



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE  
ESOL Examinations

Experts in Language Assessment

# Preliminary English Test

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## PET Examination Report

December 2007

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# **Preliminary English Test**

## **Examination Report**

**December 2007**

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### **WEBSITE REFERENCE**

This report can be downloaded from the Cambridge ESOL website at:  
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## INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide a general view of how candidates performed on each paper in the December 2007 session, and to offer guidance on the preparation of candidates.

The overall pass rate for the December 2007 session was **77.05%**.

The following table gives details of the percentage of candidates at each grade:

<b>December 2007</b>	
<b>GRADE</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Pass with Merit	23.55
Pass	53.51
Narrow Fail	9.34
Fail	13.60

- **Grading**

Grading took place during January 2008 (approximately five weeks after the examination).

The final mark a candidate receives in PET is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (Reading/Writing, Listening and Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers.

PET has two passing grades:

**Pass with Merit**

**Pass**

and two failing grades:

**Narrow Fail**

**Fail**

The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a 'Pass' grade corresponds to about 70% of the total marks. 'Pass with Merit' corresponds to approximately 85% of the total marks available. A 'Narrow Fail' grade means that the candidate is within 5% of the 'Pass' level.

Statements of Results contain a graphical display of a candidate's performance in each skill. These are shown against a scale of Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak, and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each paper.

- **Special Consideration**

Special Consideration can be given to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving Special Consideration include illness and bereavement. All applications for Special Consideration must be made through the local Centre as soon as possible after the examination affected.

- **Irregular Conduct**

Cases of candidates who are suspected of copying, collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way will be considered by the Cambridge ESOL Malpractice Committee. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of the regulations.

- **Notification of Results**

Candidates' Statements of Results are issued through their local Centre approximately two months after the examination has been taken. Certificates are issued about six weeks after the issue of Statements of Results. Requests for a check on results may be made through the local Centre, within one month of the issue of Statements of Results.

Cambridge ESOL produces the following documents which may be of use to teachers or institutions preparing candidates for PET:

- *Regulations* (produced annually, for information on dates, etc.)
- *PET Handbook* (for detailed information on the examination and sample materials)
- *Examination Report* (produced once a year)
- *Past Paper Pack* (available approximately 10 weeks after the selected examination session, including question papers 1 and 2, CD and tapescript for Paper 2, answer keys, sample Speaking test materials, and Paper 1 mark schemes and sample scripts).

**Users of this Examination Report may find it useful to refer simultaneously to the relevant Past Paper Pack.** This is available from the Centre through which candidates entered, or can be purchased using the order form online at **[www.CambridgeESOL.org](http://www.CambridgeESOL.org)**

Alternatively, you can obtain an order form from:

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Feedback on this report is very welcome and should be sent to Cambridge ESOL at the above address. Please use the feedback form at the end of this report.

## PAPER 1 – READING and WRITING

READING			
PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	Three-option multiple choice.	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.	5
	Five short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, emails, labels, etc. plus one example.		
2	Matching.	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.	5
	Five questions in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.		
3	True/False.	Processing a factual text.	10
	Ten questions with an adapted-authentic long text.	Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	
4	Four-option multiple choice.	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose.	5
	Five questions with an adapted-authentic long text.	Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	
5	Four-option multiple-choice cloze.	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexicographical patterns in the text.	10
	Ten questions, plus an integrated example, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.		

- **Marking**

Candidates record their answers on a separate answer sheet. The answers for Parts 1-5 are scanned by computer. Each of the 35 questions carries one mark. This is weighted so that the Reading component represents 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

- **Candidate Performance**

### Part 1, Questions 1-5: Multiple choice

The five multiple-choice questions in this task test understanding of short texts. The range of texts covers 'public' notices, signs and labels, together with 'personal' messages such as emails, post-it notes, postcards and text messages. Both types of

text occur in a range of settings and reflect core PET topics. For a full list of these topics, see the *PET Handbook*.

The texts in this test were a notice to supermarket customers about car parking, a message about a bookshop order, an email about borrowing a friend's DVD, a college notice about collecting parcels, and a notice at a sports centre about lost property.

Candidates dealt with this part reasonably well, although Question 3 was more challenging than the others. From this, it seems that weaker candidates were unsure of the meaning of the verbs 'borrow' and 'lend'. The correct answer A states 'is offering to lend', which equates with 'You can borrow' in the text. Several candidates opted for B rather than A, despite the text saying that Chung got the DVD back. Some weaker candidates chose option C, possibly wrongly matching the words 'back' and 'borrowed' with words in the text.

Question 4 was also fairly challenging and many weaker candidates chose B rather than the correct answer, C. Here, candidates had to match 'if you prove who you are' with the need for a college identity card, and this may have been problematic for some candidates.

Although Part 1 may appear to be straightforward in that there is relatively little to read, candidates must take the time to think about each text and its options carefully. See recommendations for candidate preparation on page 7.

## **Part 2, Questions 6-10: Matching**

The topic for this session was buying books suitable for children and teenagers, which appears to have been accessible to all candidates. The task was handled well, although Question 6 proved quite challenging to weaker candidates, who opted for B, and to a lesser extent D and E, rather than the correct answer A. The chosen book for Question 6 needs to be about nature and this is exemplified in A by 'how plants grow', 'how different birds care for their young' and 'information about insects' – text B, on the other hand, is about technology and inventions. Here, weaker candidates may have simply matched the phrase 'asking questions' in the question with the phrase 'asks questions' in text B, failing to consider the unsuitable subject matter of B.

