

The Preliminary English Test is at Level B1 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* published by the Council of Europe

PET content and overview

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test Focus
Paper 1	Reading/Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	Reading Five parts test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts. Writing Three parts test a range of writing skills.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand the meaning of written English at word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and whole text level. Assessment of candidates' ability to produce straightforward written English, ranging from producing variations on simple sentences to pieces of continuous text.
Paper 2	Listening	30 minutes (approx.)	Four parts ranging from short exchanges to longer dialogues and monologues.	Assessment of candidates' ability to understand dialogues and monologues in both informal and neutral settings on a range of everyday topics.
Paper 3	Speaking	10–12 minutes per pair of candidates	Four parts. In Part 1, candidates interact with an examiner. In Parts 2 and 4 they interact with another candidate. In Part 3, they have an extended individual long turn.	Assessment of candidates' ability to express themselves in order to carry out functions at Threshold level. To ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses. To talk freely on matters of personal interest.

Preface

This handbook is for anyone who is preparing candidates for the Cambridge ESOL Preliminary English Test (PET). The introduction gives an overview of PET and its place within Cambridge ESOL. This is followed by a focus on each paper and includes content, advice on preparation and example papers.

If you require additional CDs or further copies of this booklet, please email: ESOLinfo@CambridgeESOL.org

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Introduction to Cambridge ESOL

■ University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (Cambridge ESOL) is a part of the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which has provided examinations in English for speakers of other languages since 1913. Cambridge ESOL offers an extensive range of examinations, certificates and diplomas for learners and teachers of English. In 2006 over 2 million people took these examinations at centres in over 140 countries.

Cambridge ESOL's systems and processes for designing, developing and delivering examinations and assessment services are certified as meeting the internationally recognised ISO9001:2000 standard for quality management.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are suitable for learners of all nationalities, whatever their first language and cultural background, and there are examinations suitable for learners of almost any age. Although they are designed for native speakers of languages other than English, no language related restrictions apply. The range of Cambridge ESOL examinations includes specialist examinations in Business English and English for Academic Purposes, as well as tests for young learners and a suite of certificates and diplomas for language teachers.

The examinations cover all four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. They include a range of tasks which assess candidates' ability to use English, so that in preparing for the examinations, candidates develop the skills they need to make practical use of the language in a variety of contexts. Above all, what the Cambridge ESOL examinations assess is the ability to communicate effectively in English.

Cambridge ESOL is committed to providing examinations of the highest possible quality. This commitment is underpinned by an extensive programme of research and evaluation, and by continuous monitoring of the marking and grading of all Cambridge ESOL examinations. Of particular importance is the rigorous set of procedures which are used in the production and pretesting of question papers.

■ Key features of Cambridge ESOL examinations

Cambridge ESOL undertakes:

- to assess language skills at a range of levels, each of them having a clearly defined relevance to the needs of language learners
- to assess skills which are directly relevant to the range of uses for which learners will need the language they have learned, and which cover the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – as well as knowledge of language structure and use
- to provide accurate and consistent assessment of each language skill at the appropriate level

- to relate the examinations to the teaching curriculum in such a way that they encourage positive learning experiences and to seek to achieve a positive impact wherever possible
- to endeavour to be fair to all candidates, whatever their national, ethnic and linguistic background, gender or disability.

Cambridge ESOL examinations are designed around four essential qualities: validity, reliability, impact and practicality. Validity is normally taken to be the extent to which a test can be shown to produce scores which are an accurate reflection of the candidate's true level of language skills. Reliability concerns the extent to which test results are stable, consistent and accurate, and therefore the extent to which they can be depended on for making decisions about the candidate. Impact concerns the effects, beneficial or otherwise, which an examination has on the candidates and other users, whether these are educational, social, economic or political, or various combinations of these. Practicality can be defined as the extent to which an examination is practicable in terms of the resources needed to produce and administer it. All these factors underpin the development and production of Cambridge ESOL examinations.

Examination content and processing

■ Introduction to PET

PET was introduced in the late 1970s and tests competence in reading, writing, listening and speaking. The language level of PET is approximately two thirds of the way towards that of the First Certificate in English. PET is at Level B1 of the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). PET was most recently updated in March 2004, following an extensive review involving key clients and stakeholders.

■ Content of PET

Cambridge ESOL examinations reflect a view of language proficiency in terms of a language user's overall communicative ability; at the same time, for the purposes of practical language assessment, the notion of overall ability is subdivided into different skills and subskills. This 'skills and components' view is well established in the language research and teaching literature.

Four main skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking are recognised, and each of these is assessed in a test component of the same name. Reading and listening are multi-dimensional skills involving the interaction of the reader/listener's mental processing capacities with their language and content knowledge; further interaction takes place between the reader/listener and the external features of the text and task. Purpose and context for reading/listening

shape these interactions and this is reflected in the PET Reading and Listening components through the use of different text and task types which link to a relevant target language use context beyond the test.

Writing ability is also regarded as a linguistic, cognitive, social and cultural phenomenon that takes place in a specific context and for a particular purpose. Like Reading and Listening, PET Writing involves a series of interactions between the task and the writers, who are required to draw on different aspects of their knowledge and experience to produce a written performance for evaluation.

Like writing, speaking involves multiple competencies including vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, phonological control, knowledge of discourse, and pragmatic awareness, which are particularly distinct from their equivalents in the written language. Since speaking generally involves reciprocal oral interaction with others, Speaking in PET is assessed directly, through a face-to-face encounter between candidates and examiners.

Each of the four skills tested in PET provides a unique contribution to a profile of overall communicative language ability that defines what a candidate can do at this level.

■ The level of PET

PET is at Level B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and a description of this level is given below in terms of:

- what material learners can handle
- what learners can be expected to be able to do.

At this level a learner should be able to cope linguistically in a range of everyday situations which require a largely predictable use of language. A B1 level user will be able to use English in their own or a foreign country in contact with native and non-native speakers of English for general purposes as described below.

The type of materials a PET candidate can deal with

The text types which can be handled by the learner at this level include street signs and public notices, product packaging, forms, posters, brochures, city guides and instructions on how to do things, as well as informal letters and newspaper and magazine texts such as articles and features. The kinds of listening texts the learner needs to understand are announcements made at railway stations and airports, traffic information given on the radio, public announcements made at sporting events or pop concerts and instructions given by police or customs officials. At this level, candidates need to be able to not only pick out facts, but also to understand opinions, attitudes, moods and wishes.

