

BULATS

Guide for Candidates



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge



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What is BULATS?

BULATS is designed to evaluate the level of language skills of candidates who need to use English in their work.

It is also suitable for students and employees on language courses or on professional/business courses where English language ability is an important part of the course.

■ What level is BULATS?

BULATS provides tests at all levels for learners. There is no 'pass' mark. Instead, your *BULATS* score will tell you and your employer which of six levels you have reached. The table below explains the different levels. They are expressed as ALTE (Association of Language Testers in Europe) levels, which are linked to the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

ALTE levels	CEFR levels	BULATS scores	Level description	Cambridge English certificated examinations at these levels
Level 5	C2	90-100	Upper advanced	Proficiency
Level 4	C1	75-89	Advanced	Advanced/Business Higher
Level 3	B2	60-74	Upper-intermediate	First/Business Vantage
Level 2	B1	40-59	Intermediate	Preliminary/Business Preliminary
Level 1	A2	20-39	Elementary	Key
Level 0	A1	10-19	Beginner	—

■ Who is BULATS suitable for?

BULATS is carefully designed to be suitable for a wide range of people at work or students studying business courses. It does not require any previous business experience.

Why take a Cambridge English exam?

Cambridge English Language Assessment offers the world's leading range of qualifications for learners and teachers of English. Our exams are taken by more than 5 million people in 130 countries each year.

■ Develop effective communication skills

Our examinations cover all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They include a range of tasks which assess your ability to use English, so that you develop the full range of skills you need to communicate effectively in a variety of contexts.

■ Worldwide recognition

Educational institutions, employers and governments all over the world accept our exams, so a Cambridge English examination is a valuable qualification.

■ Quality you can trust

We do extensive research and trialling to make sure that you get the fairest, most accurate assessment of your ability and that our exams are most relevant to the range of uses for which you need English.

How to use this booklet

The *BULATS Guide for Candidates* booklet helps you prepare for the test by giving you examples of the type of questions you will encounter when you take the *BULATS* test. There is also an overview of the test sections covering Reading and Language Knowledge, Listening, Writing and Speaking.

■ Glossary of BULATS task types

Multiple choice – You read a text or listen to a recording and then answer questions. Each question has three or four options, only one of which is correct.

Cloze – You are given a text with gaps, where words or phrases are missing. There are two types of ‘cloze’: multiple-choice cloze, where you choose from the four options given, and open cloze, where you have to select the right word for the gap.

Gapped sentences – You are given individual sentences each with one word missing. You choose the correct word to fill the gap from the four options given.

The BULATS Reading and Listening test

What does the BULATS Reading and Listening test involve?

This section is a brief introduction to the *BULATS* Reading and Listening test. We show examples from each of the exercise types in the test, but in some cases we do not show the full text or all the questions. If you would like to try the full demo for *BULATS* Reading and Listening, please visit the *BULATS* website at: **www.bulats.org**

The *BULATS* Reading and Listening test is taken online and lasts about 1 hour. It tests listening and reading skills, and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

The test is divided into two sections: Reading and Language Knowledge, and Listening.

There are five task types in the Reading and Language Knowledge section and three task types in the Listening section:

Reading and Language Knowledge	Listening
Multiple choice	Multiple choice
Gapped sentences	Multiple-choice (graphic)
Multiple-choice gap-fill	Extended listening
Open gap-fill	
Extended reading	

There is a short demo at the beginning of the test to explain what you should do. If you start a new type of exercise and you don't understand what you have to do on a particular screen, click on the question mark button at the top of the screen to get help.

Questions appear on the screen and you answer them by clicking on a particular answer or by typing in words or phrases. There are eight different types of question and they assess listening, reading and grammar/vocabulary skills.

The *BULATS* Reading and Listening test is an adaptive test: depending on your answer to each question, the software decides whether to offer you an easier or a harder question of the same type or to give you a different type of question which could be easier or harder. It does this until it has enough data to decide which level you have reached. Alternatively, your employer will set a time limit and you work through the different questions until the time is up. As the test is adaptive the length of the test will depend on your level of ability. Most candidates take about 60 minutes to complete the test, but this varies. Some candidates may be required to complete the test in 75 minutes.

