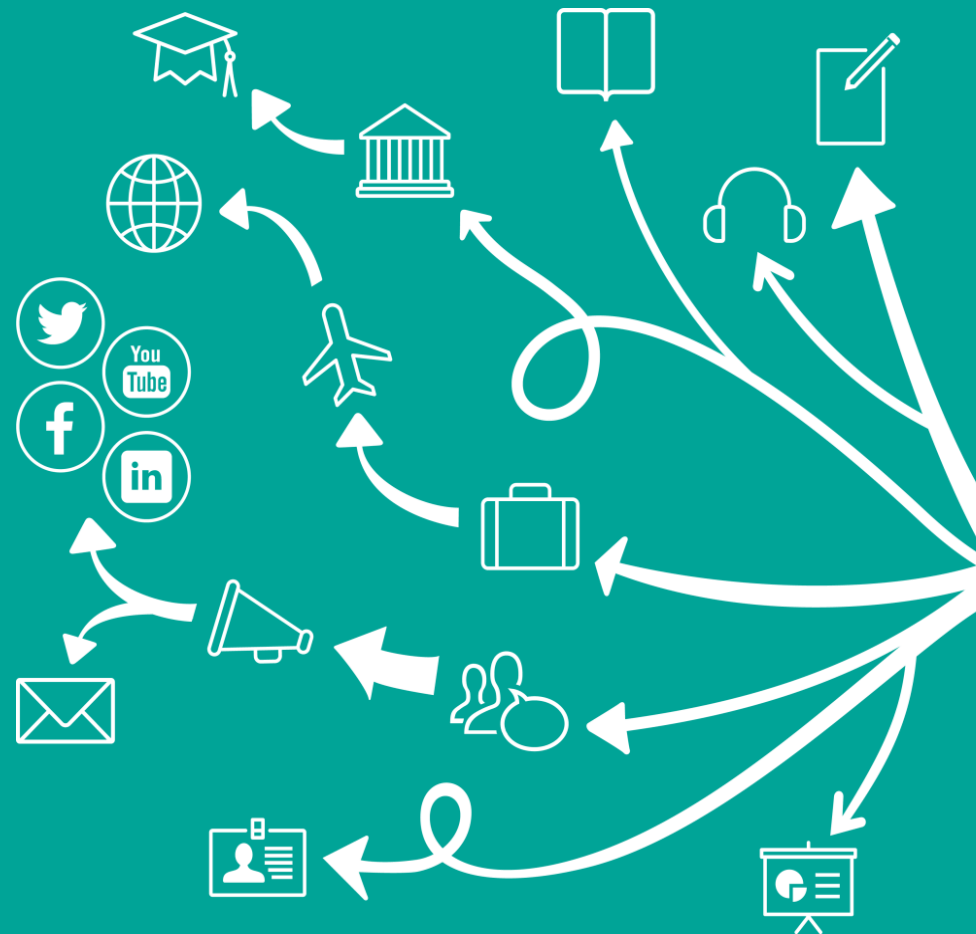


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# Understanding assessment

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What every teacher  
should know



Evelina Galaczi and Nahal Khabbazzbashi

Cambridge English

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## Our aim today

### To help you to:

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- **UNDERSTAND** assessment
- **DEVELOP** tests which support learning
- be able to **EVALUATE** existing tests.



# First, an activity for you ...

*In this part of the test, you have to read aloud six sentences which appear on the screen.*

- 1) This is the latest version of the plan.
- 2) These are the minutes of the last committee meeting.
- 3) Sales have risen faster than expected over the last quarter.
- 4) Mr Bond apologises for not being able to attend the reception.
- 5) Dr Clark would like you to phone her back before 3 o'clock.
- 6) The design should follow the guidelines set out in the tender specifications.

**Does this task test speaking?**

**Reading aloud**

What might the people find interesting about visiting these different museums?

# And this task?

*Talking about  
information in pictures*

## Which task is better at testing speaking skills?



How do you know what made one of these tasks more suitable than others?

# ASSESSMENT LITERACY

=

Understanding and being able to use the principles of assessment

# Why is assessment literacy important?



When you do some exams it is useful because it tells you how well you are doing in English. Even though I don't like tests so much.







# Value of assessment literacy

Helps students: high-quality tests → assist learning




Helps teachers → developing/evaluating/selecting tests



# Key concepts in assessment

## **Validity**

Is the test measuring what it claims to be measuring?

