

ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXAMS
A GUIDE FOR PARENTS



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ABOUT US

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. We do this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

In the Czech Republic we focus our work on teaching English and organising internationally recognised general English, professional and university examinations.

» **Our organisation**

We are globally renowned as an authority for our work in English teaching, testing and in supporting teachers of English. Every year, three million people take international exams with help from the British Council. We offer exams on behalf of UK awarding organisations, professional bodies and universities in 95 countries across the globe.

» **Our work in exams**



WELCOME TO THE BRITISH COUNCIL

We know that taking an English language exam is an important and special event for school-age learners and parents and is part of achieving future life goals. We created this guide to welcome you to the British Council and to tell you more about our promise to support you and your child through their English exams. Together with schools and language centres we will aim to ensure the experience is stress-free for your child.

You will find information about English language exams, answers to parents' frequently asked questions and advice, tips and online materials to help your child prepare and do their best in their English language exam.

The online version of this guide contains links to more information and resources.

Introduction to English language exams

There are many different types of tests and exams which give an evaluation of your child's level of English. Most education systems and English classes include these in the curriculum or course of study. There are also formal and internationally recognised English language exams available.

Here are some of the main benefits of taking formal English exams.

- To create future education opportunities. Many universities and colleges at home and around the world require an internationally-recognised certificate to demonstrate levels of English.
- To create future career opportunities. A certificate can be used to prove level of English to employers at home and internationally.
- Exams are a clear way to show progress and it is very motivating to reach the next exam level.
- Preparing for exams provides useful practice in communication and study skills.
- The experience of taking an exam at each stage in learning English is good preparation and confidence-building when taking higher-level qualifications in the future.

Preparing for an exam helps children to learn and improve their English. Taking a formal exam provides certification of their level in English and is an achievement for everyone to feel proud of.





PARENTS' FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT ENGLISH LANGUAGE EXAMS

Our teachers and examination staff talk to thousands of parents around the world every year. Here are the most frequently asked questions we receive about English language tests and exams.

You can check which exams we offer on our website.

» **British Council take an exam**

Why should my child take a formal English exam?

A formal test or exam will result in a certificate to prove English levels. This is important for young people when applying to university and can help them forge a successful career. Preparing for a formal English exam can help children recognise their own achievements and feel they are making progress. These achievements help children to feel confident about communicating in social situations such as making friends, travel and extra-curricular classes.

When should my child take a formal English exam?

Your child can take a formal test or exam at any time in their learning journey. For example at the end of a year or when they need to obtain certification to prove their level of English. There are many benefits to taking exams while at school. Your child will get useful practice, develop valuable study skills and increase self-confidence.

How do English exam levels compare to the levels in schools and language centres?

Most formal exams, tests, certificates are aligned to the CEFR. Schools, universities and language centres often describe curriculum levels and courses using the CEFR. As a guide, most learners of English need approximately 200 hours of study to reach each level of the CEFR.

» **Common European Framework Guided Learning Hours**

What does CEFR mean?

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is the international standard for describing levels of ability in any European language. These abilities range from knowing some words, to knowing and using the language almost perfectly. There are three levels A, B and C and each level is divided into two parts 1 and 2. A1 is beginner and C2 is mastery or proficiency.

What is the difference between paper-based and computer-based exams?

Computer-based exams, like paper-based exams take place in a venue with other candidates but candidates complete the written questions on a computer with easy-to-use software. It is a comfortable experience and it is easier for candidates to edit their answers. Speaking papers are not computer-based and your child will take this part with a qualified examiner.

How do I know which level my child is currently at?

Your child's English teacher will be able to help you decide which exam is best for his or her language level and can give you more advice about how you can help your child prepare.

How can I help my child prepare?

As a parent, there are many ways that you can support your child with their English exam and help them to do their best. With an exam preparation course your child can benefit from a teacher's knowledge and expertise. Parents can also help children at home. Completing one or two online activities per week can make a big difference. It is a good idea to choose a regular time to do English activities together such as one afternoon a week, after English class, or at the weekend.



