

› TIPS FOR LANGUAGECERT ESOL FOR SCHOOLS

B1 Level



› PAVING THE WAY TO ENGLISH PROFICIENCY FOR SCHOOL-AGE LEARNERS

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Exam Overview:

From the classroom to the real world

LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools is a suite of single-level English tests **for secondary school learners aged 12 to 16**. The test is **Ofqual-regulated**; it assesses all 4 skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) and reports at A1-B2 levels of the CEFR.

Designed to **assess English use at school and in everyday situations**, this test helps your students feel confident and proud of their skills!

Why LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools?

Tailored to secondary school students: Age-appropriate content designed to engage test takers aged between 12 and 16.

Flexible and friendly test experience: Test takers can choose between paper-based or computer-based tests through their local Test Centre.

Communicative approach and straightforward exam format: Teachers can concentrate on teaching English for the real world, with a minimum of exam preparation.

Growing range of preparation resources: Access to practice papers, lesson plans, and preparation tips.

Quick results: Results within 5 working days for computer-based exams and 10 working days for paper-based exams.

Exam Structure

B1 Level

Written Exam

Listening



4 parts - 26 questions

Played twice

30 minutes

Reading & Writing



R: 4 parts - 26 questions

W: 2 tasks

2 hours & 10 minutes

Spoken Exam

Speaking



4 parts

1 to 1 with an interlocutor

12 minutes

Listening

At a glance

Number of parts: 4

Number of items: 26

Question types: multiple-choice (3 options), short answer

Audio recordings: all played twice

Overall duration: 30 mins

Listening Tips

- 1 Before you play the audio,** give learners time to look at the task. Ask them to read all the answer choices carefully and predict what they will hear.
- 2 After you've played the audio,** use the listening script to help learners identify any unknown words, and teach new vocabulary as needed.
- 3 If learners are struggling to choose the correct answer** (e.g. for multiple-choice tasks), they can try to eliminate the two wrong answers instead.
- 4 Remind learners that they will hear each audio recording twice,** and that the information in the audio will follow the same order as the questions in the task.
- 5 For extra language practice in class,** ask learners to explain their answers, e.g. for multiple choice tasks, they could share why they chose a particular option rather than the other two.
- 6 Encourage learners to practise 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' listening skills** to ensure they fully understand what they are hearing.

Bottom-up listening:
learners listen for
detail, such as
sounds, words and
grammatical
structures, to build
meaning step by step.

Top-down listening:
learners use context
and prior knowledge
to interpret the
overall meaning.

Part 1: Multiple choice

Learners will hear seven short sentences. They choose the best response for each one.

Check task type example on the right side.

1. a) I like spending time with my friends.
b) I'd like to but I can't.
c) I haven't decided yet.
2. a) She's tall with long, blonde hair.
b) She's a really lovely person.
c) She loves playing the guitar.
3. a) I haven't got one.
b) Sure, no problem.
c) Yes, it's over there.
4. a) I don't think it was, actually.
b) I think that one is the best.
c) I'm so pleased you feel better.

To prepare learners for this part, create sentences that mirror the question types in the task and ask learners to respond appropriately. This will help learners to practise identifying context, meaning and function.

Practise using the audio only. Play each sentence and ask learners to give their own responses. Then show them the task so that they can compare their ideas with the answers.

Before they do the task, remind learners that they should choose the most appropriate response to the sentence they hear.

For extra practice, challenge learners to produce their own sentences to match the other two responses.

Part 2: Multiple choice

Learners will hear three short conversations. There are two questions about each conversation. Learners choose the correct answer for each one.

Conversation 1

1. The speakers are
 - a) in a café.
 - b) in a house.
 - c) at a bus stop.
2. What do the speakers mention about their plans?
 - a) They think bad weather might affect them.
 - b) They travel to school in the same way.
 - c) They expect the hike to be cancelled.

Check task type example on the right side.

Prepare learners for this part by exposing them to a variety of short conversations (e.g. between friends, parent/child, teacher/student) and asking questions about specific aspects. Questions should be similar to those in the task, focusing on topics, gist, purpose and context, and the feelings and opinions of the speakers.

Before they do the task, play the audio, stopping after each conversation to ask learners questions about the topic, the purpose of the conversation, and the speakers.

