

Cambridge English Business Higher

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

Is there a wordlist for Cambridge English: Business Higher?

No. Examinations that are at CEFR Level B2 (independent user), or above – such as *Cambridge English: Business Higher* – 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

- ✓ Read the instructions for each part carefully. This may save time as they can give information about the overall context for the text.
- ✓ Make sure you understand precisely how to record your answers and that you complete the answer sheet correctly.
- ✓ Read through the whole of the texts for Parts 1–3 before attempting the questions. If you start answering questions too hastily by selecting the first options that look possible superficially, you may later discover that you were wrong and waste time doing the questions all over again.
- ✓ Make sure that the answers for Part 1 are justified in terms of genuine paraphrases in the texts or extracts, equivalent to the statements, and are not based on a purely superficial resemblance, such as simple ‘word spotting’.
- ✓ Make sure in Part 2 that each sentence chosen to fit into each gap fits both grammatically and in terms of the meaning of the text, before and after the gap.
- ✓ Be aware that you may have to change other answers you have given if you realise you have chosen an incorrect option for one of the gaps in Part 2.
- ✓ Read the whole of each sentence in Part 6 before deciding whether a line is correct or identifying an error in it; this is likely to involve reading the next line or previous lines.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't select an answer for Part 1 simply because the same word or words are in one part of the text and in the questions. This kind of ‘word spotting’ is very unlikely to lead to the correct answer.
- ✗ Don't choose an option for Part 3 which, although true, does not actually answer the question that has been set.
- ✗ Don't forget that questions in Part 3 follow the order of the text and that time can be wasted by looking all over the text for the answer to a particular question (unless the question is a ‘global’ one, in which case it will be the final question).

- ✗ Don't answer questions in Parts 4 and 5 without reading the text around the gaps to establish the context.
- ✗ Don't leave blanks for correct lines in Part 6 or identify as errors words which are unnecessary but not incorrect.

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.

Where do I write my answers?

In this paper, you put the answers on an answer sheet by filling in a box or by writing a one-word answer on your answer sheet in pencil.

Writing

DO

- ✓ Underline the key words in the question.
- ✓ Make a detailed plan before you start writing.
- ✓ Write clearly and concisely.
- ✓ Make sure that all the figures and numbers you give are accurate.
- ✓ Remember the target reader.
- ✓ Remember that the examiner is a second target reader and that you are writing to prove a range of skills.
- ✓ Keep looking back to the question to remember the purpose of writing.
- ✓ Remember which format to use.
- ✓ Use opening and closing phrases in a letter.
- ✓ Use headings and subheadings in a report and proposal.
- ✓ Choose the correct register or level of formality.
- ✓ Include the name and position of the writer in a report or proposal.
- ✓ Answer all the elements in the question.
- ✓ Structure your writing with good linkers, such as 'firstly', 'also', 'however', 'moreover' and 'nevertheless', as these provide structure.
- ✓ Write in paragraphs.
- ✓ Check the question and your work again after you have finished writing.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't try to prepare an answer before the exam, for example, for the graph question. It will be obvious to the markers.
- ✗ Don't invent reasons for why changes occurred on the graph. This is unnecessary.

- ✗ 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. You should put yourself under exam conditions when trying a practice test – this means answering the two questions in the time given (including making your plans), not using a dictionary, and checking carefully at the end.
- ✗ Don't panic if other people in the exam start writing straight away. Reading the question carefully and producing a plan before you write your answer will produce a better piece of work.
- ✗ Don't mix formal and informal language.
- ✗ Don't waste time writing addresses for a letter, as they are not required.

How many written answers do I need to give?

Two. One compulsory task (Part 1) and another from a choice of three tasks (Part 2).

In what ways is Part 1 different from Part 2?

In Part 1, there is one compulsory task. You are not offered a choice of task or task type. The task is based on graphic input (for example, graphs, bar charts or pie charts). In Part 2, you can choose from more than one business-related task, with a variety of inputs.

Where do I write my answers?

In the question booklet. The 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, this will probably mean that you have left out some important information.

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

You should not worry if you run slightly over the word limit. But if you write far more than the word limit, you will lose marks, primarily because you are likely to have included irrelevant information or not made use of the appropriate concise business style.

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 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.

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.
- ✓ Remember that spelling must be correct in Part 1 (British or American spelling).
- ✓ 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 the five answers in each task should be different in Part 2.
- ✓ Concentrate on an in-depth understanding of what is said in Parts 2 and 3.
- ✓ 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, while completing Part 1, repeat or paraphrase words that are already in the question; make sure you only write the necessary words.
- ✗ Don't forget that an option in Part 3 that is true according to what is said may not, in fact, 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 (that is, not only for business).

Can I take the Listening test separately?

No, *Cambridge English: Business Higher* 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

- ✓ Make sure that you are familiar with all parts of the test and that you know what order they come in.
- ✓ Practise giving answers that are appropriate in length, especially for Part 2.
- ✓ Listen to the questions that are asked and make sure you answer them.
- ✓ If you haven't quite understood the task, ask the examiner to repeat it or explain.
- ✓ Listen carefully to your partner's presentation in Part 2, so that you can ask a suitable question.
- ✓ Listen carefully to what your partner says in Part 3, so that you can respond appropriately.
- ✓ Take the initiative in Part 3 and ask questions, say whether you (dis)agree with your partner, and ask for/give reasons during the discussion.
- ✓ Use the preparation time well in Part 2 to outline the main points you want to make, write down any useful words and organise your presentation.
- ✓ Practise brainstorming for ideas on many different topics/situations for Part 2.
- ✓ Speak clearly and to the appropriate person (the examiner or your partner).
- ✓ Think in terms of good communication and use strategies such as paraphrasing or substituting if you can't remember a word.

DON'T

- ✗ Don't prepare long responses and then learn them by heart before the exam.
- ✗ Don't try to speak more than your partner or interrupt impolitely while they are in the middle of speaking.
- ✗ Don't interrupt your partner during the 1-minute presentation.
- ✗ Don't start on a long, detailed answer to your partner's question at the end of Part 2.
- ✗ Don't worry if the examiner stops you. It means you have spoken enough, and they have to keep to the timing of the test.

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

Cambridge English: Business Certificates test English language in a business context. They are not focused on any specific industry sector, e.g. banking or computing, but you are expected to be familiar with a broad spectrum of business situations and the vocabulary appropriate to them.

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 those with minimal or even no experience of work. The second topic is more suited to work contexts, and the third is more appropriate to those 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.

For Part 3, is it best for us to decide on a specific company to use as a context and to discuss the situation around that?

If both of you come from the same company, then clearly you already share a certain knowledge that you can use as a basis for your discussion. If, however, you don't know each other, it is not a good idea to spend time trying to decide on a specific context. Furthermore, keeping an open context extends the potential for ideas and suggestions in your conversation. This is a discussion task and not a role play.

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

Examiners are trained to handle such situations and to ensure that both of you are given equal opportunities, which you should then use to show what you know. The questions after the Part 3 task enable the interlocutor to ensure both of you have equal opportunities.

What should I do if I don't understand a question?

Ask! Good communication involves requesting clarification where necessary, in an appropriate manner.

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 happens when 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 Higher*, visit our website:
www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams/business-certificates/business-higher