# Understanding grammar and vocabulary assessment
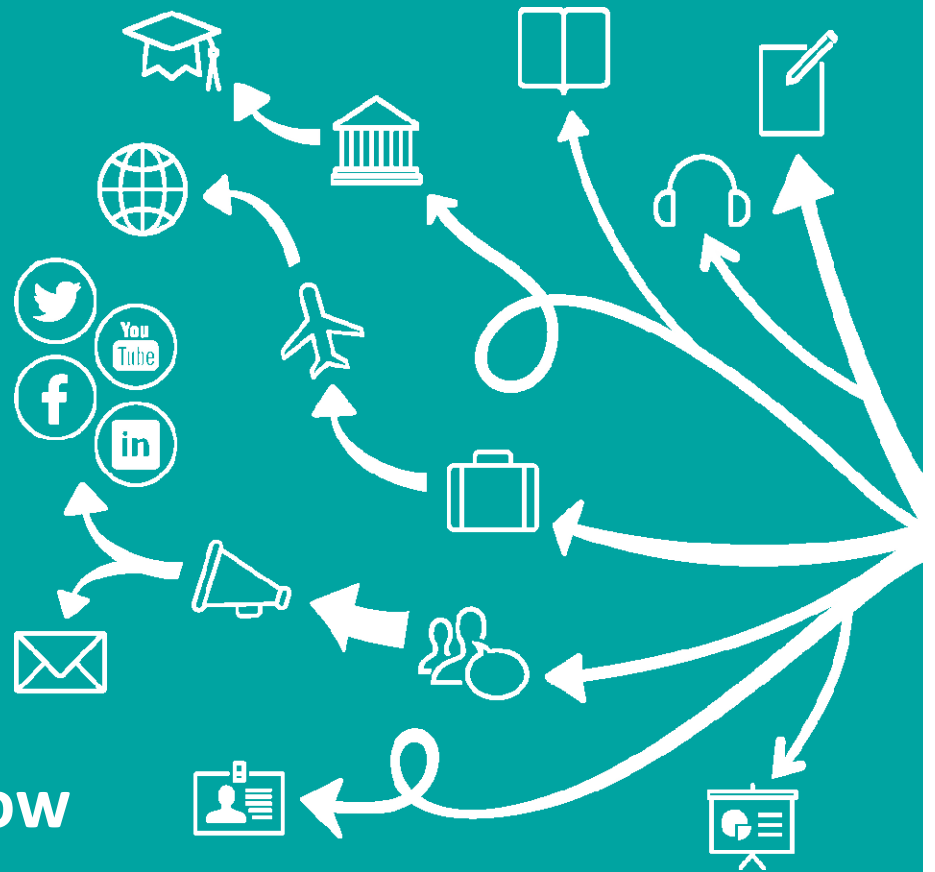
**What every teacher should know**

