

Cambridge English **Business** Vantage

Achieve your ambitions in international business

Information for candidates



CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH
Language Assessment
Part of the University of Cambridge

Business English Certificates (BEC)

www.cambridgeenglish.org/bec-vantage



How to use this guide

You can print this document if you wish, but it is better to read it on screen. Click the links in the document to access other useful online resources such as videos and practice tests, and to find the information you need.

What does Cambridge English: Business Vantage involve?


Cambridge English: Business Vantage is the second of three exams in the general Business English suite offered by Cambridge English Language Assessment. It can be taken in both paper-based and computer-based formats. It is at Level B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), and is accepted by educational organisations, government bodies and leading international companies worldwide as an indication that you have achieved an upper-intermediate level of skill in the English language.

Cambridge English Language Assessment carries out extensive research to make sure that you get the fairest, most accurate result, and that the exam is relevant to the range of uses for which you need English. Studying for the exam will enable you to use English confidently in international business environments.


About the exam


Here's a summary of what's in the exam:

Paper details	What's in the paper?	What do I need to be able to do?
<p>Reading</p> <p>1 hour</p> <p>Parts 1-3: Reading component</p> <p>Parts 4-5: text-based Use of English tasks</p>	<p>First there are three long Reading texts: multiple matching, gapped paragraphs and multiple choice.</p> <p>Then there are two shorter Use of English texts, each with a different task, the first requiring you to supply missing words, the second looking for mistakes in a document.</p> <p>Texts are all business related. They are adapted from real-world publications and reflect international business practices. You don't need lots of specialist knowledge to read them.</p>	<p>The reading skills you need include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reading for the main idea • finding specific information and reading for detail • understanding attitude, opinion and the writer's purpose • interpreting visual information • reading for gist, inference and global meaning • understanding text structure or following an argument • understanding vocabulary and grammar in a short text • proofreading • working out meaning from context.

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Paper details	What's in the paper?	What do I need to be able to do?
Writing 45 minutes	<p>You have to produce two pieces of writing. The first is compulsory, and you need to write to a colleague or colleagues within the company. It may be a note, message, memo or email.</p> <p>For the second piece of writing there is a choice from various tasks, such as a business letter, proposal or report.</p>	<p>You're tested on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• how well you fulfil each task and its purpose• whether you've used the right style for the task• how well you can put together and develop ideas on the topic• the accuracy and range of your use of language.
Listening 40 minutes including 10 minutes' transfer time	<p>The Listening paper has three parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a task to complete notes from messages or conversations with one or two speakers• a matching task• a longer piece with multiple-choice questions. <p>You'll have to listen to things like presentations, lectures, interviews, discussions and more informal business conversations.</p>	<p>This tests your ability to listen for a wide variety of real-life purposes, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• listening for specific information• identifying the topic• understanding attitudes and opinions• listening for details• listening for the overall meaning of a whole extract.
Speaking 14 minutes Paired: two candidates together	<p>The Speaking paper has three parts and the tasks involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• answering some individual questions from the examiner about yourself and business-related topics• preparing and then giving a short talk• discussing a business-related situation with another candidate, before reaching a decision.	<p>You're tested on many things, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• your grammar and vocabulary• pronunciation• fluency• your ability to organise your thoughts, negotiate and sustain a discussion• the appropriate extent of your answers.

You don't need to pass all four papers in order to pass the whole exam. For example, if you do very well in Reading, Writing and Listening, but you don't do so well in Speaking, it is still possible to pass the exam.

The weighting of each of the four skills is equal.

- ➔ [Download a complete sample paper.](#)
- ➔ [Try a computer-based practice test.](#)

Before the exam – preparation

It is important to know exactly what you have to do in the exam as this will make you feel more confident. For example, in the Speaking test if you are not familiar with what is required in a short space of time, then you may not be able to show your true ability.

Although learning business vocabulary and doing practice tests are certainly important, these are not shortcuts and they should be just part of your exam preparation. In preparing for the exam, you need to take a whole and long-term approach to your ability to communicate in English, analysing your own strengths and weaknesses across all language skills.

