



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Examinations

Cambridge  
**IGCSE**

# Learner Guide

Cambridge IGCSE<sup>®</sup>  
First Language English  
**0500**

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## How to use this guide

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The guide describes what you need to know about your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English examination.

It will help you to plan your revision programme for the examinations and will explain what we are looking for in your answers. It can also be used to help you to revise by using the tick boxes in Section 4, 'What you need to do', to check what you have covered.

The guide contains the following sections:

### Section 1: How will you be tested?

This section gives you information about the different examination papers you will take.

### Section 2: Examination advice

This section gives you advice to help you do as well as you can. Some of the ideas are general advice and some are based on the common mistakes that learners make in exams.

### Section 3: What will be tested?

This section describes the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that we will test you on.

### Section 4: What you need to do

This section shows the syllabus in a simple way so that you can check that:

- You have practised each skill
- You can understand and respond, in English, in a variety of contexts and situations.
- You are well prepared for the level of examination (Core or Extended) you will be taking.

### Section 5: Revision

This section gives advice on how you can revise and prepare for the examination.



## Section 1: How will you be tested?

### About the examinations

There are two components to your Cambridge IGCSE course:

#### 1. A final examination

Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core)

**OR**

Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)

#### 2. A further examination

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition

**OR**

you will submit a **Coursework portfolio** Component 4

Your teacher will assess your skills during the Cambridge IGCSE course and will discuss with you which papers and which level of examination (Core or Extended) you should take for your version of the syllabus. Extended gives grades A\* to E; Core gives grades C to G.

Check with your teacher if you are unsure which components you are taking.

### About the papers

The table below provides key information about each paper. You will need to read only about the papers you are actually taking

Paper title and level of examination	How long and how many marks?	What's in the paper? Which skills are being tested?	What's the % of the total syllabus grade?
Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core)	1 hour 45 minutes 50 marks	Question 1 – Reading Question 2 – Reading and Writing Question 3 – Reading and Writing	50%
Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)	2 hours 50 marks	Question 1 – Reading and Writing Question 2 – Reading Question 3 – Reading and Writing	50%
Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition (Core and Extended)	2 hours 50 marks	Section 1 – Reading and Writing Section 2 – Writing	50%
Component 4 Coursework Portfolio (Core and Extended)	n/a 50 marks	Three assignments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informative, analytical and/or argumentative;</li> <li>descriptive and/or narrative;</li> <li>response to a text</li> </ul>	50%

In addition, you may EITHER take an optional Speaking and Listening test OR Speaking and Listening coursework.

## Section 1: How will you be tested?

Paper title and level of examination	How long and how many marks?	What's in the paper? Which skills are being tested?	What's the % of the total syllabus grade?
Component 5 Speaking and Listening Test (Core and Extended)	10–12 minutes 30 marks	Part 1 – Individual Task Part 2 – Discussion	Separately endorsed
Component 6 Speaking and Listening Coursework (Core and Extended)	n/a 30 marks	Task 1 – Individual activity Task 2 – Pair-based activity Task 3 – Group activity	Separately endorsed

For 0522 the syllabus the Speaking and Listening Components count towards the final grade as 20% making the other two components 40% each.

For 0500 Speaking and Listening does not contribute to your overall result, and is marked as a separate examination, for which you will be given a separate result as a grade 1 (high) to 5 (low).

**You should check with your teacher whether you will be taking Component 5 or 6 and whether Speaking and Listening is separately endorsed or counts towards your final syllabus grade.**



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## Section 2: Examination advice

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This section gives you advice to help you do as well as you can. Some of the ideas are general advice and some are based on the common mistakes that learners make in exams.

### General advice

Whichever examination(s) you are taking for your Cambridge IGCSE course, there are some things you can remember to do in order to give you the best chance of success:

- Work through the paper in the order set – there is nothing to be gained by going to the final question first and in fact often it will work against you as some tasks build up.
- Make sure that you plan your time in the exam to allow for you to edit your answers – leave time to CHECK and CHANGE. You will almost certainly have made a mistake somewhere or be able just to add in a detail – those changes could make all the difference to your final answers. Use carets (^) or asterisks (\*) to add extra material above the line or at the end of the piece.
- Do not be afraid to make corrections, using a line through the word(s) and making a clear substitution above or with an asterisk below.
- Pay close attention to the marks available to make sure that you are spending the right amount of time and effort on each part of your exam.
- Look out for the key words in a question and underline them – what exactly is the question asking you to do? Watch out too for any help being offered to you in the question itself. We want you to do as well as you can, so the questions are worded carefully to help you to focus your attention in the right area.
- Do not write rough drafts. You cannot afford the time to write out every answer twice, and it is neither required nor desirable that you should do so; plans are sufficient.
- Have a pen and a spare with which you can write neatly – we need to be able to read your answers!
- Suggestions for length of response are there to help you understand what is expected and what is possible within the time limit. Don't write much more as you will not have time to check it and may lose marks. If you finish the exam early, go back and check your answers again; you may have missed something.
- Use commas to separate clauses in a sentence. It is sometimes difficult to follow meaning where they have not been used and should have been. Watch out though that you are not using commas as substitutes for full-stops – this is called 'comma-splicing' and will lose you marks.
- Keep up your concentration to the end of the examination. Often learners start well and then their writing declines in quality as they get tired. Sentence structure, as well as tidiness of handwriting, tends to deteriorate as time passes. Try to keep producing mature vocabulary even when you'd rather take the easy option and write on auto-pilot; the last questions carry as many marks as the first.