How can my child use their English exam?

Many schools, universities, employers and organisations at home and around the world require a high standard of English and proof of your level. It is usually very important to have a certificate with international recognition to study and work in English. You can find out which organisations accept English language exams online.

» Who accepts Cambridge English Qualifications?

Why choose Cambridge English exams?

Parents and teachers choose Cambridge English Qualifications because they meet the highest standards of quality and make learning English enjoyable, effective and rewarding for school-age learners. They are accepted by thousands of education institutions at home and around the world and are highly valued by employers. There are a range of exams to choose from and provide a structured framework and clear objectives for learning English. The step by step approach with Cambridge English exams helps children and teenagers to build confidence, improve their English and develop the skills they need to communicate in real-life situations. With these exams your child is supported to reach and achieve their language goals for study, work and social purposes.

Which Cambridge English exam should my child take?

Cambridge English: Young Learners tests contain motivating activities. Taking these can help primary and lower-secondary learners improve their English and feel more confident about taking a test in English. Cambridge English: Key and Preliminary help teenagers to prepare and become ready to study for higher-level exams in the future. Reaching a B2 level such as Cambridge English: First is a common goal and very good achievement for many teenagers learning English. Reaching a C1 or C2 level such as Cambridge English: Advanced or Proficiency is an outstanding achievement and shows a mastery of the language. Cambridge English have a free online test to find out which Cambridge English exam may be best.

» Cambridge English test your English

How are Cambridge English exams assessed?

Cambridge English exams evaluate the ability to communicate in English in the four language skills of reading, writing, listening, speaking and use of English. Your child will receive a statement of results showing their score in each skill and their overall score. The overall score is used to show their English ability according to the CEFR levels. Their CEFR level is stated on their certificate. In Starters, Movers and Flyers tests children receive a certificate for participation and up to five special shields to reward their achievement in each part of the test.

What is different about the Cambridge English for Schools exams?

Cambridge English: Key, Preliminary and First for Schools exams have the same structure and international recognition but the content of each paper is more interesting and relevant for school-age learners.

Cambridge English for Schools

How do I know if my child is ready to take an exam?

You can check your child is ready for an exam by doing a practice test together. Cambridge English have many free sample tests and resources for each exam.

» Cambridge English practice tests



What is the structure of Cambridge English Qualifications for school-age learners?

The following Cambridge English exams for children and teenagers are available:

Name of exam	CEFR level	Achievement	Content	Score
Starters, Movers, Flyers	Pre-A1 A1, A2	These are an introduction to English exams for primary and lower-secondary school-age learners and for building confidence in communicating in English about familiar topics.	Three papers: Reading and Writing, Listening, Speaking	Up to five Cambridge shields for each paper
Key for Schools	A2	This is for communicating in simple everyday situations and showing essential English language skills.	Three papers: Reading and Writing, Listening, Speaking	Pass with Distinction, Pass with Merit, Pass, Level A1
Preliminary for Schools	B1	This is for communicating in everyday study and social situations and showing a mastery of the basics in English.	Three papers: Reading and Writing, Listening, Speaking	Pass with Distinction, Pass with Merit, Pass, Level A2
First for Schools	B2	This is for communicating with confidence in an English-speaking environment, everyday study, work and social situations and proving ability at B2 level.	Four papers: Reading and Use of English, Writing, Listening, Speaking	Grade A, B or C or level B1
Advanced	C1	This is for communicating with confidence in English at an advanced level in study, work and social situations and proving ability at C1 level.	Four papers: Reading and Use of English, Writing, Listening, Speaking	Grade A, B or C or level B2
Proficiency	C2	This is for communicating with confidence in English at a proficient level in study, work and social situations and proving ability at C2 level.	Four papers: Reading and Use of English, Writing, Listening, Speaking	Grade A, B or C or level C1

» **Cambridge English Qualifications for schools**



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We are the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations. We are registered as a charity.



IELTS™

What is IELTS?

