



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
ESOL Examinations

Experts in Language Assessment

# Preliminary English Test

***Handbook***

**Level B1**

Common European Framework of Reference

# PET content and overview

Paper	Name	Timing	Content	Test Focus
<b>Paper 1</b>	Reading/Writing	1 hour 30 minutes	<b>Reading</b> Five parts test a range of reading skills with a variety of texts, ranging from very short notices to longer continuous texts.  <b>Writing</b> 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.
<b>Paper 2</b>	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.
<b>Paper 3</b>	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.

# PAPER 3

# SPEAKING

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

<b>Paper format</b>	The paper contains four parts.
<b>Timing</b>	10–12 minutes per pair of candidates.
<b>Interaction pattern</b>	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.
<b>Task types</b>	Short exchanges with the interlocutor; a collaborative task involving both candidates; a 1-minute long turn and a follow up discussion.
<b>Marks</b>	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

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

### PART 2

<b>Task type and format</b>	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.
<b>Focus</b>	Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.
<b>Timing</b>	2–3 minutes.

### PART 3

<b>Task type and format</b>	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.
<b>Focus</b>	Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.
<b>Timing</b>	3 minutes.

### PART 4

<b>Task type and format</b>	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.
<b>Focus</b>	The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits, etc.
<b>Timing</b>	3 minutes.

Preliminary English Test  
Speaking Test

Part 1 (2-3 minutes)

Phase 1  
Interlocutor

A/B Good morning / afternoon / evening.  
Can I have your mark sheets, please?

(Hand over the mark sheets to the Assessor.)

A/B I'm ..... and this is .....  
He / she is just going to listen to us.

A Now, what's your name?  
Thank you.

B And what's your name?  
Thank you.

B Candidate B, what's your surname?  
How do you spell it?

Thank you.

A And, Candidate A, what's your surname?  
How do you spell it?

Thank you.

Back-up prompts

How do you write your family  
/ second name?

How do you write your family  
/ second name?

Do you live in ... ?

Have you got a job?  
What job do you do? / What  
subject(s) do you study?

Do you have English  
lessons?

(Ask the following questions. Use candidates' names throughout. Ask Candidate A first.)

Where do you live / come from?

Adult students

Do you work or are you a student in ... ?  
What do you do / study?

School-age students

Do you study English at school?  
Do you like it?

Thank you.

(Repeat for Candidate B.)

Phase 2  
Interlocutor

(Select one or more questions from the list to ask each candidate. Use candidates' names throughout. Ask Candidate B first.)

Back-up prompts

Do you enjoy studying English? Why (not)?

Do you think that English will be useful for you in the future?

What did you do yesterday evening / last weekend?

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Thank you.

(Introduction to Part 2)  
In the next part, you are going to talk to each other.

PAPER 3: SPEAKING

Part 2



Speaking Test 1 (Holiday present)

Part 2 (2-3 minutes)

Interlocutor  
Say to both candidates:

I'm going to describe a situation to you.

A young man on holiday in North America wants to buy a present to take home to his parents. Talk together about the different presents he could buy, and say which would be best.

Here is a picture with some ideas to help you.

Place Part 2 booklet, open at Task 1, in front of candidates.

Pause

I'll say that again.

A young man on holiday in North America wants to buy a present to take home to his parents. Talk together about the different presents he could buy, and say which would be best.

All right? Talk together.

Allow the candidates enough time to complete the task without intervention. Prompt only if necessary.

Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?)

Retrieve Part 2 booklet.

About 2-3 minutes (including time to assimilate the information)



**Speaking Test 1 (People reading and writing)**

**Part 3 (3 minutes)**

**Interlocutor**  
Say to both candidates:

Now, I'd like each of you to talk on your own about something. I'm going to give each of you a photograph of people **reading and writing**.  
Candidate A, here is your photograph. (Place **Part 3 booklet**, open at **Task 1A**, in front of Candidate A.) Please show it to Candidate B, but I'd like you to talk about it. Candidate B, you just listen. I'll give you your photograph in a moment.  
Candidate A, please tell us what you can see in the photograph.

**(Candidate A)**

*Approximately one minute*

*If there is a need to intervene, prompts rather than direct questions should be used.*

Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?)

Retrieve **Part 3 booklet** from Candidate A.

**Interlocutor**

Now, Candidate B, here is your photograph. It also shows people **reading and writing**. (Place **Part 3 booklet**, open at **Task 1B**, in front of Candidate B.) Please show it to Candidate A and tell us what you can see in the photograph.

**(Candidate B)**

*Approximately one minute*

Thank you. (Can I have the booklet please?)

Retrieve **Part 3 booklet** from Candidate B.

**Part 4 (3 minutes)**

**Interlocutor**  
Say to both candidates:

Your photographs showed people **reading and writing**. Now, I'd like you to talk together about the different kinds of reading and writing **you** did when you were **younger**, and the kinds you do **now**.

*Allow the candidates enough time to complete the task without intervention. Prompt only if necessary.*

Thank you. That's the end of the test.



**Parts 3 & 4** should take about **6 minutes** together.



## 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 extent, relevance, coherence and cohesion of each candidate's individual contribution. On this scale the candidate's ability to build and maintain a coherent flow of language without undue hesitation 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 intonation, stress and individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of the non-language specialist and assess the overall intelligibility of the candidates's pronunciation. 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, 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 Professional Support Leader who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the Speaking tests. Professional Support Leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session. Team Leaders are appointed by the Professional Support 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 DVD.

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