-  • Test **PURPOSE**
- Test **TAKERS**
- Test **CONSTRUCT**
- Test **TASKS**
- Test **RELIABILITY**
- Test **IMPACT**

# 1. Why am I testing?

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Six key  
questions

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## TEST PURPOSE

- A. To CHECK LEARNING at the end of a unit in school?
- B. To DIAGNOSE what learners know and don't know?
- C. To PLACE learners into groups based on their ability?
- D. To provide test takers with a CERTIFICATE of language proficiency?

## 2. Who am I testing?

---

Six key  
questions

---

### TEST TAKERS

- Primary school children?
- Teenagers?
- Adults?
- Doctors?

### 3. What am I testing?

---

Six key  
questions

---

## TEST CONSTRUCT

- Communicative language ability?
- Speaking ability?
- Pronunciation?
- Grammatical knowledge?
- Use of grammatical knowledge?

# Test construct

The ability a test tries to measure = test CONSTRUCT

For example:

- maths
- intelligence
- personality
- anxiety
- English language ability
- pronunciation

## 4. How am I testing the construct?

---

Six key questions

---

## TEST TASKS

- Grammar and vocabulary -> *multiple choice?*
- Reading ability -> *texts and questions?*
- Listening ability -> *a lecture and questions?*
- Writing ability -> *a short email?*
- Speaking ability -> *face-to-face interview?*

## 5. How am I scoring the test?

---

Six key questions

---

## SCORING RELIABILITY

- Correct/incorrect?
- Using trained teachers?
- Using assessment criteria?



## 6. How is my test benefiting learners?

---

Six key questions

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### TEST IMPACT

- Through using AUTHENTIC tasks?
- Through including all FOUR SKILLS (reading, writing, listening, speaking)?
- Through formative FEEDBACK on performance?

# To summarise

## Six key questions

- Why am I testing?
- Who am I testing?
- What am I testing?
- How am I testing?
- How am I scoring?
- How is my test benefiting learners?

## Six key assessment concepts

- ✓ Test **PURPOSE**
- ✓ Test **TAKERS**
- ✓ Test **CONSTRUCT**
- ✓ Test **TASKS**
- ✓ Test **RELIABILITY**
- ✓ Test **IMPACT**

# VALIDITY

- Is the test measuring what it claims to be measuring?

A test is never just valid, it is VALID FOR a purpose

**→ FITNESS FOR PURPOSE**

# In the rest of the presentation:

## Six key questions

- Why am I testing?
- Who am I testing?
- What am I testing?
- How am I testing?
- How am I scoring?
- How is my test benefiting learners?

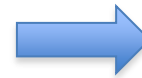
## Six key assessment concepts

- ✓ Test PURPOSE
- ✓ Test TAKERS
- ✓ Test **CONSTRUCT**
- ✓ Test **TASKS**
- ✓ Test **RELIABILITY**
- ✓ Test **IMPACT**

# Test Construct

Construct = a cognitive element  
Construct = a task element

*What are the cognitive processes required to complete the task?*



# Cognitive processes in practice

Read the sentence and answer the question.

*Yesterday I saw the palgish flester gollining begrunt the bruck.*

**Question 1:** *What was the flester doing?*

- A. chandering
- B. gollining
- C. rangeling

Adapted from *A Course in Language Teaching* by Penny Ur (1999), p.59–61, Cambridge University Press.

# Cognitive processes in practice

*Yesterday I saw the palgish flester gollining begrunt the bruck.*

**Question 2:** *Where was the flester?*

- A. begrunt the quistly
- B. besand chander
- C. begrunt the bruck

Adapted from *A Course in Language Teaching* by Penny Ur (1999), p.59–61, Cambridge University Press.

# Cognitive processes in practice

*Yesterday I saw the palgish flester gollining begrunt the bruck.*

**Question 3:** *What is the event described here?*

- A. The flester is participating in a sports competition.
- B. The flester is cooking a special dinner for friends.
- C. The flester is ill in hospital.

Adapted from *A Course in Language Teaching* by Penny Ur (1999), p.59–61, Cambridge University Press.



# Cognitive processes in practice

What makes Questions 1 and 2 different from Question 3?

# Cognitive processes in practice

What makes Questions 1 and 2 different from Question 3?

