CAMBRIDGE

Practice Tests for IGCSE English as a Second Language

Reading and Writing

Book 1

Marian Barry,
Barbara Campbell,
Sue Daish

th Key

Endorsed by University of Cambridge International Examinations

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Previously published by Georgian Press

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521140591 (without key)
www.cambridge.org/9780521140614 (with key)

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First published by Georgian Press (Jersey) Limited 2006
Second edition 2007
Reprinted and published by Cambridge University Press 2010 (twice)

Printed in the United Kingdom by Latimer Trend

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-14059-1 Paperback without key
ISBN 978-0-521-14061-4 Paperback with key

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IGCSE IN E2L AT A GLANCE

PAPER 1 Reading and Writing

(Core curriculum) 1½ hours

PAPER 2 Reading and Writing

(Extended curriculum) 2 hours

EXERCISE 1: READING

Candidates answer questions of factual detail about a text (an advertisement, brochure, leaflet, guide, instructions, etc). Skimming/scanning and gist reading skills are tested, and short answers using single words or phrases are required.

Total marks: Core 6, Extended 8

EXERCISE 2: READING

Candidates answer questions requiring a more detailed understanding of a text, such as a report or newspaper/magazine article with a graphical element (a map, chart, graph or diagram). One question may ask candidates to make a list of points based on the text.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 14

EXERCISE 3: INFORMATION TRANSFER

Candidates complete a form or skeletal notes using information given in a scenario on the question paper.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 8

EXERCISE 4: NOTE-MAKING

Candidates write brief notes from a written text, under a heading or headings provided.

Total marks: Core 6, Extended 8

EXERCISE 5: SUMMARY WRITING

Extended candidates write about 100 words on an aspect or aspects of a written text, such as a newspaper or magazine article.

Core candidates write a paragraph of no more than 70 words, using their notes from Exercise 4.

Total marks: Core 4, Extended 10

EXERCISE 6: WRITING

Extended candidates write about 150–200 words (Core candidates 100–150 words) of continuous prose. The purpose, format and audience are specified, e.g. an informal letter to a friend, or an article about a holiday for the school magazine. Candidates must use an appropriate style and register. A stimulus is provided, in the form of pictures or photos and/or short prompts.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 18

EXERCISE 7: WRITING

Extended candidates write about 150–200 words (Core candidates 100–150 words) of continuous prose. The format, purpose and audience are specified, and will be different from Exercise 6, e.g. a formal letter to a newspaper about a local issue. Candidates must use an appropriate style and register. A stimulus is provided, in the form of pictures or photos and/or short prompts.

The prompts are a guide to help students focus their thoughts and are not meant to be prescriptive. Good candidates can use them selectively, and some may choose to write totally without reference to the prompts. This is perfectly acceptable, as long as they do not drift away from the point of the question.

Total marks: Core 10, Extended 18

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 1: 56
Weighting: 70% **Grades available:** C–G

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 2: 84
Weighting: 70% **Grades available:** A–E

PAPER 3 Listening

(Core curriculum) 30–40 minutes

PAPER 4 Listening

(Extended curriculum) 45 minutes

QUESTIONS 1–6

Candidates answer questions on six short spoken texts, such as informal conversations, travel announcements, answerphone messages. They are required to identify specific points of information. Each text is heard twice, and short answers (one word or phrase) are required.

Total marks: Core 7, Extended 8

QUESTIONS 7 AND 8

Candidates listen to two recordings of longer spoken texts, such as formal or informal conversations, interviews, monologues, formal talks. Each text is heard twice.

Candidates fill in skeletal notes or close gaps on forms or charts with single words or short phrases. They need to be able to select information from what may be incidental.

Total marks: Core 12, Extended 16

QUESTIONS 9 AND 10

Candidates listen to two recordings, which may be informal conversations or more formal talks, interviews, etc. Each text is heard twice.

Extended candidates answer about six questions on each recording, requiring short or sentence-length answers. Core candidates answer about 10 true-false or multiple-choice questions on each recording by ticking boxes. In both cases, candidates need to be able to understand more complex meanings, opinions and attitudes of the speakers. Extended candidates should also be able to infer meaning implicit in the text.

