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Cambridge English Teacher Competition Exam Preparation Ideas for Teachers



Practical classroom exam tips and ideas for the preparation of Cambridge English exams.
Created by teachers for teachers.





Competition overview

Cambridge English and Bell ran a competition inviting teachers of English from all over the world to submit written practical teaching ideas for preparing their candidates for a range of Cambridge English examinations.

These teaching ideas had to focus on one of the four skills that students would encounter in the exam: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

The four competition winners each received an all-expenses-paid trip to Cambridge with a place on a two-week residential teacher development course at Bell Teacher Campus based at Homerton College, part of the University of Cambridge.

This booklet contains the four winning entries and a selection of the other ideas submitted. They are grouped under the appropriate exams they relate to, but some ideas may be used for any exam or for General English classes.

Thanks go to all those who have contributed. We hope that these teaching ideas will be practical and useful tools to integrate into your classroom experience and will help to inspire future ideas. If you have any further teaching tips please submit these to:

teachersupport@cambridgeesol.org

Cambridge English and Bell

Views and tips expressed by teachers in this document are their own, based on their own experience, and are not official guidance from Cambridge English Language Assessment.



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Contents

Exam preparation tips for:

Cambridge English: Young Learners

8

Cambridge English: Key

20

Cambridge English: Preliminary

24

Cambridge English: First

30

To learn more about the different parts of the exams in this booklet please refer to the Exams and qualifications section of the Cambridge English website for an overview.

www.Cambridgeenglish.org

Exam preparation ideas for Cambridge English:
Young Learners



Winner of the Teacher Competition 2012

Natalia Cheskidova, Russia

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE), *Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)* and *Cambridge English: First (FCE) Speaking tests*

Summary:

1. **Divide the students into teams** and ask each team to select an 'artist'.
The artists then leave the room.
2. **Provide each team with an image**, then ask the artists to return to the room.
3. **Encourage each team to describe the picture** to their artist.
4. **Ask the artists to draw a picture following their team's instructions.**
5. **Compare the pictures against the originals** and award points.

Materials needed:

Paper, and pens or pencils

Picture perfect

"This activity will help prepare students for the Speaking test, specifically the part using visual prompts.

The students are divided into teams and each team appoints an 'artist'. After that the artist leaves the room and the team receives a picture. Alternatively, the team can draw a picture themselves. The artist comes back into the room and the team members describe their picture. The artist follows their instructions and draws a similar picture. The goal is to draw a picture as close to the original one as possible.

Then the rival team compares the two pictures and finds as many differences between them as they can. The number of differences identified is the number of points that the rival team wins. The visual prompts may be

different. The students may be asked to draw whatever they like or a certain theme may be set. The theme itself may be quite simple, for example, describing a room or a place, a person's appearance, etc. However, depending on the students' level, you can speak about more complicated issues while doing this activity. For instance, I used this task with my Sociology students when we were working on the topic 'Non-Verbal Behaviour'. They had to describe a face expression for the artist so he/she could recognise the emotion that the face was expressing. This activity enables students to focus on the target language for describing pictures and photos, and speaking about differences between them.

The element of competition makes it more exciting, especially with children."

Winner of the Teacher Competition 2012

Julieta Caffarel, Uruguay

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Starters (YLE Starters)

Summary:

1. **Draw a picture on the interactive whiteboard** and stick a large sheet of paper next to it.
2. **Encourage each child to come to the front of the class** and follow your instructions to colour in or draw an object on the paper.
3. **Ask questions** about the picture.
4. **Create a worksheet** using a photograph of the picture.

Materials needed:

Whiteboard or piece of paper with coloured pens

Students' drawing exercise

"These activities help to integrate the four skills of reading, writing, listening and speaking.

First I stuck a big sheet of white paper on the whiteboard where I had already drawn a big tree and a small pond with some flowers around. I asked the children to come to the front in turns and draw/colour what I told them to, e.g. 'Draw two fish in the water.' 'Colour the fish red.' 'Colour the water blue', etc.

My aim here was to give them practice on Part 5 of the Listening paper in a motivating way (they enjoyed themselves a lot being creative). Afterwards, I used their picture to practise Part 3 of the Speaking paper by asking them questions such as 'What's this?' 'What colour is it?' 'How many flowers are there?', etc.

Finally, I took a photograph of their big picture and used it at home to produce a worksheet. I placed the picture on the top and wrote several Yes/No sentences below to give the students the opportunity to practise Part 2 of the Reading and Writing paper. They loved seeing their drawings in the worksheet!"



Daniela Mirza, Romania

Job role:

Primary English teacher in an international school in Bucharest

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers), Listening test

Summary:

1. **Record an interview** which includes basic questions about family, home and hobbies.
2. **Create a worksheet** using information from the interview, incorporating pictures and descriptive words.
3. **Ask students to listen carefully to the interview.**
4. **Encourage students to draw lines to connect different pieces of information** on the worksheet, connecting what they hear to what they see.
5. **Mark worksheets interactively** to discuss the interview and activity further.