As Question 6 illustrates, Part 2 often involves finding exemplification of the requirements mentioned in the questions on the left-hand page in one of the eight texts on the right-hand page. Candidates need to employ skimming and scanning skills to locate this information, as well as having a good grasp of relevant topic vocabulary. See recommendations for candidate preparation on page 7.

## **Part 3, Questions 11-20: True/False**

The text for this task is the longest in the Reading component but will always contain some redundant information. Common sources for this text are magazine or website articles, which are usually factual in content. Candidates have to decide whether ten sentences about the text are correct or incorrect. These sentences follow the order of information in the text.

This session's text was an article written by a journalist about her experiences in Antarctica and those of an artist who had also worked there. Candidates generally performed well on this task. Question 15 was the easiest question, and candidates were able to match 'particularly liked' with 'the best thing about my visit' without difficulty.

Questions 16 and 17 were more demanding. Question 16 was the hardest question of the set of ten, requiring candidates to process three sentences in the penultimate paragraph and to infer from them that the painting *Leonie Island at Midnight* 'brought back happy memories'. Many weaker candidates opted for B (incorrect), perhaps distracted by the wording of the previous sentence 'at times I felt terrible'. However, most of the stronger candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 17 also required understanding of more than one sentence in the text, as well as the force of 'whenever' in the question itself. Some candidates may have been tempted to guess the answer here because the artist was working in Antarctica, but as the text says, Hughes was there in summer, when it was not excessively cold. Option B is confirmed by 'He could draw in these conditions but if it got colder, he needed to wear gloves.'

This illustrates that it is always necessary to read the text and sentences carefully. See further recommendations for candidate preparation on page 8.

#### **Part 4, Questions 21-25: Multiple choice**

Part 4 tests attitude and opinion, which is generally less straightforward to process and understand than factual information. The Part 4 text for this session was about a famous film actor's views on the Indian film industry, and compared his own experiences with those of a new generation of film-makers. Candidates handled the task reasonably well.

Question 21 always tests writer purpose and candidates usually have no problems with this question type. In this session, it was the easiest question out of the five. The key, D, picks up on the comparisons made in the text and most candidates chose this answer, although some weaker candidates opted for B, perhaps because of the use of the verb 'compare'.

Question 23 was quite challenging and tests a large amount of text in the second paragraph. The correct answer, D, is supported by the writer's words 'I can see technical difficulties' when contrasted with Rakesh Mehra's different perspective: 'He said it was not a problem.' Several candidates chose C, but although the phrase 'financial side' is mentioned in connection with Rakesh Mehra, there is no suggestion that they disagreed about cost.

Question 25 was the hardest of the five questions. This question tests global understanding and therefore draws on information throughout the text. Most of the stronger candidates chose the correct option, B, which is confirmed in various places: 'the new generation of film-makers take their work seriously and they are all very confident'; 'they are extremely well-prepared'; 'I have little doubt that the future of our film industry is in very good hands.' Several candidates chose C, but while this is

perhaps a plausible comment for someone to make in the real world, the writer views the new generation of film-makers more positively.

Candidates must allow enough time for this part of the paper. Even though there are only five questions, each one needs to be thought about carefully and all four options checked against the text. See recommendations for candidate preparation on page 8.

### **Part 5, Questions 26-35: Multiple-choice cloze**

This multiple-choice cloze task mainly tests vocabulary but also focuses on some grammatical areas of language. The text for this session was about inventions. The task seemed to be accessible, although weaker candidates found some of the questions quite challenging.

Questions 26, 29, 31 and 35 proved to be the most challenging. In Question 26, stronger candidates recognised the collocation 'distant places' but weaker candidates were attracted by A ('far') and C ('other'). Question 29 focused on quantifiers and required candidates to know the differences in use between 'every' and 'each'. The correct answer was A ('every') but all three distractors were chosen by weaker candidates.

Question 31 tests prepositions of time and some candidates opted for B ('at') rather than the correct answer C ('during'). For Question 35, candidates had to process above sentence level, needing to understand the meaning of the previous sentence in order to recognise that 'until' was the correct answer in the final sentence. Many weaker candidates chose options A ('if') and D ('when'), although the vast majority of the strong candidates chose correctly.

As shown above, for this session it was largely the structural items that proved the hardest, although this is not typically the case. See recommendations for candidate preparation on page 9.

## • RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION

### Part 1

Many of the public notices used in this part are only found in English-speaking countries, so teachers may wish to familiarise their students with examples drawn from past papers or published practice tests. As for the personal messages, teachers could produce similar short texts including emails, post-it notes and postcards, or ask their students to do so. Many students would undoubtedly also be amenable to using their mobile phones to send text messages to their friends in English, and could perhaps be persuaded to switch to English as the default language for a period. In this way, they might learn from or be helped by the predictive text facility on their phones.

It would be worth spending some time in class looking at the contrasting language used in public notices and personal messages. As initial training for this task, students could be given just the short texts and asked to explain their meaning, either orally or in writing. They could then suggest different ways of expressing the meaning, so that students become familiar with the use of paraphrase in this part as well as in subsequent parts of the Reading component.

Students need to be made aware of the dangers of 'wordspotting' across text and options and this could be made clear through reference to a past paper. Students could be asked to highlight identical words in text and options and then to discuss these examples in pairs, explaining why options are correct or incorrect according to the meaning of the text.

### Part 2

Students should be trained in skimming and scanning, so that they can process the eight texts efficiently. As a training activity, it can be helpful to focus in detail on the people's descriptions, asking students to underline key words and phrases and then to think further about these, perhaps discussing them in pairs and suggesting possible paraphrase.