Advise learners to listen for gist the first time they hear the audio, and for detail the second time.

After they've done the task, ask learners to share what led them to the right answers and which word(s) in the audio helped them.

Part 3: Form-filling

Learners will hear a short monologue. They complete the missing information on a form under seven headings.

School Exchange Visit to France

1. Length of visit: _____
2. Cost of visit: _____
3. What is not included in the price: _____
4. School subject this visit is particularly good for: _____
5. How we will travel from Paris: _____
6. Final date for returning the application form: _____
7. Name of teacher to ask if you have questions: _____

Check task type example on the right side.

To prepare for this part, expose learners to a variety of short authentic monologues similar to those in the task (e.g. radio broadcasts, narratives, presentations, speeches, podcasts) and ask them to identify and note down key information under different headings.

Advise learners to listen for gist the first time they hear the audio, and for detail the second time.

Tell learners to pay attention to the title, which may help them to identify the topic of the monologue and give them a clear idea of what to listen for.

Remind learners they will hear only one person speaking, and their answers should be between 1–3 words. They won't be awarded extra marks for longer responses.

Part 4: Multiple choice

Learners will hear a conversation between two speakers. There are six questions about the conversation. Learners choose the correct answer for each one.

Check task type example on the right side.

To practise this part, expose learners to a variety of short everyday conversations between two speakers (e.g. conversations between friends discussing plans, a teacher and a student talking about a school activity). Then ask questions about the conversations, similar to those in the task, focusing on purpose, gist, key ideas, speakers' attitudes and opinions, as well as contrast and cause and effect.

Before they do the task, play the audio and ask learners questions about the topic of the conversation, its purpose and the speakers.

Advise learners to listen for gist the first time they hear the audio, and for detail the second time.

After they've done the task, ask learners to share what led them to the right answers and which word(s) in the audio helped them.

1. When discussing their current project, the two students agree that
 - a) they don't have much time for the project.
 - b) they will find it easier than the last one.
 - c) they mustn't go off the main topic.
2. What do the students say about how to present their work?
 - a) They could get their teacher's suggestions.
 - b) They ought to ask what their classmates are doing.
 - c) They should wait until later to decide.

Reading

At a glance

Number of parts: 4

Number of items: 26

Question types: multiple-choice (3 options), multiple matching

Duration (Reading & Writing): 2 hrs 10 mins

Reading

Reading Tips

- 1 **If there are words learners don't know**, encourage them to guess their meaning from the context. This will improve their overall comprehension and help them to feel more confident.
- 2 **Have learners practise reading strategies** (skimming and scanning).
- 3 **Tell learners** that the information in the texts will follow the same order as the questions in the task.
- 4 **If learners are struggling to choose the correct answer** (e.g. for multiple-choice tasks), they can try to eliminate the wrong answers instead.
- 5 **Remind learners** that once they've finished the Reading test, they should go back and check all their answers.
- 6 **For extra language practice in class**, ask learners to explain their answers, e.g. for multiple choice tasks, they could share why they chose a particular option rather than the other two.
- 7 **Have learners practise Reading tasks using the free practice papers on the [LANGUAGECERT website](#).**

Part 1: Multiple choice

Learners will be given five short texts, each with a gap. They choose the correct answers to complete the texts.


Check task type example on the right side.

Chelsea Cinema

Choose from five different films every day.

Enjoy a delicious snack from our food and drink counter

..... you relax in our comfortable seats



- a) while
- b) because
- c) so

To practise for this part, provide learners with a variety of short texts similar to those they'll encounter in the task (e.g. notices, emails, instructions, letters, questionnaires, tickets). This will help to familiarise them with the language commonly used in these types of texts. Then ask questions about these texts (e.g. about gist, detailed information, ideas or opinions expressed, or the writer's purpose).

Tell learners to read each text carefully and to look at the key words and phrases either side of the gap. This should give them clues to the correct answers.

To help with comprehension, draw learners' attention to the linking words in each text (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'or') and to think about their function.

Part 2: Gap-fill

Learners will be given a text with six gaps. They choose the correct sentence from the seven options (A–G) to complete the text. There is one sentence that isn't needed.

Check task type example on the right side.