Materials needed:

Paper, pen, photo of family, recording equipment

Interview and gap fill

"I asked one of my students in Grade 4 to interview a teacher of English from New Zealand. The student had a set of questions that he asked the teacher, based on the structure from the *Cambridge English: Movers* Listening test. The teacher introduced himself and spelled his name. Then he showed a picture of his family, explained who the people in the picture were, described everyone and provided names. The student asked about the type of accommodation he lives in/location, various sport activities that the teacher might be involved in, finding out information about the days on which the teacher practises the various sport activities.

I recorded the conversation and then I created a worksheet similar to the exam question type. I then played the CD in class. My students had to fill in the gaps (e.g. a picture of a family – students had to connect names with people by listening to their description; a set of pictures showing various sport activities/the days of the week next to them – students had to connect the pictures with the days when the activities were performed, etc.). The CD was played twice. Then we checked the answers interactively. I also invited the New Zealand teacher to my class, for a bit of 'realia'. My students loved the Listening test."



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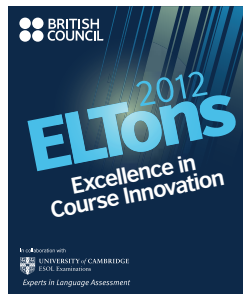
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Patricia Orellana Santiago da Silva, Brazil

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers), Part 2 and *Cambridge English: Flyers (YLE Flyers)*, Part 3, Speaking tests

Summary:

1. **Display a comic strip story on an interactive whiteboard.**
Ideally choose one without dialogue.
2. **Encourage the students to tell the story**, either as a whole class or in pairs.
3. **Provide each pair with a print-out of the story**, cut into sections.
4. **Ask one student to tell the story** while the other arranges the pictures in the correct order.

Materials needed:

Internet on screen, or printed sheets from web page

Comic book stories

“To help students overcome problems with vocabulary and encourage them to paraphrase I started to give them some ‘disguised’ practice. I say disguised because students thought we would have 5 or 10 minutes every class just for fun, working with stories from comic books. I chose *Monica’s Gang*, Brazilian kids’ favourite one. As we have an e-board, I have very easy access to the stories. They can be found at www.monica.com.br/ingles/index.htm, and I choose the ones without dialogues. I use them in many different ways, for instance:

1. the whole class together tells the story
2. students work in pairs, helping each other to tell the story
3. in pairs, one student tells the story while the other (with his/her back to the board) puts the pictures (printed and cut out beforehand) in order.

There is also a deal between the students and me: no Portuguese can be spoken and I don’t help them during the activity. When everybody finishes, I tell them the words they want to know. So far our ‘fun time’ has been a success. I still do not know if it is effective, but I have very positive feelings about it!”

Guadalupe Amores, Argentina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers), Speaking test, Part 2

Summary:

1. Find a selection of stories comprising four pictures each.
2. Mix up the order of the pictures in each story.
3. Divide the class into pairs and give each pair a story.
4. Encourage the students to connect the pictures to make a story.

Materials needed:

Four pictures printed and cut out

Story makers

"I looked for stories consisting of a sequence of four pictures each. I had 16 students so I needed eight different stories, as the idea was for students to work in pairs - at least in this first stage.

Once I had the stories, I mixed them up, got students in pairs and gave each pair four pictures at random. Then students were told to make up a story using those four pictures. At the beginning they thought they wouldn't be able to connect the pictures, but gradually they came up with brilliant ideas and consequently, original stories.

By doing this activity, students noticed they were able to tell a story just by looking at some pictures, and this strengthened their confidence. After this activity we started working with mock exams. In the first two,

students were given some time to look at the pictures in Part 2 of the Speaking paper, and in some cases they wrote one or two sentences before speaking; but after the second mock exam, they were able to tell the story without any support. In the end, they took the exam and all of them passed it with top marks."



Everton Malvesi, Brazil

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers) and *Cambridge English: Flyers (YLE Flyers)* Speaking tests

Summary:

1. **Ask students to use their mobile phones to take a selection of photos** at the beginning of their break.
2. **Ask them to photograph the same scene 3 minutes later.**
3. **Display the pairs of photos** on an interactive whiteboard.
4. **Encourage the students to compare and contrast** the pairs of photos.

Materials needed:

Students' mobile phones

Comparing/contrasting with your school

"Living in a world where technology is all around, I like to use technology in class. I use students' mobile phones to gather the necessary material for a Speaking mock test.

When students are on their breaks, I ask them to use their phones to take pictures of the cafeteria, library, sports court, etc. at the beginning of their break and then 3 minutes later. This way, the pair of pictures is used for comparing/contrasting. I save these pictures on my computer and display them side by side on the board. Then I act as Speaking examiner: 'In this picture, there is a girl running.' Students are supposed to say what is different in the other picture: 'In this picture, the girl is eating.'