Students at B1 level need to expand their vocabulary and one way of doing this that will also provide useful preparation for the exam is to take the topic areas listed in the *PET Handbook* and encourage students to build up lists of vocabulary for each of them. The *PET Vocabulary List*, available online at [www.CambridgeESOL.org/teach](http://www.CambridgeESOL.org/teach), contains relevant lists of vocabulary for these topic areas in its Appendix 3.

For a simple introduction to this part, students could be given two texts to choose between for each person's requirements. The 'wrong' text should contain some distraction – so for example texts A and B from this version could be given to students for Question 6 and students asked to underline the parts of each text that match a requirement in the description. In this way, students can focus more closely on meaning, and appreciate the relevance of exemplification and paraphrase.

### Part 3

Exposure in class to a range of factual texts of medium length is important for this part. The internet provides a readily available source of appropriate texts, and authentic brochures and leaflets can also work well as practice material. Since the essence of this task is paraphrase recognition, it would be helpful for students to be given a factual text and asked to try to express elements of its content in other ways. This type of practice activity could also be done with a task from a past paper, where only the text is handed out to students, with the key parts underlined or highlighted.

Confident students might also be asked to draft their own correct and incorrect sentences about a text they have chosen and to then exchange their task with another student. This practice activity not only improves reading comprehension and paraphrase, but also creates a realistic context for writing at sentence level.

For weaker students, it is useful to indicate where approximately the answers come in a text, so that they initially have some guidance and support. It may also be useful to concentrate on key language areas such as comparison and conditional structures, since these regularly appear in the wording of some of the ten sentences.

Students should be confident in their ability to reject incorrect statements about a text. As a training activity, students could just be given the sentences with B answers and be asked to explain why these statements are incorrect, working closely with the text and underlining the relevant parts. This could be done as a pairwork activity or for homework, with any Part 3 task from a past paper or practice test.

It may be useful to discuss with students how much time they think should be spent on Part 3. It contains the longest text and has ten questions, so represents a substantial part of the whole Reading component, yet the task is designed so that not every word of the text needs to be read closely. Developing confident scanning skills at this level will enable students to read more efficiently in this part.

### Part 4

It is clear that students need to be familiar with ways of expressing attitude or opinion. This includes an awareness of different 'functional' verbs, such as 'advise', 'compare', 'refuse' and 'suggest', which are relevant to any Reading Part 4 question testing opinion and also occur in Question 21. Candidates should be able to understand a range of these verbs, which are key to other parts of the PET examination as well (for example, Writing Part 2 and Listening Part 4).

These verbs are listed alphabetically in the *PET Vocabulary List* and, for the language of attitude and opinion, it is also worth consulting the list of adjectives on page 49: *Personal Feelings, Opinions and Experiences (Adjectives)*. To activate some of the words in this list, students' opinions on a given topic could be elicited and written on the board, for other members of the class to then suggest paraphrases for, using words from the list. For example, one student might say 'I don't really enjoy cooking for myself', which could be paraphrased as: 'Luis isn't very keen on preparing his own meals.' Always encourage students to reformulate ideas in this way, as it will develop their productive vocabulary.

When training students in how to approach the Reading Part 4 task in the exam itself, discuss with students whether it might be better to answer the questions out of the order given: as Questions 21 and 25 test overall understanding of the text, students might find it easier to answer these last, after they have considered the text in depth.

To practise answering multiple-choice questions that focus on detailed meaning, give students the correct answer to a question and ask them to quote the parts of the text that confirm this answer. Students could also explain why the distractor options are wrong, by close reference to the text. This will illustrate to them how much text is typically involved for each question.

## **Part 5**

To perform well in this part, students need to have a solid grasp of B1 level structures (see the *PET Handbook* for a list of grammatical areas tested) and a fairly broad knowledge of vocabulary. Work on part of speech awareness and specific practice of structures such as modals, quantifiers, conjunctions and the passive are particularly relevant here.

The *PET Vocabulary List* provides a checklist in terms of the vocabulary that may be tested in the PET exam and, as already suggested on page 7, its topic lists in Appendix 3 should prove particularly useful for teachers preparing their own exercises and activities. Regular vocabulary activities in class that revise and extend students' knowledge and offer initial preparation for the exam include 'odd one out' exercises, where students have to explain which word in a set of four or five is different and why; and word square searches, containing fifteen words belonging to the same topic. Exercises that encourage students to group words by part of speech are also useful.

It may be better to introduce the actual exam task by giving students a choice of only two or three options at first, rather than four. This provides an easier version of the task and also focuses students on the spaces in the text rather than the options. This is essential, for they need to see the context and grammatical clues surrounding each space. Even when working with past papers, suggest that students try to fit all four options in the space, checking the words either side of the space before deciding on their answers. Practice of dependent prepositions and phrasal verb particles is also relevant here.

Students may also be interested in creating their own multiple-choice texts, which they can exchange among their peers. The internet will provide an accessible source for texts on topics that particularly interest them.

**WRITING**

<b>PART</b>	<b>TASK TYPES AND FORMAT</b>	<b>TASK FOCUS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF QUESTIONS</b>
<b>1</b>	<p>Sentence transformations.</p> <p>Five questions, plus an integrated example, that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences with no more than three words, using a different structural pattern, so that the sentence still has the same meaning.</p>	Control and understanding of B1/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.	5
<b>2</b>	<p>Short communicative message.</p> <p>Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, email etc. The prompt takes the form of a situation to respond to.</p>	A short piece of writing (35-45 words) focusing on communication of specific messages.	1
<b>3</b>	<p>A longer piece of continuous writing.</p> <p>Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story.</p> <p>Candidates are primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of B1/Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.</p>	Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.	1

- **Marking**

Questions 1-5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of 5 and Question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25, which represents 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

- **Candidate Performance**

### **Part 1, Questions 1-5: Sentence transformations**

This sentence-transformation task requires a short answer of at most three words, but more typically of one or two words only. Candidates have to fill in the missing part of the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. In this part of the Writing component, everything must be correctly spelled, with capital letters where necessary. American English is acceptable, if used consistently.