Reading and Language Knowledge


Multiple choice

In this type of question, you have to read a notice, diagram, label, memo or letter containing a short text. You then choose from three possible answers, the sentence or phrase which most closely matches the meaning of the text.

In the example below, the text is part of a letter from a furniture company to a customer. Read the letter and decide which of the three sentences has the same meaning.

Choose an Answer

Look at the picture and click on the best answer.


LAKELAND FURNITURE
Dear Mr Royston
Order No. 13448
We thank you for your recent order dated 10 September and confirm that we can supply your requirements.

☐ Mr Royston's order will be sent on 10th September.
☐ Lakeland Furniture is accepting Mr Royston's order.
☐ Mr Royston will supply the order on 10th September.

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Gapped sentences

You have to read a sentence in which there is a gap (missing word) and choose the correct word from a choice of four to fill it.

Choose an Answer

Read the question then click on the best answer.

I've applied for the job but I don't really _____ to get it.

☐ expect
☐ think
☐ believe
☐ suppose

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Multiple-choice gap-fill

You have to read a text in which there are some gaps. There are four choices for each gap and you have to choose the right one.

In the example below, Jim Blakeney is writing to a customer (Mr Maddox) to apologise about the difficulties Mr Maddox has been having in contacting him.

Fill the Gap

Click in each gap. A choice of words will appear. Click on the word you think completes the phrase or sentence.

A Communication Problem

Dear Mr Maddox

I am writing in _____ to your telephone conversation with my assistant about our new product lines, and to explain my failure to answer your enquiries.

I believe your difficulty in _____ me, and in getting information on our new lines, arose because of our recent _____ of premises. I sincerely regret any trouble you have had.

As my assistant promised, I have attached the new product details which you requested.

I hope I have _____ to explain the reason for problems you have had in contacting me recently, and that we can look _____ to continuing business with you.

Yours sincerely

Jim Blakeney

response

respect

subject

accordance

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Open gap-fill

You have to read a short text in which there are some gaps and fill in the missing word for each gap.

In the example below, you have to read a short text about whether your boss knows your name and find the correct missing word for each gap.

Write in the Gap

Click in each gap, then type the word you think completes the phrase or sentence.

Does your boss know your name?

According to a recent survey, half of all employees reckon their chief executive doesn't know their name. This anonymity might not bother everyone, but is particularly frustrating for the ambitious.

In large organisations it would be unreasonable to expect a chief executive to know every single employee _____ name. But unless the payroll runs into thousands, it isn't much to ask that they _____ least recognise your face.

'Some of the most admired and successful leaders display a gritty determination _____ to lose touch with their staff, regardless _____ how large the organisation is,' says Erling Nottaasen of management consultants Right Coutts. 'We come across many senior people who believe shopfloor contact is critical to their success _____ leaders, and has a positive impact on performance.'

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Extended reading

In this part of the test, you have to read a longer text and answer a series of multiple-choice questions based on it. The questions are in the same order as the information in the text.

The text below is about answering customer calls. Read this part of the text and try to decide which of the three answer options is the correct one. There are three more questions for this text and you scroll down the screen to read the rest of the text.

Read the Passage

Click on the numbers to see ALL the questions. Find the answers by reading the passage using the scrollbar.

Question 1 of 4

What happened when the writer tried to hire a car?

☐ One hire-car company took a long time to finally answer the writer's call.

☐ The writer was unable to get through to the cheapest hire-car company.

☐ The writer used the hire-car company that was her second choice.

**FAILING TO ANSWER CUSTOMER CALLS
COULD COST YOU DEARLY...**

Last month I called my usual hire-car firm and let the phone ring for some time, giving up when it went unanswered. I then rang the next company on my list, which answered immediately. Result: the second company got my business. It turned out to be less expensive anyway so now it will be first on my list the next time I need a hire car.