The statements which follow contain useful advice for each question on each examination paper. Make sure that you are reading advice only for the papers you are taking (you may be sitting one or two – ask your teacher to check you have the right one(s) before you go any further).

There is also some advice about common mistakes made by learners to help you to avoid making the same errors yourself.

## Advice for each paper

### Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core)

#### Question 1

- Skim read Passage A for the gist of it before you look at the different parts of the question. Then scan the passage to find the answer to each part of the question in turn.
- Each part of the question will tell you where to look in the text to work out your answer – for example it may say to look at certain lines, certain words or the whole passage.
- Generally, the questions will get more challenging as you work through, so watch out for instructions designed to help you – for example if you are told to use your own words or give a certain number of reasons.
- Notice how many marks there are for each question. This will help you to judge how much to write for your answer and the number of points you will need to include. For example, a question with 6 marks is expecting you to offer more than a question with only 1 mark.
- There is no need to repeat the whole of the question before beginning your answer. ‘He means that...’ or ‘It is because...’ are enough to provide a grammatical introduction to your sentence. This will save you time.
- Where you are asked to give a word or words you do not need to answer with a full sentence – more time saved!

#### Question 2

- Remember that in this question your reading and writing skills are being tested so you need to be using both – picking out ideas from the passage and reworking them to write a convincing response.
- You will need to use and develop the ideas contained in the passage, and add original details of your own. Don’t forget that your ideas should remain based on the passage and not stray too far from it.
- Remember that the quality of your writing is being judged in this part of the question paper. The question may give you bullet points to help you structure your piece of writing.
- You will need to check your answer when you finish and correct any mistakes you notice. Look out especially for things you might not have noticed as you were writing – like missed full-stops.
- You will be rewarded for showing a wide range of vocabulary, so aim to avoid using the same word too often and try to choose more precise vocabulary rather than always the first word you think of.
- Try if you can to “hear” your answer read out in your head – this will help you to check that you are using an appropriate register (that it sounds right). For example, a news report is going to differ in style from a magazine article. Reading your answer back to yourself will also help you to spot slips in punctuation and check your sequencing of ideas.

#### Question 3

##### 3(a) Notes

- You can write your response to this question in note form, but you should make sure that each point is clear enough and contains enough information for the examiner to understand your point.
- In your identification of points, you will need to focus on and select the specific ideas or details relevant to the question set.

- Make sure that your points are clear and show the examiner what specific idea you have selected. You do not need to use your own words for this part of the question, but you should make sure that the points you record are clear.
- Write your points on separate lines in the question paper. Don't write more than one point per line.
- Don't repeat your points.
- You are not assessed for spelling in this question, but make sure that the words you write are clear and as accurate as possible to make sure the examiner understands what point you have selected.
- You will have 10 numbered lines in the question paper on which to record your points. You cannot add extra points to this list of 10, unless you have crossed out an earlier point.

### 3(b) Summary

- This response should be written in full sentences, not note form.
- Use your notes from Question 3(a) in your prose response and try to include all of the points you have identified in 3(a) in your answer to 3(b).
- You do not need to introduce or conclude your summary – this will waste time and words. You could start by using the wording of the question, 'The features of the desert are...'
- You need to show evidence of clear and concise summary style throughout, with good focus on the points you have identified in 3(a) Notes.
- Use your own words as far as possible, but you do not have to find synonyms for technical objects, e.g. solar heaters.

## Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)

### Question 1

- The passage for this question may contain a description of a person or place or both. To do well, you will need to be sensitive to the atmosphere being created and show appreciation of the feelings of any characters in your response. This means watching out for details and picking up on clues in the passage as you read.
- In this question, you are going to be rewarded not only for identifying relevant material in the passage but also for development of those ideas and use of supporting detail. Some ideas might be quite subtle and implied. This means that you will need to use any clues and details you noticed when you were reading, in order to write a convincing response.
- If you are aiming to score the full 15 marks available for Reading in this question, it will not be enough to just repeat details you have read. The more you can adapt the details from the passage to suit the task you have been set, the more likely you are to score well for reading.
- When you are preparing to write your answer, it will really help you to highlight the material in the text you are going to use – using a pencil so that you can change your mind if you need to. Next, draw up a quick plan in order to organise the ideas you've found into a logical structure, before you start writing your response.
- If you are given bullet points to remind you of what should be included, use them to check you have covered what is required. These bullet points can also help you to structure your answer. The material from the passage should be put into the appropriate section and not repeated.