The Value of Flies

Many people find flies annoying. They fly around our heads, land on our food, and we all know that they can carry diseases. Because of this, most of us do not see flies as useful creatures, but the truth is that they have important jobs in nature.

First, flies help pollinate many different types of plants. In other words, they help the plants to produce new plants, which is the most basic purpose in nature. (1) This is because some plants attract flies, rather than bees or other insects, which then carry pollen from one flower to another. Perhaps one reason that flies are less well known for assisting in this way is because they are not equipped with specialised body parts. (2)

The second importance of flies is that they are part of a food chain. They are eaten by many animals, like birds, frogs and spiders. (3) This could cause problems for the whole ecosystem. So, flies help keep nature in balance.

Third, flies help clean up the environment. They eat dead animals and rotting plants. (4) They go back into the soil. This, in turn, helps new plants grow.

(5) For example, fruit flies are very important in studies into genetic diseases which are passed from parents to children. This research has led to important medical discoveries.

In conclusion, while flies can be annoying, they do many good things in nature. (6) Next time you see a fly, don't kill it, because it has important jobs to do in our world.

To familiarise learners with this part, provide them with short texts, each with six missing sentences plus a distractor sentence. Learners could discuss as a class where each missing sentence belongs and why, and which is the distractor.

Tell learners to read the text carefully. They should look at the title and the key words/phrases/sentences either side of the gaps, which will give them clues to the correct answers.

To help them better understand the text, draw learners' attention to cohesive devices (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'then', 'finally', 'however') and to think about their function.

Explain that one sentence will not be used (acting as a distractor).

When they have chosen all their answers, advise them to read the completed text to ensure it makes sense.

Part 3: Multiple matching

Learners will be given four short texts (A–D) with a linked theme but different purpose. They choose a text for each of the seven questions.

Check task type example below.

A.

Last year, I visited Paris and saw the *Mona Lisa*, which was painted between 1503 and 1519 by the famous Italian artist, Da Vinci. The photographs I'd seen had not given me any idea of the actual size – about 80 by 50 centimetres. But despite its size, it is just as impressive as people have said for centuries. I love the famous smile and also the wonderful Italian landscape behind her. Go and see it at the Louvre one day – except on Tuesdays!

To familiarise learners with this part, provide them with sets of four short texts with a common theme but different purpose, similar to those they'll encounter in the task (e.g. emails, articles, adverts) and have them answer questions about the texts.

Before attempting the task, learners should skim-read all four texts. This will help them to establish the topic, type and purpose of each text, before reading again more carefully with the task in mind.

Tell learners to underline the words in the texts that provide clues to the correct answers. They could share these clues in class.

You could ask learners to work in pairs and then compare their answers with the rest of the class before you give the correct ones.

Part 4: Questions with short answers

Learners will be given a continuous text followed by eight questions. They write answers to the questions using 1–3 words.

The poet's daughter

Ada was born on December 10, 1815, in London, England, the daughter of the famous poet Lord Byron. In 1816, she became the bride of a man called William Lovelace. She is known by some today as the first computer programmer, but most people who use her basic ideas every day have never heard about her.

Ada's parents separated when she was very young, but Ada's mother still took an interest in her future and supported her study of mathematics, rather than ancient languages or music, the subjects more usual for educated women of her day. It is interesting that, through her short life, Ada believed that imagination played as big a role in discovering new things such as calculations.

When Ada was 17 years old, she met Charles Babbage, an inventor. Babbage was working on a machine called the *Analytical Engine*, which he thought would be the first design for a general-purpose computer. Babbage's work, and they became friends.

Ada began to study the *Analytical Engine*. French an article written by an Italian mathematician, she added her own ideas to it in English, and she wrote a list of instructions for the machine. This was the first time longer than the original machine could be programmed with. It is now considered to be the first computer program.

In her translation notes to the article, she wrote more than just maths. She also wrote about music and art, and might even be a few years ahead of the times.

Sadly, Ada Lovelace died at the age of 36 on November 27, 1852, after being sick for several months, during which she turned to religion. For many years, her contributions were not widely recognised, but today she is remembered by many scientists as an original thinker in the field.

1. What was Ada's married name?

2. Which subject, unusually for her time, did Ada study as a child?

Check task type example on the right side.