The international English language testing system (IELTS) is a popular English language proficiency test for people who want to study or work where English is the language of communication. Over three million IELTS tests were taken around the world last year. Test-takers are assessed on their ability in reading, writing, listening and speaking in English. Test-takers will receive a result in each skill and an overall score. Results are given on a band scale from 1 (the lowest) to 9 (the highest). IELTS bands are mapped to the CEFR.

» About IELTS

Why choose IELTS?

Older teenagers and young adults often choose IELTS for higher education reasons. IELTS has international recognition and is accepted by over 10,000 organisations worldwide, including universities, employers, and professional bodies. Most higher education institutions ask for the IELTS Academic test and set an entry requirement for courses. IELTS has very convenient registration processes and a wide availability of test locations and dates worldwide.

» IELTS Academic or IELTS General Training

» Who accepts IELTS?

How can test-takers prepare for IELTS?

In addition to a preparation class there are many more resources available to support test-takers with IELTS. At the British Council we offer a wide range of support materials with expert advice and practice resources to help prepare for the test. We provide all of our test-takers with access to Road to IELTS, the British Council's online preparation and practice website for the test.

» Road to IELTS





TAKING AN EXAM WITH THE BRITISH COUNCIL

Here we list some of the reasons why to choose British Council and some of the questions parents ask us about taking an exam with us.

We can guarantee quality

We are experts in English language teaching and testing. Our experienced staff receive regular training to meet British Council and exam board quality standards.

» **Why us?**

We choose exam venues carefully

We organise exams at schools and other carefully selected venues. We ensure all venues are comfortable, quiet and secure. Computer-based and listening tests are conducted with state-of-the-art equipment.

We can offer a safe environment for your child

Our trained staff will take care of your child, during exams and English classes, and ensure a safe and friendly experience. The British Council is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people which we achieve through our global child protection policy.

» **Our child protection policy**

We organise exams for special needs candidates

We aim to ensure that every candidate is treated fairly and objectively. We can provide a special arrangements service for candidates with hearing, speech, visual and kinetic difficulties, as well as for candidates with learning difficulties. We encourage parents, teachers and schools to discuss their child's needs and the help that is available with us. Please contact us at least three months in advance of your child's exam date to ensure we have enough time to arrange everything that is needed.

» **Special arrangements**



Frequently asked questions

What if my child suddenly falls sick or is delayed?

If your child is delayed on the day of the exam or feels unwell during the exam we will help to make special arrangements in accordance with the exam board rules and regulations.

Do I have to register for my child's exam through a school or language centre?

There is a wide range of British Council Partner Schools that will be able to help you with your child's registration. If your school is not a British Council partner, you can register directly through our website.

» **Register for an exam**



How does the British Council help candidates, teachers and schools with English exams?

We aim to go beyond the day of the exam. Our customer services teams are available to support you and your child through every stage of taking an exam. We also offer candidates and teachers a range of high-quality materials to help prepare for exams.

Schools and language centres that register candidates with us are invited to join our Addvantage loyalty scheme. We offer members additional services and benefits such as special exam rates, presentations and workshops for schools, teacher training, school competitions and more. To find out more about Addvantage and how it can help your child and school, please contact your British Council examinations centre.

» **Addvantage member scheme**

How does the British Council communicate with candidates and schools?

We are in regular contact with schools and language centres through our exams administration team. They receive all the latest information about exams and any important announcements on the exam day.

Do children have to take preparation classes to sit for a Cambridge English exam?

It is not a requirement to follow preparation classes to take a Cambridge English exam but there are many benefits to taking a preparation class. A qualified and experienced English teacher can help structure your child's learning and give them important feedback on their language and skills. They will also have plenty of opportunities to practise their English with classmates.

How will my child get their results and certificate?

Cambridge English results for paper-based exams are available between four and six weeks after you take the exam and for computer-based exams it is two weeks. Cambridge English: Young Learner test results are issued approximately eight weeks later. We will notify you or your school when your certificate is available for collection.