Fiona Barker and Angeliki Salamoura

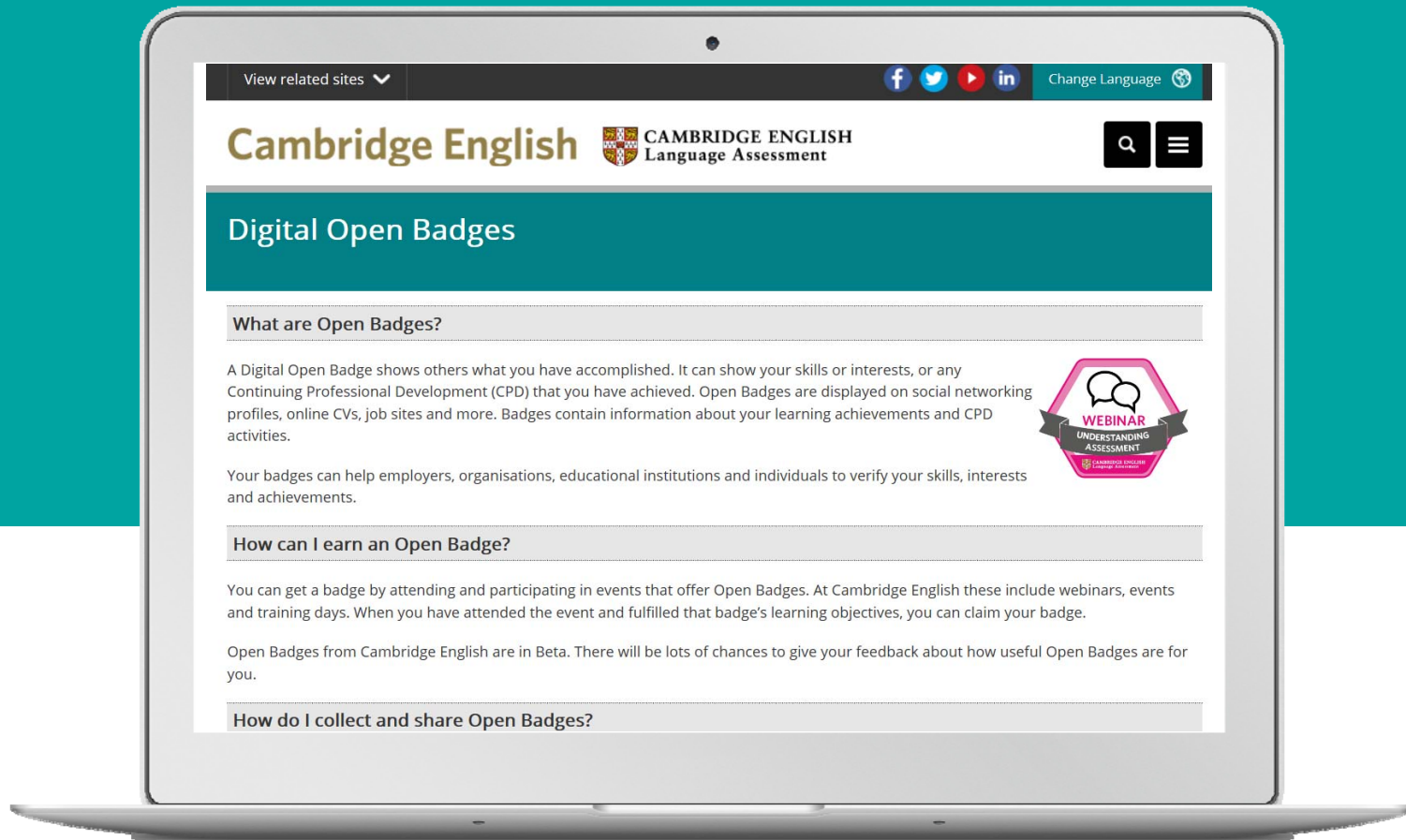**Cambridge English**

# Who are you?

A. I'm a teacher.

B. I'm a co-ordinator/director of studies.

C. I'm a learner.

D. I'm a parent.

Cambridge English

# Why are you here?

A. I need evidence of Continuous Professional Development.

B. I want to earn an Open Badge.

C. I want to know more about grammar and vocabulary assessment.

D. Other

Hong Kong
Chile
Cote D'Ivoire
Canada
Kazakhstan
Taiwan
Philippines
Senegal
Mexico
Macedonia
Lithuania
Thailand
Russia
Kuwait
Japan
Vietnam
Poland
Ecuador
Turkey
Pakistan
Greece
Romania
Estonia
Colombia
Egypt
Germany
USA
Moldova
France
Algeria
United Kingdom
Portugal
Uruguay
Spain
Switzerland
Netherlands
Saudi Arabia
Peru
Brazil
Albania
Sweden
Serbia
Norway
Sri Lanka
Tajikistan
India
Iran
China
Bahrain
Ukraine
Malaysia
El Salvador
Italy
Iraq
Bulgaria
United Arab Emirates
Croatia
Argentina
Panama
Czech Republic

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# Digital Open Badges



**http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/events/open-badges**
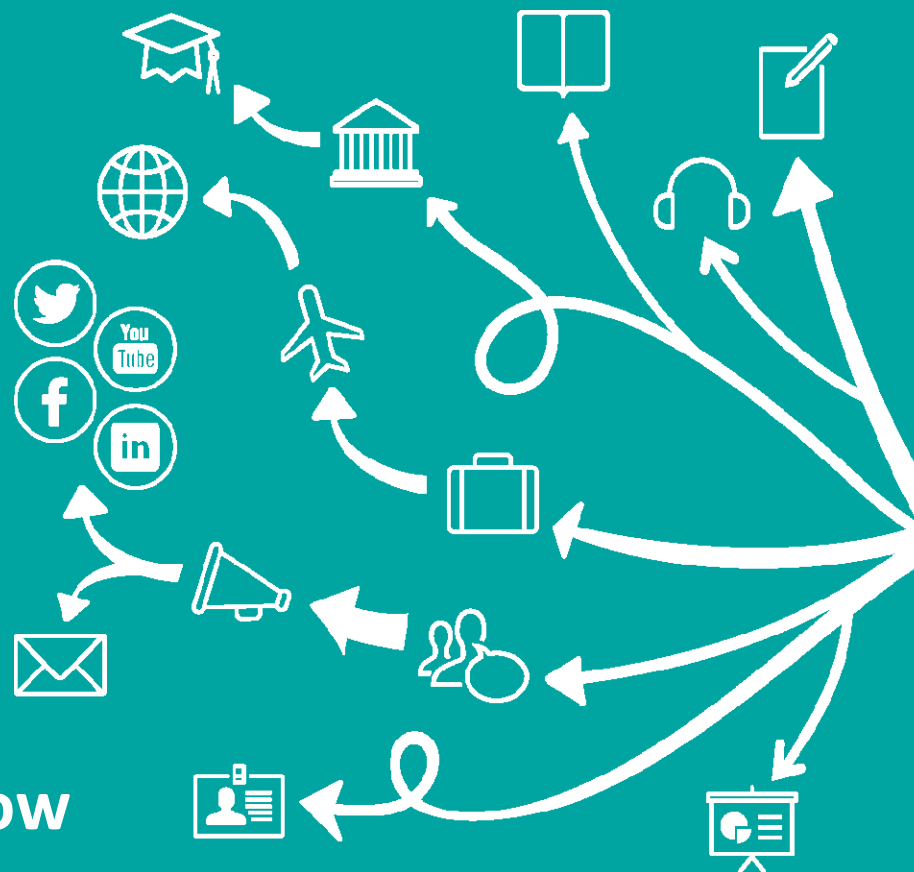
# Understanding grammar and vocabulary assessment

## What every teacher should know

Fiona Barker and Angeliki Salamoura

**Cambridge English**

# Our aim today

- key questions

- practical tips

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?
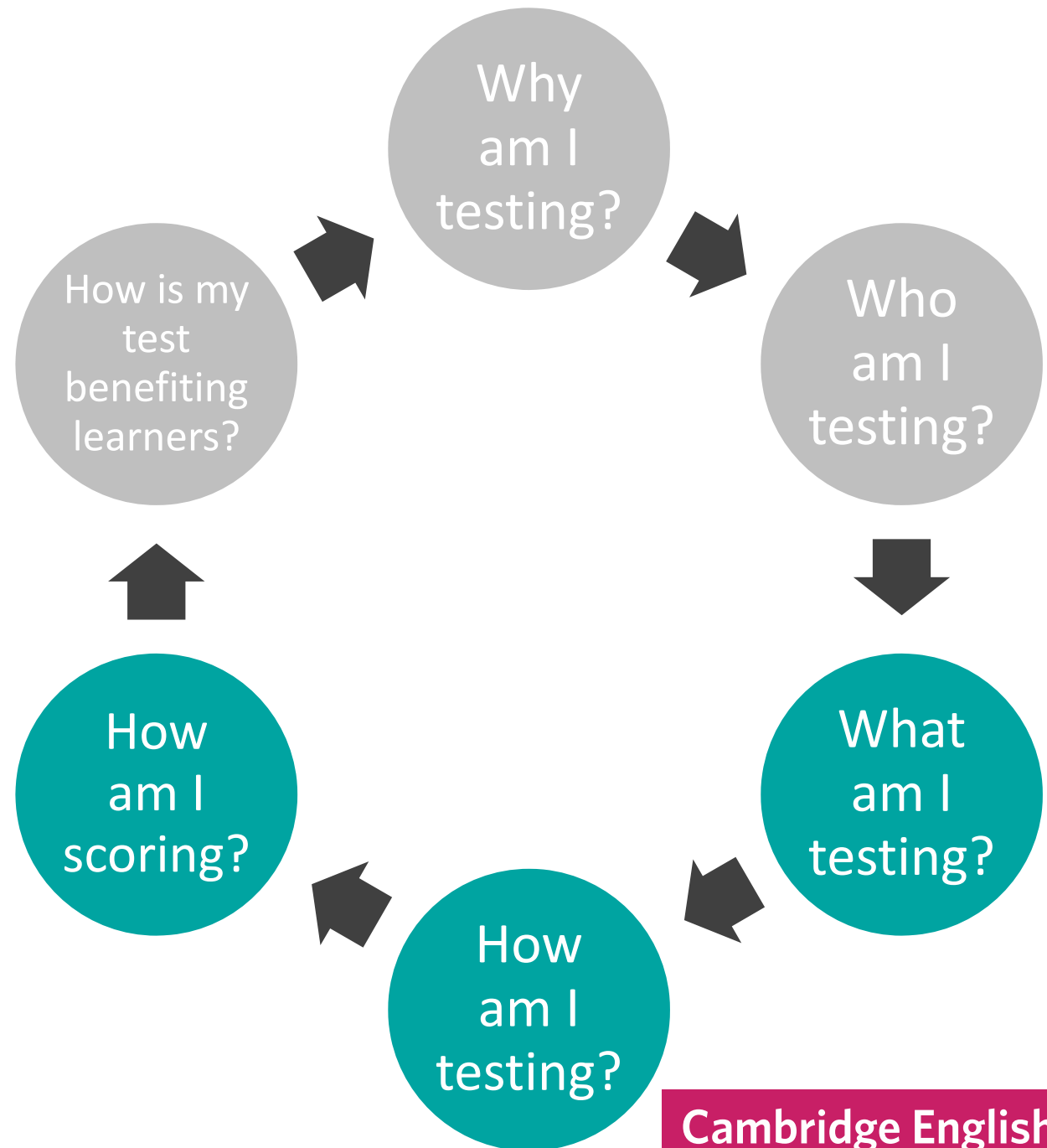
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Why is assessment of vocabulary and grammar one of the most common forms of testing?

