

PET

Preliminary English Test

Examination Report

December 2004



UNIVERSITY *of* CAMBRIDGE
ESOL Examinations

English for Speakers of Other Languages

Preliminary English Test

Examination Report

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WEBSITE REFERENCE

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www.CambridgeESOL.org

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide a general view of how candidates performed on each paper in the December 2004 session, and to offer guidance on the preparation of candidates.

The overall pass rate for the December 2004 session was **78.7%**.

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

December 2004	
GRADE	PERCENTAGE
Pass with Merit	23.4%
Pass	55.3%
Narrow Fail	9.2%
Fail	12.1%

- **Grading**

Grading took place during January 2005 (approximately six 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 overall pass rate for the December 2004 session was **78.7%** of the candidates. 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**

The 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, tape/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, together with further copies of this report, can be purchased using the order form on-line at **www.CambridgeESOL.org**

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can obtain an order form from:

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Feedback on this report is very welcome and should be sent to the Reports Co-ordinator, Cambridge ESOL, at the above address. A feedback form is included on page 24.

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. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	10
	Ten questions with an adapted-authentic long text.		
4	Four-option multiple choice.	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	5
	Five questions with an adapted-authentic long text.		
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 carries 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, etc. 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 warning drivers about other traffic, an email between a brother and sister about a birthday present, a station notice about train delays, a postcard written on holiday, and a notice in a shop. The language in the public notices is formal and includes some use of imperatives, while the personal messages are informal and, as in real life, are sometimes written in short form, for example 'Any ideas about Mum's birthday present?', 'Went sightseeing in the city today... '.

Question 2, the email, was extremely well done, possibly because the situation was such an everyday scenario. Questions 3 and 4 were the most challenging. In Question 3, the station notice, a considerable number of candidates (mainly the weaker ones) chose option A, rather than the correct answer, C. However, while it is plausible to think of trains being cancelled, the notice carries no mention of this. The correct answer, saying that some trains 'will be late' is a paraphrase of 'delays to some trains' in the notice and is clearly testing the word 'delay', which is a B1 level word (noun and verb) according to Threshold.

Question 4, the postcard, also caused weaker candidates some difficulties. The question tests understanding of the sequence of events described in the postcard and B is the correct answer. However, many weaker candidates chose A, and a smaller number of weaker candidates chose C. Students should be reminded to read the text and all three options carefully before selecting their answer. See suggestions for candidate preparation on page 7.

Part 2, Questions 6-10: Matching

The topic for this session was holiday campsites in Britain, which appears to have been accessible to candidates. The task worked well and few candidates had difficulties in selecting their answers. Questions 6 and 10 were the least demanding, probably because they test familiar topic vocabulary to do with the beach and nightlife.

Question 7 was slightly more challenging than the others, possibly because the description of Carlos and Ana gave candidates more to think about and match up in the chosen text. For example, they wanted to have a *relaxing* holiday at a *quiet* campsite with *beautiful scenery*. The correct answer, D, has a *lakeside* situation, with fields *away from* the main site that are *less busy*. There are *countryside views*. Similarly, Carlos and Ana *are good swimmers* but want to learn *other water sports*. Weaker candidates chose E, which offers a swimming pool but no other water sports. Students must avoid superficial matches at word-level (swimmers/swimming pool) or actual 'wordspotting' in this task, as they will most likely be misled if they do this. As Question 7 demonstrates, the reading skill involved here is locating paraphrase or exemplification of the descriptions on the left-hand page. Work done in class on topic vocabulary and on the simple reworking of key phrases is invaluable for this part of the test. See suggestions 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 and is usually factual in content. Candidates have to decide whether ten sentences about a text are correct or incorrect and these sentences follow the order of information in the text. This session's text was about collecting picture postcards and included some historical information about postcards. Possibly for this reason, the task was slightly more challenging than some previous Part 3 tasks, but it was reasonably well handled by most candidates.

Questions 13 and 16 were the easiest, while Questions 15 and 18 were much more challenging. Question 18, the most difficult of the ten, tests the understanding of a

longer stretch of text than, for example, Question 16, which focuses on wording within a single sentence. This may explain why weaker candidates had problems with Question 18. The statement deals with the time period 'before 1902' and candidates therefore had to scan the text from '...not until the 1890s' to the end of the paragraph. The key is located in the final sentence but also involves the time reference 'before that' back to the preceding text.