To prepare learners for this part, provide them with similar texts to those in the task (e.g. narrative, descriptive, expository, biographical) and have them practise answering 'Wh-' and 'How' questions about the texts. You could do this in class or set as homework.

Aim to develop crucial reading strategies, particularly scanning as this part of the Reading test requires a detailed understanding of the text.

Tell learners to pay attention to the title of the text as this will give them a clue as to what it is about.

Advise learners to read the whole text first to gain a good understanding of it, before attempting to answer the questions.

Remind learners to write short answers (1–3 words), as they won't be awarded extra marks for longer responses.

If doing the paper-based test, learners should make sure their writing is legible – they could lose marks if the Examiner can't understand what they've written.

Writing

At a glance

Number of parts: 2

Tasks: Produce a formal and appropriate response for a specified reader (e.g. an email to the headmaster suggesting a field trip), produce an informal letter/email to a friend (e.g. inviting him/her to a concert)

Duration (Reading & Writing): 2hrs 10 mins

Writing Tips

1

Ensure learners are aware that both parts of the Writing test are mandatory and that they will need to answer both.

2

If doing the paper-based test, learners should make sure their writing is legible – they could lose marks if the Examiner can't understand what they've written.

3

To help learners prepare, practise the conventions of both formal and informal writing in class. Remind learners to think about who they are writing to as this will affect the tone and style of their response and the type of language they use.

Writing

Writing Tips

- 4** **Remind learners of the correct way to start and end each of the text types** and encourage them to memorise a few set phrases/expressions they could include in their answer, such as 'Thank you for ...', 'Say hello to ...', 'Give my regards to ...'
- 5** **When practising their writing,** encourage learners to share personal experiences, feelings, reactions and opinions.
- 6** **Encourage learners to demonstrate the depth of their language knowledge** by avoiding basic grammar and using more descriptive/specific words (e.g. instead of 'good', 'bad', 'big', use 'amazing', 'terrible', 'enormous'). They should aim to use a variety of cohesive devices (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'or') to clearly indicate the relationship between ideas and to help them produce clear and coherent text.
- 7** **Clarify that they do not need to write an address** at the top of their text, or the number of words in their answer.
- 8** **As part of their practice,** learners could write a draft of their text, but they won't have time to do this in the test.
- 9** **Tell learners to aim to finish early,** allowing time for them to review their work. A piece of writing can always be improved!
- 10** **Have learners practise Writing tasks using the free practice papers on the [LANGUAGECERT website](https://www.languagecert.org.uk/).**

Part 1: A formal response to a text

Learners write a formal response to a short text, aimed at a specific audience. They should write between 70–100 words.

Check task type example below.

<p>Computer use at this school</p> <p>I'd like to know what you think about the way we use computers in this school during lessons, for homework and for projects. Please email me with your views and ideas for the future.</p> <p>Mrs Hughes (School Principal)</p>

To help them prepare, provide learners with text types similar to those they will encounter in the task (e.g. a notice, poster, timetable or leaflet) and have them practise writing responses to them.

Tell learners to read the rubric and text carefully, and to underline key words/phrases to ensure they address all the points in their response. They will lose marks if they fail to cover all the required points.

Explain to learners that they will lose marks if they write fewer than 70 words. But they won't be awarded extra marks if they write more than 100 words.

Part 2: A letter or email to an English-speaking friend

Learners write a letter or email to an English-speaking friend in response to a given situation. They should write between 100–120 words.

Check task type example below.

Write an email to an English-speaking friend telling them the best time to visit your hometown and suggesting what you could do together if they came to visit.

Write between 100 and 120 words.

To help learners prepare for this part, have them practise writing responses in the form of letters and emails to given situations like the ones in the task.

Tell learners to read the rubric carefully and to address all the points in their response. They will lose marks if they fail to cover all the required points.

Remind learners to paraphrase the topic words in their letter/email, rather than copying them exactly as they appear in the rubric.

Explain to learners that they will lose marks if they write fewer than 100 words. But they won't be awarded extra marks if they write more than 120 words.

