



Teaching the compulsory essay in the revised Cambridge English: Proficiency exam





Aims of this webinar

- to highlight the purpose of Part 1 of the *Cambridge English: Proficiency* Writing test
- to discuss the skills assessed in Part 1 of the Writing test
- to explore the assessment criteria and level descriptors for C2 level
- to provide practical teaching tips for developing these skills in the classroom



What is the Part 1 task?

- compulsory task: essay writing
- discursive essay
- two input texts, each approximately 100 words
- texts based on authentic, contemporary sources
- reading input within reading competence of C2-level candidates



Instructions for Part 1

Read the two texts below.

Write an essay summarising and evaluating the key points from both texts. Use your own words throughout as far as possible, and include your own ideas in your answers.

Write your answer in 240–280 words on the separate answer sheet.



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Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

At C2, learners should be able to

‘summarise information from different sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation of the overall result.’



Skills candidates need:

- identifying the main points
- summarising the main points
- academic writing style
- using organisational patterns and linking devices
- drawing conclusions from all the relevant information



What will candidates have to do in order to successfully complete the task?

- A. hypothesise
- B. summarise information from two different sources
- C. describe a narrative
- D. reconstruct arguments and accounts
- E. present the overall result coherently
- F. suggest a solution
- G. express and justify an opinion
- H. evaluate abstract arguments



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Assessment subscales

C2 Band	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language



Assessment subscales

C2 Band	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
5				
4				
3				
2				
1				
0				



Assessment subscales

C2 Band	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
3				

Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present.
Target reader is, on the whole, informed.



Assessment subscales

C2 Band	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is, on the whole, informed.			

Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.



Assessment subscales

C2 Band	Content	Communicative Achievement	Organisation	Language
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is, on the whole, informed.		Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.	

Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.



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3	<p>Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is, on the whole, informed.</p>	<p>Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.</p>	<p>Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.</p>	



Language subscale

- A** Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication, and style.
Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural.
Any inaccuracies occur only as slips.
- B** Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately.
Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility.
Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
- C** Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, effectively and precisely.
Uses a wide range of simple and complex grammatical forms with full control, flexibility and sophistication.
Errors, if present, are related to less common words and structures, or occur as slips.



Language subscale

C2 Band	Language
5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication, and style. Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural. Any inaccuracies occur only as slips.
4	
3	
2	
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0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>



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5	Uses a wide range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, with fluency, precision, sophistication, and style. Use of grammar is sophisticated, fully controlled and completely natural. Any inaccuracies occur only as slips.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, effectively and precisely. Uses a wide range of simple and complex grammatical forms with full control, flexibility and sophistication. Errors, if present, are related to less common words and structures, or occur as slips.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>
1	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately. Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>



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Write an essay summarising and evaluating the key points from both texts. Use your own words throughout as far as possible, and include your own ideas in your answers.

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Shifting sands: behavioural change

Nowadays, in some cultures there may often be confusion between generations about what is acceptable behaviour in certain situations. Older people sometimes complain, for example, about the real or imagined rudeness of others, such as in the use of electronic devices in public places. However, the younger generations do not regard electronic communication as intrusive, but rather as fundamental to their way of life. Only increased mutual understanding is likely to resolve potential conflict or confusion in any society. In this case, as in all others, it pays to be aware of other people's points of view.

Follow my leader?

Should we always aim to do what society expects of us? No, what society needs is individuality. Worrying about what other people think inhibits enthusiasm and creativity. Nothing new is ever achieved by conforming to expected social norms. This is not only true for society's innovators: everybody needs a strong sense of their own worth as an individual. This is essential for psychological well-being and the ability to function effectively in one's personal and professional life. Paying too much attention to society's conventions can be counter-productive in these and other ways.



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What mark for Content?

Behavioural Change

Our modern life often poses us a question – what is acceptable in terms of behaviour considering the fast pace at which modern society changes. Besides, the shift towards the cult of individuality has been obvious for the past years.

Nowadays, we are all aware of the fact that society is made up of different generations each of which has their own preferences and habits deeply ingrained in their consciousness. In this connection the generation gap is considered to be a perennial problem. It is a well-known fact younger generations are more technologically advanced than the previous ones, moreover the young are quicker on the uptake and more resilient to ever changing demands of our life. Despite that, I am inclined to believe that only by being tolerant to each other and accepting the right of each generation to adhere to their own set of beliefs and ideas we will be able to peacefully co-exist in society.

At last society has recognised the need for each member to be an individual. Throughout the history of humanity members of society have had to fit the mould and conform to the set of principles and beliefs accepted. For example, even 50 years ago woman's only domain was household chores. Nowadays, we are relieved to see that women are equal members of society fulfilling their potential and rising through the ranks. Some of them even manage to achieve dizzy heights.

In conclusion, our society is moving forward by leaps and bounds, patterns of behaviour and social norms are changing as well. So, only by coming to terms with the above-mentioned we, all members of it, won't be deemed as misfits and relish our existence in the society.



What mark for Communicative Achievement?

Content: 4

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What mark for Organisation?

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Content: 4

Communicative
Achievement: 3



What mark for Language?