For this session, the sentences were about a football match. Different structures and transformations were tested: expressing a superlative, use of gerund, passive to active,

comparative with 'than', and related parts of speech. Question 2 was the hardest of the five and Questions 4 and 5 were the easiest.

A common wrong answer in Question 1 was the use of 'an' on its own, rendering the second sentence incomplete in terms of meaning.

In Question 2, the failure to recognise that a gerund form was needed following the words 'I didn't mind' led to common wrong answers such as 'to have to' and the four-word clause 'that I had to' (candidates may only write up to three words in the gap).

In Question 3, some candidates used other synonymous verbs or phrasal verbs in place of 'give' – for example 'showed', 'handed out' – and these were acceptable. However, in a passive to active transformation, students should be advised to use the verb provided in the first sentence, rather than 'risk' producing a different verb inaccurately.

Question 4 was the easiest question in the set and most students were able to produce the correct answer. Occasionally, 'than' was mis-spelt as 'then' and these candidates lost the mark.

In Question 5, other nouns such as 'finale' and 'ending' were produced by some candidates, which were incorrect answers in this context.

## **Part 2, Question 6: Short communicative message**

The testing focus of the Writing Part 2 task is on task achievement, and the quality of the language produced by candidates is only a factor if it affects the communication of the message. Language is fully assessed in Part 3 of the Writing component.

It is essential for candidates to read the whole question carefully to ensure that they cover all three bulleted content points, and produce a communicative message that is in line with the task rubric. All too frequently, apparently strong candidates fail to deal with one of the three points and so do not score more than three marks out of five for Part 2.

Candidates are required to write between 35 and 45 words and are penalised if they write much below this. If they write a lot more than 45 words, their answer is likely to lack clarity and will be penalised accordingly. However, there is no automatic penalty for answers longer than 45 words so candidates shouldn't spend unnecessary time cutting their piece of writing to an exact length. See recommendations for candidate preparation on page 13.

For this session, candidates had to write a card to an English friend about moving to a new home. The three content points to include were: an explanation for why the candidate had moved, a positive comment about the new home, and an invitation for the English friend to visit.

Many candidates coped with the task satisfactorily and the coverage of the first point was particularly clear. However, there was some confusion over the second point, with weaker candidates misunderstanding the phrase 'what you like about' and giving instead a description (saying what it 'is like'). Stronger candidates linked the first and second points together skilfully.

Providing an invitation for the third point was dealt with without difficulty. The tone of the invitation was not always appropriate and if this affected the clarity of the message, such answers were assessed as 'adequate'. A few other candidates lost marks here by inverting the scenario and inviting themselves to visit the friend.

### **Part 3, Question 7 or 8: Continuous writing**

Up to fifteen marks are available for Writing Part 3, representing 60% of the total marks on the Writing component. Candidates are rewarded for showing ambition and the ability to use a good range of structures and vocabulary, even if this leads to errors. For example, a Band 5 answer will demonstrate 'confident and ambitious use of language', where errors are 'due to ambition and non-impeding'. For a full description of the assessment criteria for PET Writing Part 3 see the *PET Handbook*.

Both Part 3 tasks seemed accessible to candidates, although the fact that fewer opted for the story task in this session may indicate that 'making a decision' is less relevant to younger candidates. Question 7, the letter, asked candidates to write to a friend saying what they think their town will be like in 20 years' time and whether they will always live there. This topic produced a wide variety of responses and there was a good range of structure and vocabulary in many answers. A few candidates wrote more generally about science-fiction developments such as flying cars and robots instead of focusing on their town specifically, but this was regarded as an acceptable interpretation of the question.

A number of candidates made extensive use of 'would' rather than 'will' as a future marker, and although this was sometimes linguistically inappropriate, the candidates concerned still managed to address the future aspect of the question. Weaker candidates tended to overuse 'I think' to start their sentences. See recommendations for candidate preparation on pages 13-14.

Question 8, the story, had the title: *The best decision I've ever made* and there were some good answers, demonstrating a range of tenses and relevant vocabulary. The word 'best' in the title sometimes had to be interpreted leniently and any decision made in the story was deemed acceptable. Sometimes the decision was rather unclear as it was embedded in the story, but most candidates managed to link the story to the title reasonably well. However, a few candidates wrote the story in the third person, which did not match the title. Some candidates misunderstood 'decision' as 'discussion', although this did not necessarily result in the story being 'off-task'.

It should be pointed out that examiners are no longer able to 'check against script' in the event of a blank answer sheet, so that any candidates who write their answer on the question paper and fail to transfer it to the answer sheet will receive 0. Candidates should therefore be encouraged to write directly onto the answer sheet, even if they use the question paper for minimal rough work.

## • RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION

### Part 1

As this part tests structural knowledge, students need to have a good grasp of B1 level structures and be able to apply these accurately. The *PET Handbook* contains a list of the grammatical areas covered in PET on pages 7-8. Correct spelling is also essential, so time should be spent in class practising spelling, focusing on key problem areas such as pluralisation, comparative forms, irregular past tenses and gerund forms. It is also useful for students to revise the different forms of irregular verbs.