» **Cambridge English Online Results Service**

What if my child is unable to attend the exam or needs to change the exam date?

Please check with your school or language centre, or if you registered with us directly, with your British Council examinations centre. You may be asked to provide supporting documents when making a request.

What if we lose the certificate or need an additional copy?

Cambridge English are not able to replace lost certificates but you can apply for a certifying statement, which is an official confirmation, if you need to prove your result.

» **Cambridge English lost certificates**

What if I am not happy with my child's result?

If you are not happy with your child's result, you can make a request to query it through your British Council examinations centre. Cambridge English has a vigorous and thorough result enquiry procedure to ensure all components are checked and, if requested, re-marked for a fee.



HELPING YOUR CHILD PREPARE FOR ENGLISH EXAMS

Parents do not need to know a lot of English to help children prepare for English exams. Your support and encouragement can make a big difference to your child's motivation. Extra practice at home is a great way to support what they are learning in their English classes and help your child to get the result they want in their exam.

5–12 year olds

Children can do well by learning what is needed for the test or exam and practising some fun activities with parents. This will help them to feel less nervous about what happens.

13–18 year olds

Teenagers can do well if they plan ahead and make time for effective revision and practice. This will give them confidence before the exam and can reduce feelings of stress and anxiety. Teenagers may find it difficult to organise their time and get started, and this is where parents can help.

How can I help my child get started?

There are many ways you can help your child start with revision and exam practice. Here are our top tips for doing this at home.

- **Become familiar with the exam**

On the exam website you can read about the exam your child is taking and look for revision materials and practice tests which are available. Help them to choose the resources which are best for them.

- **Help with planning**

Provide an area at home for studying and help to create a revision timetable. This is particularly useful for teenagers taking other school exams at the same time.

- **Look at an exam practice test**

Ask your child to tell you about the exam strategies they have learned for answering different types of questions before they complete a practice test.

- **Find online exam practice**

The British Council's **LearnEnglish Kids** website is a fun, educational website for children aged 5–12 who are learning English. There are online vocabulary and grammar games, songs, stories and videos. The activities are designed for children to do on their own, with friends or with parents and teachers.

The British Council's **LearnEnglish Teens** website has a lot of material for your child to practise and improve their English. The **Skills section** has listening, reading, and writing practice activities that are similar to those that they will find in their English exams. There is also an **Exam section** that has a lot of advice and information to help your child prepare for their exams.

The British Council's **Learn English Exams** website is designed to support teenagers preparing for Cambridge English: First for Schools and Advanced exams. It contains tips and advice, strategies, practice exercises and reflection stages for the Reading, Listening, Use of English, Speaking and Writing papers. The website is the ideal place for teenagers to get revision and last-minute practice before taking their exam.

- **Help to check answers and reflect on understanding**

Encourage your child to check their answers to exam practice exercises and think about what they got right or wrong and why.

- **Help with concentration**

Teenagers often face many distractions when they study but turning off phones and listening to some types of music can help.

- **Ask for help**

Talk to your child's teacher or examination centre if you would like more information or advice about the exam and preparation.



HELPING YOUR CHILD ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM

Here are our top tips for what parents can do to help children on the day of the exam.

BEFORE THE EXAM

Parents can help to ensure children feel confident about the exam day and reduce nerves. For example:

- ✓ read the exam rules together
- ✓ check you both know where and when the exam will take place
- ✓ check your child knows exactly what to bring to the exam.

ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM

When it comes to the day of the exam, you can help your child keep calm and focused. Here are our tips:

- ✓ make sure they get a good night's sleep and eat a healthy breakfast
- ✓ make sure they leave plenty of time and arrive at the exam location early
- ✓ remind them that if they find a question difficult it's best to move on to the next question
- ✓ encourage them to do their best.

AFTER THE EXAM

Immediately after the exam you can help your child reflect on their performance and remain positive. For example:

- ✓ ask them about how the exam went
- ✓ show that you are proud of them for this achievement
- ✓ celebrate the end of the exam with a special treat together.

