

Cambridge

English Skills Test

Schools

Sample candidate responses and commentaries CEFR levels A1 to C1



CAMBRIDGE
English

Introduction

This set of candidate responses represents performances at different levels of the CEFR from A1 to C1. The responses and accompanying commentaries are intended to help teachers and learners understand the features of these examples of writing which contribute to the text being at a particular CEFR level. As you read through, you may also wish to refer to the EST Schools Writing Assessment Criteria.

Part 1

Writing a message: Sample essay task

Part 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Sam, a student from another country, has sent you a message on the e-platform that your schools share.

Read Sam's message.

Hi!

How are you?

I had a great time last weekend walking in the mountains with my family. It was amazing and such a good way to relax and get some exercise. I love spending my free time outdoors.

How about you? Do you like doing things outdoors in a park or the countryside? Why or why not?

How important do you think it is for everybody to spend time outdoors?

Sam

Write a **message** replying to Sam.

Try to write **100 – 200** words.

Message task: responses and commentaries

A1 candidate response

Hi

Yes I like go outdoors like countyside but I want to going park and play. In parks I like wach films and drink or eat and have dog name is Jr and also jr want go to park he meets friend to. And helove to play whit Alex. Alex and my dog they go to dog park and run jump and rool they are good friend

Commentary

The CEFR states that at A1 level the writer can compose a short, very simple message to friends to give them a piece of information or to ask them a question.

The writer produces isolated short units about simple and concrete matters, not always communicating successfully. They communicate basic information about personal details in a simple way, using simple words and basic expressions (e.g. *I want to going park and play. In parks I like wach films and drink or eat*).

The writer links words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors (e.g. *and; but*) and there is limited punctuation (e.g. *In parks I like wach films and drink or eat and have dog name is Jr and also jr want go to park he meets friend to.*). As a result, the text is difficult to follow.

The writer's attempt to communicate the intended ideas is not always successful and the reader needs to read slowly to try to interpret the text at times; this is because the writer produces few simple grammatical forms with only limited control. Tenses are not mastered yet, only the simple present and base forms are available (e.g. *want; like; play; wach*), and the writer lacks the necessary language resource to be able to add clarity to the intended message. The linguistic range is a very basic one of simple words and phrases (e.g. *park; films; dog; name*), and errors impede meaning at times (e.g. *I like go outdoors like countyside but I want to going park and play.*).

A2 candidate response

hi

and how are you? with me its going good.

my name hans i live in the nederlands.

i love doing stuff with vrieds and i dont like dowing

outdoors stuf i like gaming same time and i like dowing stuf white friends and i like to chil some time.

i dont vaunt it important to if you game all day and i

dont care if jou do outdoors tinhs if jou are all day oudoors thats better then spending inside all day

if you spent inside all day than you can get fat and if jou are fat thats not good.

hans

Commentary

The CEFR states that at A2 level writers can write simple personal correspondence, and can exchange information in short letters, responding to questions from the other person.

The writer has produced a message that communicates simple ideas in simple ways, showing some awareness of the conventions of a message when they greet the recipient at the start of their message (*hi and how are you?*). The message consists of a series of short sentences about hobbies and likes/dislikes, using simple words (e.g. *and how are you? with me its going good. my name hans i live in the nederlands.*). In some situations, it is evident that they have to compromise the message (e.g. *i dont vaunt it important to if you game all day*).

The writer uses the most frequently occurring connectors to link clauses (e.g. *and*). They attempt to compare and contrast (e.g. *if jou are all day outdoors thats better then spending inside all day*) and show a relationship of cause and effect (e.g. *if you spent inside all day than you can get fat*). However, cohesion is limited overall.

