor.

What happens if the other candidate won't let me speak?

Examiners know how to deal with this situation, and give both of the candidates an opportunity to speak. It is important both to talk and to give the other candidate the chance to talk. Remember – there is also a time in the test when you speak on your own.

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 Preliminary*, visit our website:

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