To help you get ready for *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*, there is a range of **free exam preparation resources**, including:

- tips and FAQs for each exam paper
- sample papers and a computer-based practice test.

To support learners as they prepare for their exams, Cambridge English Language Assessment and Cambridge University Press have developed a range of **official preparation materials**, including coursebooks and practice tests.



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How much do you know about preparing for *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*?

Can you answer these questions?

1. *Does the exam test my business knowledge?*
2. *Where can I find out exactly what I have to do in each part of the test?*
3. *How can I make best use of an English-English business dictionary to prepare for Cambridge English: Business Vantage?*
4. *What about the grammar of Business English? How can I learn that?*
5. *What kinds of things should I be reading as well as my coursebook?*
6. *The Reading paper tests reading in different ways. How can I practise doing this?*
7. *How can I best prepare myself for the Writing paper?*
8. *What else can I listen to outside the classroom?*
9. *What is the best way to develop my speaking skills?*
10. *How is Speaking assessed?*
11. *How is Writing assessed?*

Find the answers on the next page



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Preparing for Cambridge English: Business Vantage

1. *Does the exam test my business knowledge?*

This exam is a test of English language, but in a business context. Of course, you will have the opportunity to write and talk about your business situation in the Writing and Speaking papers, so if you are working in a company you can use your own business knowledge in these papers. But you are not at any disadvantage if you only have business knowledge from your studies. It's the same in the Reading and Listening papers: we do not require you to have expert, specialist knowledge, but you do need to be well read and therefore well informed about general international business practices.

2. *Where can I find out exactly what I have to do in each part of the test?*

You can download a sample paper and find more information about each part of the test on the **Cambridge English Language Assessment website**. If you are taking a computer-based exam, you can try a computer-based practice test **here**. (Please note that this only works with the most recent version of Firefox.)

3. *How can I make best use of an English-English business dictionary to prepare for Cambridge English: Business Vantage?*

It's a good idea always to have a business dictionary beside you when you're studying: a lot of business terms have a specific meaning (for example the words 'inventory' and 'costs' are used slightly differently in Business and General English). You'll need a dictionary to prepare for all papers, particularly Parts 4 and 5 of the Reading paper. A good dictionary will list multiple word meanings and show how a key word is used in set phrases and collocations (words that often go together). In Business English there is a large amount of fixed language with set expressions. So learning a good number of these will help you with Parts 4 and 5 and with understanding the longer texts in Parts 1-3. You'll be able to use these words and expressions in the Writing paper, and a good dictionary of this kind will also take data from spoken sources, so it will also help with the Listening and Speaking papers.



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4. *What about the grammar of Business English? How can I learn that?*

Grammar is certainly important: in the Writing and Speaking papers, for example, producing accurate language is part of communicating effectively. Getting tenses right is important for negotiating and making arrangements. If you attend a Business English course, and read and listen widely outside the classroom, you can aim to improve your whole ability to communicate in English. This may be a more effective way to improve your grammar than just reading grammar books.

5. *What kinds of things should I be reading as well as my coursebook?*

Past papers and other practice tests can be very useful, even if you just read them as texts and don't answer the questions. It's not necessary to read specialist business journals or magazines, but some general-interest business magazines are useful. Try to read written interviews, biographies, reports, book reviews and advertisements. If you look at past papers you will see that these are the kinds of things that you either have to read about in the Reading paper or you will be writing yourself in the Writing paper. And of course the written interviews also give you useful spoken language of the type used in the Listening paper. As long as they are published by online business magazines or organisations that you trust, articles from the internet can be good to read as they are interesting and up to date.



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6. *The Reading paper tests reading in different ways. How can I practise doing this?*

All the parts of the paper are testing comprehension and require close and careful reading. Some test your knowledge of vocabulary, others test your understanding of the structure of the text. A good idea is to quickly read through the text to get the general idea of what it's about, then go back and look at it paragraph by paragraph in order to tackle the questions. Work out your timing – some parts are longer than others, so practise getting the timing right and you can finish the paper comfortably.