This activity usually works really well because not only does it mix moving around the school and using their gadgets, but also practising their English in a meaningful way. A variation of this activity is to ask students to take five pictures in a sequence in order to create a story. Despite being a little more challenging, students usually try hard to snap a story! Then I display the pictures on the board and ask students to tell a story based on what they see in the pictures.

It is interesting that they can be really creative at times. By using these two activities, I help my teen students to become better prepared to get the most shields in the Speaking exam."

Melania Dui, Italy

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers), Speaking test

Summary:

1. **Make sets of object flashcards.**
2. **Practise the vocabulary** with the students.
3. **Divide the students into pairs** and ask them to take turns to say something about the pictures.
4. **Collect the flashcards** and ask the students to divide them into logical groups.
5. **Encourage the students to make an 'odd one out'** by moving cards into different groups and discussing the differences.

Materials needed:

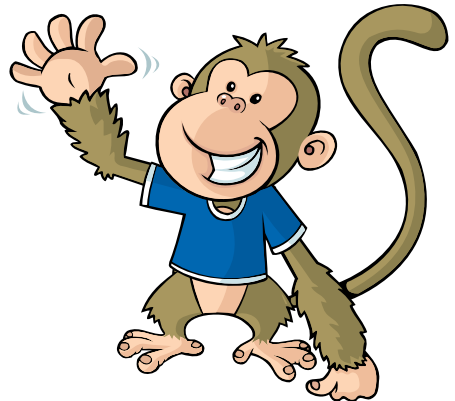
Cut out pictures or drawn flashcards

Flashcard drilling, groups and odd one out

"Make some object flashcards or cut them out from books. Elicit the vocabulary shown, e.g. 'It's an apple', 'It's a t-shirt' etc. Drill until students know all the vocabulary, then they can take turns to say something more about the pictures, e.g. 'It's an orange, it's round, it's a fruit'. 'It's a t-shirt, it's red and white, it's dirty.' Then collect the flashcards and ask the students to divide them logically: all orange things, all the things you use outdoors, all the things you use in class, etc.

Introduce the concept of 'odd one out': take a fruit picture and put it in the vehicle group. Ask, 'Can I put this here?' Students say, 'No, you can't'. Then say, 'I can't put this here. This is a fruit, but these are cars and things that move.' Encourage students to make their own 'odd one out' puzzles and repeat the sentence.

Once they know the language, show a *Cambridge English: Movers* past paper and ask them to do the exercise."



Alfredo Alvarado, Mexico

Job role:

Elementary School English teacher

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Starters (YLE Starters) and *Cambridge English: Movers (YLE Movers)*

Summary:

1. **Select a range of children's books suitable for your students' level** and read them as a class.
2. **Discuss the style, content and language used.**
3. **Encourage the students to write their own stories**, using the books as a model.
4. **Help the students to edit their stories**, and ask them to illustrate them.
5. **Record the students reading their stories**, then create electronic books.

Materials needed:

Paper and pens or document on computer

Young authors – a story based on English wordlists

"To incorporate all the major skills in language learning my students have written their own children's books using the official vocabulary list published by Cambridge English.

We start by reading various children's books suited to their level, for them to get a sense of style and content, with an emphasis on descriptive language and proper sentence structure. We then use those books, along with some simple books we write together, as models to help them create their own stories.

One of the requirements of their writing assignment is to use a minimum number of words from the list provided by Cambridge. The students illustrate their stories in fun and creative ways. I also help them edit their stories for proper grammar usage.

Finally, in order to help their speaking skills, the students record their stories using the best pronunciation and intonation possible. The books are then published digitally for classroom usage – the pages are scanned or photographed, and their voice recordings attached to create an electronic book of their work.

It is a fun and engaging activity that prepares them for the *Cambridge English: Young Learners* exams. I've always received a positive response to this activity and my students have done amazingly well in their exams."

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Elena Voronyanskaya, Russia

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Young Learners (YLE)

Summary:

1. Give each student a set of word bubbles taken from a *Pupil's Book* comic strip.
2. Ask the students to read the comic strip bubbles, find the matching word bubble from their set and place it on the word bubble in the book.
3. Give students a copy of the complete page of the book but with the original bubbles removed.
4. Ask students to try to remember what the characters were saying, find their word bubbles and fill in the gaps.

Materials needed:

A book with speech bubble dialogue (comic book) and a copy of the speech bubbles cut out as well as a copy of the page with blank bubbles.

Bubble memory challenge

"In the *Pupil's Book*, stories are presented mostly in comic format. After drilling new vocabulary, listening and repeating, I give each student a set of word bubbles. They have to read the words that the book characters are saying, find the same word bubble from their set and put it on the word bubble in the book.

