

› TIPS FOR LANGUAGECERT ESOL FOR SCHOOLS

B2 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

B2 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

13 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 conversations. They choose the best response to complete each one.

1. a) Do you have any idea which channel it was on?
b) Where exactly did you see that?
c) Why didn't you think to get it for me?
2. a) What did you think was wrong with it?
b) I'm not sure I could afford that.
c) Yes, I remember when we went there.
3. a) Yes, it's fine.
b) What's the right temperature, then?
c) I'll guess the rest.

Check task type example on the right side.

To prepare learners for this part, expose them to a variety of short everyday conversations on concrete and abstract topics (e.g. arranging a meeting or giving an opinion), and ask them to complete them with an appropriate response. This will help learners to practise identifying context, meaning and function.

Practise using the audio only. Play each conversation and ask learners to come up with their own appropriate responses to complete them. Then show them the task so that they can compare the answers with their own ideas.

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

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.

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.

Conversation 1

1. As they were leaving the football stadium, the speakers agreed that
 - a) the weather was better than forecast.
 - b) their team managed to perform satisfactorily.
 - c) the team usually performs poorly.
2. Why didn't the woman go to the rearranged match last week?
 - a) She had too much work to do.
 - b) The man didn't tell her about it.
 - c) She forgot to put it in her diary.

Part 3: Form-filling

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

Check task type example on the right side.

The illustration shows a clipboard with a form titled "Adventure Holiday: Day 2". The form has seven numbered sections, each with a heading and a line for an answer:

1. Content of the instructions given out yesterday:
2. Title of today's task:
3. Main skill needed to complete today's task:
4. Type of groups you will work in today:
5. Where today's task will end:
6. How you will return to the activity centre:
7. Name of today's instructor:

A pencil is shown pointing to the bottom of the form.

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) 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 that their answers should be between 1–5 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 prepare for this part, expose learners to a variety of short authentic discussions between two speakers. Then ask questions about the discussions, 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. Amelia suggests promoting their school drama club by
 - a) putting up posters around the school.
 - b) making a public announcement.
 - c) talking to the people who they would like to join.
2. According to the speakers, the main aim of the club should be
 - a) performing plays.
 - b) teaching acting skills.
 - c) improving social skills.

Reading

At a glance

Number of parts: 4

Number of items: 26

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

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 a continuous text followed by six questions. They choose the correct answer for each one.

Whales and their songs

Whales are some of the most fascinating creatures in the ocean. These majestic mammals can be found in every ocean on Earth, and they come in various shapes and sizes. The blue whale, at 30 metres long and 180 metric tons, is the largest animal on the planet, having the weight of over 30 elephants. There is also the humpback whale, the orca, or killer whale, the baleen and many, many more. Despite their differences, one thing whales have in common is their ability to produce sounds. However, only the sounds of certain species can be termed 'songs'.

The primary purpose of whale song seems to be contact over long distances. Perhaps surprisingly, sound travels faster and farther in water than in air. Research suggests that whales use sound to understand their surroundings better, similar to how we know bats use echolocation. This presumably helps whales, in the same way as bats, to find things to eat, to avoid obstacles and to stay together as a group.

Whales produce sounds in various ways, depending on the species. Toothed whales, like dolphins and orcas, produce clicks and whistles by pushing air through structures in their heads. The structures can be moved to produce different noises. This is similar to the way our lips and our tongue vary the output in human languages. Baleen whales, such as the blue whale and humpback whale, use part of their throat to turn air into low frequency sounds that can travel incredibly long distances underwater.

Although whale song and human language share some purposes, the sounds produced by whales are different from human language in many ways. Whales do not appear to have a vocabulary of sounds representing individual items like 'fish' or actions like 'swim.' In addition, while whale song has structure like bird song, it does not seem to be

1. In the first paragraph, the writer

a) compares one species of whale to a land animal.
b) lists the whale species which are capable of song.
c) gives information about the shape and size of different whale species.

Check task type example on the right side.

To practise for this part, provide learners with similar texts to those in the task (e.g. news stories, articles, reviews, proposals) and set them multiple choice questions about the texts (e.g. about purpose, gist, key information, ideas/opinions).

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 that the correct answers will not usually be worded exactly as they appear in the text, so they may need to identify paraphrases of those words.

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.

Get moving!

In today's world, fitness apps on our smartphones and smartwatches remind us to move, exercise and stay active. But have you ever wondered why movement is so important for our health? Let's explore the three essential types of movement our bodies need.

(1)

The first of these are the small but important actions we do on a daily basis. Walking helps to strengthen the heart and lower blood pressure. (2) But it is not the only daily exercise we need. Stretching and bending keep our joints and muscles active, preventing stiffness. To stay healthy, try to include these movements throughout your day too. (3) Use these moments to stretch and move around. Start your day with a few minutes of stretching.