**Cambridge English**

# What am I testing?

# Which of the following are aspects of grammatical and lexical ability?

A. Reciting rules

B. Ability to provide an accurate translation

C. Ability to select a correct form from several options on a multiple-choice test

D. Ability to use grammar and vocabulary correctly while writing, speaking, reading or listening

E. All of the above

"Assessment of grammatical ability is nothing new. What has changed over time is what teachers have chosen to assess under the title of 'grammar'."
(Purpura 2004:3)

# What is grammatical and lexical ability?

reciting
rules

Past ←——————————————————→ Now

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# What is grammatical and lexical ability?

reciting
rules

Past — Now

provide an
accurate
translation

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# What is grammatical and lexical ability?

reciting
rules

select a correct
form from
several options

Past

Now

provide an
accurate
translation

# What is grammatical and lexical ability?



Past — reciting rules — provide an accurate translation — select a correct form from several options — use grammar and vocabulary correctly while writing, speaking, reading or listening — Now

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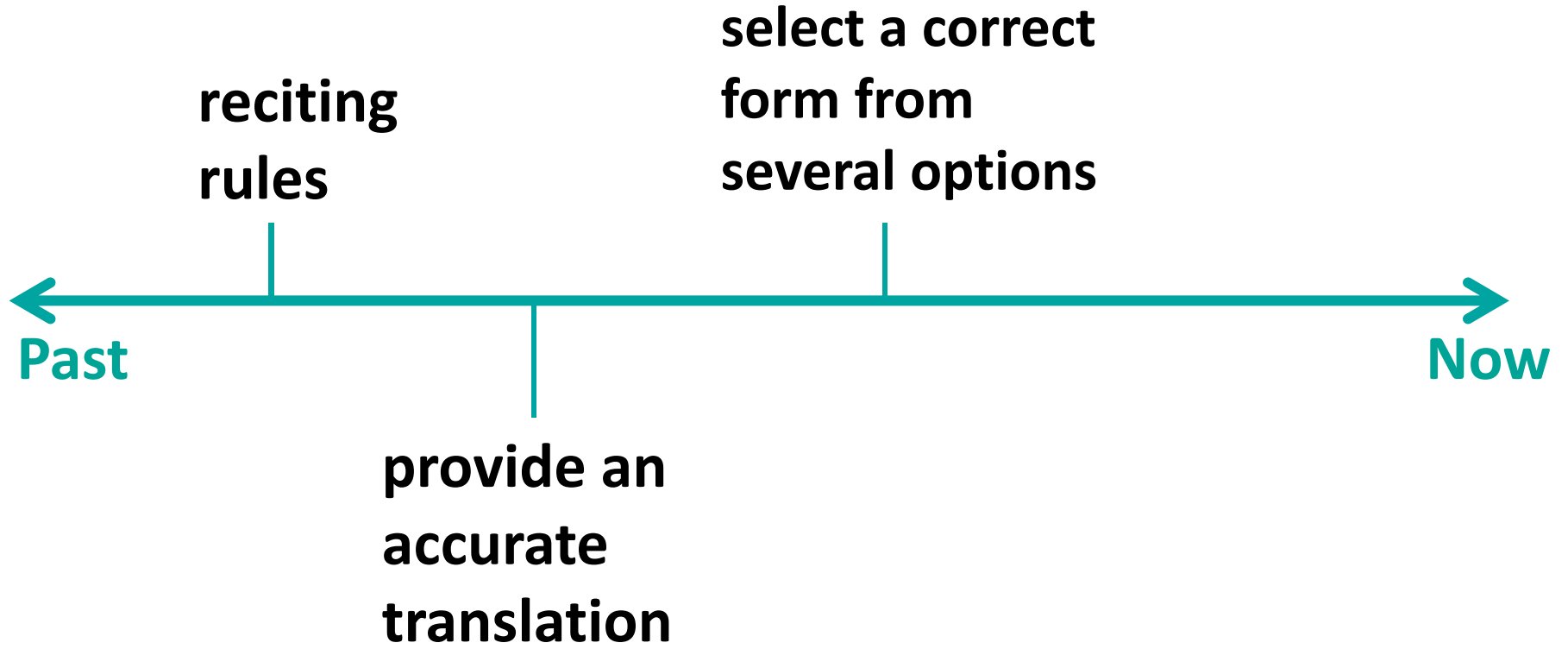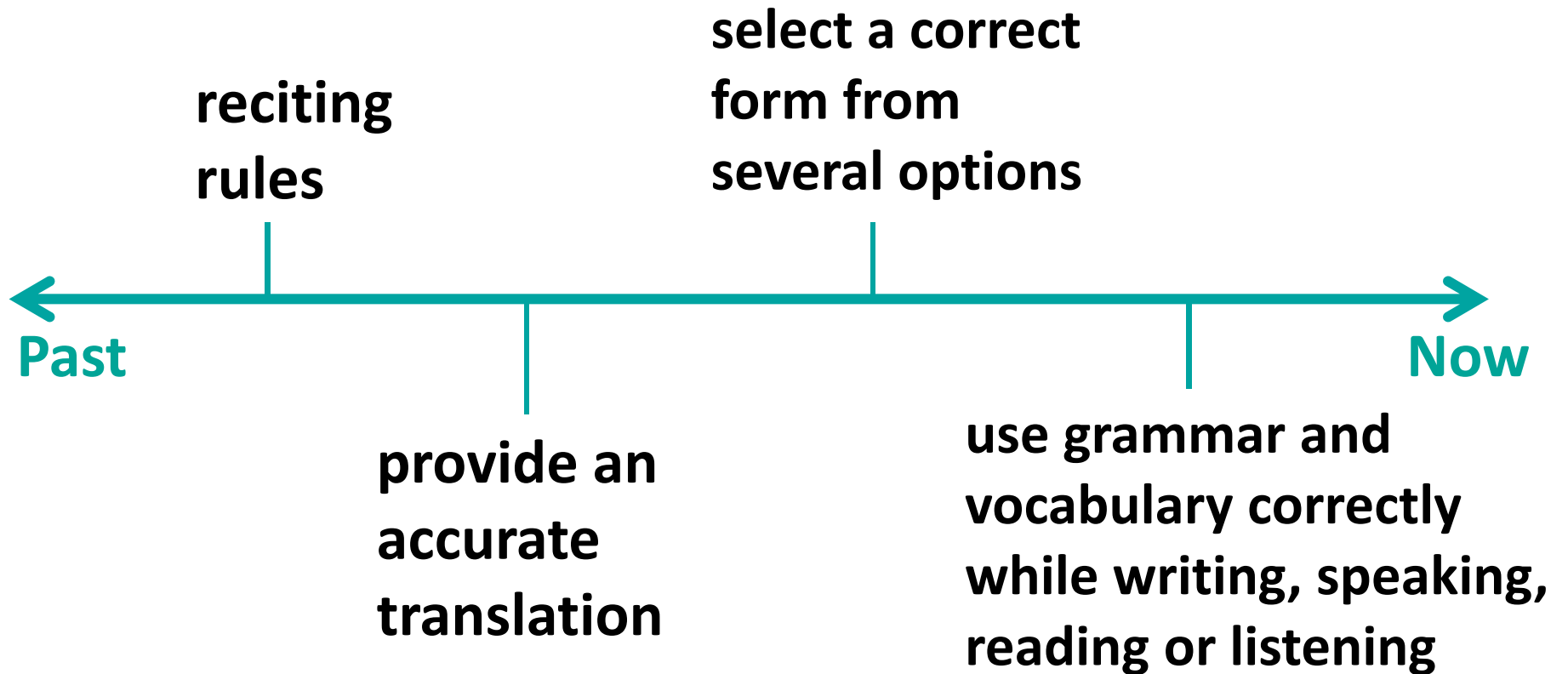
# Aspects of grammatical and lexical ability