What a PET candidate can do

Learners at this level, if travelling as tourists, can get all the information needed from a tourist information centre, as long as it is of a straightforward, non-specialised nature. Similarly,

if taking part in a guided tour, they can understand the main points of a commentary and ask questions in order to get more information, as long as no specialised technical language is needed. They can deal with most situations likely to arise when making travel arrangements through a travel agent or when actually travelling. In the context of work, they can state requirements within their own job area, and ask questions of a fact-finding nature. In a meeting, they can take part in a discussion which involves the exchange of factual information or receiving instructions, but they may have difficulty dealing with anything unpredictable or unfamiliar.

Where telephone calls are concerned, predictability is also important at this level, and as long as only routine matters are involved, the learner can receive and pass on messages. They can also write simple personal letters.

The ALTE ‘Can Do’ Project

The Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) has developed a framework which covers six levels of language proficiency aligned to the Council of Europe Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). (See table 1.) Research carried out by ALTE has shown what language learners can typically do at each level. Table 2 (overleaf) gives some examples at PET level of typical general ability plus ability in each of the skill areas and a range of contexts.

Table 1

Cambridge Main Suite	CEFR levels
Certificate of Proficiency in English	C2
Certificate in Advanced English	C1
First Certificate in English	B2
Preliminary English Test	B1
Key English Test	A2
	A1

■ Varieties of English

Candidates' responses to tasks in the Cambridge ESOL examinations are acceptable in varieties of English which would enable candidates to function in the widest range of international contexts. Candidates are expected to use a particular variety with some degree of consistency in areas such as spelling, and not for example switch from using a British spelling of a word to an American spelling of the same word in the same written response to a given task.

■ Recognition

PET is recognised by and used by many higher education institutions and corporations across the world. More information about recognition is available from centres, British Council offices, Cambridge ESOL offices and from www.CambridgeESOL.org

Table 2

'Can Do' summary

Typical abilities	Listening and Speaking	Reading and Writing
Overall general ability	CAN understand straightforward instructions or public announcements. CAN express simple opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area.	CAN understand routine information and articles. CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.
Social and Tourist	CAN identify the main topic of a news broadcast on TV if there is a strong visual element. CAN ask for information about accommodation and travel.	CAN understand factual articles in newspapers, routine letters from hotels and letters expressing personal opinions. CAN write letters on a limited range of predictable topics related to personal experience.
Work	CAN follow a simple presentation/demonstration. CAN offer advice to clients within own job area on simple matters.	CAN understand the general meaning of non-routine letters and theoretical articles within own work area. CAN make reasonably accurate notes at a meeting or seminar where the subject matter is familiar and predictable.
Study	CAN understand instructions on classes and assignments given by a teacher or lecturer. CAN take part in a seminar or tutorial using simple language.	CAN understand most information of a factual nature in his/her study area. CAN take basic notes in a lecture.

■ Official accreditation in the UK

PET has been accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum authority (QCA), the statutory regulatory authority for external qualifications in England, and its counterparts in Wales and Northern Ireland at Cambridge ESOL Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3).

■ The PET candidature

Information is collected about PET candidates at each session, when candidates fill in a Candidate Information Sheet. The candidates for PET come from a wide range of backgrounds and take the examination for a number of different reasons. The following points summarise the characteristics of the current PET candidature.

Nationality

PET is taken by candidates throughout the world in about 100 countries, with the majority of candidates coming from European and South American countries.

Age and gender

The majority of PET candidates are aged between 12 and 18, though over 25% of candidates are aged 19 or over. About 54% of candidates are female.

Education

Most candidates are studying full time in secondary schools or at college or university.

Exam preparation

A large proportion of candidates (about 88%) undertake a preparatory course before taking the examination.

Reasons for taking PET

Candidates' reasons for taking PET are as follows:

- for career purposes (36%)
- for further study (26%)
- out of personal interest (16%)
- for university recognition (13%)
- other (9%).

■ What sort of test is PET?

In real life, language is used in context, and the forms of language vary according to that context. The assessment aims of PET and its syllabus are designed to ensure that the test reflects the use of language in real life. The question types and formats have been devised with the purpose of fulfilling these aims. PET corresponds closely to an active and communicative approach to learning English, without neglecting the need for clarity and accuracy.

■ Marks and results

The final mark a candidate receives in PET is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (Reading and Writing, Listening, and Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers. Each skill: Reading, Writing,

Listening and Speaking carries equal weighting, providing 25% of the total marks each.

Results are reported as two passing grades (Pass with Merit and Pass) and two failing grades (Narrow Fail and Fail) and are set according to the following information:

- statistics on candidature
- statistics on the overall performance
- statistics on individual items, for those parts of the examination for which this is appropriate (Reading and Listening)
- advice, based on the performance of candidates and recommendations of examiners, where this is relevant (Writing and Speaking)
- comparison with statistics from previous years' examination performance and candidature.

Candidates are issued with statements of results approximately 5–6* weeks after the examination has been taken.

These include the grade awarded and a graphical display of the candidate's performance in each paper (shown against the scale Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak).

'Pass' ordinarily corresponds to about 70% of the total marks. 'Pass with Merit' ordinarily corresponds to approximately 85% of the total. A 'Narrow Fail' grade means that the candidate is within 5% of the 'Pass' level.

Certificates are issued to candidates gaining a passing grade (Pass with Merit or Pass) approximately one month after the issue of statements of results.

Certificates are not issued to candidates awarded the failing grades Narrow Fail or Fail.

■ Special circumstances

Special circumstances covers three main areas: special arrangements, special consideration and malpractice.

- **Special arrangements:**

These are available for candidates with a permanent or long-term disability, such as a visual or hearing difficulty, or a temporary difficulty such as a broken hand, or ear infection affecting a candidate's ability to hear clearly. Special arrangements may include extra time, separate accommodation or equipment, Braille transcription, etc. Consult the Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary in your area for more details as soon as possible.

- **Special consideration:**

Cambridge ESOL will give special consideration to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Special consideration can be given where an application is sent through the centre and is made within 10 working days of the examination date. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving special

consideration are in cases of illness or other unexpected events.

- **Malpractice:**

Cambridge ESOL will consider cases where candidates are suspected of copying, collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of regulations. Centres are notified if a candidate's results have been investigated.

PET support

■ Course materials

A list of UK publishers which produce coursebooks and practice materials related to the examinations is available from Cambridge ESOL and is on the Cambridge ESOL website. PET requires an all-round language ability and this should be borne in mind when selecting course materials. Most coursebooks will be supplemented; care should be taken to ensure that coursebooks and practice materials selected accurately reflect the content and format of the examination. N.B. Cambridge ESOL does not undertake to advise on textbooks or courses of study.