As an introduction to Writing Part 1, teachers could use past papers to produce adapted sets of sentences, where the answer is given along with one or two incorrect answers. In this way, students would understand what is involved in the task without having to come up with the answers for themselves. Students could also work through past papers in pairs, discussing what is required in each space and checking each other's answers.

It is worth explaining to students that, since the main emphasis in Part 1 is on structural transformations, they rarely have to bring new vocabulary into the second sentence in order to answer the question successfully. So if for example a verb is given in the passive (as in Question 3 of this session), all that is required is the active form of the same verb.

### Part 2

Regular practice in writing short communicative messages will benefit not only this part but also Reading Part 1. Students could be encouraged to email each other in English or to write notes to each other.

Students should be taught useful expressions and other language appropriate to common functional areas, such as apologising, explaining, inviting, suggesting and thanking. They should be discouraged from using any phrases that appear on the question paper, since this may not be the most natural way of communicating a given function in informal language and will not show their true language ability.

Given the problem of inadvisable editing that sometimes arises in respect of the word limits, students should be given plenty of opportunities for writing sample Part 2 messages of an appropriate length, in order to give them a better feel for what an answer of approximately 35-45 words looks like in their own handwriting. They should also be encouraged not to spend too long on this short task, in order to give themselves more time to perform well on Writing Part 3.

### Part 3

Students should be given regular opportunities to write extended answers of around 100 words. It is often useful to ask students to write a first and second draft, where comments on accuracy on the first draft are supplemented by suggestions for improving the language range used. Students should regularly be encouraged to be

more ambitious, for example, using a variety of adjectives instead of 'playing safe' with one or two, and varying how they start their sentences. Work on simple linking devices would also be beneficial.

For the letter, students will need to be confident in their use of informal opening and closing formulae and be able to draw on a range of informal expressions. Some class work on phrasal verbs may also be advantageous. They should also be encouraged to experiment with ways of including a good range of structures and vocabulary in the letters they write for homework.

While it is generally clear that a good variety of topic vocabulary can be used in the letter task, the inclusion of a variety of structures is perhaps less obvious. Looking at a selection of letter tasks from past papers in class may be beneficial, to brainstorm all the possible structures that could be used. In the letter task for this session, a focus on future forms was necessary, while for other tasks, some use of conditionals or modal verbs might be appropriate.

For the story, students should revise narrative tenses and consult irregular verb tables in order to improve their accuracy of past tense forms. They should be encouraged to use adverbs to raise the level of language in their stories: words such as 'immediately', 'suddenly' and '(un)fortunately' can also act as useful sequence and discourse markers.

It is important for a story to have a definite ending, and for this reason, students should look critically at their own work and attempt to improve the endings of their practice stories if necessary. They could do this in many different ways, such as the mention of a dramatic event to draw the story to a close, or the inclusion of a summary final sentence that reinforces the overall content of the story.

Finally, students should be encouraged to write letters and stories of at least 100 words. They will be penalised if they write fewer than 80 words, whereas there is no penalty for over-length answers.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 1 READING and WRITING**

- DO** make sure you are familiar with the various test formats in Paper 1 through practice tests and past papers.
- DO** check with your teacher that you have covered the core PET topics in class.
- DO** make sure that you read as widely as possible in English so that you get regular exposure to authentic reading texts of different types (factual, narrative and opinion-based).
- DO** develop a range of reading skills, including skimming and scanning.
- DO** keep a vocabulary notebook organised by topic.
- DO** read the instructions for each part carefully.
- DO** study any examples given (Reading Part 1 and Part 5; Writing Part 1).
- DO** read each text carefully before attempting the questions, especially for Part 4.
- DO** consider all multiple-choice options before choosing your answer.
- DO** check your answers and transfer them accurately to the answer sheet.
- DO** be ambitious and use a range of language in Writing Part 3.
- DO** make sure that you mark the correct box for your choice of question in Writing Part 3.
- DO** use the time well, leaving yourself enough time for Writing Part 3.
- DO** approach the test calmly and confidently.
- DON'T** leave any answers blank, even if you are unsure of the answer.
- DON'T** use a pen on the answer sheet. You should use a pencil.
- DON'T** panic if there is a word in a text that you don't understand. It is usually possible to guess the meaning from the context.
- DON'T** write more than three words to fill a space in Writing Part 1.
- DON'T** write much more than 45 words in Writing Part 2, as this may affect the clarity of your answer.
- DON'T** answer both questions in Writing Part 3. You must choose between the letter and the story.
- DON'T** spend time making a full rough copy for Writing Part 3. There isn't enough time to do this and it isn't necessary.
- DON'T** worry too much about minor errors in Writing Part 3, as ambitious language is rewarded.

## PAPER 2 – LISTENING

PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	<p>Multiple choice (discrete).</p> <p>Short neutral or informal monologues or dialogues.</p> <p>Seven discrete three-option multiple-choice questions with visuals, plus one example.</p>	Listening to identify key information from short exchanges.	7
2	<p>Multiple choice.</p> <p>Longer monologue or interview (with one main speaker).</p> <p>Six three-option multiple-choice questions.</p>	Listening to identify specific information and detailed meaning.	6
3	<p>Gap-fill.</p> <p>Longer monologue.</p> <p>Six gaps to fill in. Candidates need to write one or more words in each space.</p>	Listening to identify, understand and interpret information.	6
4	<p>True/False.</p> <p>Longer informal dialogue.</p> <p>Candidates need to decide whether six statements are correct or incorrect.</p>	Listening for detailed meaning, and to identify the attitudes and opinions of the speakers.	6

- **Marking**

Candidates record their answers on a separate answer sheet. A computer scans the answers for Parts 1, 2 and 4. The answers for Part 3 are marked by teams of trained markers. Each question carries one mark, so the Listening component has a total of 25 marks, representing 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

- **Candidate Performance**

### Part 1, Questions 1-7: Multiple choice

This part of the test contains seven visual multiple-choice questions. Candidates are asked a question and must choose the correct visual image from a choice of three in order to answer the question in the context of what they hear on the recording. This set of questions was well answered by the majority of candidates. The early questions were quite high scoring, especially Questions 1, 2 and 5, whilst Questions 6 and 7 proved to be the most challenging. Taken as a whole, the set of questions was of average difficulty and discriminated well, with stronger candidates choosing the correct option and weaker candidates selecting the other options.

