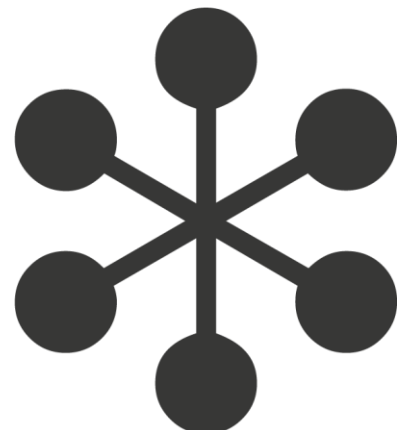
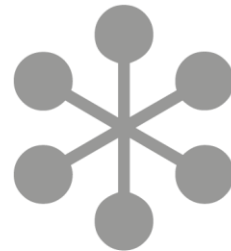
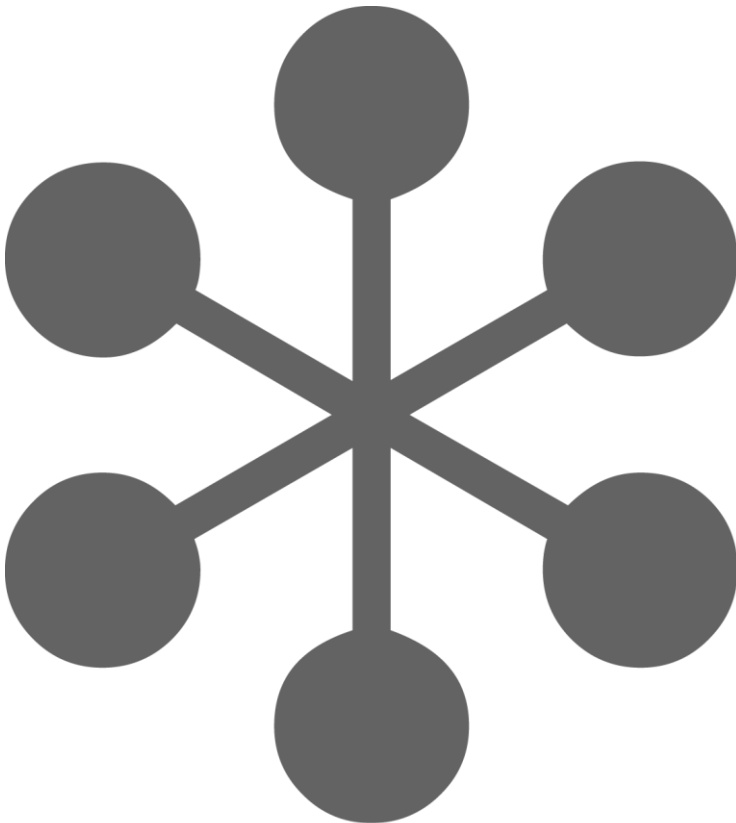




# Cambridge English Understanding assessment

- what every teacher should know

6Y02





# Handout: Understanding assessment

This handout will help you to revisit the main ideas from the webinar after you've participated in it. The handout includes the main concepts we discussed, an extension of some of these concepts and some tasks to help you put into practice the key ideas we covered. The keys to the tasks can be found at the end of this handout.

## Main concepts from the webinar

| Key questions in assessment   | Key concepts in assessment   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why am I testing?</li> <li>• Who am I testing?</li> <li>• What am I testing?</li> <li>• How am I testing?</li> <li>• How am I scoring?</li> <li>• How is my test benefiting learners?</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test PURPOSE</li> <li>• Test TAKERS</li> <li>• Test CONSTRUCT</li> <li>• Test TASKS</li> <li>• Test RELIABILITY</li> <li>• Test IMPACT</li> </ul> |

## Task 1: Review of assessment concepts

| Which key assessment concepts do these scenarios refer to? You can choose more than one answer for each question.  |
|--|
| <p>1) A teacher is developing a reading test and has to decide whether to include questions about facts from the text or inferences about the text or both.</p> <p>A Test purpose                      B Test takers                      C Test construct<br/>D Test tasks                              E Test reliability                      F Test impact</p> |
| <p>2) A testing organisation requires all its speaking examiners to get standardised every 12 months.</p> <p>A Test purpose                      B Test takers                      C Test construct<br/>D Test tasks                              E Test reliability                      F Test impact</p>   |
| <p>3) A teacher is developing a grammar test and deciding between an information-gap task and a multiple-choice task to test use of verb tenses.</p> <p>A Test purpose                      B Test takers                      C Test construct<br/>D Test tasks                              E Test reliability                      F Test impact</p>            |
| <p>4) A group of teachers are deciding what criteria to use to assess the new writing test they've developed for their school.</p> <p>A Test purpose                      B Test takers                      C Test construct<br/>D Test tasks                              E Test reliability                      F Test impact</p>                              |
| <p>5) A teacher is given the task to develop a test to be used with all the students in their final year in secondary school.</p> <p>A Test purpose                      B Test takers                      C Test construct<br/>D Test tasks                              E Test reliability                      F Test impact</p>                               |