■ Past papers and examination reports

Cambridge ESOL produces past examination papers, which can be used for practice, and examination reports, which provide a general view of how candidates performed overall and on each paper and offer guidance on the preparation of candidates. Details of how to order past papers and examination reports, and how to download an order form, are available from www.CambridgeESOL.org/support

The sample question papers included in this handbook have been produced to reflect the format of the examination. However, candidates are strongly advised not to concentrate unduly on working through practice tests and examinations as this will not by itself make them more proficient in the different skills.

■ Online support

Cambridge ESOL provides an online resource for teachers, designed to help them understand the examinations better and to prepare candidates more effectively.

The Teaching Resources website can be found at www.CambridgeESOL.org/teach

■ Seminars for teachers

Cambridge ESOL offers a wide range of seminars designed for teachers concerned with the examinations; some are also suitable as introductions for administrators, school directors etc. Some seminars are intended to provide information and support for teachers who are familiar with the examinations,

*Results for computer-based tests are released in 3–4 weeks.

and others can be used to introduce teachers to established examinations and also to new or revised examinations. Contact Cambridge ESOL for further details.

■ Administrative information

The PET examination is available six times a year in March, May, June (twice), November and December.

A computer-based version of PET (CB PET), is also available via the Cambridge Connect internet delivery system. The tasks in each component of CB PET follow the same format as in the paper-based version of PET. The Reading and Writing, and Listening components are taken on computer, but the Speaking test is still administered in the same way as for paper-based PET. CB PET was introduced to allow centres greater flexibility with test dates. CB PET is available on several dates throughout the year. Please contact your local Cambridge ESOL centre for more information.

Candidates must enter through a recognised centre.

■ Further information

Copies of Regulations and details of entry procedure, current fees and further information about this and other Cambridge examinations can be obtained from the Cambridge ESOL Local Secretary in your area, or from the address on the back cover of this handbook. In some areas this information can also be obtained from the British Council.

The aims and objectives of PET

Candidates who are successful in PET should be able to communicate satisfactorily in most everyday situations with both native and non-native speakers of English. The following information provides an outline of the four skills covered in PET and a list of the language specifications that the PET examination is based on.

■ Reading

Using the structures and topics listed in this handbook, candidates should be able to understand public notices and signs; read short texts of a factual nature and show understanding of the content; demonstrate understanding of the structure of the language as it is used to express notions of relative time, space, possession, etc.; scan factual material for information in order to perform relevant tasks, disregarding redundant or irrelevant material; read texts of an imaginative or emotional character and appreciate the central sense of the text, the attitude of the writer to the material and the effect it is intended to have on the reader.

■ Writing

Candidates should be able to give information, report events, and describe people, objects and places as well as convey reactions to situations, express hopes, regrets, pleasure, etc.

They should also be able to use the words they know appropriately and accurately in different written contexts, and be capable of producing variations on simple sentences.

■ Listening

Candidates should be able to understand and respond to public announcements; to show precise understanding of short factual utterances and to make identifications on the basis of these; to extract information of a factual nature (times, dates, etc.) from speech which will contain redundancies and language outside the defined limits of PET; to understand the sense of a dialogue and show appreciation of the attitudes and intentions of the speakers.

■ Speaking

Candidates should be able to express themselves in order to fulfil the functions listed in the Syllabus in situations which simulate authentic communication. They should be able to ask and to understand questions and make appropriate responses, and should be able to talk freely in order to express emotions, reactions, etc.

Language specifications

■ Inventory of functions, notions and communicative tasks

Note that 'talking' is used below to refer to BOTH speaking and writing.

greeting people and responding to greetings (in person and on the phone)

introducing oneself and other people

asking for and giving personal details: (full) name, age, address, names of relatives and friends, occupation, etc.

understanding and completing forms giving personal details

understanding and writing letters, giving personal details

describing education, qualifications and skills

describing people (personal appearance, qualities)

asking and answering questions about personal possessions

asking for repetition and clarification

re-stating what has been said

checking on meaning and intention

helping others to express their ideas

interrupting a conversation

starting a new topic

changing the topic

resuming or continuing the topic

asking for and giving the spelling and meaning of words

counting and using numbers

asking and telling people the time, day and/or date

asking for and giving information about routines and habits

understanding and writing diaries and letters giving information about everyday activities

talking about what people are doing at the moment

talking about past events and states in the past, recent activities and completed actions
understanding and producing simple narratives
reporting what people say
talking about future or imaginary situations
talking about future plans or intentions
making predictions
identifying and describing accommodation (houses, flats, rooms, furniture, etc.)
buying and selling things (costs, measurements and amounts)
talking about food and ordering meals
talking about the weather
talking about one's health
following and giving simple instructions
understanding simple signs and notices
asking the way and giving directions
asking for and giving travel information
asking for and giving simple information about places
identifying and describing simple objects (shape, size, weight, colour, purpose or use, etc.)
making comparisons and expressing degrees of difference
talking about how to operate things
describing simple processes
expressing purpose, cause and result, and giving reasons
drawing simple conclusions and making recommendations
making and granting/refusing simple requests
making and responding to offers and suggestions
expressing and responding to thanks
giving and responding to invitations
giving advice
giving warnings and prohibitions
persuading and asking/telling people to do something
expressing obligation and lack of obligation
asking and giving/refusing permission to do something
making and responding to apologies and excuses
expressing agreement and disagreement, and contradicting people
paying compliments
criticising and complaining
sympathising
expressing preferences, likes and dislikes (especially about hobbies and leisure activities)
talking about physical and emotional feelings
expressing opinions and making choices
expressing needs and wants
expressing (in)ability in the present and in the past
talking about (im)probability and (im)possibility
expressing degrees of certainty and doubt

would (polite requests)
will (offer)
shall (suggestion; offer)
should (advice)
may (possibility)
might (possibility)
have (got) to (obligation)
ought to (obligation)
must (obligation)
mustn't (prohibition)
need (necessity)
needn't (lack of necessity)
used to + infinitive (past habits)

Tenses

Present simple: states, habits, systems and processes (and verbs not used in the continuous form)
Present continuous: future plans and activities, present actions
Present perfect simple: recent past with just, indefinite past with yet, already, never, ever; unfinished past with for and since
Past simple: past events
Past continuous: parallel past actions, continuous actions interrupted by the past simple tense
Past perfect simple: narrative, reported speech
Future with going to
Future with present continuous and present simple
Future with will and shall: offers, promises, predictions, etc.