- Do not be tempted to add extra sections. For instance, where you are given the questions to ask in an interview, stick to those questions only and develop the responses to them. It can make your answers too fragmented or less focused if you add more.
- If a detail is relevant, use it! Make sure that you are using as much of the material as it is possible to do. However, there may be some parts of the passage which you can ignore because they are not covered by the question.
- Do not drift away from the text. Everything you write must be directly connected to the passage and be supported by references to it.
- Using words or phrases from the passage here and there when you are giving details within your answer is fine. Watch out though that you do not copy big chunks of text as that is not going to be showing your understanding, just your handwriting! You should try to use your own words as far as possible.
- Before you start writing, you will need to decide on the appropriate tone to use – you will decide this based on your audience and why you are writing. You might even be writing in character. You can expect that you will have to write in a reasonably formal style – this is after all an English exam! It is rarely going to be a good idea to use slang for example. Even if the task is to write a letter to a relative, it will be someone distant or older, such as an uncle whom you haven't met recently. If a task asks for a report to your fellow learners, it will be official or for publication in the school magazine. It is really important to remember who you are writing for and to address them directly – imagining this is a real situation (as far as possible).
- For the full marks for Writing you need to show that you have structured your answer, sequenced your ideas, and used a wide range of original and appropriate language. Thinking about the way your answer would sound if it was read out loud will help you to check if you are getting this right.
- If the question has several parts to it, you can either deal with them in the order they are written in the question or you can deal with them together. You can decide on your own structure for your answer, but what matters is that there should be a structure of some kind which is clear to your reader.
- Obviously, it is important that we can read your work so you need to make sure that your writing is legible. You won't get any marks for how it looks in terms of layout though. For example, it is wasting time to divide a newspaper report into columns or add drawings and extra advertisements to try to make it look similar to real life. This cannot be rewarded and it will distract you from the real task of providing appropriate and accurate content for your response.
- Don't forget that you are writing in continuous prose so should be using paragraphs.
- Checking and correcting your answer at the end is essential. You will need to make changes to correct slips and perhaps words or phrases which don't sound quite right in context.

### Question 2

- This question may be sub-divided in two parts. You need to give equal attention to each part and provide at least half a page for each. Make sure that you concentrate on the sections of the passage which you have been told to look at.
- You should aim to find at least four relevant quotations to support each of your points in both parts of the question. Give the quotation, in quotation marks, explain its meaning, and then explain its effect in the passage.
- Spend some time thinking about which choices you will explain – choose the strongest examples rather than necessarily the first ones you come to.
- Make sure that it is clear which word(s) you are discussing. If you choose more than three or four words together it is not clear which one(s) you are selecting, so try to keep quotations short.
- Avoid clumping words together or listing them – again you need to focus on each word individually as you explore and explain the effect the writer wanted them to have on the reader.

- You need to do more than label literary features – saying that something is a metaphor is a starting point but to show understanding of effect you need to explain why and how the author has chosen that particular image in the context of the passage.
- Do not select a quotation which you do not understand as you will not be able to explain either its meaning or its effect.
- When you are explaining a quotation, do not repeat the words used in it. You need to use your own words to show that you are understanding what you are reading.
- Do not repeat quotations; you cannot get credit more than once for the same choice.
- You need to give a full range of explained effects and link them into an overview which shows understanding of what the writer was trying to achieve in the passage as a whole.
- Try to avoid generalised comments such as ‘The writer makes me feel as though I am there’ and ‘The passage is cleverly written’. These will gain no marks and give the impression that you are failing to find things to say. You need to explain HOW this is the case.
- When you have some ideas for your comments, think about how they fit together before you start writing your answer – in that way you can avoid contradicting yourself in the effects that you are suggesting.
- When you are planning your answer, things to look for could include:
  - use of the five senses – including colour, noise or sound effects
  - use of contrast or links between the subject and the environment
  - surprising or unusual words in the context of the description
  - imagery (similes and metaphors).

To score marks though you will need to explain HOW they work, not just find them.
- Though there are no marks for writing in this question, if the examiner is not able to follow what you are saying then it will be hard for you to show your understanding. Try to keep the examiner in mind as you write – explain your points fully so that we know exactly what you are suggesting. Write in full sentences and in paragraphs, not in note form or using a table.

## Question 3

### 3(a) Notes

- You can write your response to this question in note form, but you should make sure that each point is clear enough and contains enough information for the examiner to understand your point.
- In your identification of points, you will need to focus on and select the specific ideas or details relevant to the question set.
- Make sure that your points are clear and show the examiner what specific idea you have selected. You do not need to use your own words for this part of the question, but you should make sure that the points you record are clear.
- Write your points on separate lines in the question paper. Don’t write more than one point per line.
- Don’t repeat your points.
- You are not assessed for spelling in this question, but make sure that the words you write are clear and as accurate as possible to make sure the examiner understands what point you have selected.
- You will have 15 numbered lines in the question paper on which to record your points. You cannot add extra points to this list of 15, unless you have crossed out an earlier point.