- Questions 1 and 2 → sentence-level knowledge
- Question 3 → making inferences

# Cognitive processes in practice

	Local level	Global level
<b>Careful reading</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding lexical and grammatical meaning</li><li>• Understanding syntactic structure of sentence and clause</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding main ideas and supporting details</li><li>• Making inferences</li></ul>

Khalifa and Weir (2009)

# Cognitive processes in practice

Questions 1 and 2



Question 3

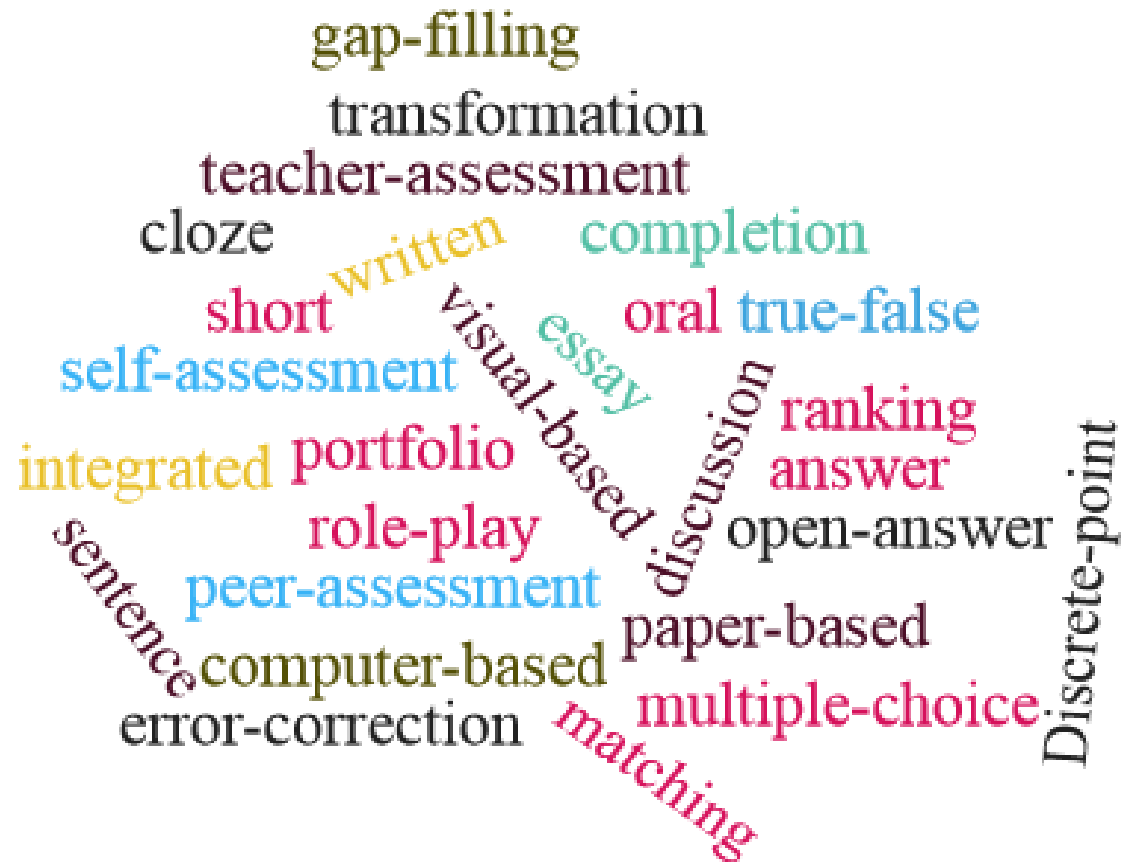


	Local level	Global level
Careful reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding lexical and grammatical meaning</li><li>• Understanding syntactic structure of sentence and clause</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding main ideas and supporting details</li><li>• Making inferences</li></ul>

Khalifa and Weir (2009)

# Are the test tasks appropriate for the test construct?

## Task types



# Task types

- No good/bad task type: **fitness-for-purpose** of tasks and tests
- **Range of task types** in a test reduces problems connected with certain task types

# For example: multiple-choice task

1 How many children went on the school trip?

**6**

**A**

**12**

**B**

**18**

**C**

1 *How many children went on the school trip?*

Man: Did you enjoy your school trip, James? Did everyone in your class go?

James: No, twelve people stayed behind, so there were eighteen of us. We had a great time.

Man: Where did you all sleep?

James: We had small rooms with six beds in each one. It was lots of fun.

*Now listen again.*

# For example: multiple-choice task

## Advantages:

- easy to mark
- questions can tap into different levels of cognitive processing

## Limitations:

- high chance of getting correct answer through guessing
- task is not authentic

1 How many children went on the school trip?

6

A

12

B

18

C

1 How many children went on the school trip?

Man: Did you enjoy your school trip, James? Did everyone in your class go?

James: No, twelve people stayed behind, so there were eighteen of us. We had a great time.