## **Part 2, Questions 8-13: Multiple choice**

This is a three-option multiple-choice task which tests understanding of the detailed meaning of a longer text. The questions were generally well within the candidates' competence with a high proportion getting the right answer to Questions 9, 10 and 11, for example. Question 12, on the other hand, proved to be more challenging and discriminated well between weaker and stronger candidates. Weaker candidates tended to choose option B in Question 12, perhaps hearing that the weather was indeed good, but failing to pick up on the point that it was darkness that would have prevented her from landing.

## **Part 3, Questions 14-19: Gap-fill**

This task tests the candidates' ability to listen out for and write down specific information from the listening text. Candidates generally find this the most challenging part of the test, although most managed to write acceptable answers for Questions 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18. Question 19, which tested a price, proved more challenging. This question did, however, discriminate well between weak and strong candidates. A range of unambiguous misspellings was accepted in this part, especially in the case of Question 15.

## **Part 4, Questions 20-25: True/False**

This true-false task focuses on candidates' ability to understand opinion and attitude as well as factual information. Candidates coped very well with this task and there were no particular problems. Questions 20, 22 and 25 proved to be the most accessible to candidates whilst Question 24 was the most challenging. Again, there was good discrimination between weak and strong candidates on all items.

## **• RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION**

### **Part 1**

Unlike other parts of the Listening test, Part 1 asks candidates to listen to a series of separate recordings, including both monologues and dialogues, each with its own context, speaker(s) and focus question. The question is written above the three picture options and is also read out on the tape. Candidates should read and listen to the wording of this focus question very carefully so that they are sure what information they are listening for. In Question 3, for example, the speaker mentions the three different rooms depicted, but only one of them shows where the computer is located now.

Candidates should try to tick the correct box the first time they hear each text, and then check their answers the second time. They should be ready to find the key information at any point in the recording, not necessarily at the beginning or end. For example, in Question 2 the boy mentions all three parts of the body, but the first one we hear about is not the one which still hurts. Some questions focus on information or opinions coming from one of the speakers, for example in Question 7, and this is indicated in the focus question. In other questions, for example Question 5, the key information may come from both speakers.

## Part 2

In the Part 2 rubric, which is both printed on the page and read out on the recording, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the setting (e.g. a talk), the topic (e.g. the last days of a flight around the world in a small aeroplane), and the speaker (e.g. a woman called Kate Gingford). This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and for the questions on the page.

The listening text for Part 2 has a clear structure with a discrete piece of text relating to each question. Each question is cued by words in the text that correspond closely to the wording of the questions. For example, Question 10 asks about Kate's feelings on Monday, whilst the corresponding piece of text is cued by Kate saying: 'On Monday'. An important strategy for candidates to develop is listening for such cues, and using the wording of the questions to guide them through the text and prevent them from 'losing their place' as they listen.

This task involves listening for detail in order to pick out the correct option and disregard the incorrect ones. Once the initial prompt is established, however, the questions are unlikely to repeat the exact wording of the text in the multiple-choice options. Therefore, candidates need to listen for the meaning of what they hear and match this to the closest idea amongst the options. For example, in Question 13 we are asked how Kate felt when she arrived in London, and the answer is 'pleased that she had done the trip.' What Kate says is: 'I felt wonderful – the long difficult journey had been worth it.' Option B is wrong because Kate 'promised' her family that she wouldn't make another trip, whereas option C is wrong because we hear Kate say it was 'lovely' seeing her family again.

## Part 3

In Part 3, the information on the page represents a summary, in note or sentence form, of what the candidates are going to hear. This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and so helps them to listen out for the type of information which is missing. The spoken and written rubrics also supply further information about both the topic (e.g. a tourist attraction) and the type of text (e.g. a recorded message).

The questions are well spaced so that there is plenty of time for candidates to write their answers as they listen. Most of the gaps require a single word, a number or a short noun phrase as an answer and candidates should be discouraged from attempting to transcribe longer pieces of text. For example, the answer to Question 16 is 'piano'. If candidates write 'piano and a painted ceiling' this is also correct and would get the mark, but they will have wasted time writing information which is not part of the key and risk missing the answer to the next question whilst doing so. The words or numbers that candidates need to write will all be heard on the recording, in the form in which they need to be written. As in Part 2, the wording of the prompts on the page echoes, to a certain extent, the wording of the text, but this is not a dictation, so candidates need to listen for the meaning of the text in order to locate the correct information. For example, in Question 15 the message tells us that there is an 'exhibition' of photographs, whilst the prompt asks us about a 'display'.

Candidates should check their final answers to make sure they are clearly written and unambiguous, but should not become over-concerned about spelling, as a range of misspellings is accepted as long as the answer is clear. For example, in Question 15 various spellings of 'photographs' were accepted as correct answers (e.g. 'fotographs'), as was the word 'photography'. But where candidates wrote, for example, 'guard' instead of 'garden' in Question 17 meaning was lost and so the mark could not be

given. However, high frequency words, such as 'September' in Question 18, should be correctly spelt.