Next they get a copy of the complete page of the book with the original bubbles cut out. Now the students try to remember what the characters were saying, find their words and fill in the gaps. Sometimes students' bubbles are broken into sentences.

I get lots of feedback. Children come back after the summer break remembering everything, being able to read, communicate and loving English!"



Exam preparation ideas for Cambridge English:

Key



Lourdes Martinez-Cerda, Mexico

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Key (KET)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Key (KET), Reading and Writing Part 6, word completion

Summary:

1. Find out which social networking sites your students use, e.g. Facebook.
2. Post a list of the vocabulary you have worked on, together with definitions, example sentences and pictures.
3. Include a quiz on vocabulary from the previous lesson, using paraphrase.
4. Encourage students to save, share and comment on the vocabulary.
5. Post new material after each lesson.

Materials needed:

Internet access outside of the classroom

New vocabulary via social media

"In this activity, the teacher uses social media to post new vocabulary with a description/definition of the word, and if possible a very graphic example of the meaning and a picture.

Every day you can post the words you have worked on in class, and a quiz using a definition slightly different from the original (paraphrases) from the previous day. By using a social network such as Facebook, where most students spend time every day, we reinforce new items of vocabulary, and it allows teachers and students to save, share and comment on any of the vocabulary presented. A personal blog would be a variation of this idea. Nevertheless, I consider Facebook to be

the best choice, since it is very friendly to use, even for inexperienced or technophobe teachers. It's a resource students are already using for other purposes, so we can just take advantage of it. You might need to explain the activity to the class so they can understand what you are doing and why, and how it will help them."



Mersina Šehć, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Key (KET)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Key (KET)

Summary:

1. **Arrange realia on a desk** and ask students to sit in a circle around it.
2. **Ask students to come to the desk one at a time** and select an item related in some way to the item chosen by the previous student.
3. **Explain that they must not speak until each student has chosen an object.**
4. **Encourage the students to explain to the class why they picked their item.**

Materials needed:

Realia of various unrelated items; enough for each class member

Go pick an item!

“I noticed that my young learners like visual aids, so students sit in a circle and I arrange realia on a desk. Then students approach the desk one by one and pick an item without talking. The item has to be in some way connected to the item the previous student chose. There does not have to be an obvious connection, but it must be something that makes sense to the student.

Afterwards, the students explain to the class why they picked that particular item. Students often say if they use it often, of whom the item reminds them, where it can be bought, etc.”





Exam preparation ideas for Cambridge English:
Preliminary



Winner of the Teacher Competition 2012

Pham Thuy, Vietnam

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET), Writing paper

Summary:

1. **Divide the class into groups of four** comprising two story-developers, one judge and one note-taker/editor.
2. **Give the groups a story title or starter sentence** and ask them to develop a story.
3. **Encourage the story-developers to take turns to contribute sentences.**
4. **Ask the judge to approve each sentence** and the note-taker/editor to write down the story, correcting any errors.
5. **Display the stories** and ask students to vote for their favourite.

Materials needed:

Paper and pen for note-taker

Story building

"First, the students are divided into groups of four comprising two story-developers, one judge and one note-taker/editor. Next, they are given a title or beginning sentence and asked to develop a logical story within a time frame. Next, after throwing a dice to decide the starting person, the two story-developers take turns to contribute one sentence to build up the story; the judge must listen attentively to evaluate the logical link between that sentence and the previous ones, then decide to approve or disapprove of it; the note-taker/editor notes down the story and fixes any grammatical, lexical or cohesive errors. It should be noted that the story-developers have no time to think between turns, so the editor does play a role in group work. Finally, all products are collected and exhibited on the walls of the classroom.

All members will then go around, read the stories and stick a star (which is paper-made and handed out to them before) on the one they vote for. At the end of the class, the teacher gives comments on the students' work and suggestions for improvements. With this activity, I find students more relaxed, active, creative and fluent in writing stories."

Guillermina Grondona, Argentina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Computer-based *Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)*, Writing paper, Parts 2 and 3

Summary:

1. **Email a writing task** to your students.
2. **Ask them to complete the task** and email it back to you.
3. **Email them to confirm receipt** of their work.
4. **Assess their work**, highlighting any errors, adding comments and using pre-agreed correction codes.
5. **Return their work**, asking them to correct the mistakes and resubmit the task.

Materials needed:

Access to the internet

Writing tasks by email

“My students are teenagers and it is very difficult to get them to write, not to mention re-write. Therefore, I have started sending writing tasks by email. Students complete the tasks and send them back to me. As soon as I receive their files, taking into account that teenagers are used to instant messaging and responding, I let them know that their files have arrived. In the first part of the assessment phase, I just highlight mistakes and use a correction code they can interpret. In fact, we create the correction code together before they start receiving the writing tasks. I always write an overall comment or point out specific details to revise. I send the file back to them and they are expected to correct their mistakes, re-write the text and send it back to be marked.