### 3(b) Summary

- This response should be written in full sentences, not note form.
- Use your notes from Question 3(a) in your prose response and try to include all of the points you have identified in 3(a) in your answer to 3(b).
- You do not need to introduce or conclude your summary – this will waste time and words. You could start by using the wording of the question, ‘The features of the desert are...’
- You need to show evidence of clear and concise summary style throughout, with good focus on the points you have identified in 3(a) Notes.
- Use your own words as far as possible, but you do not have to find synonyms for technical objects, e.g. solar heaters.

## Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition (Core and Extended)

### Section 1

- For this question, you will need to put yourself into role, and address your audience directly. The opening needs to introduce clearly the situation and purpose of the task, and will be rewarded if it puts the reader in the picture.
- You need to be clear and often persuasive in tasks like these, so imagining that you are addressing someone in front of you might help you to keep that in mind. Do not be overly casual though – this is a formal piece of writing. Even if it is for your peers in a school magazine, written language for publication is less colloquial than spoken language.
- Your answer will not be in the same genre as the passage, and should therefore be in a different style from it.
- You should try to use as many ideas from the passage as possible as they will all be relevant, but you will have to change the way you express them; all the material you use from the passage must be modified to suit the new genre.
- Do not write as yourself unless you are specifically told to do so and keep in mind why you are writing – for example are you meant to be persuading someone or offering advice?
- There will almost certainly be two texts, perhaps in different genres e.g. a letter and a dialogue. The question will require you to assimilate information from both texts so you must not ignore one of them, but don’t just lift from the text(s) word for word. You need to find the ideas and use them.
- The recommended structure for the response will be offered in the wording of the question, and you should follow this.
- There will be at least two factors to focus on – for example advantages and disadvantages. You will need to make two lists before you start in order to make sure you have enough material for both sides of the question.
- The third element of this question is evaluation; you will have to decide which of the options is better, present reasons why you have formed this opinion and justify it.
- Keep your focus on what the question is asking you to do. Do not get distracted by peripheral issues; for instance if you are asked how money should be spent, don’t discuss the fund-raising methods.
- Make strong transitions between points/paragraphs e.g. ‘Yet another reason to support this proposal is...’ You need to link your ideas together logically so that if someone in real life was reading this response they would follow what you are saying step by step.

- Though you cannot make up things which are not in the passages, you should try to use your own ideas in the way that you extend those of the passages, provided that they are 'based on the reading material'.
- The ending needs to be definite and provide an effective and satisfying conclusion to the piece.

## Section 2

- It is essential that you choose a question which you understand and which suits your writing abilities.
- Though the two different genres are marked according to the same mark scheme for Style and Accuracy, they are marked differently for Content and Structure. The two genres are different from each other, so you need to be aware of the characteristics of each.
- Whichever type of essay you choose, it should be planned first. If after five minutes you have managed to collect only a few ideas for your choice of title, switch to another one. The plan should contain between 6 and 10 points or ideas which can be developed into paragraphs, if the essay is going to be of a suitable content and length. Aim for about 8 paragraphs and 400 words.
- Openings to compositions are important as they either engage the reader or they don't. Try to grab your reader's attention from the start.
- Take the opportunity to show off your range of vocabulary – find precise words to use and vary your choices.

## Descriptive compositions

- It is difficult to write interesting descriptions, so this type of composition should not be attempted unless you have had practice and success at this type of writing. To write a strong descriptive answer you will need to use a wide range of vocabulary and even use imagery to engage reader interest. Unless the readers can see the picture they will not be able to relate to the experience.
- You will need to use a variety of sentence structures. All forms of repetition should be avoided – unless you are deliberately using it carefully for effect.
- You will need to evoke all five senses to create an environment and atmosphere, as well as details of size, shape and colour. Make colour precise, e.g. 'scarlet', 'azure', 'off-white', 'bluish-grey'.
- Try to avoid common, overused, vague, short and childish vocabulary, such as 'nice', 'big', 'little', 'a lot of', 'good', and 'bad'.
- Each noun probably needs one or more adjectives in front of it to give sufficient detail.
- Don't let your description become static – give structure and progression to your description e.g. moving towards or through something, such as a street market or busy shopping mall, or going through a period of time, an hour or a day for instance, and recording the changes.

Descriptive compositions must not become a narrative, which means character and event should not take over or be dominant. (You can have lots of description in a story but you should have as little "story" in a description as possible.)