You can continue to help by talking about your child's exam results when they arrive and discussing their next steps in learning English together.



ONLINE RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN

Here are some of our top activities from the British Council's LearnEnglish Kids website that you can do together with your child to support their preparation for Cambridge English: Young Learners tests.



Reading and writing

Stories

Many of the questions in Starters, Movers and Flyers are based on stories. There are lots of great stories with activities for children to watch on LearnEnglish Kids. Not only are these activities good exam practice but reading stories is also a great way for children to improve vocabulary and language skills.

» Stories



Spelling

Correct spelling is important in all parts of the reading and writing papers of YLE exams. Children can practise spelling everyday English words with fun story characters in the spell section of LearnEnglish Kids.

» Spelling practice

Children can practise spelling some of the trickiest words in English with these fun games:

» Tricky word games



Factual texts

In Young Learners exams children also need to answer questions about factual texts. In the reading practice section of LearnEnglish Kids children can complete activities and practise with this type of text. Remember to choose your child's activity level, pre-A1, A1 or A2 according to the exam they are preparing for.

» Reading practice

Vocabulary

Another question children will see in Young Learners exams is reading short sentences and recognising words. In the grammar and vocabulary section of LearnEnglish Kids there are many exercises on familiar topics such as colours, animals, clothes, holidays and the environment. Children can play fun games and practise recognising and spelling words at the same time!

» Word games





Speaking

Introducing yourself

In the first part of the speaking test in Starters, Movers and Flyers, children need to say their name, family name and age. You can help your child feel confident at the start of the test by practising asking and answering some questions together: *What's your name? What's your family name? How old are you?* Why not have fun by trying to spell your name and age backwards! For more enjoyable activities in which children can learn about sounds, vocabulary and developing their listening skills, there are a range of fun games in LearnEnglish Kids.

» Games

Say it out loud: It is a good idea to say words out loud to practise speaking in English. You can do this together by reading a word first and then ask your child to repeat. In the speak section of LearnEnglish kids children can practise saying words out loud with fun story characters.

» Speaking practice

Sounds

A good warm up activity and fun game you can play with your child to practise speaking is 'I spy'. You can also play this game with sounds like to practise similar sounds in English. For example. *I spy with my little eye, something that sounds like 'clock'*. Possible answers are 'broccoli' 'chocolate' 'crocodile'.

» I-spy song.

Listening

Conversations

Many of the questions in the listening paper of Young Learners exams are based on listening to short conversations between an adult and a child. Children can practise this type of listening in the Grammar with Gran and Kitty section of LearnEnglish Kids. There are many videos and exercises with common grammar points that your child will see in Cambridge English: Young Learner tests.

» Grammar videos

Pictures and songs

Another type of listening question in Starters, Movers and Flyers is looking at a picture and doing a task. A fun way to practise is by listening to songs with videos. In our songs section of LearnEnglish Kids there are many traditional and modern English songs for children to watch and learn. Children can tell you in English what they can see in the pictures in the video. Why not sing the songs together to improve pronunciation too!

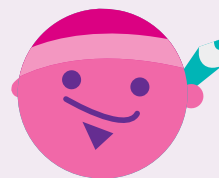
» Songs

There are many more free resources for kids in each section of the LearnEnglish Kids website.



ONLINE RESOURCES FOR TEENAGERS

Here are some of our top activities from the British Council's LearnEnglish Teens website with familiar topics and types of questions to support teenagers preparing for Cambridge English: Key, Preliminary, First and Advanced exams.



Reading

The reading section gives you help and advice for all types of reading tests and exams. We explain what you can do before a reading exam and during the exam to get top marks.

» [Reading](#)

Grammar and vocabulary

The grammar and vocabulary section gives you tips and advice for grammar and vocabulary tests. There are lots of different ways to test grammar and vocabulary and this section will introduce you to some of them.

» [Grammar and vocabulary](#)

Writing

The writing section gives you help and advice for all types of writing tests and exams, and focuses on planning time, writing time and reviewing time.

