

2021 TEACHER TRAINING COURSE

TEACHING WRITING: B1 AND B2

CAMBRIDGE B1 – PRELIMINARY EXAM

- 2 parts – 45 minutes in total
- Part 1 – Compulsory Email (about 100 words)
- Part 2 – Choice between an article and a story (about 100 words)

CAMBRIDGE B2 – FIRST EXAM

- 2 parts – 80 minutes in total
- Part 1 – Compulsory Essay (140–190 words)
- Part 2 – Choice between four options, including: article, email/letter, essay, review, story (140–190 words)

Planning Your Time

How should students dedicate their time for B1 and B2 writing.

If we consider that in 45 minutes (B1) or 80 minutes (B2), students have to produce two texts which carry the same possible marks, no more than 22/23 minutes (B1) and 40 minutes (B2) should be dedicated to each task. How can we divide this time?

B1

5 mins: Reading the question, Thinking, Planning

15 mins: Writing

2 or 3 minutes: Checking and Correcting

B2

10 mins: Reading the question, Thinking/Brainstorming ideas, Making a plan

25 minutes: Writing (for an essay, this gives you 5 mins per paragraph)

5 mins: Checking and Correcting

Making a Plan

The key to writing well is thinking about the question well, and making a plan.

The first 5 minutes (B1) or 10 minutes (B2) of the writing task should be dedicated to reading the question, thinking about it and making a plan.

Most students will not write an organised text unless they have made a plan beforehand.

Things to consider:

Formality

- Semi-formal: essay, email/letter (to unknown person)
- Semi-informal: review, article, story
- Informal: email/letter (to a friend)

How many paragraphs? – no writing for B1 or B2 should have fewer than three paragraphs, or more than five.

What will each paragraph contain? – e.g., introduction, point 1 and 2 of the letter, the start of the story.

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Writing a Story

The story option in Preliminary B1 and First B2 always gives you some idea to start you writing. The most common ones are:

A title: e.g., The Luckiest Day of My Life

The first line: e.g., “When I opened the letter, I couldn’t believe my eyes”

The last line: e.g., “ ... and that’s how I became a millionaire!”

In addition, the First B1 adds two elements that your story must include. For example:

A meeting

A stranger

Even if the question does not give you a title, your story should have one (this is equally true for the article and review).

Elements of a Successful Story

What are examiners looking for in a story?

Narrative tenses – which 3 tenses are generally considered narrative tenses? Write them in the chat.

- Past Simple: for important events, told in the order that they happened.
- Past Continuous: for “background” actions or longer actions interrupted by the past simple.
- Past Perfect: for “flashback” events or to reveal surprises.

Time expressions

- Then, later, one hour later, two days before etc.

Adverbs

- Suddenly, Immediately, Unfortunately etc.

Interesting vocabulary

- Extreme adjectives: not just “big” but “huge”, not just “good” but “delicious”, “fantastic”, “amazing”,

Emoji Story

To get students interested in writing stories, why not give them some engaging prompts?

Emojis can be used as inspiration for a story.

Pressing [Windows key] and the [full stop] in Word will give you Emojis.

Five Emojis should be enough for a story for B1 or B2.

Dividing the story can make it easier to order.

- Where were you? What were you doing?
- What happened? What happened then? (longer, maybe 2 paragraphs)
- How did it finish?

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Writing an Article

The aim of an article is to grab the reader's interest, and hold it until the end. How can students do this? Most article questions give students a lot of information on how to answer. The students must answer all the questions in the article question. Usually, the questions are already in a logical order.

One way to answer the question is to use this format:

1. Introduce the topic. For example, if the topic is "My closest friend", spend the first paragraph writing about friendship and why it is important. Then end with your best friend's name.
2. Now start to answer the questions. Try to give the objective facts first: Where did you meet him/her, How long have you known him/her?
3. Move onto the more emotional aspects. What influence has she/he had on your life? (Can you give an example?)
4. A short conclusion. Often, because an article requires you to speak of your experiences, maybe you can talk about the future: How you hope to stay friends forever/ What you have planned next summer etc.

How can we grab the reader's attention in the article?

Ask the reader rhetorical questions:

- "Have you ever? Well, I have! In fact, last year"
- "Did you know that"?
- "Would you believe that.....?"
- "What would you say if I told you that?"