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*Now listen again.*



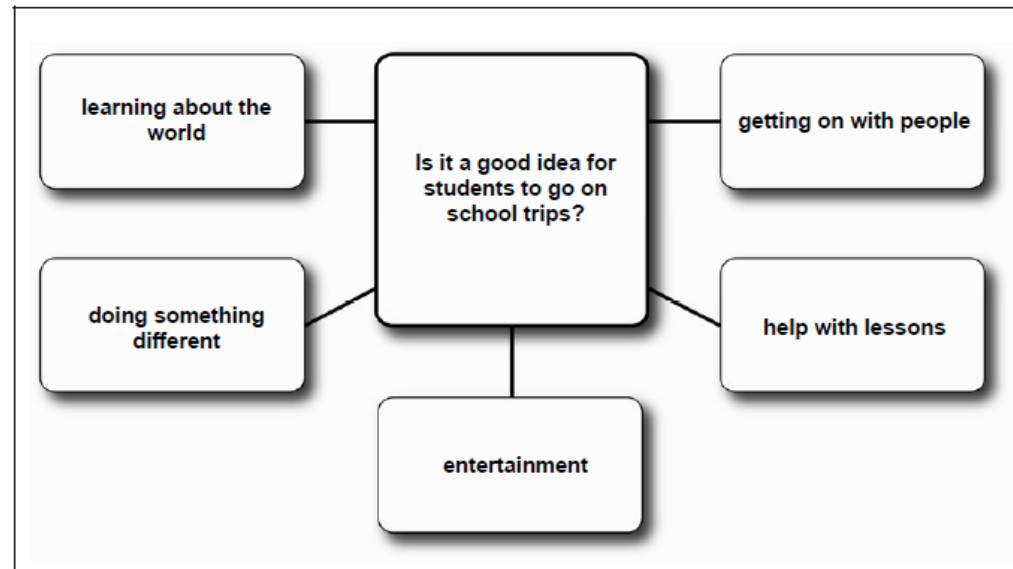
# For example: paired speaking task

Now, I'd like you to talk about something together for about two minutes (*3 minutes for groups of three*).

Here are some reasons why many students go on school trips and a question for you to discuss. First you have some time to look at the task.

Place *Part 3 booklet*, open at *Task 21*, in front of the candidates. Allow 15 seconds.

Now, talk to each other about whether it's a good idea for students to go on school trips.



# For example: paired speaking task

## Advantages:

- high authenticity
- interactional skills

## Limitations

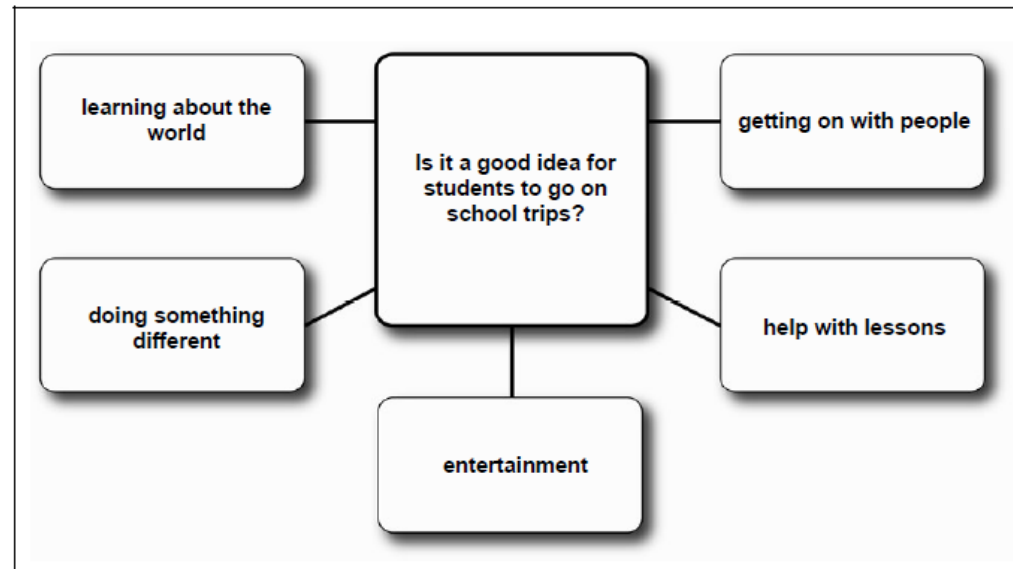
- role of personality, age, gender, language ability, etc.
- scoring reliability
- practicality

Now, I'd like you to talk about something together for about two minutes (*3 minutes for groups of three*).