Verb forms

Affirmative, interrogative, negative
Imperatives
Infinitives (with and without to) after verbs and adjectives
Gerunds (-ing form) after verbs and prepositions
Gerunds as subjects and objects
Passive forms: present and past simple
Verb + object + infinitive give/take/send/bring/show + direct/indirect object
Causative have/get
So/nor with auxiliaries

Compound verb patterns

Phrasal verbs/verbs with prepositions

Conditional sentences

Type 0: An iron bar expands if/when you heat it.
Type 1: If you do that again, I'll leave.
Type 2: I would tell you the answer if I knew it.
If I were you, I wouldn't do that again.

Simple reported speech

Statements, questions and commands: say, ask, tell
He said that he felt ill.

■ Inventory of grammatical areas

Verbs

Regular and irregular forms

Modals

can (ability; requests; permission)
could (ability; possibility; polite requests)

I asked her if I could leave.
No one told me what to do.
Indirect and embedded questions: know, wonder
Do you know what he said?
I wondered what he would do next.

Interrogatives

What, What (+ noun)
Where; When
Who; Whose; Which
How; How much; How many; How often; How long; etc.
Why
(including the interrogative forms of all tenses and modals listed)

Nouns

Singular and plural (regular and irregular forms)
Countable and uncountable nouns with some and any
Abstract nouns
Compound nouns
Complex noun phrases
Genitive: 's & s'
Double genitive: a friend of theirs

Pronouns

Personal (subject, object, possessive)
Reflexive and emphatic: myself, etc.
Impersonal: it, there
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those
Quantitative: one, something, everybody, etc.
Indefinite: some, any, something, one, etc.
Relative: who, which, that, whom, whose

Determiners

a + countable nouns
the + countable/uncountable nouns

Adjectives

Colour, size, shape, quality, nationality
Predicative and attributive
Cardinal and ordinal numbers
Possessive: my, your, his, her, etc.
Demonstrative: this, that, these, those
Quantitative: some, any, many, much, a few, a lot of, all, other, every, etc.
Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular):
(not) as ... as, not ... enough to, too ... to
Order of adjectives
Participles as adjectives
Compound adjectives

Adverbs

Regular and irregular forms
Manner: quickly, carefully, etc.
Frequency: often, never, twice a day, etc.

Definite time: now, last week, etc.
Indefinite time: already, just, yet, etc.
Degree: very, too, rather, etc.
Place: here, there, etc.
Direction: left, right, along, etc.
Sequence: first, next, etc.
Sentence adverbs: too, either, etc.
Pre-verbal, post-verbal and end-position adverbs
Comparative and superlative forms (regular and irregular)

Prepositions

Location: to, on, inside, next to, at (home), etc.
Time: at, on, in, during, etc.
Direction: to, into, out of, from, etc.
Instrument: by, with
Miscellaneous: like, as, due to, owing to, etc.
Prepositional phrases: at the beginning of, by means of, etc.
Prepositions preceding nouns and adjectives: by car, for sale, at last, etc.
Prepositions following (i) nouns and adjectives: advice on, afraid of, etc. (ii) verbs: laugh at, ask for, etc.

Connectives

and, but, or, either ... or
when, while, until, before, after, as soon as
where
because, since, as, for
so that, (in order) to
so, so ... that, such ... that
if, unless
although, while, whereas

Note that students will meet forms other than those listed above in PET, on which they will not be directly tested.

■ Topics

Clothes	Personal identification
Daily life	Places and buildings
Education	Relations with other people
Entertainment and media	Services
Environment	Shopping
Food and drink	Social interaction
Free time	Sport
Health, medicine and exercise	The natural world
Hobbies and leisure	Transport
House and home	Travel and holidays
Language	Weather
People	Work and jobs
Personal feelings, opinions and experiences	

■ Lexis

The PET examination includes items which normally occur in the everyday vocabulary of native speakers using English today.

Candidates should know the lexis appropriate to their personal requirements, for example, nationalities, hobbies, likes and dislikes.

Note that the consistent use of American pronunciation, spelling and lexis is acceptable in PET.

A word list of vocabulary that could appear in the PET examination is available from the Cambridge ESOL website:
www.CambridgeESOL.org/teach

The list does not provide an exhaustive list of all the words which appear in PET question papers and candidates should not confine their study of vocabulary to the list alone.

PAPER 1 READING AND WRITING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The Reading component contains five parts. The Writing component contains three parts.
Timing	1 hour 30 minutes.
No. of questions	Reading has 35 questions; Writing has seven questions.
Task types	Matching, multiple choice, true/false, transformational sentences, guided writing and extended writing.
Sources	Authentic and adapted-authentic real world notices; newspapers and magazines; simplified encyclopedias; brochures and leaflets; websites.
Answering	Candidates indicate answers by shading lozenges (Reading), or writing answers (Writing) on an answer sheet. In computer-based PET, candidates mark or type their answers directly onto the computer. There are no examples in computer-based PET, but candidates are shown a short tutorial before the test.
Marks	Reading: Each of the 35 questions carries one mark. This is weighted so that this comprises 25% of total marks for the whole examination. Writing: Questions 1–5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of 5; and question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25 which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS – READING

PART 1

Task type and format	Three-option multiple choice. Five very short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, emails, labels etc.
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Task focus	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.
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No. of Qs	5.
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PART 2

Task type and format	Matching. Five items in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.
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Task focus	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.
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No. of Qs	5.
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PART 3

Task type and format	True/False. Ten items with an adapted-authentic long text.
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Task focus	Processing a factual text. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.
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No. of Qs	10.
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PART 4

Task type and format	Four-option multiple choice. Five items with an adapted-authentic long text.
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Task focus	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.
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No. of Qs	5.
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PART 5

Task type and format	Four-option multiple-choice cloze. Ten items, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.
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Task focus	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexico-structural patterns in the text.
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No. of Qs	10.
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Preparation

Paper 1 lasts 1 hour 30 minutes and contains two components, Reading and Writing.

READING

General

- The Reading component consists of 35 questions, with five separate reading tasks in all, Parts 1–5. Together, these parts are designed to test a broad range of reading skills. Texts are drawn wherever possible from the real world and are adapted as necessary to the level of the PET examination. To this end, item writers work with a grammatical syllabus and a vocabulary list, which is updated annually to reflect common usage.
- The topics of the texts fall within the list of topics given on page 8. Every effort is made to ensure that all texts used in PET are accessible worldwide and of interest to different age groups. Each exam task is pretested on large numbers of students before going live, to monitor its suitability and level.
- To prepare for the Reading component, students should be exposed to a variety of authentic texts, drawn from newspapers and magazines, non-fiction books, and other sources of factual material, such as leaflets, brochures and websites. It is also recommended that students practise reading (and writing) short communicative messages, including notes, cards and emails.
- As the Reading component places some emphasis on skimming and scanning skills, it is important for students to be given practice in these skills, working with texts of different lengths. It should be stressed to students that they do not need to process every word of the text: they may read an article on history purely to find particular dates or a brochure to check on different locations.
- It is essential that students familiarise themselves with the instructions on the front page of the question paper and read the individual instructions for each part very carefully. Where an example is given, it is advisable to study it before embarking on the task. Students should also know how to mark their answers on the separate answer sheet, so that in the examination they can do this quickly and accurately. No extra time is allowed for the transfer of answers on Paper 1 and students may prefer to transfer their answers at the end of each part.
- When doing final preparation for the examination, it is helpful to discuss timing with students and to get them to consider how to divide up the time between the various parts of the paper. Broadly speaking, it is envisaged that candidates will spend approximately 50 minutes on the Reading component and 40 minutes on the Writing component.