In terms of grammatical accuracy, the writer uses some simple structures correctly, but still systematically makes basic mistakes; nevertheless, it is usually clear what they are trying to say. They have sufficient vocabulary for transactions involving familiar situations and topics and for the expression of basic communicative needs (e.g. *I like gaming; same time*). They control a narrow repertoire and show signs of mother tongue influence (e.g. *vrieds; vaunt*). Basic punctuation is used but is not always present. Their orthographic control is limited in cases, and spelling mistakes occur (e.g. *jou; tinhs; don't*). These issues contribute to effort being required from the reader to derive meaning from the text.

B1 candidate response

Hi Sam...

I'm doing fine, how about you?

I spend my last weekend with my family too. We went to Madagascar, an island in East Africa. It was really fun and amzing there, we went to different tourist places.

I like to do things in the countryside, because countryside has a lot of things to do there, doing things in a park are limited. In countryside, we can go to many tourist places, try new foods there, or even see different types of animals there.

I think by everyone spending time outdoors, they can get closer or even talk about themselves more deper to get to know each other well. I think, we need to spend time outdoors more, so we could get

to know each other more.

*Your best friend,
Van*

Commentary

The CEFR states that at B1 level writers can compose personal letters describing experiences, feelings and events in some detail.

The writer has produced a message in a suitable tone, relating to the correspondent appropriately (e.g. *how about you?*) and showing awareness of the conventional structure of the text type when communicating their ideas. In terms of thematic development, they show they can develop a point well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time (e.g. *I think by everyone spending time outdoors, they can get closer or even talk about themselves more deper to get to know each other well.*).

The message is connected and coherent, using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices. The writer uses some simple linking words (e.g. *because; or; and*) to support cohesion, and shows they can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points (e.g. *In countryside, we can go to many tourist places, try new foods there, or even see different types of animals there.*). They demonstrate that they can introduce a counter-argument too (e.g. *I like to do things in the countryside, because countryside has a lot of things to do there, [whereas] doing things in a park are limited.*).

The writer has sufficient vocabulary to express themselves in simple terms. They use basic vocabulary appropriately (e.g. *countryside; family; spending*). Occasionally the writer overuses certain lexis (e.g. *tourist places; spend time outdoors; get to know each other*), perhaps due to lexical limitations. They use simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control (e.g. *I think; we need; has; we can go*). While some errors are noticeable (e.g. *even talk about themselves more deper*), meaning can be determined.

B2 candidate response

Hi,

I am doing pretty well. Thank you for asking. Unfortunately, I have a lot of exams next week and I have to study for them. It is really nice to hear that you had awsome time in the mountains and you relaxed.

Honestly, hiking is not my cup of tea but I really like taking a walk on the beach or play some outdoor sports. I enjoy playing beach volleyball with my classmates during summer or go on a bike trip with my parents.

When it comes to place, I prefer spending time in the countryside over park because I feel more

connected with nature there. When I am in the park it all looks fake for me as the trees are all the same and grass has the same height. In the countryside nature lives its own life and I find it fascinating.

I think that spending time outdoors is really important as it improve your sleep or health condition. Also going on a walk helps you stay in good shape.

How about you? Do you agree? I can not wait to see you.

Love,

Marina

Commentary

The CEFR states that at B2 level writers can write a message (email, letter) which conveys degrees of emotion and highlights the personal significance of events and experiences, and comments on the correspondent's news and views. The writer has written a clear, succinct message which demonstrates these abilities.

The writer has employed the conventions and register of personal correspondence. They use a level of formality and conventions appropriate to the context to show they can maintain a relationship through personal correspondence and relate their experiences to those of the correspondent (e.g. *'Hi, I am doing pretty well. Thank you for asking.'*; *'It is really nice to hear that you had awesome time'*; *'Honestly, hiking is not my cup of tea but; I can not wait to see you.'*). They use the language fluently and effectively to give descriptions of experiences (e.g. *When I am in the park it all looks fake for me as the trees are all the same and grass has the same height.*), pose sympathetic questions and follow up on issues of mutual interest (e.g. *How about you? Do you agree?*). The writer uses all these means to successfully hold the target reader's attention.