pronunciation

spelling

morphology

syntax

frequency

register

discourse features

meaning

associations

synonyms

antonyms

collocations

contexts of use

figurative use

# Why assess grammar and vocabulary?

# Why assess grammar and vocabulary?



**SPEAKING**

- Generation of **ideas** (conceptualisation)

- Knowledge of **grammar**

- Knowledge of **vocabulary**

- Knowledge of **sounds**

- **Articulation**

Cambridge English

# Why assess grammar and vocabulary?

**READING**

- Recognise and understand a **word**

- Understand the **basic** meaning of a **phrase** or **sentence**

- Understand **implied meaning**

- Understand information **across sentences**

- ... across **a whole text**

- ... across **texts**

# Why assess grammar and vocabulary?

**READING**

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- ... across **a whole text**
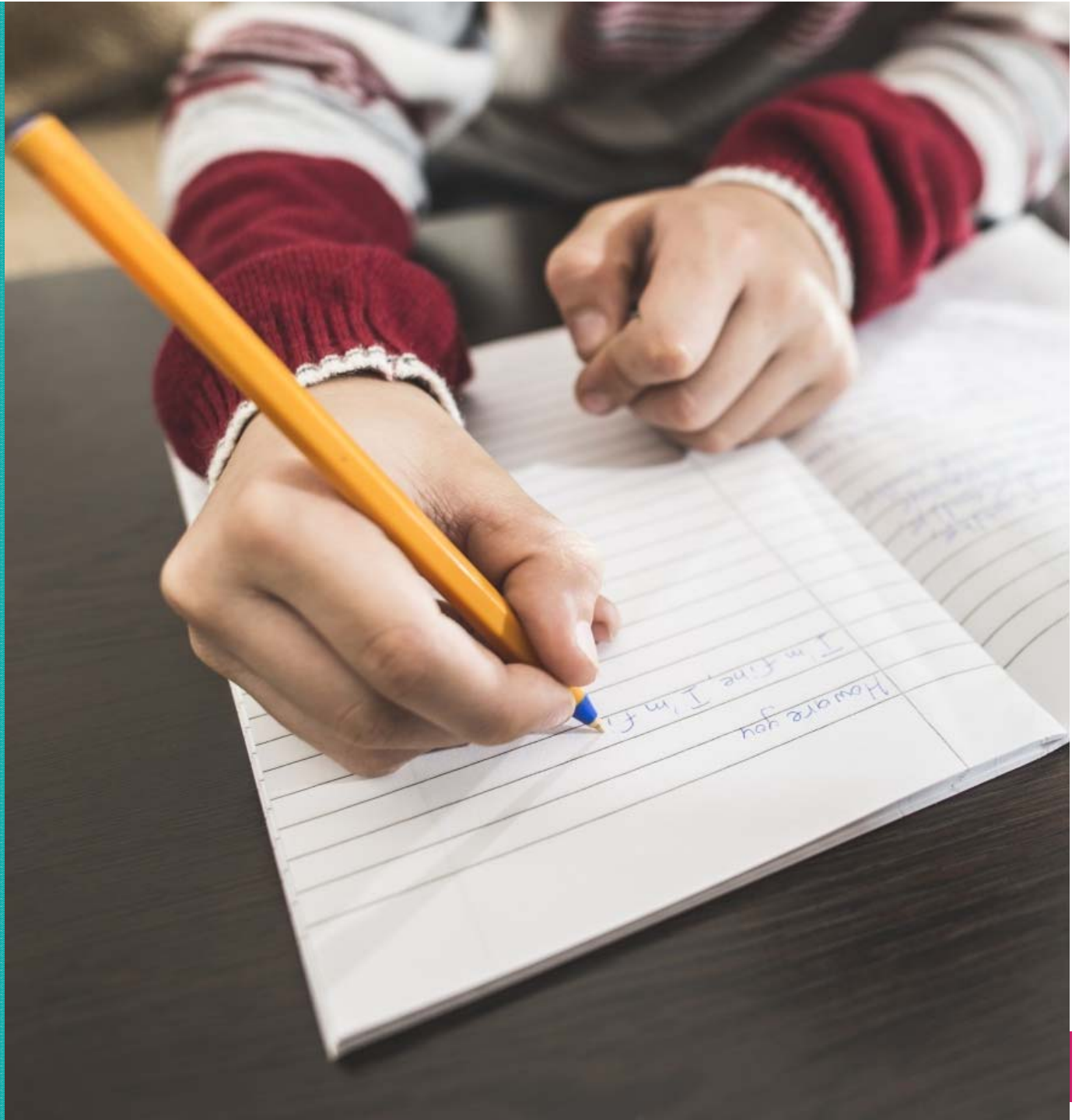- ... across **texts**