By part

■ PART 1

■ Part 1 tests the candidate's understanding of various kinds of short texts: authentic notices and signs, packaging information (for example, instructions on a food package or a label on a medicine bottle), and communicative messages (notes, emails, cards and postcards). Accompanying the text is one multiple-choice question with three options, A, B and C.

■ When candidates attempt a question in this part, they should first read the text carefully and think about the situation in which it would appear. A text is often accompanied by visual information as to its context, for example showing its location, and this may also help candidates to guess the purpose of the text. After thinking about the general meaning in this way, candidates should read all three options and compare each one with the text before choosing their answer. As a final check, candidates should re-read both the text and their choice of answer, to decide whether the chosen option is really 'what the text says'.

■ PART 2

■ Part 2 tests the candidate's detailed comprehension of factual material. Candidates are presented with five short descriptions of people and have to match this content to five of eight short texts on a particular topic. The topic is usually to do with goods and services of some kind, for example purchasing books, visiting museums, staying in hotels or choosing holidays. Candidates should begin Part 2 by reading through the five descriptions of the people. They should then read through all eight texts carefully, underlining any matches within them. In order to choose the correct text, candidates will need to check that all the requirements given in the description are met by it. Candidates should be warned against 'wordspotting' – that is, they should avoid making quick matches at word level and instead read each text carefully, thinking about alternative ways of saying the same thing, i.e. paraphrasing.

■ PART 3

■ Part 3 tests the ability to work with a longer, factual text, looking for precise information. The information to be found is usually practical in nature, resembling the type of task with which people are often confronted in real life. Frequently, these texts take the form of brochure extracts, advertisements in magazines and website information.

■ There are 10 questions, which are single-sentence statements about the text. The task is made more authentic by putting these questions before the text, in order to encourage candidates to read them first and then scan the text to find each answer. The information given in the text follows the same order as the content of the questions.

n In this part, candidates may well meet some unfamiliar vocabulary. However, they will not be required to understand

such vocabulary in order to answer a question correctly. When they meet an unfamiliar word or phrase, therefore, they should not be put off, and should concentrate on obtaining the specific information required from the text.

■ PART 4

■ Part 4 presents candidates with a text which goes beyond the provision of factual information, and expresses an opinion or attitude. There are five multiple-choice questions with four options, A, B, C and D. In answering these questions, candidates will demonstrate whether they have understood the writer's purpose, the writer's attitude or opinion, or an opinion quoted by the writer, and both the detailed and global meaning of the text.

■ This part requires candidates to read the text very carefully. After a first fairly quick reading, to find out the topic and general meaning of the text, candidates should think about the writer's purpose and the meaning of the text as a whole. Having established this, candidates should read the text once again, this time much more carefully. After this second reading of the text, candidates should deal with the questions one by one, checking their choice of answer each time with the text. It may be more practical for candidates to consider the first and last questions together, in that the first focuses on writer purpose and the last on global meaning. The other three questions follow the order of information given in the text and one of the three will focus on attitude or opinion.

■ PART 5

■ In Part 5, candidates read a short text containing 10 numbered spaces and an example. There is a 4-option multiple-choice question for each numbered space, given after the text. The spaces are designed to test mainly vocabulary, but also grammatical points such as pronouns, modal verbs, connectives and prepositions.

■ Before attempting to answer the 10 questions, candidates should read through the whole text to establish its topic and general meaning. After this, they should go back to the beginning of the text and consider the example. Then they should work through the 10 questions, trying to select the correct word to fit in each space. It may often be necessary to read a complete sentence before settling on their choice of answer. Once candidates have decided on an answer, they should check that the remaining three options do not fit in the space. Having completed all 10 questions, candidates should read the whole text again with their answers, to check that it makes sense.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS – WRITING

PART 1

Task type and format	Sentence transformations. Five items that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences using a different structural pattern so that the sentence still has the same meaning. Candidates should use no more than three words.
Task focus	Control and understanding of Threshold/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.
No. of Qs	5.

PART 2

Task type and format	Short communicative message. Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, email etc. The prompt takes the form of a rubric or short input text to respond to.
Task focus	A short piece of writing of 35–45 words focusing on communication of three specific content points.
No. of Qs	1.

PART 3

Task type and format	A longer piece of continuous writing. Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story. Candidates are primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.
Task focus	Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.
No. of Qs	1.

Preparation

WRITING

General

■ It is important that candidates leave themselves enough time to answer all three parts of the Writing component as this carries the same weighting as the Reading component i.e. 25% of the total exam. It is also important that candidates realise that Writing Part 3 carries 15 marks out of the total of

25. It is suggested that candidates spend at least 40 minutes on the Writing component.

■ Parts 2 and 3 of the Writing component focus on extended writing and candidates need to think carefully about who the target reader is for each task and try to write in an appropriate style and tone.

■ It is important to write clearly so that the answers are easy to read. However, it is not important if candidates write in upper or lower case, or if their writing is joined up or not.

By part

■ PART 1

■ Part 1 focuses on grammatical precision and requires candidates to complete five sentences, all sharing a common theme or topic. There is an example, showing exactly what the task involves. For each question, candidates are given a complete sentence, together with a ‘gapped’ sentence below it. Candidates should write between one and three words to fill this gap. The second sentence, when complete, must mean the same as the first sentence. Both sentences are written within the range of grammar and structures listed on pages 6–9. There may be more than one correct answer in some cases.

■ As stated above, it is essential for candidates to spell correctly and no marks will be given if a word is misspelled. Candidates will also lose the mark if they produce an answer of more than three words, even if their writing includes the correct answer.

■ PART 2

■ Candidates are asked to produce a short communicative message of between 35 and 45 words in length. They are told who they are writing to and why, and must include three content points, which are laid out with bullets in the question. To gain top marks, all three points must be present in the candidate’s answer, so it is important that candidates read the question carefully and plan what they will include. Their answer should relate to the context provided in the question. Candidates are also assessed on the clarity of the message they produce; minor, non-impeding errors are not penalised.

