Course notes

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

B1 Preliminary

B1 Preliminary, tasks from 2020; paper and digital

Reading 45 min: 6 parts, 32 items. Writing 45 min: compulsory email plus article/story choice, about 100 words each. Listening about 30 min: 4 parts, 25 items. Speaking 10–12 min per pair: 4 parts. Use live performance for speaking.

Official scope: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/168150-b1-preliminary-teachers-handbook.pdf

R.1-2 · Preliminary reading: notices and needs matching

- Part 1 includes messages, notices and other short real-world texts. Identify intent, audience and required action.
- Part 2 gives five people and eight descriptions. Underline each person's requirements before comparing.
- Test every required condition: cost, time, experience, location or activity. One shared keyword is not enough.
- Keep an evidence note for the match. Reject options that satisfy only part of a person's needs.

■ Checked example

Mina needs a beginner photography course on Sunday, below £30. Course A is £20 on Saturday; B is £25 on Sunday for beginners; C is £15 on Sunday for experts. B meets all conditions. A and C each fail an important need.

■ Common error

Do not match from the headline alone. A small qualification in the description may change suitability.

R.3-4 · Preliminary reading: detailed meaning and cohesion

- Part 3 asks detail and meaning from a longer passage. Read once for its overall development, then locate evidence.
- Attitude questions depend on wording and context. Distinguish a character's view from the writer's.
- Part 4 supplies eight sentences for five gaps. Check references, tense, logical links and paragraph progression.

- Read before and after a gap. A sentence can connect backwards but break the next sentence.

■ Checked example

"Ana missed the last train. _____ She decided to phone her brother instead." Candidate: "No buses were running either." This supports the next decision. "Her brother enjoyed trains" shares a noun but does not explain the phone call.

■ Common error

Cohesion needs meaning on both sides of the gap. Pronoun agreement alone is insufficient.

R.5-6 · Preliminary reading: lexical and open cloze

- Read for topic and meaning before individual gaps. Part 5 tests lexical choices, collocations and semantic fit.
- Compare all four alternatives in the complete sentence. Similar words may take different prepositions.
- Part 6 requires one word. Identify whether the gap needs an auxiliary, determiner, pronoun, preposition or connector.
- Check tense, agreement and references by rereading the complete text after answering.

■ Checked example

"The journey took longer _____ we expected." Than makes a comparison with longer. Then marks time order, and although introduces contrast. "She has lived here _____ 2021" needs since, marking the starting point.

■ Common error

One-word answers must stay one word. A correct meaning expressed in a phrase does not meet the format.

W.1 · Preliminary writing: responsive email

- Part 1 is compulsory: reply to an email using the notes provided, in about 100 words.
- Interpret each note as an action: answer, suggest, explain or ask. Give relevant development rather than copying it.
- Use an appropriate greeting, paragraphs and close. Organise the reply so the recipient can follow every answer.

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- Teacher review uses Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language. A local checklist prepares the response; it does not award a Cambridge Scale score.

Checked example

An invitation email asks whether you can attend, when to arrive, what activity to try and where to eat. A plan can have four bullets: accept; arrive at two; suggest cycling because it suits the group; choose the café near the park. Expand them into a coherent reply.

Common error

Do not treat "about 100 words" as permission to omit notes. Accurate content takes priority over ornamental phrases.

W.2 · Preliminary writing: article or story

- Part 2 offers a choice: write an article or story of about 100 words. Read both before choosing.
- An article addresses its topic prompts and audience. Explain examples and give a clear focus.
- A story develops from the supplied opening sentence, with connected events and a clear outcome.
- Plan quickly, then reserve time to check content and language. A teacher reviews the open response, not a rigid model-answer string.

Checked example

Opening: "When I opened the bag, I realised something was wrong." Plan: wrong sports kit → contact a friend → borrow equipment → reach the match. Keep a clear sequence and explain how the problem is resolved.

Common error

A fluent piece in the wrong genre or unrelated to the supplied opening misses the communicative task.

L.1-2 · Preliminary listening: detail and short-extract meaning

- Compare visual options before Part 1 audio. Differences can be place, time, number or action.
- Part 2 short extracts may test feeling, opinion or purpose. Listen for meaning rather than a copied word.
- Track contrast and correction. An earlier plan can be replaced by a later decision.

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- Teacher-read scripts must be hidden from the learner. Use natural B1 pace and two hearings for local tasks.

Checked example

Teacher script: "The morning train was full, so I booked the afternoon one. It costs more, but I'll reach the meeting in time." Final journey: afternoon. Attitude: accepts the higher cost to arrive on time.

Common error

A transcript on screen changes the task to supported reading; do not call that an unaided listening result.

L.3-4 · Preliminary listening: notes and longer interviews

- Part 3 is a monologue with six gaps. Read instructions for the permitted word or number form and preview headings.
- Write the requested detail, not an entire sentence. Keep spelling and number meaning clear.
- Part 4 is a longer interview with six multiple-choice questions. Separate the interviewer's suggestion from the interviewee's view.
- Use the second hearing to verify details and reasons. In local practice the teacher reads the original script twice.

Checked example

Teacher script: "The pottery course starts on 12 May. It lasts six weeks, and the total fee is eighty pounds." Notes: start–12 May; duration–6 weeks; fee–£80. Six is not the start date just because it is a clear number.

Common error

Do not assign the interviewer's question or guessed opinion to the interviewee.

S.1-4 · Preliminary speaking: description, decision and discussion

- Part 1 answers personal questions with relevant development. Part 2 is an individual photograph description.
- Describe location, people, actions and relationships. Use cautious language such as seems when interpreting uncertain details.
- Part 3 asks paired discussion of visual options and a decision. Compare, invite and respond rather than delivering separate speeches.

- Part 4 extends the topic with opinion questions. Teachers assess grammar/vocabulary, discourse management, pronunciation, interactive communication and global achievement.

■ Checked example

Photo practice: three friends at a café, one holding a menu and another carrying a cup. “They seem to be choosing drinks” is plausible. “Her name is Mei and she is exactly seventeen” invents unsupported details. In discussion, explain which venue suits a shared purpose.

■ Common error

Part 2 is an individual long turn; Part 3 is collaborative. A memorised monologue cannot replace partner interaction.

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