## Narrative compositions

- Decide on a tense and then stick to it; do not jump between present and past. The normal narrative tense is past and those who try to write in the present usually forget to do so after a while, so it is safer to start off in the past.
- Know what your last sentence is going to be before you write your first. A narrative has to build up to a climax and lead towards a conclusion which is planned before it starts or it will end lamely or incomprehensibly, or the pace will be too slow or too fast.
- Don't try to do too much; you can't cover many events and many years in one short composition. Select key moments and skip over the rest, changing the pace according to the intensity of the moment.
- Don't try to include too many characters (generally no more than three is best). Don't try to give them all speech.
- For the top band, complexity of narrative and structure is required e.g. framing the story; flashback or forward time jump; two parallel strands being brought together. However, do not attempt these devices unless you are sure you can manage them.
- Use dialogue by all means (if you can punctuate and set it out correctly) but don't overdo it. You shouldn't turn your story into a play, nor should you dilute the effect of occasional and significant moments of speech by giving the characters trivial things to say throughout. Save speech for important moments.
- If you do use dialogue, find synonyms for 'he said/she said'.
- Even narrative needs description. You need to help your reader imagine characters and places by adding significant details to bring them alive.
- Choose to tell your narrative in first or third person and stick with your choice; do not switch viewpoint accidentally, as this is confusing for the reader.
- Don't use a first person narrator if you want to die at the end of your story! It is generally safer to use third person narration as it gives you more flexibility and a wider viewpoint.
- Don't end your story with 'And then I woke up in hospital', or 'It was all a dream'. Try to avoid clichés of any kind, including stereotypical characters and predictable outcomes.
- Use similes, but avoid obvious ones such as 'as red as a rose'. Make comparisons unusual, but still apt, by giving them a moment's thought and making them more specific e.g. 'as red as a matador's cape'.
- Use plenty of interesting details to engage your reader and make them want to read on.
- Don't exaggerate; too much blood or too many unlikely events become ridiculous, and fear is more believable when it is mental rather than physical.
- Use your own knowledge and experiences as inspiration. It is better to think of something that actually happened to you, or someone you know, or which you read in a book or saw in a film, than to try to make up something entirely from scratch. It will sound more convincing. You will need to adapt, embellish and exaggerate the original idea to make it relevant, fresh and memorable – just retelling the plot synopsis or giving a factual account is not likely to interest your reader.
- Keep a balance in the different parts of the narrative. An over-long introduction reduces the effect of the middle section where things build up to a climax, and you need to leave yourself time to create a memorable ending.

End your narrative deliberately. Stories need a conclusion, where things are either resolved or purposely left unresolved as a cliff-hanger (though on the whole readers prefer to know how a story ended). You must not give the impression that you just stopped writing because you ran out of time, ink or ideas.



## Section 3: What will be tested?

The syllabus sets out the skills that will be tested in the question papers. In First Language English, there are four main skills – two that test how well you understand and receive information (reading and listening), and two that test how well you are able to convey, or pass on, information (writing and speaking). This information might be information you have just received, or it might be new and original information.

### Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) listed below reflect those parts of the aims of the syllabus which will be assessed.

The skills are as follows:

Assessment objective 1: Reading	
Core	Extended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate understanding of words and phrases within extended texts</li> <li>identify and develop facts, ideas and opinions</li> <li>summarise, paraphrase and re-express</li> <li>demonstrate some understanding of how writers achieve their effects</li> <li>recognise and respond to simple linguistic devices including figurative language</li> <li>extract specific information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>demonstrate a precise understanding of extended texts</li> <li>synthesise, develop, analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions</li> <li>effectively summarise, paraphrase and re-express</li> <li>demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve their effects</li> <li>recognise and respond to sophisticated linguistic devices</li> <li>extract appropriate information for specific purposes.</li> </ul>
Assessment objective 2: Writing	
Core	Extended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express thoughts, feelings and opinions in order to interest, inform or convince the reader</li> <li>convey simple and detailed facts, ideas and opinions in an orderly sequence</li> <li>use appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>demonstrate some sense of audience and context</li> <li>demonstrate adequate control of spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> <li>attempt a variety of sentence structures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>express effectively what is thought, felt and imagined</li> <li>order and convey facts, ideas and opinions effectively</li> <li>demonstrate a sophisticated use of imaginative and varied vocabulary</li> <li>demonstrate a clear sense of audience and context</li> <li>demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar</li> <li>use effectively a variety of sentence structures.</li> </ul>

### Section 3: What will be tested?

Assessment objective 3: Speaking and listening	
Core	Extended
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe experience in simple terms and express intelligibly what is thought, felt and imagined</li><li>• recognise and give statements of opinion and attitude</li><li>• present facts, ideas and opinions in an orderly sequence</li><li>• communicate with some clarity, focus and purpose</li><li>• communicate with some awareness of audience and context</li><li>• make relevant comments on what is heard.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describe and reflect on experience, and express effectively what is thought, felt and imagined</li><li>• understand and convey complex information in a sophisticated way</li><li>• order and present facts, ideas and opinions effectively</li><li>• discuss statements of opinion and attitude, discerning underlying assumptions and points of view</li><li>• communicate with clarity, focus and purpose</li><li>• communicate appropriately depending on the audience and context</li><li>• evaluate and reflect on what is heard.</li></ul>

The Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening assessment objectives to be tested are divided as follows:

**Reading:**

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions
- R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects
- R5 select for specific purposes.