7. *How can I best prepare myself for the Writing paper?*

In points 3 and 5 above we've already talked about how you can help yourself by reading widely and using a dictionary actively. In addition you should:

- Practise writing under exam time conditions so that it becomes a habit.
- Familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria – *Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language*. See **page 9** for more about how Writing is assessed.
- Train yourself to read the rubric carefully so you don't miss out any part of the task you have to do. You could work through past papers, making a plan for each task, then writing within the time allowance and in accordance with the word count.
- Be sure to familiarise yourself with model answers in your course material. This way you can see how answers should be structured, see how the writer is aware of the target reader, and get an idea of the variety of grammatical structures and range of vocabulary that is required.



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8. What else can I listen to outside the classroom?

Internet podcasts are very useful and there are many presentations available online. There are various techniques you can use for listening to these, such as pausing and summarising in your own words, and practising note-taking skills. Listening to business programmes on English-speaking TV channels and radio stations will also give you valuable practice.

9. What is the best way to develop my speaking skills?

You should take every opportunity to speak English. Can you talk fluently about a variety of business issues and practices? Do you have the vocabulary to do so? Remember that a lot of business vocabulary consists of set phrases, so you'll feel more confident if you know lots of these familiar expressions. But don't memorise set speeches for the Speaking test, as this would not sound natural.

You can try recording your voice and listening to yourself – this can help you think about your pronunciation. You will also find some useful language in transcripts of texts you've heard. These can be found in 'with key' editions of coursebooks and exam practice tests.


10. How is Speaking assessed?

In the Speaking exam, there are two examiners. The interlocutor, who speaks to you, awards a mark for *Global Achievement*. The assessor, who just listens, uses these assessment criteria: *Grammatical Resource and Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication*. *Discourse Management* is to do with your fluency and how well you organise your ideas.

11. How is Writing assessed?

Writing tasks are marked using these criteria: *Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation and Language*.

- **Content** focuses on how well you have fulfilled the task, in other words if you have done what you were asked to do.
- **Communicative Achievement** focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the particular task and whether you have used the appropriate style and conventions.
- **Organisation** focuses on the way you put together the piece of writing, in other words if it is logical and ordered.
- **Language** focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language as well as how accurate it is.



How much do you know about practical things to do before the exam?

Can you answer these questions?

1. How can I find practice tests?
2. How do I register for the exam?
3. Can I delay taking a particular paper if I don't feel ready for it?
4. What is the Notice to Candidates?
5. What do I need to take with me on exam day?
6. How do I register for results online?

Find the answers on the next page



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By preparing for *Cambridge English: Business Certificates*, my spoken English achieved great progress.

Yi Zhang, China

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ANSWERS

Practical things to do before the exam

1. *How can I find practice tests?*

Official books of practice tests are **available online** or from bookshops. There is also a free sample online test.

2. *How do I register for the exam?*

If you are already at a school that offers a course in the exam, they will do this for you. If you are registering independently, click **here** and find a centre that offers *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*. You can register directly with them, and they will be able to give you advice about preparation, give you exam dates and tell you how much it will cost.

3. *Can I delay taking a particular paper if I don't feel ready for it?*

No, all papers must be taken in a single session.

4. *What is the Notice to Candidates?*

It's a list of things you can and can't do in the exam room. Your exam centre will give you a copy, but you can also see a copy online **here**.

5. *What do I need to take with me on exam day?*

Just your passport for identification. A bottle of water is a good idea. You can take pens and pencils, but your centre will also provide these.

6. *How do I register for results online?*

When you register for the exam, you will receive a Confirmation of Entry. This will show the web address for our Results Online site, as well as your ID number and secret number, which you will need to use to register to receive your results online. It is a good idea to register for results online a few weeks before your exam – we may send you useful information and important updates by email.



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You can feel better prepared and less nervous if you know what to expect on the day. Doing practice tests and getting used to filling in the answer sheet is a vital part of this. You can practise this on the **online sample test**.