Such a scenario is played out more often than is thought. New research suggests that British companies are overlooking around 20% of potential business simply by not answering the telephone quickly enough. According to John Hislop, marketing director of TellMe which conducted the research by monitoring 1,800 inquiry calls to 126 of its subscribers, the lost calls could cost an average of £116,000 a year in potential business for each of the country's 4.3m small and medium enterprises.

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Listening

Multiple choice

You have to listen to a short recording and answer a multiple-choice question. You choose the correct answer from three options.

In this example, you are waiting to see Mrs Browning about a job when her assistant comes to explain why. In the test you listen to the recording of Mrs Browning's assistant talking to you and decide which of the three options is the correct reason why Mrs Browning can't see you now.

Choose an Answer

Click on an audio button to hear the short passage. Then choose the best answer.

You are waiting to see Mrs Browning about a job when her assistant comes to speak to you.

Why can't she see you now?

☐ She is checking some equipment.

☐ She has a visitor from abroad.

☐ She has left the building.

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Multiple-choice (graphic)

In this type of listening task you choose the correct answer from a choice of three pictures or images.

In the example below, the recording is about two colleagues deciding where to advertise a new car. In the test you listen to the recording and choose where they decide to start their advertising campaign.

Choose an Answer

Click on an audio button to hear the short passage. Then choose the best answer.


Two colleagues are talking about advertising for a new car.

Where do they decide to start their advertising campaign?


A



B



C



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Extended listening

For this part of the test, you have to listen to a longer recording and answer six multiple-choice questions based on it. The questions are in the same order as the information you hear in the recording.

Listen and Choose the Answers

Read ALL the questions. Click on the audio button to hear the long passage. Click on each question. Then choose the best answer.

Question 1 of 6

Ms Green's Interview
How many companies has Ms Green worked for?

☐ 3
☐ 4
☐ 5

Question 2
What is Ms Green's main reason for wanting to join Copycat?

Question 3
Which does Johnson's sell?

Question 4
How many people were in J & P's sales department?

Question 5
When Ms Green was with J & P, what happened to computer sales?

Question 6
What was the main problem for J & P?

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The BULATS Writing test

What does the BULATS Writing test involve?

The *BULATS* Writing test is taken online and assesses writing skills, and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Writing tasks are presented to you on the computer screen. You type your answers onscreen and the computer saves your answers.

There is a tutorial which you can watch before you take the *BULATS* Writing test. The tutorial gives you instructions on how to do the test.

The *BULATS* Writing test is divided into two parts:

Content	Writing	Suggested timings
Part 1	Email (50–60 words)	15 minutes
Part 2	Report or letter (180–200 words)	30 minutes

The test lasts for 45 minutes. It is suggested that you spend 15 minutes on Part 1 and 30 minutes on Part 2.

Writing

Part 1

In Part 1 of the test you have to write an email using the information given. It is important to cover all the points given in the instructions. You should write 50–60 words for your answer.

The screenshot shows the BULATS Part One writing task interface. At the top, it says "Part One" and "44:39". Below this, it says "Answer the question below. Type 50–60 words." and "Part One" is selected. The task is to write a reply to John Linden, Managing Director, regarding customer complaints. The instructions are: "We have recently received a number of complaints from our customers. In the last month they have returned 20% of goods because of poor quality. I need to know today what is causing this problem. What can we do about it, and how soon can this be done?" The candidate is asked to write a reply to John Linden, explaining the problem, what can be done about it, and how soon this can be done. The word count is 0.

Part One 44:39

Answer the question below.
Type 50–60 words.

Part One ☒ Part Two ☐

You have received this message from your Managing Director.

From: John Linden, Managing Director

Subject: Customer Complaints

We have recently received a number of complaints from our customers. In the last month they have returned 20% of goods because of poor quality. I need to know today what is causing this problem. What can we do about it, and how soon can this be done?