The writer has expanded on their preference for the countryside; the points they make are developed systematically and with relevant supporting detail. It is evident that they can evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of various options (e.g. *When it comes to place, I prefer spending time in the countryside over park because I feel more connected with nature there.*). The message is generally well-organised and coherent, using a range of linking words and cohesive devices (e.g. *and; but; also; because*). Cohesion is further strengthened with the use of reference (e.g. *there; I find it fascinating*). The use of cohesive devices contributes to smooth reading overall.

The writer communicates the main points with reasonable precision using a sufficient range of everyday vocabulary and some less common lexis to express viewpoints appropriately (e.g. *awesome; fascinating*). There are instances of use of collocations too (e.g. *in good shape; my cup of tea; connected with nature*). Lexical and grammatical accuracy are both high.

C1 candidate response

Hello!

I'm Great, thanks for asking!

I'm so glad you had so much fun with your family in the mountains! That sounds awesome. Being outside in nature is something I love as well. It's amazing to think that we have such an exciting world right there behind our front doors! Personally, I love just going to parks and on nature walks, it doesn't have to be anything more than that - it's so relaxing. Like a breath of fresh air. I have time to unwind, relax my mind and take it off of school and responsibilities. Nature is a beautiful way to remind yourself that there's more to life than school and studies.

I definitely think it's important for everyone to spend some time every day outdoors, no matter the weather. Many people will tell you that standing under the rain is unhealthy, but that's not really true; as long as you keep moving, you'll be fine. Any day outdoors, even rainy ones, can help you clear your mind. Also, time spent outside in nature means less time spent inside on your phone. Which, considering the addictive behaviours that technology nowadays may cause, is a very healthy thing, isn't it?

What do you think? Do you agree?

Write back soon!

Your friend.

Commentary

The CEFR states that at C1 level writers have the ability to express themselves with clarity and precision in personal correspondence, using language flexibly and effectively, including emotional usage. The text produced here provides evidence that the writer has those abilities; they have produced an email with a very engaging tone, notable for the ease with which the ideas are conveyed.

The writer has successfully employed the conventions and informal register of personal correspondence. They use a level of formality and conventions appropriate to the context to show they can maintain a relationship through personal correspondence and relate their experiences to those of the correspondent (e.g. *'I'm Great, thanks for asking!'; 'I'm so glad you had so much fun'; 'Being outside in nature is something I love as well.'*). They use the language fluently and effectively to describe their experience of being out in nature and evaluate its benefits (e.g. *it's so relaxing. Like a breath of fresh air. I have time to unwind, relax my mind and take it off of school and responsibilities. Nature is a beautiful way to remind yourself that there's more to life than school and studies.*). All ideas, straightforward and more complex, are well developed (e.g. *Also, time spent outside in nature means less time spent inside on your phone. Which, considering the addictive behaviours that technology nowadays may cause, is a very healthy thing*). The writer uses all these means to successfully hold the target reader's attention.

The writer produces clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured language, using organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices to good effect. Parallelism (e.g. *'unwind, relax my mind, and take it off of school'; 'time spent outside in nature means less time spent inside on your phone'*),

substitution (e.g. *that; ones*) and a variety of connectors (e.g. *so; definitely; in fact; also*) are employed to organise ideas and tie the text together.

The writer consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot. A range of simple and complex grammatical forms are used with control and flexibility.

Finally, the writer uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis (e.g. *unwind; addictive; behaviours*), and collocation (e.g. *there is more to life than; breath of fresh air*) appropriately.

Part 2

Writing an essay: Sample essay task

Part 2

You should spend about 25 minutes on this task.

In your English class you have been talking about the advantages and disadvantages of having a pet.

Your teacher has asked you to write an essay on the following topic:

Should children be allowed to have their own pets?

Write your **essay** giving your views, providing reasons and examples to support your views.

Try to write **100 – 250** words.