There are some specific tips:

- use an email address different from your personal one
- ask students to identify their files clearly (e.g. adding their surname to the file name)
- be strict with deadlines
- teach them how to count words using their word processor tools.”



Laura Casetti, Argentina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: Preliminary (PET), Speaking paper, Part 3

Summary:

1. Ask students to bring in a topic-related picture.
2. Divide the class into pairs and ask the students to swap pictures.
3. Ask the students to describe their partner's picture.
4. Ask each student to describe their own picture to the class, and then explain how their partner described it.
5. Encourage the class to discuss further ideas.

Materials needed:

A picture or photo from home

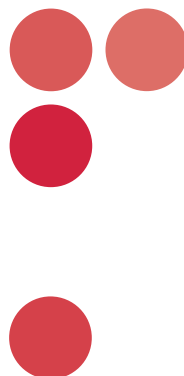
Describing a personal photo

"I usually ask students to look for a picture at home, related to a given topic (usually the one we are dealing with in class), and bring it to the following class. This gives them the chance to choose a picture that, in a way, inspires them. The class works in pairs, exchanging their pictures, which, as I said before, have a topic connection.

Once they have done this, I give them a task for Part 4. After they have finished this, they are asked to tell the group how they would have described the picture they brought, and how their partner actually did this. Then, they can ask the rest of the group for further ideas.

This activity proves quite fruitful, since it allows students to open their minds to new ideas about what to say about a picture, enlarging the scope of possibilities. If this is done regularly when we

finish dealing with a given topic, at the end of the course they will have a folder with their own pictures, which will be useful for revising the topics, prior to the oral interview."





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Exam preparation ideas for Cambridge English:
First



Winner of the Teacher Competition 2012

Nora Beatriz Brussolo, Argentina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Speaking paper, Part 2

Summary:

1. **Collect pictures from different Speaking Part 2 practice tests** and separate the pairs.
2. **Divide the class into groups** and distribute the pictures.
3. **Place a picture on the table** and ask the first group if they have a picture to connect to it.
4. **Encourage students to find relationships among the pictures** to justify their choice.
5. **Ask the groups to take turns placing a picture.** If they can't place a picture they miss their turn - the winning group is the first to place all their pictures.

Materials needed:

Pictures from different Speaking Part 2 practice tests

Picture dominoes

"I take to the class lots of pictures from different Speaking Part 2 practice tests. I separate the pictures so that the students never get the pairs. I divide the class into groups and distribute the pictures among them. Each group should have at least two/three pictures. Then we play a kind of 'dominoes'. I start by placing a picture on the 'board' and ask the first group if they have a picture to connect. The idea is that they should find relationships among the pictures to justify their choice and they will have to tell the class why they consider that picture could be paired off with the one on the board.

Once they are done, the next group tries to match one of their pictures with the last one placed. If one group does not find any reasons to match any of their pictures, the next group has a try. The teacher can ask the rest of the class if the reasons given are correct or else there might be a group of students playing the role of the judges. The group who gets rid of all of their cards first is the winner. In this way they are forced to look beyond the picture itself and practise comparing and contrasting pictures."

Luliana Draghici

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Reading paper, Part 1, multiple choice

Summary:

1. Give each student a sheet of paper with a tree drawn on it – each branch represents a word category, e.g. noun, adjective, verb.
2. Ask students to read a text, decide on the main issue and write this on the trunk of the tree.
3. Encourage them to find words corresponding to each branch and write them on the branches.
4. Discuss the reasons for their choices.
5. Ask students to reconstruct the story, then compare their versions with the original.

Materials needed:

Paper and pens or whiteboard

Word tree

“The teacher prepares sheets of paper with a tree drawn on each. Each branch is named after the structures targeted, e.g. nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbials, and has enough space around it for students to fill in the words or phrases spotted. He/She hands out a strip of paper to each student and explains the steps.

Procedure:

1. Students read a text and in pairs decide on the main idea or key issue: it may be a person, a place, an event, etc.
2. Then they write it on the trunk of the tree (the trunk is always named after the key issue under discussion). For example, if they decide on a person, they will write the name of the person, e.g. ‘Danny’; if a place: ‘Cardiff’; or an event: ‘Edinburgh Art Festival’, etc.

3. They also work in pairs in order to find the words corresponding to each branch and write them along it.
4. The teacher checks with the class and they discuss the reasons for their choices, for example, how difficult it was for them to spot the words related to the key issue.
5. Without looking back at the original text, students try to reconstruct it. They compare their versions with the original and the teacher helps them draw conclusions.

Further on, this activity could be used to spot opinion, attitude, purpose, detail, tone and gist in the given text.”