**SPEAKING**

- Generation of **ideas** (conceptualisation)
- Knowledge of **grammar**
- Knowledge of **vocabulary**
- Knowledge of **sounds**
- **Articulation**

Cambridge English

# Careful of negative washback though!
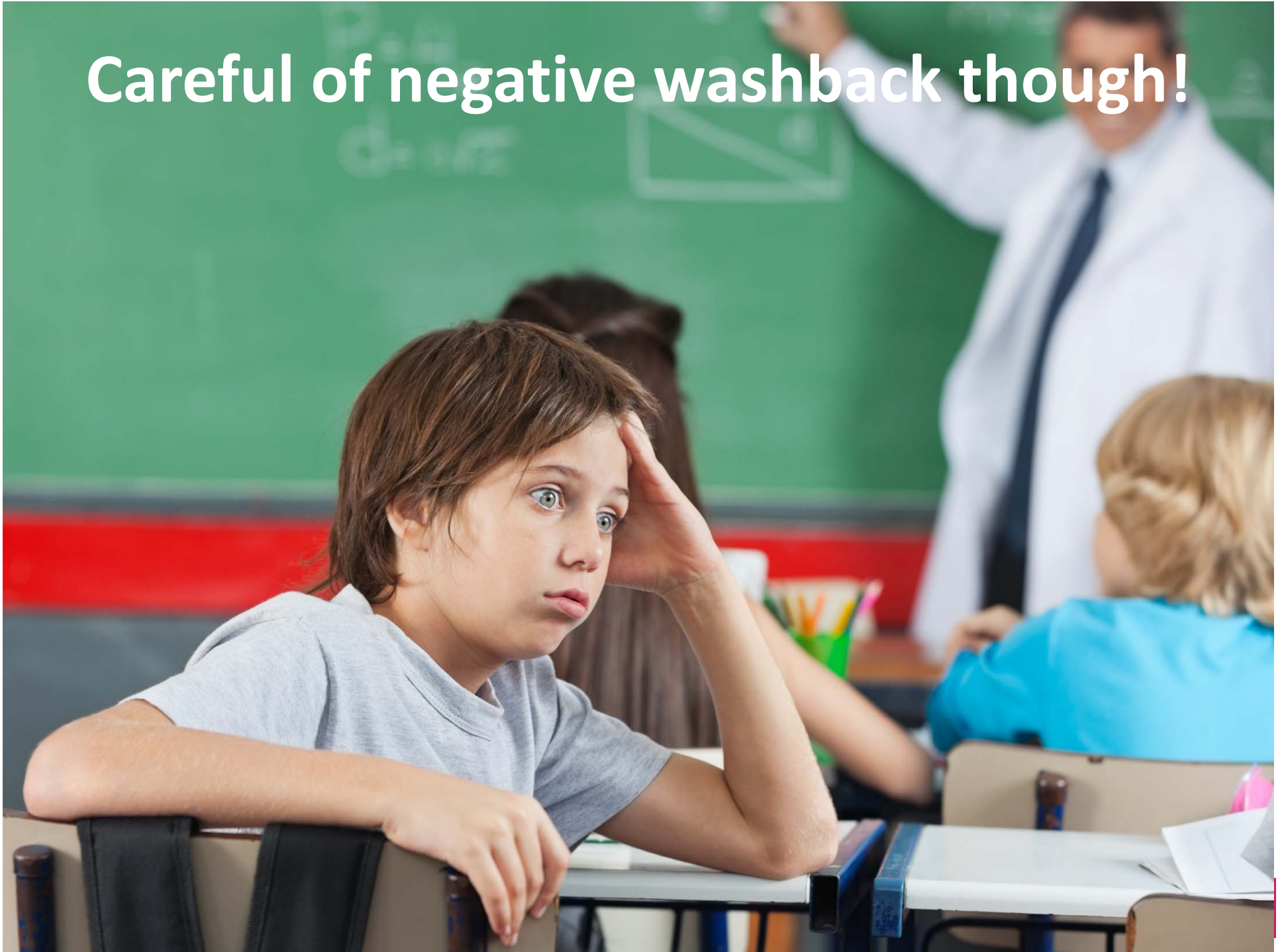
# How am I testing?

# Directly

## A wildlife cameraman

I (0) ….. a living as a freelance wildlife cameraman working all over the world.  It is my job to provide

the (1) ….. material from which a natural history programme is (2) ….. up.  If the lifestyle agrees with

you, the travel and the filming can be great.  There is fantastic variety: I often do not have the slightest

(3) ….. where I am going or what I will see.  There is also a certain pleasure in (4) ….. some of the

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **A** | pure | **B** | plain | **C** | raw | **D** | bare |
| **2** | **A** | made | **B** | set | **C** | taken | **D** | put |
| **3** | **A** | idea | **B** | thought | **C** | purpose | **D** | sense |

# Indirectly

Write an answer in 120–180 words in an appropriate style.

You have seen this announcement in an international magazine.

MY FAVOURITE TEACHER

Tell us about a favourite teacher of yours and say what you remember about him or her. We will publish the most interesting article next month. Write your article.

My Favourite Teacher

I can remember my favourite teacher very well indeed. She was my primary school teacher and because it was a small, village primary school, she had to teach us all the lessons, maths, reading, writing, singing, art and so on.

Her name was Mrs Horvat and I think she had taught at that school for years. She knew all the children and even their parents as well. She was quiet old but full of energy and her lessons were always interesting.

She was also very kind and cheerful. The lessons always started laughing and I felt really well during her classes. We never got boring and she made all interesting for us. Sometimes, we went out for an excursion, like to a museum or zoo. That was great!

I think I will always remember her.

# What type of response does each of these tasks elicit?

**TASK A**

**TASK B**

**TASK C**

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Extended production

Limited production

Selected response

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# How to evaluate test items

*Stem*         Maria hasn't seen
               her ………. 2 years.

# How to evaluate test items

*Stem*

Maria hasn't seen
her ………. 2 years.

*Response*

a. during

b. since

c. till

d. for

# How to evaluate test items

*Stem*        Maria hasn't seen
              her ………. 2 years.