■ Candidates will need practice in writing to the word length required. They will lose marks if their answers fall outside the limits: a short answer is likely to be missing at least one content point, an overlong one will lack clarity, by containing superfluous information. Practice should be given in class, with students comparing answers with each other and redrafting what they have written as a result. The General Mark Scheme below is used in conjunction with a Task Specific Mark Scheme (overleaf).

■ PART 3

■ Part 3 offers candidates a choice of task: either a story or an informal letter may be written. Both tasks require an answer of about 100 words. For answers that are below length (fewer

General Mark Scheme for Writing Part 2

5 All content elements covered appropriately.
Message clearly communicated to reader.

4 All content elements adequately dealt with.
Message communicated successfully, on the whole.

3 All content elements attempted.
Message requires some effort by the reader.
or
One content element omitted but others clearly communicated.

2 Two content elements omitted, or unsuccessfully dealt with.
Message only partly communicated to reader.
or
Script may be slightly short (20–25 words)

1 Little relevant content and/or message requires excessive effort by the reader, or short (10–19 words).

0 Totally irrelevant or totally incomprehensible or too short (under 10 words).

than 80 words), the examiner adjusts the maximum mark and the mark given proportionately. Longer answers are not automatically penalised, but may contain some irrelevant material. Candidates should be advised to keep to the task set, rather than include ‘pre-learned’ text, which may well not fit as part of their answer. Answers that do not fulfil the task will not receive top marks.

■ Candidates should be encouraged to choose the task which best suits their interests. They should consider the context e.g. topic, as well as the range of language, e.g. lexis, that a good answer would require.

■ For the story, candidates are given either a short title or the first sentence. The answer must be recognisably linked in content to the question and candidates should pay particular attention to any names or pronouns given in the title or sentence. If, for example, the sentence is written in the third person, the candidate will need to construct his or her story accordingly.

■ To gain practice and confidence in story-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write short pieces for homework on a regular basis. They will also benefit from reading simplified readers in English, which will give them ideas for how to develop and end a story.

■ For the informal letter, candidates are given an extract of a letter from a friend of theirs, which provides the topic they must write about: for example, a couple of questions may be included, to focus their ideas. Candidates must keep to the topic or they will lose marks.

■ To practise their letter-writing, candidates should be encouraged to write to penfriends or ‘e-pals’ on a regular basis. In addition, they should have opportunities in class to think about the language and organisation of such a letter, with examples of appropriate opening and closing formulae

provided, as well as useful phrases of greeting and leave-taking.

■ As already stressed, it is important for candidates to show ambition. They could gain top marks by including a range of tenses, appropriate expressions and different vocabulary, even if their answer is not flawless. Non-impeding errors, whether in spelling, grammar or punctuation, will not necessarily affect a candidate's mark, whereas errors which interfere with communication or cause a breakdown in communication are treated more seriously.

■ In order to help teachers to assess the standards required, there are several sample answers to the Writing Part 3 questions on pages 22–23 and 31–32, with marks and examiner comments. Marks for Part 3 are given according to the Mark Scheme opposite. Bands 1 to 5 are subdivided into three further points, giving a total of 15 available marks. Examiners work with a more detailed version, which is subject to updating.

BAND 5 The candidate's writing fully achieves the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language will be confident and ambitious for the level, including a wide range of structures and vocabulary within the task set. Coherence, within the constraints of the level, will be achieved by the use of simple linking devices, and the response will be well organised. Errors which do occur will be minor and non-impeding, perhaps due to ambitious attempts at more complex language. Overall, no effort will be required of the reader.

BAND 4 The candidate's writing will achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language will be fairly ambitious for the level, including a range of structures and vocabulary within the task set. There will be some linking of sentences and evidence of organisation. Some errors will occur, although these will be generally non-impeding. Overall, only a little effort will be required of the reader.

BAND 3 The candidate's writing may struggle at times to achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language, including the range of structure and vocabulary, will be unambitious, or, if ambitious, it will be flawed. There will be some attempt at organisation but the linking of sentences will not always be maintained. A number of errors may be present, although these will be mostly non-impeding. Overall, some effort will be required of the reader.

BAND 2 The candidate's writing struggles to achieve the desired effect on the target reader. The use of language, including the range of structure and vocabulary, will tend to be simplistic, limited, or repetitive. The response may be incoherent, and include erratic use of punctuation. There will be numerous errors which will sometimes impede communication. Overall, considerable effort will be required of the reader.

BAND 1 The candidate's writing has a negative effect on the target reader. The use of language will be severely restricted, and there will be no evidence of a range of structures and vocabulary. The response will be seriously incoherent, and may include an absence of punctuation. Language will be very poorly controlled and the response will be difficult to understand. Overall, excessive effort will be required of the reader.

BAND 0 There may be too little language for assessment, or the response may be totally illegible; the content may be impossible to understand, or completely irrelevant to the task.

PAPER **2** LISTENING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper contains four parts.
Timing	About 30 minutes, plus 6 minutes to transfer answers.
No. of questions	25.
Task types	Multiple choice, gap-fill, true/false.
Text types	All texts are based on authentic situations.
Answering	Candidates indicate answers either by shading lozenges (Parts 1, 2 and 4) or writing answers (Part 3) on an answer sheet. Candidates record their answers on the question paper as they listen. They are then given 6 minutes at the end of the test to copy these on to the answer sheet. In computer-based PET, candidates mark or type their answers directly onto the computer. There are no examples in computer-based PET, but candidates are shown a short tutorial before the test.
Recording information	Each text is heard twice. Recordings will contain a variety of accents corresponding to standard variants of native speaker accents.
Marking	Each item carries one mark. This gives a total of 25 marks, which represents 25% of total marks for the whole examination.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and format	Multiple choice (discrete). Short neutral or informal monologues or dialogues. Seven discrete 3-option multiple-choice items with visuals.
Task focus	Listening to identify key information from short exchanges.
No. of Qs	7.

PART 2

Task type and format	Multiple choice. Longer monologue or interview (with one main speaker). Six 3-option multiple-choice items.
Task focus	Listening to identify specific information and detailed meaning.
No. of Qs	6.

PART 3

Task type and format	Gap-fill. Longer monologue. Six gaps to fill in. Candidates need to write one or more words in each space.
Task focus	Listening to identify, understand and interpret information.
No. of Qs	6.

PART 4

Task type and format	True/false. Longer informal dialogue. Candidates need to decide whether six statements are correct or incorrect.
Task focus	Listening for detailed meaning, and to identify the attitudes and opinions of the speakers.
No. of Qs	6.