Roxana Sava, Romania

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Writing paper

Summary:

1. **Pre-writing activities:** brainstorming, planning, generating ideas, questioning, prompts.
2. **Activities during writing:** recursive writing, self-editing and revisions.
3. **Post-writing activities:** re-reading, eliminating redundant details.
4. **Additional writing activities:** vocabulary games, error file.

Materials needed:

Writing materials

Writing preparation and exercises

“Some pre-writing activities include brainstorming (where students divided into groups produce ideas about the writing), planning (students make a plan of the writing before they start), generating ideas (students write about the subject in six different ways – they describe it, compare it, associate it, analyse it, apply it, and argue for or against it), questioning (in groups students generate questions about the topic and the answers to these questions will form the basis to the writing), prompts (a well-chosen picture or song), and so on.

During writing, I try to engage students in recursive writing, self-editing and revisions, and also guide them through areas such as syntax. Post-writing activities help students reflect on and revise their writing based on feedback from an audience. This consists of re-reading their

work and making sure sentences make sense. Also, at this stage, students need to eliminate unnecessary/redundant details.

Vocabulary games are also a great help when it comes to writing. I use crossword puzzles, ‘the last is first’, ‘hangman’, ‘outburst’, and many others to help my students’ command of words.

And, last but not least, I make my students keep an error file throughout the preparation. Their mistakes are divided in sections (grammar, spelling, word order, etc.) for them to see what areas need improvement.”



Laura Cabrera, Uruguay

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Speaking paper, Part 2

Summary:

1. **Gather the students around a selection of images.**
2. **Divide the class into pairs** and ask each pair to select two pictures that are somehow related.
3. **Ask them to think of a question to ask about each picture** and possible answers when comparing the pictures.
4. **Encourage the students to simulate a Speaking test**, with one acting as the examiner and the other as the candidate.

Materials needed:

Photos from magazines, internet etc. of people, situations, events

Creating a speaking test

"I sat my students around a table (the activity can also be done on the floor) and I scattered some photographs that I had previously taken from magazines, advertisements, downloaded from the internet, etc. There were about 40 or 50 photographs illustrating different kinds of people, situations or events (e.g. some pictures showed people doing sports, working, studying, etc. while others showed different kinds of places, etc.).

The students were told that for the assigned task they needed to imagine that they were examiners creating a *Cambridge English: First* Speaking test. They were divided into pairs and each pair was asked to choose two pictures that in their opinion were somehow connected. Afterwards they were asked to think of a question that could be asked about the pictures. They also had to think about the possible answers that a candidate might give when answering the question and when comparing the photos.

The next step was that in each pair one student acted the part of examiner while the other acted the part of candidate. After the activity we had a feedback session where most of the students said that the task helped them to raise awareness of what is expected from them, and they found it very useful."

Anna Pavlycheva, Russia

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Writing paper

Summary:

1. **Begin by teaching students the rules of writing a paragraph.**
2. **Develop this by exploring writing** different types of paragraph.
3. **Introduce connecting words and phrases** appropriate for each type of paragraph.
4. **Encourage students to study example paragraphs** and find the topic sentence, underline linkers and identify supporting ideas.
5. **Ask students to write their own paragraphs.**

Materials needed:

White board or pieces of paper.

How to create a proper paragraph

"First of all, I teach my students how to create a proper paragraph. It is a good idea to start with making the topic sentence (main idea) of a paragraph, which can be either at the beginning or at the end. It is also advisable to memorise useful phrases that are likely to help a student express the topic sentence.

After that students are taught to write different types of paragraph, for example, the one which follows a contrast pattern, a listing pattern, a comparison pattern, a process pattern, a classification paragraph, a cause and effect pattern. In order to create a cohesive and unified piece of writing, students also learn how to make use of connecting words and phrases appropriately for each kind of paragraph.

It should be mentioned that a good way to grasp the idea of how to write a paragraph is to study an example. Therefore students are always given sample pieces of writing to look at. They read them, find the topic sentence, underline linkers and identify supporting ideas. Finally, they create their own paragraph about something, following the sample answer given. They can be offered a topic sentence or make their own."

Anastasiya Biryukova, Ukraine

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Writing paper, report.

Summary:

1. **Start a classroom discussion** about what makes a tourist-friendly location.
2. **Divide students into four groups** and ask them to discuss what they might talk about in one of four locations.
3. **Take the groups to a town or city centre** and encourage them to pretend to be tourists, talking to real people in English, in their given location.
4. **Ask the students to report orally** on their conclusions.
5. **Ask them to write a report** based on their experiences and suggest improvements.

Materials needed:

Classroom preparation and field trip for students to their local city

Tourist exercise

Note: *This activity is based around the UEFA Euro 2012 Football Championship and one of its host cities, Lviv, Ukraine. The format could be applied to other events and locations.*

“Start a classroom discussion: When you go abroad as a tourist, which things make a city ‘friendly’? Is your home town friendly towards tourists? Next, divide the students into four groups. Set the task: You are a tourist. What questions do you usually ask and what might you talk about to people in different places?”