*Response*    a. during
              b. since
              c. till          **Distractors**
              d. for

# How to evaluate test items

*Stem*                Maria hasn't seen
                      her ………. 2 years.

*Response*            a. during
                      b. since          **Distractors**
                      c. till
                      d. **for**        **Key**

# Evaluating a test item

How well does this item test grammatical or lexical knowledge?

A: *Does your computer have a modem?*
B: *Yes, _____ .*
a. *they have*                           c. *it does*
b. *it is*                               d. *they do*

# Evaluating a test item

> *A:  Does your computer have a modem?*
> *B:  Yes, _____ .*
> *a. they have*                    *c. it does*
> *b. it is*                         *d. they do*

## An improvement?

> *Mike: Does your computer have a webcam?*
> *Jenny: Yes, it _____ .*
>
> *a. is*            *c. does*
> *b. has*           *d. have*

# Tips 1: general guidelines

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- No tricky questions

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- Short stems only (maximum two lines)

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- Do not test language based on prescriptive grammar
  - 'With whom did you go?' vs. 'Who did you go with?'

# Tips 1: general guidelines

- No tricky questions

- Short stems only (maximum two lines)

- Do not test language based on prescriptive grammar
  - 'With whom did you go?' vs. 'Who did you go with?'

- Provide an example of a correctly answered item

# Evaluating a test item

Emily:  Do you want some bread?
Josh:  Yes, _____ some.

a. I love                    c. I'll hate
b. I'd love                  d. I hate

# Evaluating a test item

Emily:  Do you want some bread?
Josh:  Yes, _____ some.

a. I love             c. I'll hate
b. I'd love           d. I hate

**Do not test both grammar and vocabulary in the same question**

Cambridge English

# Evaluating a test item

Emily:  Do you want some bread?
Josh:  Yes, _____ some.

a. I love              c. I'll hate
b. I'd love            d. I hate

## An improvement?

Emily:  Do you want some bread?
Josh:  Yes, I _____ some.

a. could love          c. will love
b. would love          d. am loving

# Tips 2: keys and distractors

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- Include ONLY ONE key or correct answer

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- Include ONLY ONE key or correct answer

- Make all distractors equally plausible and 'attractive'

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- Include ONLY ONE key or correct answer

- Make all distractors equally plausible and 'attractive'

- Do not use distractors that test something the students haven't yet learned

# Evaluating a test item

*The man _____ to his 2:00 class.*

*a. didn't go*           *c. didn't went*
*b. don't go*            *d. don't went*

# Evaluating a test item

*The man _____ to his 2:00 class.*

*a. didn't go*            *c. didn't went*
*b. don't go*             *d. don't went*

**Distractors should be UNGRAMMATICAL when placed in the stem, but they should be GRAMMATICAL when considered in isolation**

# Evaluating a test item

*The man _____ to his 2:00 class.*

*a. didn't go            c. didn't went*
*b. don't go            d. don't went*

## An improvement?

*The man didn't _____ to his 2:00 class.*

*a. go            c. went*
*b. goes            d. gone*

# Tips 3: response format

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# Tips 3: response format

- Keys and distractors should be more or less of equal length
- If all choices are of different length, order them from shortest to longest or longest to shortest
- Do not repeat the same word in the response if it can be put in the stem, e.g.:

*Joan went to school _____.*

*a. at 8 in the morning*  *c. at 8 of the morning*
*b. at 8 on the morning*  *d. at 8 at the morning*

# How am I scoring?

# Scoring

How can you score the task types we discussed?

- **a selected response item?**
  - True/False?
  - Multiple Choice Question?

# Scoring

⇨ **Incorrect answer**

- 0 marks

⇨ **Correct answer**

- 1 mark

# Scoring

How can you score the task types we discussed?

- a selected response item?
- **a limited production item?**
  - Sentence Completion?

# Scoring: limited production task

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. You must use **between two and five words**, including the word given.

> Joan was in favour of visiting the museum.
>
> **IDEA**
>
> Joan thought it would be _____ to the museum.

# Scoring: limited production task

Joan was in favour of visiting the museum.

**IDEA**

Joan thought it would be _**a good idea to go**_ to the museum.

# Scoring: limited production task

Joan was in favour of visiting the museum.

**IDEA**

Joan thought it would be _**a good idea | to go**_
to the museum.

**Scalar scoring – 0 or 1 or 2 marks can be awarded**

# Scoring

How can you score the task types we discussed?

- a selected response item?
- a limited production item?
- **an extended production task?**

| B2 | Content | Communicative Achievement | Organisation | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed. | Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate. | Text is well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect. | 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. |
| 4 | *Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.* | | | |
| 3 | Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed. | Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas. | Text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices. | Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis. Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Errors do not impede communication. |
| 2 | *Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.* | | | |
| 1 | Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed. | Uses the conventions of the communicative task in generally appropriate ways to communicate straightforward ideas. | Text is connected and coherent, using basic linking words and a limited number of cohesive devices. | Uses everyday vocabulary generally appropriately, while occasionally overusing certain lexis. Uses simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control. While errors are noticeable, meaning can still be determined. |
| 0 | Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed. | *Performance below Band 1.* | | |

| B2 | Content | Communicative Achievement | Organisation | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5 | All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed. | Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate. | Text is well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect. | 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. |
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| 0 | Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed. | Performance below Band 1. | | |

# Writing assessment: language

Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis.

Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control.

Errors do not impede communication

# Write&Improve

I am think it will be ▲ good idea to filming the English class with our teacher who is Mrs Robert[s] [o]f students love Mrs Roberts and we enjoin this class [stud]ents all having nice time and doing ❗ [f]lm will see that it is a fun. They will want ❗ [thi]s class.

▲ **Missing word?**                                    ✕

**Did you forget something before this word?**

Do you need to add 'a' or something similar?

[rest]urant where we ❗ having ☆ the [...] to have good food in ❗ this schools' [s]tudents are happy ❗ to .

[...]ving the garden of the school and the sports [...] ▲ lot of trees and grass and flowers and [...]d for ❗ relax .

**Next**

I think that if people see this film they will want to come to have our daily life.

# Useful resources

# English Vocabulary Profile

- Free online resource based on research into vocabulary learning

- Shows which words and phrases – and individual meanings of each word – are typically mastered at six levels of the CEFR

- Valuable tool for decision-making around what to teach and how to assess

# English Vocabulary Profile

| British English | American English |
|---|---|

**Choose level:**
- A1
- A1-A2
- A1-B1
- A1-B2
- A1-C1
- A1-C2
- A2 only
- B1 only
- B2 only
- C1 only
- C2 only

Browse A-Z

OR

**Enter a word or phrase**

**ADVANCED SEARCH**

| | |
|---|---|
| Category | words |
| Part of speech | --Any-- |
| Grammar | --Any-- |
| Usage | --Any-- |
| Topic | --Any-- |
| Prefix | --Any-- |
| Suffix | --Any-- |

**Clear filters**

☐ Hide culturally sensitive words

**Search**

English Profile Home
About English Vocabulary Profile
Word of the Week
Help
Feedback

## About the English Vocabulary Profile

Welcome to the pilot version of the full six-level **English Vocabulary Profile**. This version covers levels A1-C2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for British and American English.