Use exciting language:

- "I'll never forget the time that"
- "Just imagine/think ..."
- "If you've ever, I think you'll agree that"

Exciting adverbs:

- Suddenly
- Surprisingly
- Amazingly
- Worryingly

You can practice these expressions by giving students a topic e.g., "My ideal holiday", and asking them to complete some of these expressions, even without writing a full article!

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Writing an essay

The essay format is common in English education, but not always in the educational system of other countries. Learners are often unfamiliar with it, and have to be taught the conventions.

Debate to essay writing lesson procedure:

- Take a typical essay question and introduce the topic to the class. In this case, present the quotation and have a warmer discussion about whether students agree or not, and why.

'Teenagers are too young to teach other people about anything.'		
Do you agree?		
Notes		
Write about:		
1. technology	2. the environment	3. (your own idea)

- Divide class equally into “agree” and “disagree” sides. It does not matter whether or not this is their true opinion.
- Students work in pairs/groups to think of points in favour/against either side.
- Reorganise groups so that you have 2 or more people arguing each side per group. Then students debate. Listen and make notes on any particularly good or creative points.
- Discuss with the whole class what points were made for each side. If you want, declare a winner.
- Students go back to their original pairs/groups and brainstorm a third idea. They should come up with as many ideas as possible. If they struggle, try to prompt them with ideas of your own or visual cues.
- Students are now ready to write a plan for their essay. One thing they could do is write a sentence for each point they are going to mention that is accurate and shows a good range of vocabulary and/or grammar.
 - “Teenagers are being taught a wide range of subjects at school, and therefore would have far better recall of them than adults”
 - “While it is true that teenagers are generally familiar with how to use new technology, their understanding can be superficial when it comes to making repairs”
- When you have reviewed the plans, students are ready to write their essays. This can be done in another lesson or for homework.

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Correction

- When any piece of writing is finished, it needs to be corrected. The challenge is making students aware of errors constructively, so that they can improve.
- One way is to have students correct their own errors, or find the errors of their peers.
- A common tool for this is a correction code.

Example correction code

Code	Meaning	Example
Sp	Spelling	<i>It was very <u>uncomfortable</u>.</i>
T	Tense	<i>The Battle of Hastings <u>happen</u> in 1066.</i>
P	Punctuation	<i>Steven Spielberg's films are world famous.</i>
^	Missing word	<i>London <u>is</u> expensive city.</i>
Gr	Grammar	<i>Their life <u>are</u> easier thanks to new inventions.</i>
✓✓	Very good	<i>In those days, horses and walking were the only means of <u>transport</u>.</i>
WW	Wrong word	<i>He <u>made</u> me a favour.</i>
L	Linker needed	<i>I met Victoria, <u>she</u> told me about it.</i>
Ag	Subject verb agreement	<i>People can buy food <u>that are</u> fast and cheap.</i>
😊	Wow word	<i>Shakespeare was a very <u>prolific</u> writer.</i>
☺	Think of a wow word	<i>The place looked <u>nice</u>.</i>
//	New paragraph	<i><u>On the other hand, some people think that a school uniform is a good idea.</u></i>

- The code above is a suggestion, you can make your own correction code.
- Introduce the code to your students and make sure that they understand it.
- One way to do this is to have them use the code on each other's writing. Remember to get them using the symbols for good language as well as bad!
- When students receive their writing back, they work to correct the mistakes their partner has identified
- The teacher has to monitor this stage closely, to make sure students are being accurate. They should also still collect writing work after this stage, to give an "official" mark.

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USEFUL LINKS

B1

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/intermediate-b1>

https://www.examenglish.com/PET/PET_writing.html

<https://kseacademy.com/cambridge/b1-preliminary-pet/writing/email-english/>

<https://www.intercambioidiomasonline.com/2017/08/30/how-to-write-a-perfect-story-for-the-cambridgeb1-preliminary-free-pdf-with-example-questions/>

<https://teacherphill.com/pet-how-to-write-a-story/>

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/181549-cambridge-english-b2-first-for-schools-writing-part-2.pdf>

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/preliminary-for-schools/preparation/>

<https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/intermediate-B1-writing>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo4biZa8rp7K_NhG4T7U6lQ/videos

USEFUL LINKS

B2

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/skills/writing/upper-intermediate-b2>

<https://www.fceexamtips.com/writing>

<https://kseacademy.com/cambridge/b2-first-fce/writing/essay-english/>

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/first-for-schools/preparation/>

<https://youtu.be/TAbNTFT0wcU>

<https://www.youtube.com/c/SMASHEnglish/videos>

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/writing-correction-code>