Write a reply to John Linden:

- explain what the problem is
- say what can be done about it
- say how soon this can be done.

Words: 0

BULATS END TEST

Part 2

In Part 2, you have to choose one of two tasks. A letter or a report format may be required for either task. Again, you need to cover all the points given in the instructions, but this time the answer should be longer (180–200 words) and needs to be written in an appropriate style.

Have a look at the two tasks below and think about the answers you could write.

The screenshot shows the BULATS Part Two writing task interface. At the top, it says "Part Two" and "44:23". Below this, it says "Answer one of the questions below. Select Task A or Task B. Type 180–200 words." and "Part One" is selected. There are two tasks: Task A (writing a letter to the factory manager) and Task B (writing a report on producing a magazine for the staff). The candidate is asked to write a letter to the factory manager to arrange the visit, or a report on producing a magazine for the staff. The word count is 0.

Part Two 44:23

Answer one of the questions below.
Select Task A or Task B.
Type 180–200 words.

Part One ☐ Part Two ☒

Task A

You are considering placing a large order with a new supplier and want to visit the factory.

Write a letter to the factory manager to arrange the visit.

Write about:

- why you want to visit;
- what you want to see;
- what you want to discuss.

and any other points which you think are important.

Task B

Your company is thinking about producing a magazine for the staff. You have been asked to write a report on this for the Human Resources Director.

Write the report giving your suggestions.

Write about:

- the benefits of a staff magazine;
- what should be in the magazine;
- who should write for it.

and any other points which you think are important.

BULATS END TEST

The BULATS Speaking test

What does the BULATS Speaking test involve?

You may decide to assess your speaking using the *BULATS* Speaking test. You wear a headset for the test and all the questions are presented to you or heard by you through your headphones. The microphone records your answers to the questions. There is a timer onscreen which shows how long you have to give your answers.

There is a tutorial which you can watch before you do the Speaking test. The tutorial gives you instructions on how to do the test.

The *BULATS* Speaking test assesses your spoken English in a business context. The table below shows you what the test involves:

Content	Speaking
Part 1	Interview
Part 2	Reading Aloud
Part 3	Presentation
Part 4	Presentation with Graphics
Part 5	Communication Activity

The test lasts about 15 minutes.

Speaking

Part 1

In Part 1, you need to be able to answer questions about your background, education, job, studies, career plans and personal interests.

Part 2

In Part 2, you have to read aloud eight sentences or questions which appear on the screen. Below is an example of Part 2.

Question 1	This is the latest version of the plan.
Question 2	These are the minutes of the last committee meeting.
Question 3	Sales have risen faster than expected over the last quarter.
Question 4	I will give you a summary of the figures at the end of my talk.
Question 5	Mr Bond apologises for not being able to attend the reception.
Question 6	Permission to develop the land must be gained in advance.
Question 7	Dr Clark would like you to phone her back before 3 o'clock.
Question 8	The design should follow the guidelines set out in the tender specifications.

Part 3

In Part 3, you have to give a short presentation about a work-related topic which appears onscreen. There is no choice of topic. You have 40 seconds to read the topic and think about what you are going to say. You then have 1 minute to speak about the topic. Below is an example of Part 3.

Part Three Presentation



00:55

You will have 1 minute to talk about a topic.
First, you have 40 seconds to read the task and prepare what you are going to say.
You will then be given 1 minute to speak.

Talk about your idea of the perfect office to work in.

You should say:

- where this office should be.
- what the office should look like.
- what facilities the office should have.

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Part 4

In Part 4, you have to talk about some visual information which appears onscreen. You have 1 minute to look at the visual and think about what you are going to say. You then have 1 minute to speak about the visual.

Below is an example of Part 4.

Part Four Presentation with Graphics00:58

You will have 1 minute to talk about some visual information.
First, you have 1 minute to look at the task and prepare what you are going to say.
You will then be given 1 minute to speak.