Essay task: responses and commentaries

A1 candidate response

of course the the children play with animal the children is very happy the pets is makes people happy and play with the children when the cildren dont any pet children dont have any friends and play with tablet a lot of has eyes a problem because of this I think each children have pets my friendliest animals is dog cat parrot hamster fish any pet the children loves or like

Commentary

The CEFR states that at A1 level writers can produce simple isolated phrases and sentences.

The writer produces isolated short units about simple and concrete matters, not always communicating successfully. They provide basic information about matters of personal relevance, namely pets, in a simple way, using simple words and basic expressions to give their opinion (e.g. *the children is very happy the pets is makes people happy*).

The writer links words or groups of words with very basic linear connectors (e.g. *and; when*). There is an instance where the writer indicates cause and effect when they attempt to explain why children should have pets (e.g. *because of this I think*), which suggests that this is a strong A1 script. However, the absence of punctuation means effort is required from the reader to derive meaning from the text.

The writer's attempt to communicate the intended ideas is not always successful and the reader needs to read slowly and to try to interpret the text at times; this is because the writer produces few simple grammatical forms with only limited control. Tenses are not mastered yet; only the simple present and base forms are available (e.g. *play; has; is*), and the writer lacks the necessary language resources to be able to add clarity to the intended message. The linguistic range is a very basic one of simple words and phrases (e.g. *the children; animals; very happy; a lot*), and errors impede meaning at times (e.g. *the pets is makes people happy; the cildren dont any pet*).

A2 candidate response

Yes because when the children gets a pet the child is become very happy, and when the child gets a pet this child will look at the pet so, the child will not play computer games 4-5 hours on a day. And when children get a pet his or her parent will be happy because of their child is very happy. For example: I have a cat and I feel so happy with my cat. I play games with my cat. And my mom, dad and my grandparents is very happy they are play games with my cat too.

Commentary

The CEFR states that at A2 level writers can produce simple texts on familiar subjects of interest, linking sentences with connectors like *and*, *because* or *then*.

The writer has produced a text that communicates simple ideas in simple ways. It is a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors. While the text does not contain the conventions of an essay designed to engage the reader (e.g. an introduction), the writer is able to express their opinion in simple terms and justify it using basic everyday vocabulary and expressions (e.g. *so, the child will not play computer games 4-5 hours on a day*).

The writer communicates what they want to say in a simple and direct exchange of limited information on familiar and routine matters (e.g. *I have a cat and I feel so happy with my cat. I play games with my cat.*), but in some parts of the text the message is compromised (e.g. *because of their child is very happy*). The writer shows that they can give an example of something in simple terms to support the point being made (e.g. *For example: I have a cat and I feel so happy with my cat.*). The writer uses basic connectors to link simple sentences (e.g. *because; and*). Cohesion is limited but present, and is supported by the use of reference (e.g. *his or her; their*).

The writer uses basic vocabulary reasonably appropriately; they write short words that are in their oral vocabulary with phonetic accuracy (e.g. *cat; dog; children; pet; happy; play; games*). The writer uses some simple structures correctly (e.g. *I play games with my cat*), but still systematically makes basic errors (e.g. *my grandparents is very happy; the child is become very happy*). Nevertheless, it is usually clear what they are trying to say. It is therefore evident that they have some degree of control of the simple grammatical forms they use; errors may impede meaning at times though (e.g. *this child will look at the pet so*).

B1 candidate response

I don't think children should be allowed to have their own pets because I think that they are not able to take care of them, for exemple, many children don't know how feed pets: the quantity of food to give to them or when give it to them, another thing is that children can't be allowed to going outside alone, so they can't going for a walk with pets if they need it.

Some children doesn't treat a pet like an animal with life, but more like a puppy, for that they can hurt the pet, but also the pet can hurt them, but it isn't their fault because their young and they can't always understand the effect of their own action they can't know the respect for animal if their parents don't tell them about.

I think that children should stay with pets, with an adult closed if they are very young, because if people spend time with them they're become happier, and most of the time adult people don't have time for that.