Question 15, which is an incorrect statement about the text, tests the phrase 'a maximum of'. Here again, candidates were required to process quite a complex part of the text in order to arrive at the correct answer. They also had to understand the semantic link between 'unusual' in the statement and 'special' in the text, and at the same time discount 'typical' as being synonymous with 'unusual'. The key sentence in the text here is: 'Although the special cards cost more, you can spend anything between 5p and £30 for the typical cards on the market.'

Candidates must allow themselves enough time to read the ten sentences carefully first, in order to scan the text for relevant information. See further suggestions for candidate preparation on pages 7 and 8.

Part 4, Questions 21-25: Multiple choice

Part 4 tests attitude and opinion, which is less straightforward to process and understand than factual information. For this reason, the Part 4 task is generally the most challenging part of the Reading component and this was again true for this session. The text, written as a first-person account, was about swimming in an outdoor pool in winter. It contained not only the attitude of the writer to this chilly experience, but also the feelings and quoted opinions of other people that he met while swimming there. This may have added to the complexity of the task, although the two most challenging questions, Questions 24 and 25, were about the writer himself.

Question 24 focused on the writer's reaction to swimming at the pool and the correct answer was A, which contained the challenging structure: *it was as cold as he expected*. Many weaker candidates and a few of the stronger candidates chose option B, a simpler statement: *he did not like the ice*. Although this is perhaps quite plausible, the text does not say this. Indeed, the writer's own mention of 'ice' at the end is a joking reference to his physical state: *...got out again after 30 seconds before I became a block of ice!* This illustrates how carefully candidates have to read the text and options.

Question 25 tests global understanding and therefore draws on information throughout the text. Most of the stronger candidates chose the correct option, D, but many weaker candidates chose B or C. However, B is ruled out because it is factually untrue and C does not reflect the writer's actual reaction to swimming at the pool.

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 further suggestions 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 a journalist who has started writing for a music website, and this seems to have been an accessible topic. The task was well done by most candidates.

Questions 28 and 33, both focusing on lexical sets, posed fewer problems than average. In Question 28, most candidates chose the correct answer, D, showing that

they were either familiar with all four verbs *think*, *persuade*, *imagine* and *decide* or knew the pattern 'decide + to' and were therefore able to reject the other options. Similarly, in Question 33 the phrase 'make mistakes' seems a known collocation at B1 level and most candidates selected B, the correct option. A few weaker candidates chose A, *faults*.

Questions 29, 34 and 35 were more challenging. Question 29 tests another set of verbs, but perhaps in a less frequent context: *appear on the website*. Some stronger candidates and many weaker candidates chose A or D rather than the correct option, B. While both 'show' and 'display' could be used in a passive form followed by 'on the website' the only verb that fits here in the active form is 'appear'.

Question 34 may have proved challenging for two reasons. It not only tests adverbs versus adjectives, but also usage with a phrasal verb: *get along well with*. Many weaker candidates chose option D and some went for A, both adjective forms. Some stronger candidates selected B, the adverb *strongly*, which does not collocate with 'get along with'.

Question 35 tests the passive and although most of the stronger candidates chose the correct answer, A, many weaker ones chose B, the future form *will*. Passive forms often cause candidates difficulty in Part 5, so it is worth spending time on these in class. See further suggestions for candidate preparation on page 8.

- **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. It would be worth spending some time in class looking at the contrasting language used in public notices and personal messages. As the texts for this session show, imperatives may be more frequently associated with public notices, while personal messages will be written in informal language, using contracted forms and truncated language. 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.

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 and exemplification.

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. Students should also recognise the 'hierarchy' within groups of words, for example *water sports* as an umbrella term for sports such as *sailing*, *windsurfing*, *water-skiing*, etc. This type of relationship is often tested within Part 2, as is the case with water sports in Question 7.

As stated earlier, students need to be made aware of the perils of wordspotting. It is probably best to do this by reference to a past paper. Students could be asked to highlight all the uses of a word that occurs in both the description and the texts, for example the use of 'countryside' already referred to above. Students should then look at all these examples, explaining how the texts they appear in match or do not match the person's requirements.

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.

For weaker students, it is useful to mark the area where 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.

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 spend less time on this part and correspondingly more on the most challenging part of the Reading component, Part 4.

Part 4

It is clear that students need to be familiar with ways of expressing attitude or opinion. Since this area of language is also tested on the PET Listening paper (in Part 4), it may be worth considering key vocabulary that is common to both exam tasks. This will include different 'functional' verbs, such as 'advise', 'complain', 'suggest', 'warn'. Verbs like these are often used in the first question of Reading Part 4, which tests the writer's purpose.