You should expect a photograph to be taken of you at the centre. You may also be given a sheet of candidate data to fill in. (Don't worry about this - it's just to enable us to keep accurate records on the ages and nationalities of candidates taking each exam.)

If you are entering the exam independently you can contact your local centre with any practical queries you may have. You can find your local centre **here**.

Before you take your exam, be sure to visit the **What to expect on exam day** web page and read the **Summary Regulations for Candidates**.



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EXAM DAY TIPS

- ✓ Have a good night's sleep and go into the exam with a clear head – you will need to be fresh as a lot of concentration is required.
- ✓ In the **Reading** and **Writing** papers, you can do the tasks in any order you wish to suit your particular strengths. Make sure you fill in the answer sheet carefully.
- ✓ With **Reading** Parts 4 and 5 (the **Use of English** parts) make sure you read the texts as far as possible before starting on any of the gaps. This will give you an idea of what the text is about, and then it becomes much easier to do the questions.
- ✓ With **Writing** make sure you don't run out of time. It is tempting to want to write in too much detail early on, but if you do this you may find that you have to rush at the end and miss things out. Allow yourself time to plan, write, check and edit your work. If you do change or correct anything you write, make sure your corrections are clear.
- ✓ With **Listening**, don't panic if you miss something – you will hear each text a second time. Make sure you use the given time to read the rubric and questions in advance, as it will help you to follow the recordings more easily.
- ✓ With **Speaking**, be sure to listen to what the other candidate says, and respond appropriately, to show that you can communicate effectively.



After the exam – How much do you know about results and next steps?

What should you do after the exam?

Can you answer these questions?

1. *What can I do with my Cambridge English: Business Vantage qualification?*
2. *What information will be on my Statement of Results?*
3. *How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?*
4. *What exactly is the online Results Verification Service?*
5. *What does my overall score say about my level?*
6. *How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Business Vantage?*

Find the answers on the next page



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Results and next steps

1. *What can I do with my Cambridge English: Business Vantage qualification?*

Cambridge English exams are recognised by over 20,000 organisations, including universities, companies, government bodies and professional organisations worldwide. A *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* certificate can help you enter higher education or find a job in your country or overseas. Find out more about who accepts Cambridge English exams [here](#).

2. *What information will be on my Statement of Results?*

On your Statement of Results you'll see your:

- score on the Cambridge English Scale for each of the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking)
- score on the Cambridge English Scale for the overall exam
- result for the overall exam
- CEFR level for the overall exam.

For more information, see the document **Understanding your Statement of Results**.

3. *How long do I have to wait for my results and my certificate?*

Statements of Results are released online four to seven weeks after the test for paper-based exams, and two weeks after computer-based exams. To see your results online, you will need your candidate ID number and secret number. These can be found on the Confirmation of Entry sheet given to you by your centre. Successful candidates receive a certificate within three months of the exam, or six weeks for computer-based exams. If you need to check when you will receive your certificate, contact your centre.

4. *What exactly is the online Results Verification Service?*

This service simply enables universities, colleges or employers to view and check exam results. You will need to provide your candidate ID number and secret number.



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5. What does my overall score say about my level?


Your overall score for the exam is given on the Cambridge English Scale and shows how well you did in the exam. If you achieve a score of between 180 and 190 (grade A), this means you performed exceptionally well and that your English is above B2 level, the level of *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*. Your certificate will show that you received the Business English Certificate Vantage and that you showed ability at Level C1.


If you achieve a score between 160 and 179 (grade B or C) in the exam, you will receive the Business English Certificate Vantage at Level B2. If your performance is below B2 level, but within B1 level, you will get a Cambridge English certificate stating that you showed ability at Level B1.


6. How can I continue my language learning after passing Cambridge English: Business Vantage?


You can continue your studies and take *Cambridge English: Business Higher*, which is at **CEFR** Level C1, the level above *Cambridge English: Business Vantage*.

If you are interested in a General English exam, then *Cambridge English: Advanced* is also at CEFR Level C1.

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Cambridge English: Business Certificates guarantee clear proof of the required language skills to succeed in international business communication.

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