For children spending time with pet can teach them many thing like take care of something, that is a skill very useful for their future.

Commentary

The CEFR states that at B1 level writers can produce straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence.

The writer has been able to give and justify their opinion on the topic. The text shows awareness of the structure of an essay, while lacking some of the typical features of an essay, such as an introduction and signposting of arguments. The writer uses simple language to successfully list disadvantages and give and justify their opinion on why children should not be allowed to have their own pets (e.g. *I don't think children should be allowed to have their own pets because I think that they are not able to take care of them*). While there is no conclusion, the writer uses the last two paragraphs to make a recommendation (e.g. *I think that children should stay with pets, with an adult closed if they are very young*) and to justify their opinion (e.g. *'because if people spend time with them they're become happier'; 'For children spending time with pet can teach them many thing like take care of something'*). Overall, the arguments are developed well enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time and the main point of the ideas is expressed comprehensibly.

The text is connected using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices. The writer uses some simple linking words (e.g. *because; or; so; but; another thing*) to support cohesion. However, the text is not particularly coherent, as there are instances where there is no transition from one idea to the next. For example, *'I think that children should stay with pets'* is an idea that does not build on the previous one and there is nothing to signal that the writer is proceeding to introduce a new idea.

The writer has sufficient vocabulary to express themselves when writing about a familiar topic (e.g. *pets*). The writer uses basic vocabulary appropriately (e.g. *children; pets; feed; walk*) and some vocabulary less appropriately (e.g. *effect; life; respect*). Occasionally, the writer overuses certain lexis (e.g. *children; pets*), perhaps due to lexical limitations.

The writer communicates with reasonable accuracy; they use simple grammatical forms with some degree of control. Sentences are generally accurate but there are some grammatical and/or syntactical issues that are typical of this level (e.g. *'many children don't know how feed pets: the quantity of food to give to them or when give it to them, another thing is that children can't be allowed to going outside alone, so they can't going for a walk with pets if they need it'; 'with an adult closed'*).

B2 candidate response

Giving your child a pet might be a good idea

It is a fact that children love animals. They want to go horse riding or go to the zoo. Many children

ask for a dog or a cat for their birthday. Should children be allowed to have their own pets?

First of all, it will learn the children to be responsible at a young age. With a dog they have to walk the dog every day, give him food and play with him. A cat also needs food, water and attention. They will not be able to play every day with their friends because they have to take care of their pet.

Secondly, it had a big influence on the whole family if the child gets a pet. The parents need to help with taking care of the pet when the children are at school. When they are planning a vacation they will not be able to go where ever they want to go because of the dog.

In conclusion, there are pro's and con's when giving a child a pet. It will learn the child to take responsibility about something. However, it might be a burden for the parents, because their life will get less flexibel when it comes to being away from home or planning vacations. I think if a pet fits in your family you should take one, but if you have doubts do not.

Commentary

The CEFR states that at B2 level writers can produce an essay which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options.

The writer has employed the structure and conventions of an essay to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas (e.g. '*Secondly, it had a big influence on the whole family if the child gets a pet. The parents need to help with taking care of the pet when the children are at school.*'; '*it will learn the children to be responsible at a young age.*'). There is an introduction which outlines the topic; the main body paragraphs which develop the argument and present the counter-argument; and a conclusion which reiterates the writer's position, summarises the main points (*It will learn the child to take responsibility about something. However, it might be a burden for the parents, because their life will get less flexibel when it comes to being away from home or planning vacations.*) and makes a recommendation (*I think if a pet fits in your family you should take one, but if you have doubts do not.*).

The writer has produced arguments that are developed systematically with relevant supporting detail. The text is generally well-organised and coherent, using a range of linking words and cohesive devices. In the introduction, the writer employs a question (*Should children be allowed to have their own pets?*) to communicate their purpose, which naturally leads to the main body of the essay thereafter, where it is addressed. This pattern contributes to smooth reading and supports cohesion. Cohesion is also strengthened with the use of reference (e.g. *they; their own; their life*) and other cohesive devices (e.g. *First of all; also; Secondly; In conclusion; because; but*).