It is also useful to present texts to students that contain different people's opinions – for example the writer's own views and quoted opinions, as in this session – so that students are aware of the need to work out 'who says what'.

When training students for the exam task 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.

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 awareness of parts of speech and specific practice of structures such as modals, conjunctions and the passive are particularly relevant here.

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.

Writing			
PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	<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>	<p>Control and understanding of Threshold/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.</p>	5
2	<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>	<p>A short piece of writing (35-45 words) focusing on communication of specific messages.</p>	1
3	<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 Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.</p>	<p>Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.</p>	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 middle part of the second sentence, so that it means the same as the first sentence.

For this session, the sentences were about playing the guitar in a band. As usual, a range of different structures and transformations were tested: indirect to direct speech, 'for' and 'since', comparison, 'There are... ', and modal verbs. Candidates coped well with Question 4. Questions 1 and 3 were more challenging than average. A common wrong answer in Question 1 was: Would you 'want to' join my band instead of 'like to'. In Question 3, some candidates had problems in completing the negative second sentence: 'not as/so... as'.

Some candidates lost marks in this part because their answers were incorrectly spelled. In this part of the Writing component, everything must be correctly spelled, with capital letters where necessary. American English is acceptable, if used consistently.

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. For this session, candidates had to write a note to an American friend, Dan, about going to the cinema.

In common with all Part 2 tasks, there were three content points to include: candidates had to tell the friend which cinema they were going to, say what film they were going to see and suggest a time to meet the friend. Most candidates handled the task well and wrote within the word limits specified. Answers that are longer than 45 words can suffer in terms of clarity and relevance, and students should be made aware of this.

The strongest candidates covered all three points clearly and gained full marks. Middle range candidates lost marks by omitting one point, usually failing to specify either the cinema or the meeting time. The task rubric makes it clear that they will be going to the cinema this evening, so the suggested meeting time needed to be consistent with this. Weaker candidates misunderstood the scenario and asked the American friend where he would like to go, what he would like to see and when he would like to meet them. Some even wrote the note to invite their other friends to accompany them, and some lost sight of the fact that Dan was actually staying with them. It is very important that candidates read the contextualising rubric carefully before addressing the three bullet points in their message.

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 page 12 of the PET Handbook.

Question 7, the letter, asked candidates to write to some friends who were thinking of having a holiday in the candidate's country. Candidates were asked whether it would be better to spend time in a city or in the countryside. This allowed candidates to use the language of comparison if they wished. A further question in the 'input' letter from the friends asked: 'Which would you recommend and why?' Stronger candidates were able to respond to this by showing a good range of language, in particular employing more complex structures such as conditionals and the sentence opener: 'If I were you...'. Better candidates also used a range of vocabulary, including a variety of adjectives and adverbs to emphasise the good or bad points of the city/countryside they were describing.

Question 8, the story, had the first sentence: 'I was really surprised when I read the email'. This gave scope for some very imaginative stories showing good language range, though not always equally good control. Past tenses in particular do need to be checked carefully by candidates, especially those with irregular forms. Candidates wrote to the word length or slightly beyond it, which is acceptable. The storyline was clearly accessible to candidates of all ages. Topics included meeting a famous person, winning a competition, learning about a friend's pregnancy, as well as receiving unwelcome news, for example about the end of a relationship. Some candidates wrote the story in the form of an email reply and this was seen as an acceptable

interpretation.

For both questions, there were relatively few short scripts – that is, answers of fewer than 80 words. In these instances, the length determines the maximum band on the mark scheme that can be awarded, no matter how good the language is. Therefore, it is worth encouraging students to write longer answers if necessary. They will not be penalised for writing too much.

Some candidates attempted to answer both questions. Where this happened, examiners marked both tasks and applied the higher mark of the two. However, the minimal length of these answers often dictated the maximum mark that could be awarded, for the reason given above.

Candidates are asked to lozenge their choice of question on their Answer Sheet, but a significant number failed to do so for this session.

• 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, past tenses and gerund forms.

Students could work through past papers in pairs, discussing what is required in the space or checking each other's answers.

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 leave messages on post-it notes around the classroom.

Students should be taught useful expressions and other language appropriate to common functional areas, such as apologising, explaining, suggesting, 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.

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 may also be required.

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 be encouraged to experiment with ways of including a good range of structures and vocabulary in the letters they write for homework.

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 also be given practice in writing in both the first and third person, starting from different first sentences where the pronouns or names given indicate which should be used.

- **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, 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** 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 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 spelling errors in Writing Part 3, as ambitious language is rewarded.