**Writing:**

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 sequence facts, ideas and opinions
- W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 use register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

**Speaking and Listening:**

- S1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- S2 present facts, ideas and opinions in a sustained, cohesive order
- S3 communicate clearly, fluently and purposefully as an individual and in dialogue with other speakers
- S4 use register appropriate to audience and context
- S5 listen to and respond appropriately to the contributions of others.

**Section 3:** What will be tested?

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## Section 4: What you need to do

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The Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course doesn't cover content in the same way as most other Cambridge IGCSE courses do. In science, for example, you might need to learn how a particular process works. This means understanding and being able to recall all the steps involved in the process in a logical way. Once you have reached a certain level of knowledge, you can move on and extend that knowledge base.

English is quite different. The best way to approach the 'content' of your First Language English course is to make sure that you have practised English in a wide variety of contexts and that you understand the different ways that English can be used and can respond appropriately.

First Language English teachers in different parts of the world use different textbooks and teaching materials. This is because there is no single 'correct' textbook that should be used. It is generally agreed that the best approach to learning First Language English is to use a variety of books, articles, newspapers, magazines, as well as the internet; also to use recordings (to develop listening) and oral activities (to develop speaking). Success in learning First Language English is linked to using a variety of different resources that will enable learners to practise all the skills that they will be tested on.

The table below – containing the checklist – is therefore simply a guide to the types of activities which are useful. However, you should not think of the table as a list of activities that you must do, or as a list of contexts that you must cover. If you do not tick some areas, it does not mean that you have not completed the whole course!

Skill:	All learners should be able to:	Those taking the Extended examination should also be able to:	Ways in which the skills might be practised (appropriate contexts)	Checklist – tick if you have worked on something similar
Reading. Locating specific information as quickly as possible = Skimming	Read short non-fiction texts, such as leaflets, news reports and advertisements	Cope with more detailed and extensive informative texts	<input type="checkbox"/> Looking at leaflets, reports, guidelines <input type="checkbox"/> Analysing brochures	
Reading. Locating more detailed information; looking more carefully = Scanning	Read longer non-fiction texts, such as articles from newspapers and magazines	Cope with longer and more challenging articles	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading similar articles (in style and in length) to those seen frequently in past examination papers <input type="checkbox"/> Reading factual articles <input type="checkbox"/> Extracting relevant information from articles	
Reading and Writing. Integrated reading and writing	1. Read a text which contains information and respond using the relevant material from the text  2. Understand descriptive texts and select relevant information and phrases from them  3. Adopt an appropriate voice in which to express a response to a text  4. Show awareness of audience	Convey a thorough understanding by writing a lengthy response in a different genre from the original text  Select, explain and analyse the effect of the usage of certain phrases in the text  Adopt a sophisticated or official persona  Target your audience	<input type="checkbox"/> Practising using the same material in different genres <input type="checkbox"/> Practising writing formal letters  <input type="checkbox"/> Reading passages from literary texts and identifying the ways in which feeling or atmosphere has been created  <input type="checkbox"/> Practising using different registers and styles for different aims according to specific tasks  <input type="checkbox"/> Practising using devices which show ability to address your audience directly and manipulate its response	

Skill:	All learners should be able to:	Those taking the Extended examination should also be able to:	Ways in which the skills might be practised (appropriate contexts)	Checklist – tick if you have worked on something similar
	5. Read texts for specific information and write short summaries		<input type="checkbox"/> Reading a text in order to identify specific information <input type="checkbox"/> Writing a summary <input type="checkbox"/> Practising the use of own words <input type="checkbox"/> Becoming familiar with the concise and precise language of summary style	
Writing	1. Describe and narrate  2. Use language for a specific purpose, e.g. to persuade, to consider, to evaluate, to inform, to entertain, to convey an impression	Carry out longer writing tasks on a range of topics, paying attention to structure, sequence and style  Create sustained and cohesive responses to continuous writing tasks, showing an awareness of the generic characteristics of different types of writing	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing descriptions of events, places, people using all five senses and imagery <input type="checkbox"/> Planning openings and endings to stories  <input type="checkbox"/> Writing (and performing) debate speeches <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing ideas for and against a discussion topic <input type="checkbox"/> Analysing the devices used in letters, articles and editorials stating a point of view <input type="checkbox"/> Writing stories which have gripping openings, pace, dialogue, climax, strong endings	
Speaking and Listening	1. Understand and respond to questions and instructions  2. Understand the speech of others and the views they express	Construct a sustained speech on a chosen topic  Listen to and respond appropriately to the contributions of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning and delivering a talk <input type="checkbox"/> Explaining a viewpoint and supporting it with evidence  <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to recordings of interviews on news or chat shows and differentiating between fact and opinion	

Skill:	All learners should be able to:	Those taking the Extended examination should also be able to:	Ways in which the skills might be practised (appropriate contexts)	Checklist – tick if you have worked on something similar
	3. Describe a personal experience 4. Engage in discussion	Use detail and example to engage the listener Develop a topic into wider issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Role-playing dialogues and interviews <input type="checkbox"/> Taking part in and contributing to group discussions	



## Section 5: Revision

Here are some of the ways in which you can prepare for the examination.