(4) They are important for building strength, endurance and heart health. They reduce stress and anxiety and increase energy levels. Experts say teens should get at least 60 minutes of this kind of activity each day. This can be through sports, gym workouts or any activity that gets your heart rate up. If you like team sports like soccer, basketball or volleyball, join a school team or a local club. (5) Try different activities to keep things interesting.

Finally, social movements involve interacting with others. Movement of this kind is important for mental health. It helps build social skills, create a sense of community and provide emotional support. It sometimes involves the other two types of movement.

(6) Aim to engage in social activities several times a week to build and keep connections. Join clubs, sports teams or interest groups that meet regularly. Combine exercise with social time by inviting friends for a jog, a bike ride or a dance class.

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.

Do you want to help your community? Join our charity centre as a volunteer! We need friendly people to help with different tasks like working in our shop, delivering meals to people's homes and collecting and sorting donations. Your help will support those in need. You don't need any experience, just a kind heart and a positive attitude. We offer flexible hours to fit your schedule. Make a big difference by giving your time and skills, and feel better about your own life. For more information, visit our website or call us at 0330 678549. Volunteer today!

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 seven questions. They write answers to the questions using 1–5 words.

The Evolution of Grains

Grains have been important food crops to human civilization for thousands of years. When early humans discovered how to turn wild grasses, the origins of all grains, into a farmed crop, it was the start of civilization.

The story of grain farming starts around 10,000 years ago. Before then, groups of humans moved from place to place, following animals or the changing seasons, but once people began to grow food, settled communities started to appear. Archaeologists have found traces of a grain called barley in one of these communities. It was a good choice because it is easy to harvest and can be stored for long periods.

Another key part of early farming was wheat. Although early humans could not have known it, the grain provides essential elements of a healthy diet, including carbohydrates, proteins, and vitamins. The farming of this grain spread widely over the centuries, and so by the time of the ancient Egyptians, it was the main grain crop, used to make bread.

In Asia, rice became a vital crop, especially in areas with plenty of water. The farming of rice is believed to have started in the Yangtze river valley in China around 8,000 years ago. Rice farming needed different techniques compared with other grains, as it grew best in flooded fields. This method not only provided the necessary water for the rice plants but also helped kill weeds, plants which would otherwise restrict the growth of the rice but were not ed.

A grain called maize was first grown in Mexico, around 9,000 years ago. It grew for growing the crop, also known as its ability to grow in various climates North and South America from its development of powerful civilisations.

The Industrial Revolution in Europe brought big advancements in grain farming. For example, the invention of 1831, a machine for cutting ripe grain efficiently and production.

In more recent times, we have the appearance of miracle rice in the 1960s, or more as it was called by the institute in the Philippines which developed it. It acquired its popularity because it could produce 10 times the amount of rice per plant than traditional varieties. This plant is credited with reducing hunger in many parts of the world, but its resistance to disease was not as high as the older grains.

1. Which type of plant do all grains come from?
2. Which grain has been discovered in the remains of a community from 10,000 years ago?

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 (1–5 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: Respond appropriately to a given text to, produce a formal response for an intended public audience, produce an informal piece of writing for a specified reader on a general subject

Duration (Reading & Writing): 2 hrs 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 100–150 words.

Check task type example below.

Our local council has asked teenagers for suggestions for improving public transport in this city. Please, send your ideas by email to me and I will pass the best ones on to the head of the council.

Mrs Clarke
Head of Senior School

To help them prepare, provide learners with text types similar to those they will encounter in the task (e.g. a letter/email, article, report, review) 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 100 words. But they won't be awarded extra marks if they write more than 150 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 150–200 words.

Check task type example below.

Write a short story for your school magazine with the title '*The Lost Phone*'. Describe how the phone was lost and what happened as a result.

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 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.

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 150 words. But they won't be awarded extra marks if they write more than 200 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: 13 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 B2 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 a visual with prompts

Learners will be asked to discuss a given topic with the Interlocutor. They will be provided with a written prompt related to the topic. They will have 20 seconds to prepare.

To prepare for 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 produce more language than the prompts, e.g. sharing their opinion about them rather than just repeating them, and encourage them to justify their opinions instead of just stating them.

In the task, learners should make good use of their preparation time to think about what they're going to say. They'll be given a pen/pencil and a piece of paper to write notes before they speak.

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 two minutes, and answer follow-up questions. They will have 30 seconds to prepare.

To practise 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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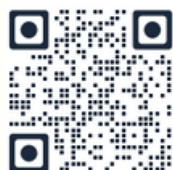
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