» [Writing](#)

Study tips

The study tips section gives you tips and advice to help you get better marks in all your exams. Getting enough sleep, eating well and planning your time are three of the areas we focus on.

» [Study tips](#)

Speaking

The speaking section gives you help and advice for different types of speaking tests and exams. You can watch six videos of real students doing speaking exams.

» [Speaking](#)

There are many more free resources for teenagers in each section of the LearnEnglish Teens website.



Listening

The listening section gives you help and advice for all types of listening tests and exams. We explain what you can do before a listening exam and during the exam to get top marks.

» [Listening](#)





ONLINE RESOURCES FOR TEENAGERS CONTINUED...

One of the British Council's top online resources to support candidates preparing for Cambridge English: First and Advanced exams is our Road to Success in First and Advanced exam preparation website.

The website provides last-minute practice and revision exercises online. With Road to Success students can boost their knowledge, skills and confidence before taking Cambridge First, First for Schools and Advanced exams.

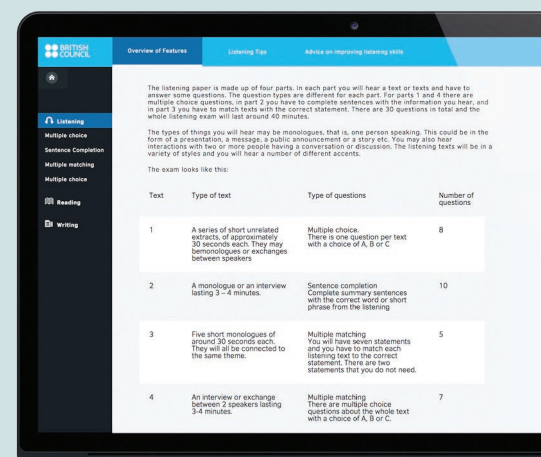
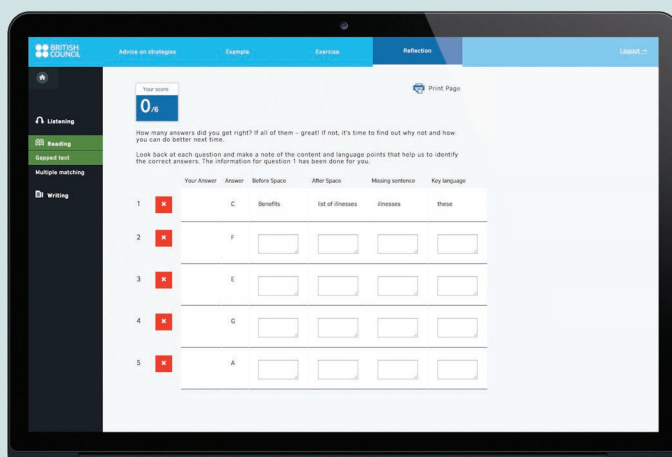
With this online resource you can:

- Get advice about the Reading and Use of English, Listening, Writing and Speaking questions.
- Get tips and strategies to help answer different types of questions.
- Complete practice exercises for a variety of tasks in the exam and apply different strategies.

- Reflect on learning and understand why an answer is right or wrong and see how to do better next time.
- Get advice for improving English skills further.

Road to Success in First and Advanced is available exclusively to schools, language centres and candidates who register for these exams with the British Council. For more information please check with your child's teacher or your examinations centre.

» **Road to Success in First and Advanced**





ONLINE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

The British Council has many online resources and communities for parents to help their children and teenagers learn English and prepare for English exams.

At our dedicated website for parents you will find lots of expert advice about helping your child learn English. You can search our hundreds of free online English games, songs, stories and activities here and find more information on our apps for mobile phones and tablets.

» [LearnEnglish Parents website](#)

Join our global Facebook community of parents for top tips, interesting articles and advice for helping your child to learn English.

» [LearnEnglish Parents Facebook](#)





FIND OUT MORE

Learn**English** Kids

Learn**English** Teens

Learn**English**



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