Speaking

At a glance

Number of parts: 4

Tasks: Communicating personal information, opinions and ideas, communicating appropriately in social situations, exchanging information and opinions, and co-operating to reach agreement/decision, presenting a topic and answer follow-up questions

Duration: 12 minutes

Speaking Tips

- 1** **Explain to learners the role of the Interlocutor** and what is expected of them well before they take their test.
- 2** **Remind them to always listen carefully** to the Interlocutor's prompts to ensure they provide an appropriate response.
- 3** **Reassure learners** that they will not be penalised for asking the Interlocutor to repeat a question or prompt, but make it clear that they cannot ask the Interlocutor to paraphrase or translate a question.



Speaking

Speaking Tips

- 4** **When they're practising for the test**, encourage learners to make their responses interesting and engaging, and to avoid one-word answers.
- 5** **Reassure learners that there are no right or wrong answers**, and that they will only be marked on the language they use, and not their opinions.
- 6** **Remind learners to use 'fillers'** (e.g. 'Well ...', 'You know ...', 'I mean ...', 'Let me think ...') to avoid long pauses and hesitation. Fillers will help them to provide more fluent responses.
- 7** **Practise a few interaction skills with learners**, e.g. how to take turns, how to add extra information and how to politely disagree, so that they can interact with the Interlocutor more effectively.
- 8** **Divide your class into pairs** and get them to practise both asking and responding to questions that are similar to the ones in the tasks.
- 9** **Foster a supportive atmosphere in class** where learners feel comfortable speaking.
- 10** **Have learners practise the task in pairs or with you, using the free practice papers on the [LANGUAGECERT website](#).**

Part 1: Answering personal questions

Learners will be asked up to five questions about themselves.

Ensure learners know how to introduce themselves, spell their name and answer questions about personal details (e.g. age, where they're from, where they live, their family, their home).

Explain that each question will be about a different topic, but they will all ask for personal information, ideas and opinions.

Get learners to role play with a partner, asking and answering simple questions about themselves. You could create question cards for them to use. (See the Qualification Handbook on the LANGUAGECERT website for a list of B1 topics: www.languagecert.org)

Teach and practise simple language for expressing likes, dislikes and preferences.

Advise learners to avoid giving rehearsed answers to anticipated questions, as this will help them to sound more natural.

Part 2: Taking part in role plays

Learners will be asked to take part in two or three role plays in different situations.

To familiarise learners with the task, put them in pairs and ask them to role-play dialogues, with one of them acting as the Interlocutor and the other acting as the candidate.

Have learners practise the language functions likely to be needed in this part of the test (e.g. expressing views, offering an apology, responding to a request).

Remind learners that they should think about who they are speaking to and ensure their responses are appropriate in terms of style, language and tone (as the Interlocutor will assume a variety of roles, e.g. a friend, a head teacher, a manager).

Tell learners that the first role play will be initiated by the Interlocutor and that they'll be asked to initiate the second role play. If there's time, there may be a third role play, which will be initiated by either the Interlocutor or the learner. Both the Interlocutor and the learner will be expected to produce two short turns for each role play.

Before learners practise role playing, ask them to review the language they will need to use. You could also provide them with a model response to guide them.

Part 3: Responding to visual prompts

Learners will be asked to discuss a given topic with the Interlocutor. They will be provided with visual prompts related to the topic.

To practise this task, review with learners the functional language they will need (e.g. how to make suggestions, express agreement/disagreement, emphasise a point, justify an opinion).

Remind learners to talk about the visuals, e.g. sharing their opinion about them, rather than just describing what they can see, and encourage them to justify their opinions, instead of just stating them.

Part 4: Talking about a topic and answering follow-up questions

Learners will be asked to speak about a topic selected by the Interlocutor for one and a half minutes, and answer follow-up questions. They will have 30 seconds to prepare.

To prepare for this task, have learners practise presenting their ideas clearly and in a logical order, using sequencing words such as 'First of all', 'Then' and 'Finally'. They should also practise phrases for expressing opinions, ideas and feelings (e.g. 'I think', 'In my opinion').

In the task, learners should make good use of their preparation time to plan what they're going to say and to ensure they're able to maintain a steady flow as they answer. They'll be given a pen/pencil and a piece of paper to write notes before they speak.

Explain that the Interlocutor may interrupt them, for example, if they have said enough and don't need to provide any further information.

Remind learners that the Interlocutor will ask them a few follow-up questions after they have finished speaking.

When practising for this part, start by allowing learners to speak for less than a minute. Then gradually increase their speaking time as they become more confident.

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