1. In a café (group 1 discusses)
2. In a hostel (group 2)
3. In a taxi (group 3)
4. In a tourist information centre (group 4)

Take the class outside (in the city centre), set a time limit and ask them to work in the same groups, pretending to be tourists.

Talk to real people, i.e. waiters in several cafés (group 1), receptionists in a few hostels (group 2), some taxi drivers (group 3), and tourist information centre staff (group 4) in order to find out how friendly and helpful they are to tourists. Speak only English. Back in class, students report orally on the conclusions they have made about their target group of people and the facilities. They put their ideas in writing.

Discuss the structure of the report students are going to write, and brainstorm ideas for appropriate headings. Set the final task: Write a report for the local Euro 2012 Committee in Lviv, making suggestions on how to improve tourist facilities in the host city, Lviv.”

Miloslava Navarro da Silva, Brazil

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Speaking paper, Part 2

Summary:

1. Ask each student to choose a 'compare and contrast' topic card for the following homework activity.
2. Ask them to select two different photos on their topic from one of three websites specified.
3. Encourage them to record themselves answering the questions on their card, and to email the recording to you.
4. Send written feedback to each student and select a 'video of the week' to play next class.
5. Invite class feedback and brainstorm ideas about what else could be said about the photos.

Materials needed:

Topic cards

Topic cards – compare and contrast

"In class, each student chooses one of the *Cambridge English: First Part 2* topic cards. Here are some examples:

Art: Compare and contrast the photos and say which piece of art you would choose for your house and why (e.g. a statue and a painting).

Food and drink: Compare and contrast the photos and say which meal represents a healthy diet and why (e.g. a hamburger and a salad).

Hobbies and interests: Compare and contrast the photos and say which hobby you would enjoy the most and why (e.g. playing tennis and playing cards).

Types of transport: Compare and contrast the photos and say which means of transport is more suitable for a longer journey and why (e.g. an airplane and a car).

Places to visit: Compare and contrast the photos and say which places you would prefer to visit and why (e.g. a farm and a busy city).

People taking photos: Compare and contrast the photos and say why those people are taking photos in these situations (e.g. a paparazzi and a father). I set the following homework task:

1. Go to www.flickr.com or www.taggalaxy.com or www.google.com/imghp and select two very different photos on your topic.
2. Answer the questions on your card. Time your answer (1 minute). Record yourself by using a digital camera/mobile phone/ an online recording tool and email your recording to your teacher.

The teacher sends written feedback to each student and selects 'the video of the week' to play next class. Peers are invited to give feedback and brainstorm ideas about what else could be said about the photos."

Alicia Maria Cullen, Argentina

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Writing paper

Summary:

1. Play a song to the students.
2. Ask them to write a story based on the lyrics.
3. Alternatively, play part of a video and ask students to write a dialogue to accompany the scene.

Materials needed:

Song lyrics or film clips shown in class (on computer)

Using songs and films

“Making use of both songs and films has helped me to motivate my students to write better, down-to-earth stories, rather than the typical TV-series-like stories they kept on writing. I play some phonologically clear songs, such as those sung by Don McLean, Chris de Burgh, Carly Simon, Neil Diamond, etc., where lyrics are understood by a non-native, as is the case with my students, and I ask them leading questions for them to make up their own story based on the lyrics.

For example, from the song *You don't bring me flowers*, they had to write the story of what had happened between the main characters of the song: what had made them come apart, what type of a man/woman he/she was before breaking up, etc. They had to choose one of the protagonists, place themselves in his/her shoes and retell their 'own' story, giving it a plot and an ending.

Every now and then I do something similar by projecting bits of videos which were unknown to them, and I would ask them to work either individually or in twos, writing the dialogues they imagined could go with the scenes. By doing this, they make a brand new story based on their invented dialogues and, of course, enlarged by their imagination. At least this 'using media technique' moved them away from their killing and bloodshed stories.”

Alena Klimova, Slovakia

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Use of English paper, Part 3, word formation

Summary:

1. **Divide students into teams** of three or four.
2. **Give each team a set of different sentences with a missing word** and the relevant stem words written next to the sentences.
3. **Call out all possible variations of the stem words** and ask the teams to complete their sentences with the correct word.
4. **Ask students to shout 'bingo'** when all their sentences are complete.
5. **Encourage students to read the sentences to the rest of the class** – they should check, evaluate and discuss the new words.

Materials needed:

Pre-prepared bingo cards for the game

Word formation

"I focus on practising word formation in several stages. Firstly, I show the students all possible variations of a stem word: verbal forms, noun (-s), adjective (-s), adverb, negative form, forms with prefix(-es)/suffix(-es). Example: Stem word: PLAY.

Task for students:

1. Form verbal forms – plays, playing, played.
2. Form nouns – player, players, plays, playfulness.
3. Form adjective – playful etc.