Preparation

General

- The Listening paper consists of four parts and a total of 10 listening texts. The paper has a standard structure and format so that candidates will know what to expect in each part. The range of texts and task types reflects the variety of listening situations which candidates at this level can be expected to deal with.
- The instructions for each task are heard on the recording, as well as being written on the page. In the case of Part 1, there is also an example text and task to show candidates how their answers should be recorded. In parts 2, 3 and 4, the instructions are followed by a pause, during which the candidates should read the questions in that part. Candidates should use this time to think about the context and the questions, as this will help them to understand the listening text when they hear it. This reflects what happens in real-life listening situations when we bring knowledge of context, speaker, etc. to what we hear.
- Classroom activities which help students to identify and understand the type of text they are listening to, and the purpose of the task they are asked to do, will help them to adopt the most appropriate listening strategies. This, in turn, will help them approach the tasks with confidence.
- The best preparation for the Listening paper is exposure to, and engagement with, authentic spoken English at an appropriate level of difficulty. Classroom discussion activities provide a good authentic source of listening practice, as does listening to the teacher, but this should be supplemented with recorded listening texts, drawn from a range of contexts, that give practice in understanding different voices and styles of delivery.
- Candidates should be familiar with the format of the paper and the task types. It is, therefore, valuable to work through a sample paper before the examination takes place. This also gives students some practice in completing the answer sheets.

By part

■ PART 1

- The first part of the test comprises seven short listening texts, each accompanied by a question and three visual images. Candidates listen to the text and then choose the visual image which best answers the question in the context of what they have heard. Candidates indicate the correct answer by ticking the box beneath the appropriate visual. There is also a text and question as an example.
- Part 1 texts, which may be monologues or dialogues, are short extracts taken from daily life. They may include, for example, conversations at home or between friends, radio announcements, parts of talks, exchanges in shops, etc. The task requires candidates to listen for specific information in the text which will answer the question. Each text is repeated

on the recording. Candidates should be encouraged to listen for gist initially, choosing the best option as they do so. They should then check carefully on the second listening to ensure that their answer is correct. Candidates will need to understand the key information in the text in order to arrive at the correct answer.

■ PART 2

- In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which may be either a monologue, or an interview with questions from a radio presenter. Texts are taken from a range of contexts, and will be largely informational in focus. Some may be informational monologues, such as radio announcements and recorded messages, providing information about places and events, whilst others may be extracts from talks or radio programmes, in which people are talking about their lives, interests or experiences. The text is heard twice.
- Candidates have to answer six multiple-choice questions as they listen to the text, choosing the correct answer from a choice of three options. Most questions require candidates to locate and understand specific information from the text, although occasionally a question may focus on a very clearly stated attitude or opinion. To arrive at the correct answer, candidates will need to understand the detailed meaning of the text. They should therefore listen for gist initially, choosing the best option for each question as they do so. They should then check carefully that their answers are correct as they listen for the second time.

■ PART 3

- In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which will take the form of an informational monologue. Texts are taken from a range of contexts, and may be radio announcements and recorded messages, providing information about places and events, or they may be extracts from talks or radio programmes, in which people are talking about courses, trips or holiday activities. The text is heard twice.
- Candidates are presented with a page of notes summarising the content of the text, from which six pieces of information have been removed. As they listen, candidates fill in the numbered gaps on the page with words from the text which complete the missing information.
- Most keys are single words, numbers or very short noun phrases and candidates should be discouraged from attempting longer answers. Recognisable spelling is accepted, except with very high frequency words, e.g. 'Monday', or where spelling is dictated. Only concrete pieces of information are tested, so that candidates are not being tested on their ability to manipulate grammatical structures, nor are they expected to interpret or reproduce language in elliptical note form. In all cases, the words that candidates need to write will be heard on the recording in the form that they need to be written.

■ Candidates should be encouraged to use the information on the page to guide them through the text as they listen. Having listened to the rubric, candidates should read through the written information in the pause before the text is played. This should enable them to make predictions about the sort of language and information they are going to hear, which will help them to feel prepared for the answers when they come.

■ The task requires candidates to locate and record specific information from the text, whilst ignoring other parts of the text that include redundant information.

■ PART 4

■ In this part of the test candidates listen to a longer text which will take the form of an informal dialogue, usually between two people of similar age and status. There is generally one male and one female speaker to aid identification and the conversation typically focuses on everyday concerns that affect the speakers. The conversation is informal in nature and generally involves speakers discussing their attitudes and opinions on a given topic, as they agree and disagree on certain points.

■ As candidates listen to the text they look at a series of six statements which report the attitudes and opinions of the speakers. Candidates must decide whether these statements are true or false in the context of what they hear, and tick the appropriate box. The text is heard twice.

■ The task calls for an understanding of the gist of a conversation containing less formal language and the correct identification of attitudes, opinions and agreement. Candidates will need to locate and understand detailed meaning in order to make the correct choice for each question. They should therefore listen for gist initially, choosing the best option for each question as they do so. They should then check carefully that their answers are correct as they listen for the second time.

PAPER 3

SPEAKING

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Paper format	The paper contains four parts.
Timing	10–12 minutes per pair of candidates.
Interaction pattern	The standard format is two candidates and two examiners. One examiner acts as both assessor and interlocutor and manages the interaction by asking questions and setting up the tasks. The other acts as assessor and does not join in the conversation.
Task types	Short exchanges with the interlocutor; a collaborative task involving both candidates; a 1-minute long turn and a follow up discussion.
Marks	Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test. There are a total of 25 marks for Paper 3, making 25% of the total score for the whole examination.

STRUCTURE AND TASKS

PART 1

Task type and format	Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor. The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.
Focus	Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.
Timing	2–3 minutes.

PART 2

Task type and format	Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other. Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.
Focus	Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.
Timing	2–3 minutes.

PART 3

Task type and format	Extended turn. A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for approximately a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.
Focus	Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.
Timing	3 minutes.

PART 4

Task type and format	General conversation. Candidates interact with each other. The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.
Focus	The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits, etc.
Timing	3 minutes.

Preparation

General

■ In the PET Speaking test, candidates are examined in pairs by two examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction. Examiners change roles during the course of an examining session, but not during the examining of one pair. There are a number of different ‘packs’ of material that examiners can use.

■ The test takes between 10 and 12 minutes and consists of four parts which are designed to elicit a wide range of speaking skills from the candidates. Where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the final Speaking test will be a group of three rather than a pair. The group of three test is not an option for all candidates, but is only used for the last test in a session, where necessary.