## Task 2: Test construct

| What are some possible problems with these assessment scenarios?   |
|--|
| 1) A test of listening comprehension – watch a 15-minute lecture and summarise the main points in a short essay. |
| 2) A placement test for an academic writing course – multiple-choice test of grammatical knowledge.              |
| 3) A reading comprehension test – answer questions about a text on the topic of football.                        |
| 4) A test for university admission – no speaking component.  |

## Test tasks

| Key questions to consider   |
|---|
| • How authentic are the tasks in terms of the cognitive processes they tap into and the language they elicit? |
| • Are the <u>instructions</u> accurate and easy for test takers to understand?                                |
| • Is the <u>purpose</u> of the test/task clear to the learners?   |
| • Is there a range of <u>task types</u> ?   |
| • Are the <u>marking criteria</u> explicit for the learners?  |
| • Are the items/tasks in a justifiable <u>order</u> ?   |
| • Is the <u>timing</u> for each part of the test appropriate?   |

## Task authenticity

| Enhancing authenticity in test tasks  |
|---|
| • Use tasks which <u>simulate real life</u> .   |
| • Use tasks which engage learners with the same <u>cognitive processes</u> that they engage with outside of the exam/classroom. |
| • Use situations which are <u>familiar and relevant</u> to the learners.  |
| • Use topics which are <u>relevant and interesting</u> for the learner.   |
| • Use topics which would <u>not disadvantage some groups</u> of learners.   |
| • Make the <u>purpose</u> of the task clear.  |
| • Make clear the <u>intended audience</u> (especially in writing tasks).  |
| • Use items which are <u>contextualised</u> rather than isolated.   |
| • Use language in the test which is as <u>natural</u> as possible.  |

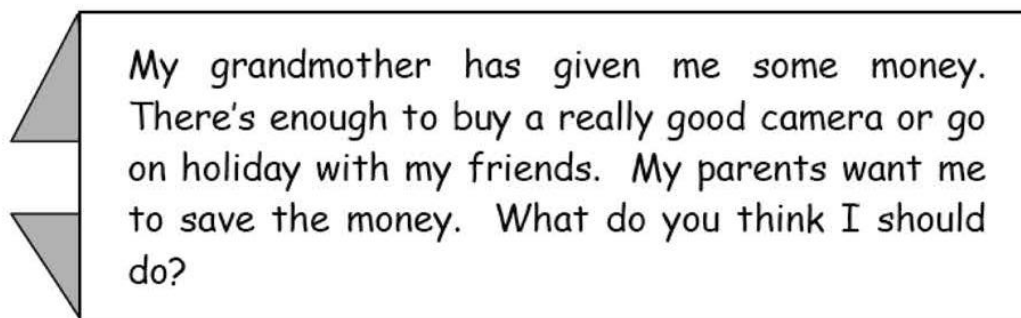
### Task 3: Authenticity in practice

Here are two examples of tasks from an intermediate-level test. The first one is from a writing test, and the second one from a listening test. Note down some of the features of the tasks which contribute to their authenticity.

#### Example from a writing test

##### Question 7

- This is part of a letter you receive from an English friend.



- Now write a letter, giving your friend some advice.
- Write your **letter** in about 100 words on your answer sheet.

Part 3

Questions 14 – 19

You will hear a radio announcer giving details about a photography competition.  
For each question, fill in the missing information in the numbered space.

**Photographer of the Year Competition**

**First prize:** £2,000 and a painting of **(14)** ..... by John Stevens

**Second prize:** £1,000 and camera equipment worth £200

**Competition closing date:** **(15)** .....

**Subjects:**

- 1 - British Nature
- 2 - Wild Places
- 3 - Animals at **(16)** .....

**Exhibition:** Victoria Museum

**Countries which the exhibition will tour:**

UK, USA, **(17)** ..... and Japan

**To enter, write to:**

Radio TYL  
63 **(18)** ..... Road  
London  
6TY 9JN

**Tel:** **(19)** .....

*Now turn to Part 3, questions 14 to 19. You will hear a radio announcer giving details about a photography competition. For each question, fill in the missing information in the numbered space.*

*You now have 20 seconds to look at Part 3.*

*Now we are ready to start. Listen carefully. You will hear the recording twice.*

Man: Now, this morning I'd like to tell you about this year's competition for the best photograph of animals, birds or plants. We have some great prizes for you – first prize for the most original photo is a cheque for £2,000 and a picture of elephants painted by the artist John Stevens. The second prize is £1,000 and camera equipment worth £200. The lucky winner will receive his or her prize in London on 16th October this year. So, all you photographers, get your cameras and start taking some great photographs, as you must send them to us by 14th May.

Now for the details. You can enter up to three colour photographs in each of the following areas. First of all, British Nature. For this your photos must only include plants or animals which are found living in Britain. Secondly, Wild Places. Your photos should be of lonely places. And finally, our third subject is Animals at Night. Pictures must be taken between sunset and sunrise and must include animals.

All the winning photographs can be seen in a special exhibition at the Victoria Museum in London, from the end of November until January next year. The exhibition will tour the UK and the USA in the spring, followed by France and Japan during the summer.