These charts show the breakdown of the total exports of a company called Pepco to three countries during the years 2005 - 2007.
Look at the information and talk about the changes that took place between 2005 and 2007.

Year	Brazil	Canada	Japan
2005	10%	15%	75%
2006	30%	15%	55%
2007	25%	25%	50%

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Part 5

In Part 5, you read information onscreen about a situation. You have 40 seconds to think about what is described. You then hear five questions about the situation on which you have to give your opinion.

Below is an example of Part 5.

Part Five Communication Activity00:36

You will imagine you are in this situation.
You have 40 seconds to read the task.

The speaker is planning a business conference and she wants to find out your opinion of what is important when making arrangements for a successful conference. She will ask you questions about:

- location
- equipment
- catering facilities
- conference speakers
- length of conference

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Preparing for BULATS

BULATS tests reading, listening, speaking and writing skills that are required for most purposes – not only in business. So preparation is valuable, even for someone not taking the test, as it will help you to improve the English you need to use at work.

If you are following a General English course or preparing on your own to take *BULATS*, have a look at the following list of topics and situations which could be covered. Try to read or listen to material on these topics, as this will help you to prepare more effectively, so that you can feel confident when you take the test.

■ What topics and situations are covered?

Personal information (Writing only)

- Asking for and giving personal details (name, occupation, etc.)
- Asking about and describing jobs and responsibilities
- Asking about and describing a company and its organisation

The office, general business environment and routine

- Arranging appointments/meetings (Writing only)
- Planning future events and tasks
- Asking for and giving permission (Writing only)
- Giving and receiving instructions (Writing only)
- Predicting and describing future possibilities
- Asking for and giving opinions (Writing only)
- Agreeing and disagreeing
- Making, accepting and rejecting suggestions (Writing only)
- Expressing needs and wants
- Discussing problems
- Making recommendations
- Justifying decisions and past actions

Entertainment of clients, free time, relationships with colleagues and clients

- Discussing interests and leisure activities
- Inviting, accepting and refusing offers and invitations (Writing only)
- Thanking and expressing appreciation (Writing only)
- Apologising and accepting apologies (Writing only)

Travel

- Making enquiries, reservations, requests and complaints (Writing only)

Health

- Health and safety rules in the workplace
- Leisure activities, interests and sports

Buying and selling

- Understanding and discussing prices and delivery dates, offers and agreements

Products and services

- Asking for and giving information about a product or service (Writing only)
- Making comparisons, expressing opinions, preferences, etc.
- Making and receiving complaints (Writing only)

Results and achievements

- Descriptions and explanations of company performance and results, trends, events and changes

Other topic areas

- A number of other topics in areas of general interest, such as food and drink, education (training, courses), consumer goods, shopping and prices, etc. may be included.

Companies that use BULATS

More than ever, a good knowledge of English is needed to succeed in international business and commerce. If you can show you have relevant language skills, you'll have a great advantage in the jobs market and much greater flexibility if you want to work or study abroad.

Recognition of *BULATS* is increasing rapidly as a growing number of companies are using the test as a focus for in-company training courses.

Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC)	KPMG
Adidas	L'Oréal
BP	Lloyds Bank
Cadbury	Merck
Citibank	Motorola
Colgate-Palmolive	Nestlé
Compaq	Nokia
Deloitte & Touche	Pfizer
DHL	Philips
Disney	PricewaterhouseCoopers
Dow AgroSciences	Procter & Gamble
EADS/Airbus	RASCO Ras Lanuf Oil and Gas
Emirates Group	Renault
Ernst & Young	Reuters
Esso	Roche
General Electric	Sberbank
General Motors	Shanghai Professional Testing Authority
GlaxoSmithKline	Shell
Guinness	Vodafone
Heinz	Volvo
HSBC	Wrigley
Italia Lavoro	Wyeth
Johnson & Johnson	

You can find a full list of companies that use the *BULATS* tests for a variety of purposes including recruitment at: **www.bulats.org**

Notes



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Cambridge English Language Assessment – a not-for-profit organisation.

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