If you have any comments, questions or requests, the EVP team would love to hear from you! **Get in touch** now.

- What is the English Vocabulary Profile (EVP)?
- Why is the EVP important to me?
- How has the EVP been created?
- What does an EVP entry include?
- How can I work with the EVP?

| What is the EVP? | Why is the EVP important? | How has it been created? | What does an EVP entry include? | How can I work with the EVP? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

### What is the English Vocabulary Profile?

The EVP shows, in both British and American English, which words and phrases learners around the world know at each level - A1 to C2 - of the CEFR. Rather than providing a syllabus of the vocabulary that learners *should* know, the EVP project verifies what they *do* know at each level. CEFR levels are assigned not just to the words themselves, but to each individual meaning of these words. So, for instance, the word *degree* is assigned level A2 for the sense TEMPERATURE, B1 for QUALIFICATION, B2 for AMOUNT and C2 for the phrase *a/some degree of (sth)*. The capitalized guidewords help the user to navigate longer entries, and phrases are listed separately within an entry.

**Find out more about the CEFR.**

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages | General English

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Proficient user | C2 | Mastery | CPE |
| | C1 | Effective Operational Proficiency | CAE |
| Independent user | B2 | Vantage | FCE |
| | B1 | Threshold | PET |
| Basic user | A2 | Waystage | KET |
| | A1 | Breakthrough | |

http://vocabulary.englishprofile.org

**Cambridge English**

# English Vocabulary Profile

**Choose level:**
- A1
- A1-A2        A2 only
- A1-B1        B1 only
- A1-B2        B2 only
- A1-C1        C1 only
- A1-C2        C2 only

Browse A-Z

**OR**

**Enter a word or phrase**

over the moon

**ADVANCED SEARCH** ⌄

☐ Hide culturally sensitive words

**Search**

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**moon** 🔊 /muːn/

**Outline view**

▶ **NOUN**

**the moon**

A2 the round object which moves in the sky around the Earth and can be seen at night

**Dictionary example:**

*We gazed at the moon.*

> ⊙ **Learner example:**
> *There is a big window [and] from it I can see mountains, the sky, the moon and the sun.*
>
> *Key English Test; A2; Italian*

**be over the moon** INFORMAL

B2 to be very pleased about something

**Dictionary example:**

*She was over the moon about her results.*

> ⊙ **Learner example:**
> *It's very kind of you to let me use things in your flat. I'm over the moon!*
>
> *First Certificate in English; B2; Polish*