Remember, the judges want to see some original ideas – they don't want photos of pets or animals in zoos. Now, to enter, the first thing you should do is contact us to get an application form. Our address is Radio TYL, 63 Beechwood Road, that's spelled B E E C H W O O D, Road, London 6TY 9JN.

Of course, if you have any questions about the competition we'll be glad to hear from you. You can either telephone us on 0163 55934 or fax us on 0163 33298.

*Now listen again.*

*That is the end of Part 3.*

## Test reliability

| <b>Enhancing test reliability</b>  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write clear item/task instructions.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trial the draft items/tasks with a group of learners who are similar to the group who will be taking the test.</li> </ul>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider test length – longer tests tend to be more reliable, but tests that are too long may cause fatigue.</li> </ul>         |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use items with a range of difficulty (some easier, some more difficult).</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop clear assessment criteria and rating scales that can distinguish test takers at different levels of ability.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that learners are familiar with the task types and assessment criteria.</li> </ul>                                       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Train the examiners both to deliver the tests (in the case of speaking) and to score the tests.</li> </ul>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get a second independent mark from examiners/teachers when marking writing and speaking.</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure consistency of test administration.</li> </ul>   |

## Task 4: Test reliability and assessment scales

| <b>Rate these scenarios on a scale of 1 (not reliable) to 5 (very reliable), and write down a few ideas to explain your rating.</b> |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1) A computer-marked multiple-choice test   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2) Trained examiners marking tests in a centralised venue   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3) Giving examiners incentives to mark faster   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4) An essay question: 'Write all you know about London.'  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5) Giving examiners freedom to apply their own marking criteria.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6) Giving a mark to each part of a speaking test instead of one overall mark for the whole test                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7) Marking a writing test with a set of different assessment criteria instead of one overall holistic criterion                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |



## Task 5: Critiquing a test

Become familiar with a high-stakes test (e.g. the *Cambridge English: First* test) and present an argument to the Head of your school why your school should/should not adopt that test for your context.

### Key to tasks

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Task 1</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) C and D</li><li>2) E</li><li>3) C and D</li><li>4) C and E</li><li>5) A and B</li></ol>  |
| <b>Task 2</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Does this test measure listening ability or writing ability? Or both? This is an integrated task which combines listening and writing skills. Integrated tasks are often used in tests in academic English, since they are authentic academic tasks. A learner may have strong listening skills, but weak writing skills and as a result receive a low mark. If we are interested in listening skills only, we need to choose a task which involves predominantly listening comprehension.</li><li>2) An advantage of this scenario is that a multiple-choice grammar test is a very practical test and it provides consistent and reliable results. However, grammatical knowledge is only one aspect of language ability, and so this way of placing students may produce limited results.</li><li>3) The main issue here is the topic, since knowledge of this topic (football) may provide an advantage or a disadvantage for some test takers. In this scenario we would not be sure whether the test measures reading ability or background knowledge about the topic.</li><li>4) The main problem here is that speaking ability is an important part of academic success, and so this test may produce limited results.</li></ol> |
| <b>Task 3</b> | <p><b>Writing task:</b></p> <p>The task has a clear purpose – to write a letter giving advice and intended audience – a letter to a friend. The task of letter-writing is taken from real life, and is familiar to learners. (An email might be an authentic choice for this task as well.)</p> <p>The topic is general enough to be familiar to learners. The language functions which this task aims to generate, such as comparing/contrasting and giving advice are functions which are often encountered outside of the exam/classroom.</p>  |

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
|                      | <p><b>Listening task:</b></p> <p>The task has a clear purpose – to listen to a radio announcer for specific details. When we listen to the radio we listen for specific details (e.g. the weather forecast or information about road traffic) or for gist (e.g. a general idea about a movie that is being discussed). In this case the task focuses on listening for specific details. This task is taken from real life and familiar to learners. The topic of a photography competition is general enough to be familiar to learners. The language involved in the test task is natural and taken from ‘real-life’ situations. In real life a learner may not be completing a form after listening to a radio announcement, but the cognitive processes involved with listening for specific information are similar to real life.</p>  |
| <p><b>Task 4</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Rating 5 – this test is fully objectively scored.</li> <li>2) Rating 4 – trained examiners who are marking under very similar conditions would make a test reliable. However, there will still be some disagreement between examiners due to their subjectivity.</li> <li>3) Rating 1 or 2 – if there is an incentive for examiners to mark faster, they may not pay sufficient attention to the assessment criteria and therefore their reliability may be affected.</li> <li>4) Rating 2 or 3 – this question is very open-ended and so test takers may produce very different kinds of responses, which will make it difficult for examiners to know what answers to expect and how to mark.</li> <li>5) Rating 1 – assessment criteria are very important in assessment. If examiners are left to decide on their own assessment criteria, there will be differences among them and therefore the reliability of marking will suffer.</li> <li>6) Rating 4 or 5 – breaking up the test into parts which receive independent marks will generate more marks for each test taker, which will automatically increase the reliability of the test.</li> <li>7) Rating 4 or 5 – marking using different criteria would allow examiners to focus more precisely on the language of the test taker, which will increase the reliability of the test.</li> </ol> |

# Notes

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# Notes

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