Total marks: Core 11, Extended 12

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 3: 30
Weighting: 30% **Grades available:** C–G

TOTAL MARKS FOR PAPER 4: 36
Weighting: 30% **Grades available:** A–E

COMPONENT 5 Oral test

(Core and Extended curriculum) 10–12 mins

Candidates take part in a discussion with the teacher/examiner, and possibly another candidate, on a set topic. There are up to five topics, e.g. holidays, health and fitness, the rights and wrongs of zoos, winning the lottery. After a short warm-up, which is not assessed, candidates are allowed 2–3 minutes to read the Oral Assessment card which has been selected by the examiner. The cards include prompts to guide the discussion. Candidates are not allowed to make written notes.

The conversation itself should last 6–9 minutes.

Detailed guidance is provided by CIE on how to conduct the Oral tests, and advice should be sought regarding all aspects of the tests.

Grades available: 1 (high) to 5 (low)

COMPONENT 6 Oral coursework

(Core and Extended curriculum)

Instead of Component 5, centres may, with the permission of CIE, opt for Component 6. This is a coursework option in which oral work is set and assessed by the teacher, at any time in the year before the written exam. Each candidate is assessed on three oral tasks, e.g. role play situations, telephone conversations, interviews, paired or group discussions, brief talks followed by discussion, debates. Further guidance on suitable types of tasks is given in the Distance Training Pack, available from CIE.

Grades available: 1 (high) to 5 (low)

More detailed information about the IGCSE in E2L examination, including support available for teachers, can be obtained from University of Cambridge International Examinations, 1 Hills Road, Cambridge CB1 2EU, United Kingdom, and online at **www.cie.org.uk**

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INTRODUCTION

About the IGCSE in E2L

These Practice Tests are designed to give practice in the Reading and Writing papers of the revised (2006) Cambridge IGCSE examination in English as Second Language. The exam is set at two levels, known as Core and Extended. The Core papers are aimed at lower-intermediate to intermediate students, hoping to achieve a grade C–G, while the Extended level is for intermediate to upper-intermediate students hoping to achieve grades A*–E. *(See IGCSE in E2L at a Glance on pages 6/7 for a detailed overview.)*

The exam is usually taken as part of the IGCSE curriculum, which offers a wide range of subjects. It can be taken at any age, although most students are about 16 years old. Students generally study for the exam over a period of two years, which allows them to develop both intellectually and emotionally.

The IGCSE in E2L qualification is widely recognised by universities where evidence of attainment in English is a requirement of entry.

About the Practice Tests

Like the exam, the material used in the Practice Tests aims to be international in perspective, culturally fair to students from all parts of the world, educational in impact and to reflect the needs and interests of teenagers. Exam tasks are realistic and similar to what students could be expected to meet at work, in training or in academic study.

The **Practice Tests** have the following benefits:

- They introduce students to the exam format.
- They allow students to experience a simulated exam under exam-type conditions.
- They help to build confidence and to develop exam techniques.
- Gaps in students' learning and skills can be uncovered and remedied.
- Students can acquire insight into what the examiners are looking for.

Common questions asked about the IGCSE in E2L

Why are there two choices of entry level?

The separate papers for Core and Extended levels are intended to encompass a wide ability range and to allow all students a chance of being awarded a qualification and a grade which reflects their level of ability in English.

This book contains three Extended-level Practice Tests (the most popular level) and one Core-level Test.

What are the differences between Papers 1 and 2? (i.e. Reading and Writing, Core, and Reading and Writing, Extended)

The exercises and tasks for the two levels are very similar. The differences are largely in the way the same exercises are adapted to be more challenging at Extended level and to stretch the candidates further. This is achieved mainly by asking additional questions on a reading text or by asking Extended candidates to write at greater length. However, there are a few specific differences. At Core level, note-taking and summary tasks are based on one text, whereas at Extended level, two different texts are used and the tasks are kept completely separate.

Some of the exam-type texts look very demanding. Is this a real problem?
Although some exam-type texts are demanding in terms of reading level, the tasks which students are asked to carry out in the exam are very straightforward. Exam practice will build the necessary confidence required to tackle difficult-looking texts with assurance.

I notice there is no Use of English paper in the exam. Why is this?
The aim of the exam is to enable students to make the language that they know work effectively in a practical context. The testing of language structures and vocabulary is integrated into the assessment of students' ability to carry out practical communication tasks. A few slight technical mistakes will not affect a student's grade as long as the overall impression is appropriate. This approach is fairer to students learning English in a second-language situation, where they may be 'picking up' English in a number of ways, not just learning it in their English classes.