In this task, candidates are listening for specific information and there will be some information in the recording which is not relevant to the questions. The skill of selecting and recording relevant information is a useful one for candidates to practise in the classroom and during their preparation for the PET examination.

#### **Part 4**

In the Part 4 rubric, which is both printed on the page and read out on the recording, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the topic (e.g. studying in different parts of the country) and the name of the speakers (e.g. a boy called Tom and a girl called Jemma). This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and for the questions on the page.

Candidates should read the questions carefully, and think about the exact meaning of each of the statements. As in Parts 2 and 3, they are unlikely to hear the exact words repeated on the recording and so should be listening out for synonyms and parallel expressions. Candidates should listen for the gist of what speakers are saying, paying special attention to whether positive or negative views are being expressed. For example, in the text relating to Question 22, Tom says: 'I can't believe that', in order to express his surprise.

Several of the questions test attitude and opinion and candidates should be familiar with adjectives which express feelings such as 'surprised', 'boring', 'disappointed' etc. and simple reporting verbs, e.g. 'persuade', 'encourage', '(dis)agree', etc., as these may be tested. Candidates also need to make sure they are listening for the opinion of the correct speaker, e.g. in this task, three questions clearly focus on Tom's views, one on Jemma's, whilst for others it is necessary to listen to both speakers, e.g. Question 20, which is asking whether or not the speakers had made an arrangement.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 2 LISTENING**

- DO** read the instructions carefully for each part so you have an idea of the topic.
- DO** look at the question paper material (text and pictures) for each part before the listening text for that part begins, and think about what kind of information you have to listen for.
- DO** mark / write your answers on the question paper as you listen.
- DO** answer as much as you can when you hear the recording for the first time.
- DO** check your answers and listen for any missing answers when you hear the recording for the second time.
- DO** answer all the questions even if you are not sure of the answer. You have probably understood more than you think you have.
- DO** check that the options you choose in Part 2 really do answer the question or finish the sentence.
- DO** write **only** one or two words or a number in Part 3.
- DO** think about what kind of words to listen for in Part 3.
- DO** remember that you are told which speaker is which in Part 4.
- DO** transfer your answers to the answer sheet **only** when you are told to do so at the end of the test.
  
- DON'T** worry too much if you don't hear the answer to a question the first time. You will hear everything twice.
- DON'T** panic if you don't understand everything while listening, as some parts of the listening may not be tested.
- DON'T** change your answers when you are transferring them to the answer sheet, because what you thought was right while you were listening was probably right!
- DON'T** use a pen on the answer sheet. You should use a pencil.

## PAPER 3 – SPEAKING

PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	TIMING
1	<p>Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor.</p> <p>The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.</p>	<p>Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.</p>	2-3 minutes
2	<p>Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other.</p> <p>Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.</p>	<p>Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.</p>	2-3 minutes
3	<p>Extended turn.</p> <p>A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for up to a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.</p>	<p>Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.</p>	3 minutes
4	<p>General conversation. Candidates interact with each other.</p> <p>The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3.</p> <p>The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.</p>	<p>The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits etc.</p>	3 minutes

### • Marking

Candidates are awarded marks by both examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the Speaking Test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction. The test takes ten to twelve minutes and consists of four parts.

The assessor awards marks to each candidate for performance throughout the test according to the four Analytical Criteria (Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication). The interlocutor awards marks according to the Global Achievement Scale, which assesses the candidates' overall effectiveness in tackling the tasks. Candidates' marks are weighted to a score of 25, representing 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

#### *Grammar and Vocabulary*

This refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical structures and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirements at PET level. Candidates who do not have immediate access to the vocabulary they need should be able to convey their intended meaning by using alternative words or phrases without extensive repetition.

### *Discourse Management*

At PET level, candidates are expected to be able to use extended utterances where appropriate. The ability to maintain a coherent flow of language over several utterances is assessed here.

### *Pronunciation*

In general, this refers to the ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. At PET level, it is recognised that even in the top assessment band, candidates' pronunciation will be influenced by features of their first language.

### *Interactive Communication*

This refers to the ability to take part in the interaction and fulfil the task requirements by initiating and responding appropriately and with a reasonable degree of fluency. It includes the ability to use strategies to maintain or repair communication.

### *Global Achievement*

This refers to the candidates' overall ability to deal with the tasks and to convey meaning appropriately.

## • **Candidate Performance**

Candidate performance in this administration was consistent with that of previous years. Feedback indicates that the candidates were generally well prepared and that the materials were well received.

### **Part 1**

Candidates tended to perform well in this part. The questions were usually predictable ones about daily routines, studies or work, free-time activities, etc. Stronger candidates extended their responses to the more open-ended questions with details that backed up their answers. Weaker candidates tended to give one-word or two-word answers to all questions and failed to develop their answers, or required additional prompts from the interlocutor. Some weaker candidates had problems spelling their name in English.

### **Part 2**

Candidates who performed well in this part listened carefully to the interlocutor's instructions, thought about the task and its context, and interacted meaningfully with their partner to reach a conclusion or decision. For example, in 'wedding present' (see December 2007 *Past Paper Pack*), well-prepared candidates talked about each of the suggestions given by the visual prompts and gave reasons for their opinions. These candidates involved their partner by asking for an opinion and following up on the points made. In this way, they kept the discussion going for the allotted 2-3 minutes. Where time allowed, they summarised the reasons for their final choice to signal that they had completed the task.