Here are some reasons why many students go on school trips and a question for you to discuss. First you have some time to look at the task.

Place *Part 3 booklet*, open at *Task 21*, in front of the candidates. Allow 15 seconds.

Now, talk to each other about whether it's a good idea for students to go on school trips.



# Task types

- No good/bad task type: **fitness-for-purpose** of tasks and tests
- **Range of task types** in a test reduces problems connected with certain task types

# A question for you ...

## Which task (A or B) is better for a writing test?

### Task A

Write a letter about a celebration in your country.

### Task B

This is a message you receive from an English friend:

*Help! For my homework project I have to write about a special day that people celebrate in your country. Which special day should I write about? What information should I include?*

Write a message answering your friend's question. You should write about 100 words.

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# Reliability

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How far can we **DEPEND** on the scores from the test?

Are the test scores **CONSISTENT** and **ACCURATE**?

Grade this apple on a scale of  
1 (lowest) to 6 (highest).



Grade this apple on a scale of  
1 to 6 for **quality of colour.**



# How can reliability be increased?

- ✓ Clear item/task **INSTRUCTIONS**
- ✓ Clear assessment **SCALES** and **CRITERIA**
- ✓ **TRAINED** examiners/teachers to deliver tests + score tests



# Rating scales

Cambridge English: First Speaking Examiners use a more detailed version of the following assessment scales, extracted from the overall Speaking scales on page 41:

B2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
<b>5</b>	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
<b>4</b>	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
<b>3</b>	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
<b>2</b>	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
<b>1</b>	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
<b>0</b>	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

# What is the effect of the test on learning and on education systems?

## Test impact



# Increasing positive impact

- Test those abilities you want learners to develop and not what is easiest to test

## Classroom:

- discussing in pairs/small groups
- describing visuals
- asking and answering questions
- information gap activities
- reading texts aloud  
(pronunciation practice)
- completing a dialogue
- presentations

# Increasing positive impact

- Test those abilities you want learners to develop and not what is easiest to test

## Test:

- reading aloud
- describing pictures
- talking about a topic



## Classroom:

- discussing in pairs/small groups
- describing visuals
- asking and answering questions
- information gap activities
- reading texts aloud (pronunciation practice)
- completing a dialogue
- presentations

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## Summary

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Good tests are those which:

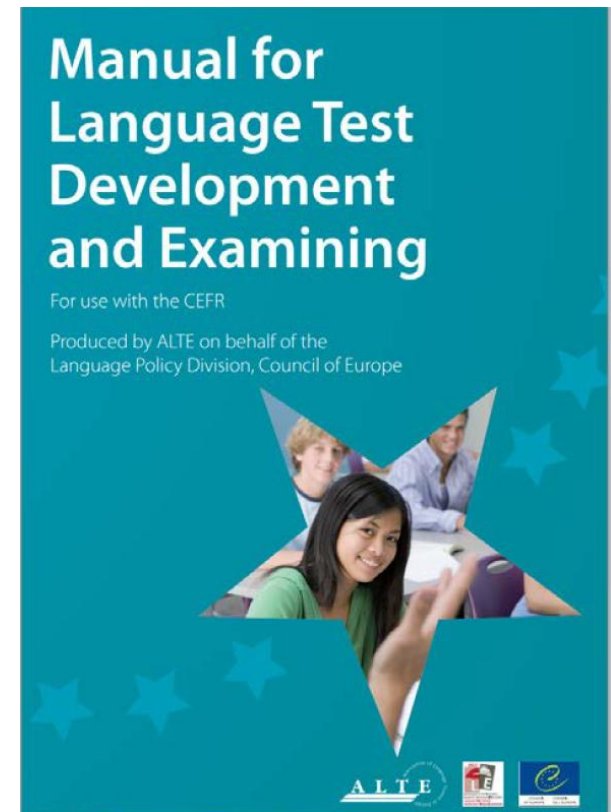
- test what they set out to test  
= have **CONSTRUCT VALIDITY**
- produce scores which can be trusted  
= have **RELIABILITY**
- support learning  
= have **POSITIVE IMPACT**

... and also are **PRACTICAL** to develop and deliver

# Useful tools for you



**Cambridge English**  
Write & Improve (BETA)



# Further information

Introducing IELTS Life Skills  
14 and 16 March 2016

University of Cambridge  
Cambridge English Language Assessment  
1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, UK  
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553997  
Fax: +44 (0)1223 553621  
Email: [helpdesk@cambridgeenglish.org](mailto:helpdesk@cambridgeenglish.org)

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