PAPER 2 – LISTENING

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

- **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.

- **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 Question 1, whilst Question 4 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 distracting 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 8 and 9, for example. Questions 12 and 13, on the other hand, proved to be more challenging and discriminated well between weaker and stronger candidates. Weaker candidates tended to choose option C in Question 12, and option A in Question 13.

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 found this the most challenging part of the test, although most managed to write acceptable answers for Questions 14, 15 and 19. Questions 16 and 18, which tested lower-frequency words at PET level, proved more challenging. These questions did, however, discriminate well between weak and strong candidates. A range of unambiguous misspellings was accepted for all answers.

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. The task was of average difficulty and there were no particular problems. Questions 21 and 24 proved to be the most accessible to candidates whilst Questions 22 and 23 were 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 on the page 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 1, for example, the speaker mentions the three different objects depicted, but only one of them is the one she has chosen as a present for her mother.

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 3 the speakers talk about all three photographs, but the last one we hear about is not the one that the girl dislikes. Some questions focus on information or opinions coming from one of the speakers, for example in Question 3, and this is indicated in the focus question. In other questions, for example Question 6, the key information may come from either speaker.

Part 2

In the Part 2 rubric, which is both printed on the page and read out on the tape, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the setting

(e.g. talking to a group of people), the topic (e.g. the band he plays in), and the speaker (e.g. a man). 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 9 asks about the members of the band, whilst the corresponding piece of text is cued by the phrase 'The band is made up of all sorts of people'. 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 where 'the band performs most regularly' is, whilst what Bob says is: 'We perform every Friday evening on a cruise boat' to give the key B. Option A is wrong because Bob says that the band only *sometimes* practises in a hotel, whereas option C is wrong because we hear that the band only *occasionally* plays at weddings. Often the questions include a simple rephrasing of the ideas in the text, but candidates sometimes need to recognise synonyms and should be aware of a range of common expressions suitable for the level. For example, the key to Question 9 is C, 'all play music for pleasure', which corresponds to the phrase in the text: '... we all share a love of playing this sort of music as a hobby'.

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. climbing holidays) and the context (e.g. a radio programme).

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 17 is 'map'. If candidates write 'a map and went out to practise our skills' 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 test, so candidates need to listen for the meaning of the text in order to locate the correct information. For example, in Question 19 the message tells us about four possible evening activities, but only two of them are available at the centre.

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 17 various spellings of 'table tennis' were accepted as correct answers (e.g. 'table tenis', 'table tenniss'), but where candidates wrote, for example, 'table tents' or 'table dentist' the meaning was lost and so the mark could not be given. However, high frequency words, such as 'September' in Question 15, 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 tape, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the topic (e.g. learning to drive) and the name of the speakers (e.g. a boy called Jack). 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 21, Jack says: 'I couldn't manage to stop the car quickly enough'.

Several of the questions test attitude and opinion and candidates should be familiar with adjectives which express feelings such as 'disappointed', 'pleased', 'excited' 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 focus on Jack, and three on Sarah, but questions can also test understanding of the attitude of both speakers, e.g. Question 21 in which Sarah 'agrees' with Jack's opinion.

- **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 find 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. Marks are awarded throughout the test on the following four scales.

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.

The assessor awards a mark out of 5 on each of the four scales. This ranges from effective use at this level (5) to unintelligibility (0). The interlocutor gives an impression mark out of 5 for each candidate. The interlocutor's mark is then doubled to 10, which is added to the assessor's mark out of 20 to give each candidate a score out of 30. This mark is weighted to a final total out of 25. There is no pass mark for the individual scales.

- **Candidate performance**

Candidate performance in the December 2004 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- 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 *A Special Birthday* (see December 2004 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 having a drink. 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, furniture, 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, etc.) 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 – things they liked to drink with their meals (1) and things they like to drink at other times (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 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 a 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 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 each other is saying. Candidates should not take long individual turns in this part, but should learn how to pick up and develop the points made by their partners. 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 both in and out of class as much as possible before the test.
- 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 picture and describe the picture 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 2004

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:

University of Cambridge
ESOL Examinations
Reports Co-ordinator
1 Hills Road
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CB1 2EU

Fax: +44 1223 460278

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 are not so useful?

7. What extra information would you like to see included in this report?

8. (Optional) Your name
- Centre/School

Thank you.

The Preliminary English Test is at Level B1 of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* published by the Council of Europe.
It has also been accredited by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the UK
as an Entry Level 3 ESOL certificate in the National Qualifications Framework.

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