Next, the students are asked to form new words from other stem words (five or six) in groups of three or four. It can be a competition with a focus on a different part of speech that students find more troublesome, e.g. nouns or words with prefixes/suffixes. When students are aware of all possible variations, the 'preparatory' or

brainstorming stage is followed by practice. One of the popular games is bingo, which I use to practise word formation. Students are divided into teams of three or four people. Each team is given a set of different sentences with a missing word and the same stem words written next to the sentences. The teacher calls out all possible variations of the stem words. The teams have to complete their sentences with the correct word. As soon as they complete all the sentences, they shout 'bingo'. Then the students read the sentences to the rest of the class – they all check, evaluate and discuss the correctness of the new words. To practise word formation more, I prepare a text with incorrectly completed gaps – students have to find a mistake, change the word and justify their decision. This exercise can be done individually by each student, who can be motivated with a good mark if the exercise is error free."

Patrícia Mara De Carvalho Costa Leite, Brazil

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Reading paper, Part 2, gapped text

Summary:

1. **Select one student** and ask them to choose an interesting text.
2. **Ask the student to remove seven sentences from the text**, and write options A to H - the seven sentences plus one extra.
3. **Check the appropriacy and accuracy of the text** and sentences before distributing the activity to the class.
4. **Evaluate the students' answers** and discuss.

Materials needed:

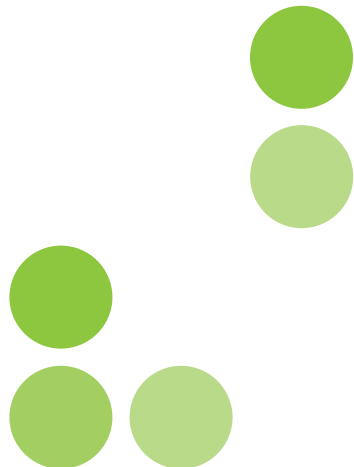
Students to bring in texts from a song or film or magazine

Sentence identification

"We asked each person from a group to bring any text they thought might be interesting for that specific group (the text could be a song, a film review, a story etc. but they needed to specify the source of information).

Then, this student takes seven sentences out of the text. Next, he/she writes options from A to H with an extra sentence for students to complete the gaps (as in *Cambridge English: First*). The teacher checks the appropriacy and accuracy of the texts before handing it to the students.

Every week, there was a different text on a different topic that led to interesting discussions. When it came to the mock exams, students felt really comfortable to do this part and also the others from the Reading one as they had been practising their reading skills in a pleasant way. It was a huge success!"



Kerley Muniz, Brazil

Job role:

Teacher, *Cambridge English: First (FCE)*

Exam preparation idea for:

Cambridge English: First (FCE), Speaking paper

Summary:

1. **Divide the students into groups of four:** A, B, C and D. Students A and B are candidates, C is the interlocutor and D is the assessor.
2. **Ask A and B to do Parts 1 and 2 of the test conducted by the interlocutor**, while the assessor observes and makes notes.
3. **Encourage C and D to give feedback.** Then they swap roles: C and D are candidates, A is the interlocutor and B is the assessor.
4. **Ask the students to swap groups** and do Parts 3 and 4.
5. **Make notes** throughout the activity and give feedback.

Materials needed:

Cambridge English: First Speaking test sample material – pictures and prompts.

Students as Speaking examiners

“Divide the students into groups of four: A, B, C and D. Students A and B are candidates, C is the interlocutor and D is the assessor. Students A and B do Parts 1 and 2 of the *Cambridge English: First* Speaking test conducted by the interlocutor, while the assessor observes and makes notes on their performance using the following questions:

- Did he/she speak for 1 minute? (For Part 2)
- Were there long pauses?
- Did he/she use language to describe, compare and contrast photos e.g.: whereas, on the other hand?
- Was the pronunciation clear? Did he/she dominate the conversation, speaking too much/not enough? (For Parts 3 and 4)
- Were there relevant grammar mistakes?

After A and B finish Parts 1 and 2, C and D give feedback. Then they swap roles: C and D are candidates, A is the interlocutor and B is the assessor. Feedback. They then swap groups and do Parts 3 and 4.

NOTE: *During the activity, the teacher monitors unobtrusively, making notes to be used later on in areas such as: i) Delayed correction of grammar mistakes like ‘Has a woman in front of shop’ – students classify the mistake as S (serious), NS (not serious); ii) Suggestion of vocabulary (lexis) used to describe the photos e.g.: thunderstorm and drizzle to describe the weather, as well as fixed phrases, collocations and idioms e.g.: ‘sport’ – elicit/teach: ‘to be a good sport’/‘to take up a sport’; iii) Useful sentences (formulaic language) for contrasting, agreeing, interrupting, etc., and speaking sub-skills like expressing uncertainty and paraphrasing.”*

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