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Content: 4

**Communicative
Achievement: 3**

Organisation: 3



Sample answer

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Content: **4**

Communicative
Achievement: **3**

Organisation: **3**

Language: **2**



Sample answer 2

How is this answer different?

The over-arching theme of these two texts is social behaviour.

The first considers the fact that different groups of society have different ideas about what is acceptable behaviour. What is normal for one set of people may appear rude to another group. This text makes the point that it is important to appreciate that others may have differing viewpoints, claiming that such awareness can help to avoid social conflicts. The second text looks at the issue from a contrasting angle. It argues against the desirability of behaving in socially acceptable ways. Its contention is that being too concerned about social conventions stifles individuality and may even have a negative effect on our own psychological health.

In my opinion, there is little to disagree with in the first text. It is an undeniable fact that behavioural norms vary across generations, classes and cultures and it is also true that understanding and tolerance provide the soundest basis for our approach to social difference.

The second text is possibly more contentious. While it may be the case that some people are over-concerned about etiquette and unimportant social rules, I feel that some conventions for social behaviour have a positive impact on everyone's lives. It all depends on the type of rule. I do not feel that it is important to know which way you 'should' tip your bowl when eating soup or when you should or shouldn't wear gloves but I do think it is desirable to say please and thank you and to behave in a considerate way towards one's fellows. In other words, I think that basic social conventions serve a useful purpose but that they should be used to oil our interactions rather than becoming too much of an end in themselves.



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- A.** Band 5 for all subscales **B.** Band 5 for Content and Language; Band 4 for other subscales **C.** Band 4 for all subscales



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In my opinion, **there is little to disagree with** in the first text. It is an undeniable fact that behavioural norms vary across generations, classes and cultures and it is also true that understanding and tolerance **provide the soundest basis** for our approach to social difference.

The second text is possibly more contentious. While it may be the case that some people are over-concerned about etiquette and unimportant social rules, I feel that some conventions for social behaviour have a positive impact on everyone's lives. It all depends on the type of rule. I do not feel that it is important to know which way you 'should' tip your bowl when eating soup or when you should or shouldn't wear gloves but I do think it is desirable to say please and thank you and to behave in a considerate way towards one's fellows. In other words, I think that basic social conventions serve a useful purpose but that they should be used to oil our interactions rather than becoming too much of an end in themselves.

A. Band 5 for all subscales
B. Band 5 for Content and Language; Band 4 for other subscales

C. Band 4 for all subscales



Sample answer 2

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Classroom activities



Classroom activities

- where to find input material to recreate the task type in the classroom
- how to improve specific language required:
 - summarising
 - reconstructing arguments
 - evaluating abstract arguments
 - integrating summaries into a coherent essay.
- how to improve academic writing skills.



Classroom ideas: dealing with input material

- use authentic texts, e.g. current affairs, news, letters to the editor, etc.
- learners choose a text; summarise key opinions; give reaction
- highlight key ideas
- pick a current affairs topic: learners research and discuss in class



Classroom ideas: improving language skills

- summarising
- reconstructing arguments
- evaluating abstract arguments
- integrating summaries into a coherent essay



Classroom ideas: improving language skills

- brainstorming functional language
- focus on synonyms
- organisation:
 - re-order a sample answer
 - complete the missing linking devices



Classroom ideas: improving academic writing skills

What are academic writing skills?



Classroom ideas: improving academic writing skills

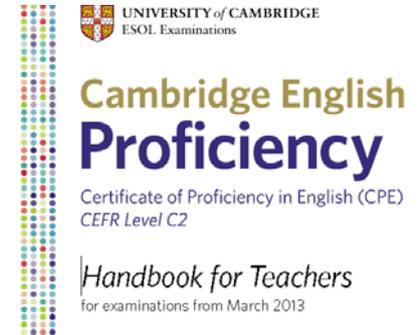
What are academic writing skills?

- formal register
- clear language
- uses evidence or references
- may be in the third person
- introduction, main body, conclusion



Classroom ideas: improving academic writing skills

Cambridge English: Proficiency
Handbook for teachers



Search online for ‘academic writing skills’

Study model texts

Evaluate sample answers



Summary of the session

- the purpose of Part 1 of the *Cambridge English: Proficiency Writing* test
- the skills assessed in Part 1 of the Writing test
- the assessment criteria and level descriptors for C2 level
- practical teaching tips for developing these skills in the classroom



Teaching Support website

- Information about all Cambridge English Language Assessment examinations and teaching qualifications
- Teaching resources for each part of each exam
- Lots more features to support teachers



www.cambridgeenglish.org/teach



Official Support

Shop for official preparation materials:

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Free resources and information:

- Teachers www.teachers.cambridgeenglish.org
- Candidates www.cambridgeenglish.org
- Recognising organisations
www.cambridgeenglish.org/recognition



Questions?

- What are the set texts and where can I find this information?
- Are there any approaches you'd suggest for teaching set texts?
- For the writing Part 1 task is it necessary for students to make direct references to the texts? For example should they say "*In text 1 the author believes....*" or "*In text 2 the writer expresses the view that....*"?
- Could you suggest some proofreading techniques?