How to use the Practice Tests

The Tests are designed to be used as flexibly as possible. They can be introduced at any time in the learning process when you feel students will benefit from being tested on exam-style exercises. Tests may be broken down into stand-alone exercises and integrated into coursework, perhaps as consolidation for work on a particular skill. Some exercises could be discussed in class before students start work on them; others could be treated as a check on skill level and students asked to complete them without help. The latter approach is also useful for diagnostic assessment at the start of the course. Alternatively, a whole test could be taken as a mock exam under exam conditions when you feel the students are ready. Obviously, you may have to extend normal lesson time to do this. Test results should help predict the kind of grade the students will get in the exam itself.

Timing

One of the benefits of Practice Tests is that students have the opportunity to practise timing themselves to see how they can build up speed for the actual exam. You can help them do this by gradually reducing the amount of time you allocate to particular exercises. This will encourage them to sustain concentration at a higher level for longer periods, to read and retain information more effectively, and to produce writing of a better and more consistent quality.

General advice on marking

When you decide on a mark, you need to take into account how well the student has completed the particular task. Students who fulfil a task very effectively should be given either full or very high marks. Students who do less well should naturally be awarded lower marks. However, the extent to which you apply this criterion will depend on the needs and capabilities of your own students. In order to motivate and encourage, you may want to be quite lenient in grading work at first, when the exercises are relatively unfamiliar, and become stricter as students progress in skills and experience.

Marking comprehension exercises

The right answer to a comprehension question is one in which the student has extracted the correct information from the text. An answer to a question may also be drawn from non-verbal information such as a chart or graph.

Sometimes there is more than one possible answer to a question. This is shown in the Key by the use of slash/slashes. Information which may be included in the answer but which is not necessary for achieving the mark is put into brackets. Answers requiring specific amounts, percentages, numbers, etc must be exact, not generalised. Sometimes an answer to a question has more than one element and both elements are required to obtain the mark. This is shown clearly both in the layout of the question and in the Key.

Marking information transfer (form-filling) exercises

Look out for the most common exam mistakes, which are:

- Filling in the form for themselves, not the person in the scenario.
- Mistakes in copying factual details (e.g. names, addresses, telephone numbers, dates), which need to be error-free to obtain the marks allocated.
- Not using block capital letters where required.
- Not following specific instructions such as *Circle*, *Delete*, *Tick*, etc.

Marking note-taking exercises

In the exam, the note-taking exercises take the form of headings followed by bullet points, against which students write their notes. Full sentences are not required and answers can be one word or a brief phrase. Students should take care with spelling, however, as they may inadvertently miss a mark if a misspelled word gives another meaning. The bullet points guide the student as to the number of points to find, and each point should be used only once.

Weak note-taking answers tend to extract irrelevant information from the text or put the right points under the wrong headings.

Marking summaries

Summary questions are selective which means that only some of the information in the text is relevant.

Core-level summaries are linked to the preceding note-taking task. Students are asked to re-present their notes in continuous prose. For example, in Exercise 4 the students may make notes for a wildlife club on a text about endangered species. Then, in Exercise 5, they have to summarise the notes into a connected paragraph for a school magazine feature. The summary exercise for Extended-level is completely separate from the preceding note-taking exercise.

When marking summaries look for the following:

- Inclusion of the appropriate content points.
- The ability to change some of the language of the text into own words without destroying the original meaning.
- Use of a clear and logical sequence.
- Good spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Good summaries should be completely understandable, even by someone who has not seen the original text. Weaker summaries, on the other hand, show less understanding of the task by failing to include all the relevant points. Weaker answers often include information which is not required by the question, chunks of text are copied, and there are errors in grammar and vocabulary which obscure the meaning.

Detailed guidelines for marking the language aspect of the summary exercises are given on page 82 of the Key.

Marking compositions

Exam compositions are not marked by examiners with perfect model answers next to them. They mark each script on its own merits and in accordance with an agreed interpretation of exam guidelines. (These are summarised in the table provided on page 83 of the Key.) When marking your own students' work, you can grade it appropriately and help them reach exam standards by using the following approach.

Firstly, a balanced view of a composition is important when you decide on an overall mark. One or two errors should not 'ruin' an effective piece of work if these are balanced out by other strengths. At IGCSE level, even the best students are expected to suffer from some frustration with the language and to make one or two mistakes, especially if they are being ambitious in their choice of grammar, vocabulary and idioms.