### **Part 3**

In this part of the test, candidates have the chance to demonstrate their range of vocabulary and their ability to organise language in describing a photograph. The

sample materials show people enjoying different kinds of weather (see December 2007 *Past Paper Pack*). Strong candidates spoke for the full time allotted and talked about the people and activities in the foreground (their clothes, what they are doing, the relationships between them, the objects in view, etc.), as well as commenting on the overall context (the location, buildings, etc.). Strong candidates were able to deal with unknown items of vocabulary by using paraphrase strategies, such as providing a fuller description of objects and activities when they were unsure of the specific word to use. Some candidates spent time unsuccessfully trying to produce sophisticated positional language (e.g. in the top right-hand corner) which is not expected at this level, and so wasted opportunities to demonstrate their range of PET-level vocabulary and expressions.

#### **Part 4**

Candidates who performed well in this part of the test listened carefully to the instructions and understood that they should talk together with their partner. They also covered both elements of the task, talking about both the type of weather they prefer (1) and what they enjoy doing in different types of weather (2). Weaker candidates sometimes addressed their comments to the interlocutor rather than the partner, or produced a lengthy monologue, failing to bring their partner into the discussion. Where candidates were unable to fill the allotted time, additional prompts were provided by the interlocutor.

#### **• RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION**

Candidates at this level are not expected to speak perfectly, nor understand everything that is said to them. Credit will be given, however, to those candidates able to use repair strategies to prevent communication breaking down. For example, they should learn to make use of simple phrases for asking the interlocutor or their partner to repeat or rephrase something they have not understood. They should also learn to use paraphrase strategies when they cannot call to mind a particular word or phrase needed for a task.

#### **Part 1**

Candidates should be given practice in the everyday language of talking about themselves. For example, they should be able to give information about their work or studies, free-time activities, family, home, home town, etc. They should also practise spelling their names using English letters.

#### **Part 2**

Candidates should be given practice in talking together about an imaginary situation. They need to understand that they are talking about the specific situation described in the instructions, as illustrated by the visual prompts, and not just generally about the topic. In class, they should practise using picture prompts as the basis for discussion. Candidates also need to practise asking for their partner's opinions and suggestions as well as supplying reasons for their own opinions. They should be familiar with the language of agreement and disagreement and be able to explain why they think something is, or is not, a good idea.

### **Part 3**

For this task, candidates need to be given practice in talking about photographs. At this level, however, they are only expected to comment on the actual content of the images they are shown, and not issues raised by the broader context. They should be encouraged to give a detailed description, however, mentioning even those details (clothes, colours, weather, etc.) which might seem obvious. In this way, they will demonstrate their range of vocabulary. They should also be able to link their ideas together in a simple way, using prepositions and other simple expressions to locate aspects of the picture (e.g. behind, in front of, next to, etc.) and back up what they say with examples, e.g. 'It is summer because the sun is shining and they are wearing summer clothes.'

### **Part 4**

As this part of the test is a conversation between the candidates, they should be encouraged to look at each other and show interest in what their partner is saying. Candidates should not attempt to 'hold the floor' with long individual turns in this part, but should learn how to pick up and develop the points made by their partners and how to invite their partners to comment. For example, a candidate might tell his/her partner interesting things about themselves, and then ask for the partner's views about a related issue. Candidates should, therefore, not only be given practice in talking about their opinions and personal experiences, but also in how to elicit these ideas from their partners.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 3 SPEAKING**

- DO** practise your spoken English as much as possible before the test, both in and out of class.
- DO** listen carefully to the examiner's questions.
- DO** ask the examiner for clarification if necessary.
- DO** speak clearly so that both examiners can hear you.
- DO** remember that the examiners are sympathetic listeners and want you to give your best possible performance.
- DO** answer the examiner's questions clearly and try to give extended answers to open-ended questions in Part 1.
- DO** talk to your partner and not the examiner in Parts 2 and 4.
- DO** show interest in what your partner is saying and ask your partner questions in Parts 2 and 4.
- DO** listen to and look at your partner and give your partner a chance to speak in Parts 2 and 4.
- DO** concentrate on the actual content of the photo and describe the photo thoroughly in Part 3.
- DO** make sure you have some phrases to get around the problem of words you don't know in Part 3.
- DO** try to relax and enjoy the test.
  
- DON'T** worry too much about making grammatical mistakes.
- DON'T** worry if you think your partner in the test is not as good as you, or much better at speaking English than you. The examiners look at each candidate's performance individually.
- DON'T** let exam nerves prevent you from speaking. Examiners can't give marks to silent candidates.
- DON'T** worry too much if you don't know a word.
- DON'T** speak for too long without involving your partner in Parts 2 and 4.
- DON'T** talk to the examiner rather than your partner in Parts 2 and 4.
- DON'T** try to talk about things/ideas outside the photo in Part 3.
- DON'T** stop talking if you come to a word you do not know in Part 3.

## FEEDBACK FORM

### PET Examination Report – December 2007

We are interested in hearing your views on how useful this report has been.

We would be most grateful if you could briefly answer the following questions and return a photocopy of this page to the following address:

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Email: [ESOLinfo@CambridgeESOL.org](mailto:ESOLinfo@CambridgeESOL.org)

1. Please describe your situation (e.g. EFL/ESOL teacher, Director of Studies, Examinations Officer, Local Secretary).
  
2. Have you prepared candidates for PET? YES/NO
  
3. Do you plan to prepare candidates for PET in the future? YES/NO
  
4. How have you used this report (e.g. to provide feedback to other teachers, for examination practice, etc.)?
  
5. Which parts of this report did you find most useful?
  
6. Which parts were not so useful?
  
7. What extra information would you like to see included in this report?
  
8. (Optional) Your name .....
- Centre/School .....

Thank you.