**Cambridge English**

# English Grammar Profile

# Summary

# Summary

**Enabling skills**

# Summary

**Enabling skills**

**Washback**

# Summary

Enabling skills

Washback

Range of tasks & responses

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# Summary

Enabling skills

Washback

Range of tasks & responses

Well-constructed test items

Cambridge English

# Summary



Enabling skills

Washback

Scoring & resources

Range of tasks & responses

Well-constructed test items
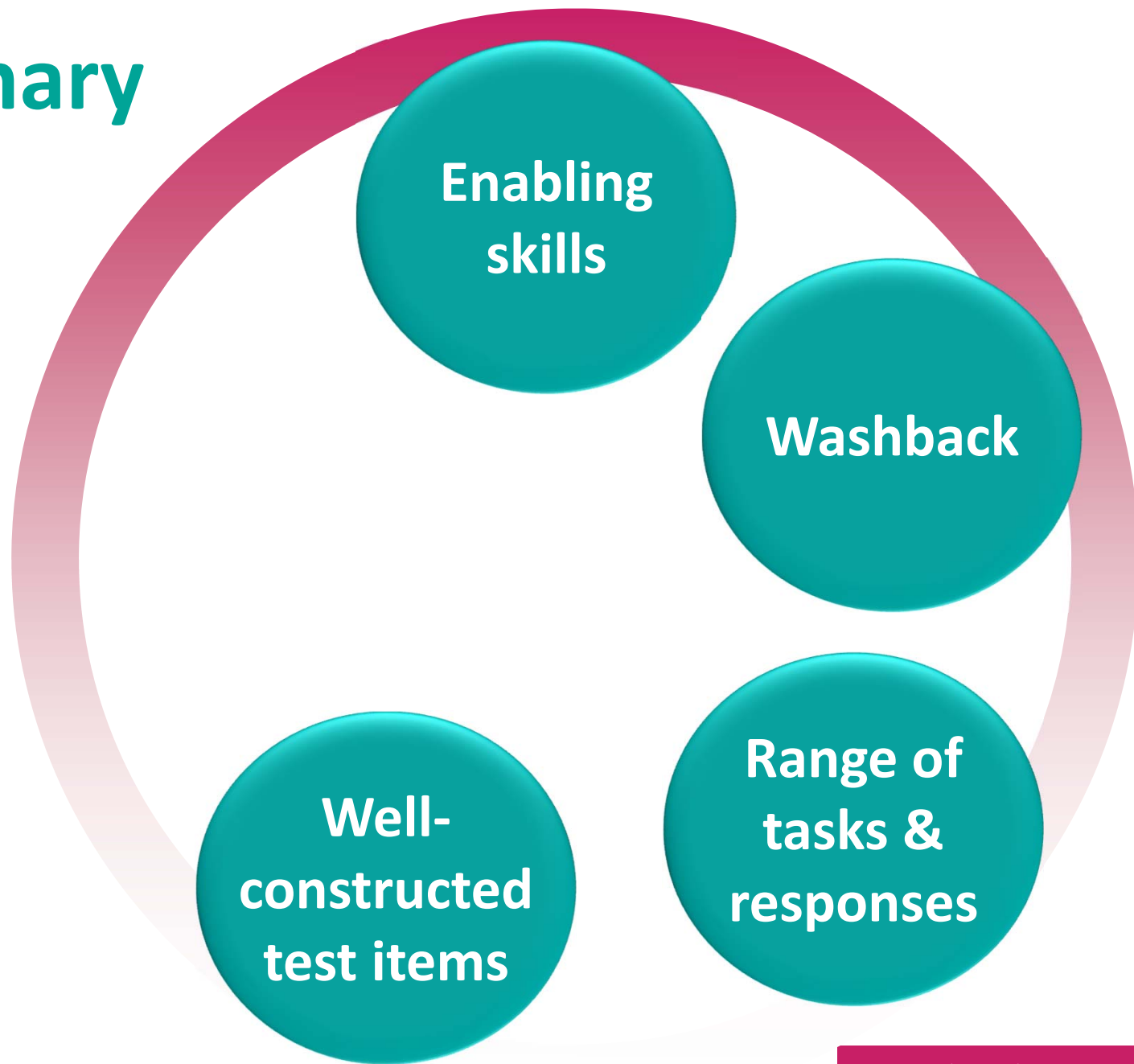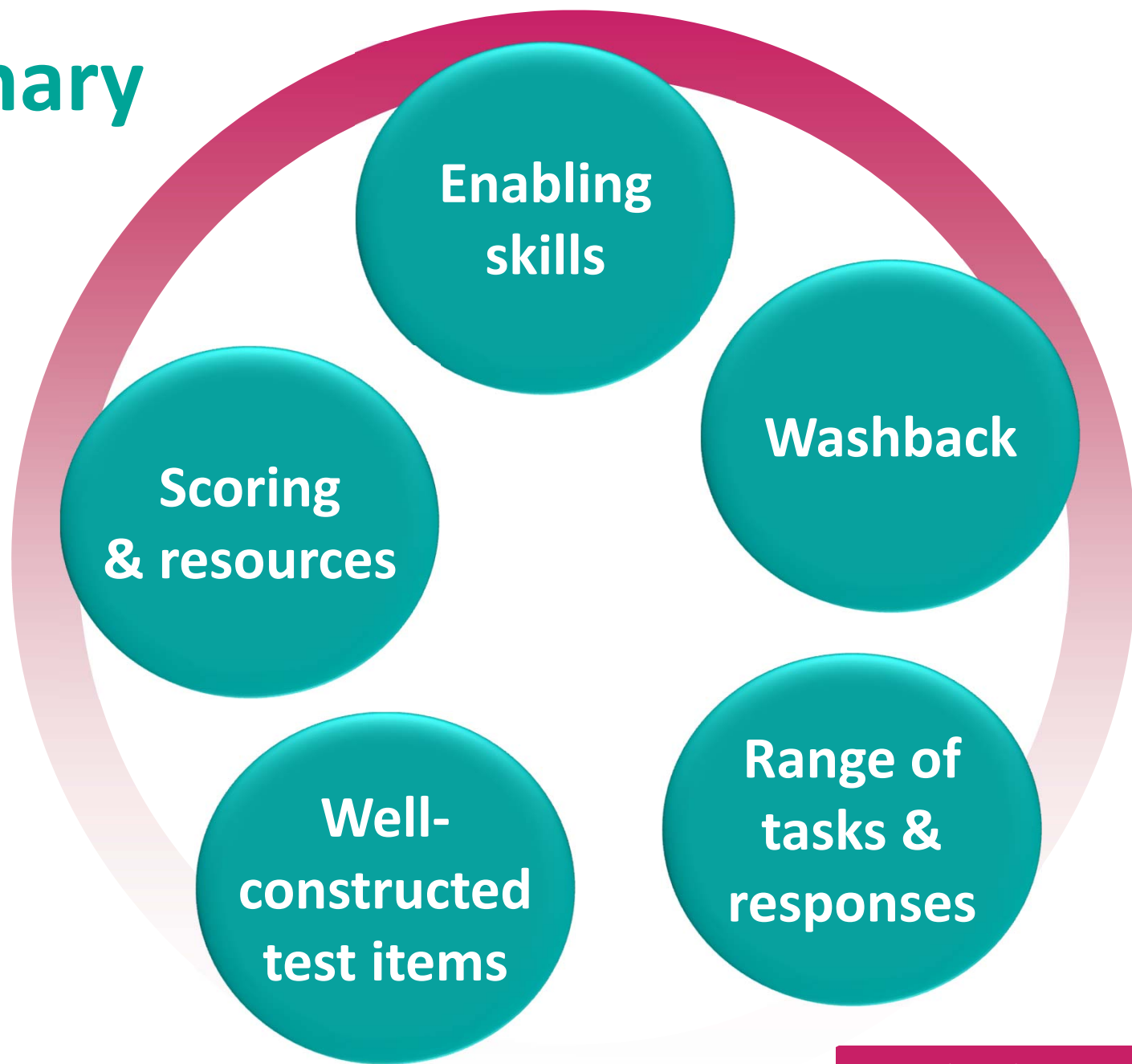
# Further information

# Teaching English



**Free resources for teachers**

Sample papers, handbooks, lesson plans and teacher guides

**Teaching Qualifications**

For new and experienced teachers

**Teaching Framework**

Helps you assess which stage you are at in your professional development and work out where you want to get to next

**Webinars**

About our exams and teaching

www.cambridgeenglish.org/teaching-english

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# Examining English – the complete set

**Studies in Language Testing 26** — Examining Writing

**Studies in Language Testing 29** — Examining Reading

**Studies in Language Testing 30** — Examining Speaking

**Studies in Language Testing 35** — Examining Listening

## www.cambridgeenglish.org/silt
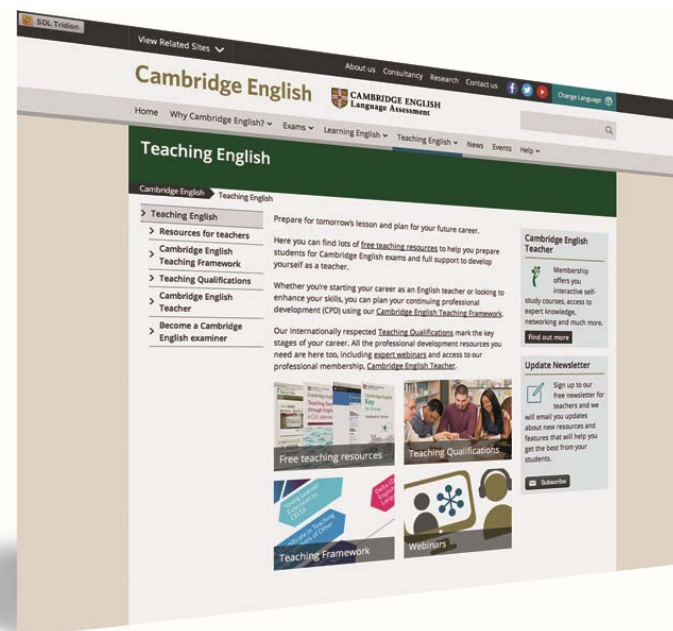
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# Further information

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**Email: helpdesk@cambridgeenglish.org**

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