The writer communicates the main points with reasonable precision using a sufficient range of everyday vocabulary and some less common lexis to express viewpoints appropriately (e.g. *flexibel; responsible; influence; burden*). Lexical accuracy is generally high, there is however some inappropriate use of lexis (e.g. *it will learn the children to be responsible*). While some errors are present they do not impede communication.

C1 candidate response

Pets come in many shapes and sizes. From a tiny goldfish, to a huge bulldog. While some children prefer to have mediocre pets, such as a kitten or a puppy, some are more daring and would be more likely to pick a lizard or a snake as a pet.

Owning pet, in my opinion, is one of the greatest pleasures of life. Sure, it's a lot of responsibility. But the joy it brings kids makes it all worth it. It helps keep them busy and motivated and spreads so much love! A pet is more likely to raise a child to be more responsible, as it would require to be taken care of. Feeding them on time, taking them for walks, making sure they don't get lost is all something a child would do for their dog, implementing a sort of discipline in the kid's life.

However, having a pet has its limitations too. First of all, a kid should be taught how to behave with the pet. Sometimes, a child might get too excited and accidentally hurt the animal, or sometimes even intentionally. To add on, some kids are not always responsible. Owning an animal requires a lot of care and attention, so the child should be prepared to take on the responsibility. Another downside is that kids get attached far too quickly. Their pet isn't going to be alive forever, and can hurt a child who loved and had their pet for a very long time. Even when travelling, a kid might not want to leave their pet behind, and bringing them along can be costly.

To conclude, I believe kids who are well-behaved prepared for the responsibility should be allowed to have their own pets, for the joy it brings them.

Commentary

The CEFR states that at C1 level writers can produce clear, well-structured texts on complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, and expanding and supporting points of view at some length with subsidiary points and reasons.

The writer has employed the structure and conventions of the essay effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas while maintaining a consistent tone throughout (e.g. *Owning pet, in my opinion, is one of the greatest pleasures of life. Sure, it's a lot of responsibility. But the joy it brings kids makes it all worth it. It helps keep them busy and motivated and spreads so much love!*). The ideas are developed well; arguments for and against are discussed and evaluated in paragraphs 2 and 3. The writer makes effective use of linguistic modality to signal the strength of an argument (e.g. *A pet is more likely to raise a child to be more responsible, as it would require to be taken care of.*). Thereafter, the writer rounds off with an appropriate conclusion in paragraph 4 (*I believe kids who are well-behaved [and] prepared for the responsibility should be allowed to have their own pets, for the joy it brings them.*).

The writer produces clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured language using organisational patterns and cohesive devices to good effect. The response is notable for the use of both grammatical and

lexical cohesion. For example, in the process of setting the scene in the first paragraph, the writer employs lexical chaining to tie ideas together (*Pets come in many shapes and sizes. From a tiny goldfish, to a huge bulldog. While some children prefer to have medicore pets, such as a kitten or a puppy, some are more daring*). This is further supported by the use of ellipsis in the same clause (*While some children....some are more daring*). Cohesion is also achieved by the use of reference (e.g. *their (pet); it's (limitations)*), and by words that add content (e.g. *and; To add on; Another downside*), indicate (time) order (e.g. *First of all; Even when*), provide an example (e.g. *such as*) and indicate conclusion (*To conclude*).

The writer consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot. A range of simple and complex grammatical forms are used with control and flexibility (e.g. *Feeding them on time, taking them for walks, making sure they don't get lost is all something a child would do for their dog, implementing a sort of discipline in the kid's life.*). Finally, the writer uses a range of vocabulary, including more sophisticated, less common lexis (e.g. *limitations; downside; implementing; discipline; motivated; intentionally*), and collocation (e.g. *take on the responsibility; joy it brings*) appropriately.



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