### Reading

- You should read as widely and as often as you can – all sorts of texts, from magazines to short stories, from leaflets to letters sent out by businesses or schools. The aim is to know what as many different forms of written English might sound like.
- You should try to learn the meanings of common prefixes so that you can guess meanings of words.
- You should practise summarising passages.

Practise using the right approach – it is best to follow a five-step process:

- read and underline the relevant material in pencil (so that you can change your mind easily if needed)
  - transfer the points into a plan, whilst changing them into your own words
  - group the points logically (using arrows/brackets); put them in order (using numbers), and decide which ones can be combined into one sentence
  - write the summary in two paragraphs using complex sentences
  - check the summary for accurate expression; adapt the length and improve if necessary by adding material overlooked or by removing repetition.
- Don't write too much – you are meant to be summing up, not adding to the original ideas.
  - Remember that summaries never include:
    - examples
    - repetitions
    - direct speech
    - figurative language
    - minor details.

All these must be removed from the passage, and then you use only the facts, which are what you have left.

- You can practise turning passages into news reports; they have a particular style and structure which are different from any other kind of writing. You will need to think about:
  - style – short paragraphs; short sentences; dramatic vocabulary; statistical information; stacking of adjectives and descriptive phrases before the noun (e.g. 'The Japanese-owned lightweight racing yacht Sunshine II...'; 'Divorced former model and mother of two, Susan Smith...')
  - using impersonal expression (do not use 'I' or 'We' and do not give any opinions)
  - using interview material and direct speech as well as reported speech – don't quote straight from the passage though; write your own to show that you understand what you have read
  - structure – unlike normal chronological sequence, news reports begin with the very recent past (usually yesterday); go on to fill in past background prior to the event; return to the immediate present and how things are developing; then finally speculate about the future.

- Practise writing formal letters. Letters to people in official positions and people you don't know well typically adopt a formal style and polite tone, and they are structured in three sections:
  - i) the topic of the letter/reason for writing it
  - ii) background information, arguments and factual details
  - iii) request or suggestions for future action.

## Writing

**Your teacher will keep telling you that each question should be answered in a different style.**

What is style? It is about:

- i) matching the expression to the type of speaker/writer – writing in role
- ii) matching the expression to the recipient – writing for audience
- iii) matching the expression to the aim – writing for purpose
- iv) choosing appropriate structure and devices – writing in genre
- v) choosing appropriate vocabulary and syntax – writing in register.

As you read different types of texts in English, try to notice how they sound different from each other and how they compare.

In your own writing you can:

- Practise joining simple sentences into complex sentences, using a range of connectives and participles. Above all avoid using 'and', 'but' and 'so'.
- Practise varying your sentences to develop your own style. You don't want your sentences all to follow the same formula and start in the same way. Try writing some of the sentence types here:
  - i) main clause followed by one or more subordinate clauses e.g. 'The cat fell asleep, after it had eaten, although someone had switched on loud music.'
  - ii) subordinate clause(s) followed by main clause e.g. 'After it had eaten, the cat fell asleep.'
  - iii) subordinate clause followed by main clause followed by another subordinate clause e.g. 'After it had eaten, the cat fell asleep, although someone had switched on loud music.'
  - iv) main clause containing embedded subordinate clause e.g. 'The cat, which had been sleeping all day, fell asleep again.'
  - v) main clause containing embedded subordinate clause, followed by another subordinate clause e.g. 'The cat, which had been sleeping all day, fell asleep again, even though there was loud music playing.'

To improve your own writing you should also:

- Learn the correct version of commonly misspelt words which you know you are likely to need to use e.g. separate, definitely, business, opportunity, surprise, privilege. The best way to learn them is to:
  - i) stare at them and try to 'photograph' them; cover them while you write them from the imprint on your memory; check back to see if you were correct. This is the Look, Cover, Write, Check method. Copying words letter by letter does not fix the 'letter-strings' in your mind successfully.