The best compositions, as a rule of thumb, are clear, straightforward and easy to read. They have definite beginnings and endings. The student shows involvement with the topic he/she is writing about, and is able to arouse your interest in it. Compositions of this kind can be given marks at the top end of the range.

Weak writing, on the other hand, is much more difficult to follow and you may find yourself re-reading it several times in order to make out the sense. As a reader, you don't feel drawn into the topic. After you have finished reading it, you may not be entirely clear about the meaning, or the student's opinions, or, if he/she was telling you a story, what exactly happened or how the story ended. Weak writing should be given marks at the lower end of the range.

Some writing is neither very good nor very weak. The task is interpreted in a safe but unexciting way. The meaning is clear but as a reader, you won't find it especially interesting or enjoyable to read. Average compositions of this type can be given middle-range marks.

Checklist for marking

In addition to the general guidance given above, you may like to use this checklist to help you when selecting a mark for your students' work.

1 ***Answering the question***
Does the writing cover the question set, or does it drift away from the question? If rubric prompts are given, are these addressed?

2 ***Sentence construction***
Do sentences begin and end in the right places? How varied are the sentences – are they a mixture of lengths or mostly short and simple? Are any relative clauses used?

3 ***Grammar***
To what extent are tenses, modal verbs, conditionals and other grammatical features accurate where used? Is there some ambition in the use of grammatical structures, or does the student keep to very simple structures he/she can manage accurately?

4 ***Vocabulary***
How varied and accurate is the vocabulary for the intended meaning? Does the student keep to limited and repetitive vocabulary, or is he/she making a real effort to use a wider range of vocabulary? Are any idioms used?

5 ***Punctuation***
Is punctuation used? Is the punctuation accurate? Has the candidate set him/herself a more complex punctuation task (e.g. punctuating direct speech), and how well is this task achieved?

6 ***Spelling***
How accurate is the spelling? Are simple, common words (e.g. *house*, *table*) spelled correctly? Are misspellings mostly because the student is trying to achieve a more ambitious effect with complex vocabulary? Are the spelling mistakes phonetic (e.g. *frend* for *friend*)? Remember, phonetic mistakes interfere less with communication than other kinds of spelling errors.

7 ***Paragraphing***
Has the student organised his/her own work into paragraphs? Are the paragraphs in the right sequence and accurately linked together so the writing makes a coherent whole?

8 ***Subject matter***
How well does the student deal with the topic? Does he/she get straight into the topic and seem interested in it, and also make the reader interested in it?

9 ***Tone, register, sense of audience***
Do the tone, register and sense of audience feel right for the purpose? Competition entries, for example, should sound positive, enthusiastic and encouraging; a letter to a friend should sound friendly and sympathetic, whereas a letter to a newspaper should sound more formal and distanced.

10 ***Sense of argument***
Is the argument set out clearly and logically and does the writer come to a clear conclusion? Are you sure what he/she thinks, or are there contradictions? Does the writer give clear examples? Are linking words (e.g. *however*, *moreover*) used, and do these help to make the meaning clear?

11 ***Length of work***
Is the writing about the right length, within the word limit given?

Helping students improve their work

Setting and marking work is a tried and tested way of supporting learning. There are several ways of marking work so that students can learn and move on from their mistakes. Marking is most helpful when it is selective, so that some errors are highlighted and others are overlooked.

Error analysis

Error analysis is used to draw the attention of the class to an extract written by a fellow student which is a clear example of a mistake to avoid. You can read the extract aloud and ask students to analyse the error(s), or write the extract on the board. If your class is not familiar with error analysis, it is useful to explain the idea behind it so that the student who wrote the extract understands that the criticism is objective. Error analysis is a particularly useful way of giving feedback if you come across an example of something which has recently been taught to the class, e.g. an error in tone and register, or an inappropriate beginning or ending, or a point of grammar. It is best to focus the error analysis on a few sentences extracted from a student's composition, rather than looking at a whole piece of work.

Written feedback

In addition to error analysis, you can write comments at the end of students' work. The most helpful ones are usually specific comments that pick up on areas of language that have recently been taught. You can ask students to rewrite drafts of work to produce a better example. Misspelled words should be written out correctly for students to copy and learn. Areas of improvement should also be commented on and praised, to reinforce students' sense of progress and to continue to motivate and encourage.

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