By part

■ PART 1

■ The test begins with a general conversation led by the interlocutor, who asks the candidates questions about their personal details, daily routines, likes and dislikes, etc. Candidates are addressed in turn and are not expected to talk to each other at this stage. At the beginning of the test, candidates are asked to spell all or part of their name.

■ The purpose of this conversation is to test the language of simple social interaction, and to enable each candidate to make an initial contribution to the test, using simple everyday language. As they are talking about themselves using familiar language, this conversation should help to settle the candidates, enabling them to overcome any initial nervousness.

■ Although the interlocutor’s questions are designed to elicit short rather than extended responses, candidates should be discouraged from giving 1-word answers in this part. Especially when asked about their daily routines or their likes and dislikes, candidates should be encouraged to extend their answers with reasons and examples.

■ This part of the test assesses the candidates’ ability to take part in spontaneous communication in an everyday setting. Candidates who find opportunities to socialise with others in an English-speaking environment will be well prepared for this part of the test. Where this is not possible, however, such situations need to be recreated in the classroom through structured speaking tasks that practise appropriate language in a similar context. Candidates should be discouraged, however, from preparing rehearsed speeches as these will sound unnatural and will probably fail to answer the specific questions asked.

■ PART 2

■ This part of the test takes the form of a simulated situation where the candidates are asked, for example, to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement with their partner. It is not a role-play activity, however, as candidates will always be giving their own views and opinions about an imaginary situation, rather than assuming an unfamiliar role.

■ In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, repeating the instructions whilst candidates look at the prompt material. The interlocutor then takes no further part in the interaction. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other.

■ A sheet of visual prompts is given to the candidates which is designed to generate ideas and provide the basis for the discussion. Candidates may, however, introduce their own ideas if they wish. Candidates are assessed on their ability to take part in the task, rather than on the outcome of their discussions, and so it is not necessary for them to complete the task in the time given. Candidates are assessed on their use of appropriate language and interactive strategies, not on their ideas.

■ All classroom discussions in pairs and groups will provide preparation for this part of the test. Candidates should be encouraged to make positive contributions that move the discussion forward by picking up on each other’s ideas. Candidates should learn to discuss the situation fully with their partners, using the range of visual prompts to extend the discussion, before coming to a conclusion. It is useful to point out to candidates that if they rush to reach a conclusion too soon, opportunities to demonstrate their language skills may be lost – and it is these skills rather than the outcome of the discussion which are being assessed.

■ PART 3

■ In this part of the test, each candidate is given one colour photograph to describe. The photographs will depict everyday situations and candidates are asked to give a simple description of what they can see in their photograph.

■ This part of the test allows candidates to demonstrate both their range of vocabulary and their ability to organise language in a long turn. Their descriptions are expected to be simple, however, and candidates at this level are not expected to speculate about the context or talk about any wider issues raised by the scenes depicted.

■ Candidates should be encouraged to describe the people and activities in the photographs as fully as possible. They should imagine that they are describing the photograph to someone who can’t see it, naming all the objects and

including illustrative detail such as colours, people's clothes, time of day, weather, etc.

■ Whilst the photographs will not call for difficult or specialised vocabulary, candidates will be given credit for the ability to use paraphrase or other appropriate strategies to deal with items of vocabulary which they do not know or cannot call to mind. Candidates should therefore be given plenty of classroom practice in both the language of description and strategies for dealing with unknown vocabulary.

■ The photographs will have a common theme, which candidates will be told, but will differ in terms of their detailed content. Although this theme establishes a common starting point for Part 4, the photographs are returned to the interlocutor at the end of Part 3 and play no further part in the test.

■ PART 4

■ In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, then takes no further part. The theme established in Part 3 is now used as the starting point for a general conversation in which the candidates discuss their own likes and dislikes, experiences, etc.

Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students with further prompts, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates should be able to talk about their interests and enthusiasms and give reasons for their views and preferences. Credit will be given for the use of appropriate interactive strategies and candidates should be encouraged to elicit the views of their partner(s), pick up on their partner's points and show interest in what their partner(s) is/are saying, as well as talking about themselves.

■ If, at any time during the test, candidates have difficulty in understanding an instruction, question or response, they should ask the interlocutor or their partner to repeat what was said. Marks will not normally be lost for the occasional request for repetition.

Assessment

Throughout the test, candidates are assessed on their language skills, not their personality, intelligence or knowledge of the world. They must, however, be prepared to develop the conversation, where appropriate, and respond to the tasks set. Prepared speeches are not acceptable. Candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. Both examiners assess the candidates according to criteria which are interpreted at PET level. The interlocutor awards a mark for global achievement, whilst the assessor awards marks according to four analytical criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.

■ Grammar and Vocabulary

This scale refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical forms and vocabulary. It also includes the range of both grammatical forms and vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in dealing with the tasks.

■ Discourse Management

This scale refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate's individual contribution. On this scale the candidate's ability to maintain a coherent flow of language is assessed, either within a single utterance or over a string of utterances. Also assessed here is how relevant the contributions are to what has gone before.

■ Pronunciation

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. This includes stress, rhythm and intonation, as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of the non-language specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate. Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

■ Interactive Communication

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to use language to achieve meaningful communication. This includes initiating and responding without undue hesitation, the ability to use interactive strategies to maintain or repair communication, and sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking.

■ Global Achievement

This scale refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the four separate parts of the PET Speaking test. The global mark is an independent impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective. The

interlocutor gives one global mark for each candidate's performance across all parts of the test.

Marking

As mentioned above, assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The assessor awards marks for each of the four criteria listed above. The interlocutor awards each candidate one global mark.

In many countries, Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a Team Leader who may be responsible for approximately 15 Oral Examiners. Team Leaders give advice and support to Oral Examiners, as required.

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Senior Team Leader who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the Speaking tests. Senior Team Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session. Team Leaders are appointed by the Senior Team Leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by Team Leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Speaking tests recorded on video and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on video are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

Cambridge ESOL Common Scale for Speaking

LEVEL MASTERY

C2 CERTIFICATE OF PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH:

Fully operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.
- Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are ‘native-like’.

LEVEL EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROFICIENCY

C1 CERTIFICATE IN ADVANCED ENGLISH:

Good operational command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most situations.
- Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.
- Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
- Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.
- L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

LEVEL VANTAGE

B2 FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH:

Generally effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in familiar situations.
- Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
- Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.
- Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.
- Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

LEVEL THRESHOLD

B1 PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST:

Limited but effective command of the spoken language

- Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.
- Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
- Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.
- Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.
- Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

LEVEL WAYSTAGE

A2 KEY ENGLISH TEST:

Basic command of the spoken language

- Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.
- Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.
- Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.
- Only able to produce limited extended discourse.
- Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.
- Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.