- ii) remember the rule: 'i' before 'e' except after 'c', if the sound you are making is long double 'ee'. (The only known exception, apart from in names, is 'seize'.)
  - iii) if in doubt whether a word has a single or double consonant apply the generally sound rule that if the vowel is short the consonant is double, but if the vowel is long the consonant is single e.g. 'hopping and hoping', 'sitting and siting', 'dinner and diner', 'writing and written'.
  - iv) create mnemonics, little sayings and rhymes which, however silly, actually work e.g. 'necessary' is spelt with one c and two s because 'one coat has two sleeves'; 'possesses' possesses five esses
  - v) be aware of prefixes, so that you can work out which words have double letters and which don't e.g. 'dis-satisfied' as opposed to 'dismay', and the spelling of words like 'extra-ordinary' and 'con-science'.
  - vi) be aware of suffixes, so that you can work out which adverbs end in 'ly' and which in 'lly' (i.e. only those which already have an 'l' at the end of the adjective, like 'beautiful – beautifully').
  - vii) think about how the word is spelt in other languages you know e.g. the French verb 'separer' will remind you of how 'separate' is spelt in English.
  - viii) break difficult words down into syllables in your mind, so that you can hear how 'in-ter-est-ing' must be spelt.
- Revise direct speech punctuation. It is likely that in one or more parts of the examination you will be required to or will wish to use dialogue. Remember in particular that a change of speaker requires a change of line, and that all speech needs a final punctuation mark in addition to the closing inverted commas. Remember also that exclamations and questions which fall inside the speech are not followed by a capital letter if the sentence continues, and that commas not full stops are used to end speech unless there is no continuation to the sentence, e.g.

'Really?' she asked.

'Really,' he answered.

When you are practising your writing:

- You should try to broaden the range of the connectives you use.  
Be aware that there are over thirty connectives available in English for joining parts of sentences (clauses) together. Challenge a friend to see how many you can think of without looking them up.  
In addition, present and present perfect continuous participles ('arriving', 'having arrived') can also be used, with or without prepositions ('after arriving', 'after having arrived'). For fun, practise having a "conversation" with a friend using a different connective each time each of you speaks – see how long you can keep going.
- Try redrafting a piece of writing to use all three types of parenthesis rather than just one. They all separate a group of words from the rest of the sentence in which they are not grammatically necessary, but see if you can hear that they create subtly different effects in the degree of separation:
  - i) a pair of commas is the weakest way e.g. 'A dog, which was huge, approached.'
  - ii) a pair of dashes is stronger e.g. 'A dog – which was huge – approached.'
  - iii) a pair of brackets is the strongest e.g. 'A dog (which was huge) approached.'
- Practise persuasive writing. Support all points with proofs and think about how you might persuade your reader – for example the use of tricolon, rhetorical questions, direct address perhaps.
- Read lots of openings to stories and practise beginning the same story in different ways. You could start:
  - i) by setting the scene, referring to place and time, season and weather
  - ii) with description of the main character

- iii) in the middle of the action
- iv) in the middle of dialogue
- v) with an intriguing or shocking statement

- Try writing a plan for a story, then experimenting with different ways to end it. There is a range of ways to end a narrative including:
  - i) ironic comment in direct speech
  - ii) an unexpected twist
  - iii) a return to the beginning
  - iv) a happy ending
  - v) a sad ending
  - vi) a 'cliffhanger'

DON'T end the story by waking up from a dream – that just means that as a writer you couldn't think of an ending to explain what had happened in your story in any other way – a sure sign of poor planning!

To improve your writing further:

- Learn, finally, those little things you've always got wrong and never bothered to work out why e.g. the difference between it's (it is/it has) and its (belonging to it); who's (who is/who has) and whose (belonging to who); continuous (without stopping) and continual (with stops); uninterested (without interest) and disinterested (without prejudice); lay (with object) and lie (without object).
- Remind yourself of any punctuation marks of which you have never been sure.
- You could revise the rules for the use of the apostrophe (missing letter or possession) or the hyphen (using two words as one) or starting a new paragraph (change of time, place or topic). Lack of paragraphing may reduce your mark as it is evidence of lack of planning and/or inability to sequence material.
- Even if you've always had trouble knowing where to put full stops, it's never too late to learn and now is the time, as your writing marks will be reduced if you are unable to form proper sentences or use commas where you should use full stops. If there is no connective you must use either a full stop or a semi-colon at the end of a group of words containing a verb, before starting another one.
- Commas are also important, as they aid the meaning of the writing and the understanding of the reader. Their function is to separate parts of a sentence (phrases and clauses). A test you can apply as to whether a group of words needs commas around it is to try saying the sentence without it. If it still makes sense, then 'scissor' the phrase or clause with a pair of commas to show it can be removed, but if the group of words is necessary to the grammar of the sentence, then do not put commas around it.

### **Finally – use the internet!**

There are websites you can use to improve your skills and you can use search engines to help you find examples of different types of writing too.

Here are a couple of sites you might like to try if you have not already visited them:

[www.englishbiz.co.uk](http://www.englishbiz.co.uk)

[www.topmarks.co.uk](http://www.topmarks.co.uk)

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