Course notes

A2 Key and B1 Preliminary (KET, PET) · Cambridge English · A2 Key (KET)

A2 Key

A2 Key, tasks from 2020; digital and remaining standard paper sessions

Reading/Writing 60 min: 7 parts, 30 reading items and two writing tasks (25+ and 35+ words). Listening about 30 min: 5 parts, 25 items. Speaking 8–10 min per pair: 2 parts. Standard paper A2 Key ends after 3 December 2026; A2 Key Digital and Key for Schools continue.

Official scope: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/610842-a2-key-handbook-for-teachers.pdf

RW.1-3 · Key reading: messages and short texts

- For Part 1, identify who is speaking, who must act and what the message asks. Check negatives, dates and conditions.
- For Part 2, find each description's key need, then compare all three texts. A repeated word is not enough.
- For Part 3, read the whole passage for its main idea, then locate detail evidence. Keep the time and person correct.
- All objective answers must follow the text. Do not replace a notice's instruction with what you would usually do.

■ Checked example

Notice: "Library closes at 4 today. Return books through the outside box after 4." The message allows returns after closing, through the box. "No books can be returned after 4" contradicts the second sentence.

■ Common error

A distractor often repeats the same place or time while reversing the instruction.

RW.4-5 · Key cloze: vocabulary and grammar in context

- Read the complete text before filling gaps. Topic and tense help narrow choices.
- Part 4 has three choices per gap and chiefly tests words in context. Check collocation and meaning.
- Part 5 asks for one word per gap. Pronouns, prepositions, auxiliaries and linking words are common targets.

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- Reread the completed sentence. The answer must agree with nearby grammar and the text's meaning.

■ Checked example

"She was tired, _____ she went to bed early." So expresses the result. But would introduce contrast; because would wrongly make going to bed the reason she was tired. Read both clauses before deciding.

■ Common error

Open cloze allows one word, not a phrase. Check spelling even when you know the rule.

RW.6 · Key writing: a message of at least 25 words

- Part 6 asks for a short email or note of 25 words or more. Turn the three prompts into a three-point checklist.
- Give a direct answer to each content point. Add enough detail for the reader to act.
- Use short complete sentences and a suitable greeting. Connect related information with and, but or because.
- Check content, organisation and language. A teacher reviews the open response; a multiple-choice check is only preparation.

■ Checked example

Task: invite Sam to study, giving place, time and what to bring. "Hi Sam, let's study in the school library on Friday at four. Please bring your science notes and a pencil. We can practise together. See you, Lin." The reader has all three details.

■ Common error

Do not count a greeting as a substitute for a required content point. Avoid memorised messages that ignore the task.

RW.7 · Key writing: a three-picture story

- Look at all pictures first. Identify who appears, what happens and how the ending relates to the beginning.
- Write about every picture. Use past forms for a completed story, with simple links such as then and finally.
- Use names or pronouns clearly so the reader knows who acts. Add only plausible details consistent with the images.
- Part 7 requires 35 words or more. The teacher checks content, organisation and language; the pictures remain the task stimulus.

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■ Checked example

Practice picture sequence: Lin packs a picnic; rain starts at the park; friends eat under a shelter. Story plan: preparation → interrupted picnic → sheltered meal. Do not claim they went swimming when no picture supports it.

■ Common error

Ignoring the last picture leaves the required story incomplete, even when the opening is fluent.

L.1-3 · Key listening: visual choices, notes and conversations

- Before audio, compare picture differences or read note headings. Predict the type of information needed.
- Part 1 tests short-dialogue details. Listen to the final decision, not the first option mentioned.
- Part 2 requires one word, number, date or time. Practise names, spelling and similar numbers.
- Part 3 asks details from a longer conversation. Track who gives each fact and corrections. Use a teacher's live reading when no licensed audio is available.

■ Checked example

Teacher script: "Please meet at the museum entrance at ten fifteen. I first said ten, but the doors open later." Note answer: 10:15. Hearing ten is not sufficient because the speaker corrects it.

■ Common error

Reading a transcript is reading practice. It becomes listening practice only when the learner cannot see the script during delivery.

L.4-5 · Key listening: gist and matching

- Part 4 asks the main message, purpose or topic of each short exchange. Listen for the whole exchange.
- Part 5 connects people or objects to options. Record the relationship, not a list of every word heard.
- Distractors can be activities the speaker rejected. Contrast words but and instead often reveal the final choice.
- Use the second hearing to check uncertainty. Do not change an answer simply because another word sounds familiar.

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■ Checked example

Teacher script: “I wanted to play football, but my leg hurt, so I watched the match instead.” Main action: watched, not played. For matching, “Mina borrowed the red book; Leo chose the blue one” assigns colour to each person.

■ Common error

Match each person’s own choice. A nearby mention of someone else can be a distractor.

S.1-2 · Key speaking: interview and collaborative discussion

- Part 1 asks personal information, routines and preferences. Answer the question directly, then add one relevant detail.
- Part 2 uses visual prompts for a discussion with another candidate. Give a preference and a reason.
- Listen to your partner and respond. Invite a view with “What do you think?” rather than delivering a memorised speech.
- Teachers observe grammar/vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication, with global achievement. Use actual paired speaking, not a written replacement.

■ Checked example

A: “I like reading because I can relax. What about you?” B: “I prefer sport. Reading is good, but I like being outside.” Both give a view, explain it and respond to a partner. There is no single correct hobby.

■ Common error

Speaking is not a speed contest. Clear meaning and interaction matter more than producing a long unbroken answer.

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