

**CAMBRIDGE**

**Young Learners  
Starters Practice  
Tests**

**Introduction and Tips**

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# Introduction

The Cambridge Young Learners English Tests are designed to test the English of primary school learners between the ages of 7 and 12. There are three levels: *Starters*, *Movers* and *Flyers*. The three tests are designed to take young learners of English as a foreign language from beginner to Waystage. There are no pass or fail grades for these tests. All students taking the tests receive between one and five shields in each component to show how they have performed.

Starters, the first level, is aimed at students aged 7+.

## An overview of Starters

### Listening

#### 20 minutes/20 items

There are four parts. Each part begins with a clear example. All the texts are heard twice.

	Main skill focus	Input	Expected response/item type	Number of items
1	Listening for lexical and verb phrases	Picture and dialogue	Carry out instructions and positioning things correctly on a picture	5
2	Listening for numbers and spelling	Illustrated dialogue	Write down numbers and names	5
3	Listening for information (present tenses)	Pictures and dialogue	3-option multiple-choice (pictures; tick the correct picture)	5
4	Listening for lexis and relative position	Picture and dialogue	Carry out instructions, locating, and colouring correctly	5

### Reading & Writing

#### 20 minutes/25 items

There are five parts, each starting with a clear example.

	Main skill focus	Input	Expected response/item type	Number of items
1	Reading for recognition of lexis	5 lexical items with pictures	Indicate <i>true</i> with a tick or <i>false</i> with a cross	5
2	Reading for recognition of lexis, number, location and grammar	1 picture 5 sentences	Write <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> next to the sentences	5
3	Spelling Writing (vocabulary)	5 pictures 5 sets of jumbled letters	Write words	5
4	Reading Writing	Riddle-cloze with picture prompts	Gap-filling (prompted); one-word answers	5
5	Reading Writing	Story presented through 3 pictures with 5 questions	Write one-word answers to questions	5

## Speaking

### 3–5 minutes/5 parts

This takes the form of a one-to-one exchange. The language used by the examiner is based on and controlled by a script (there are examples of this in the Key).

	Input	Expected response/item type
1	Greeting and name check (unassessed); scene card and identify objects in this picture	Carry out instructions; point to the correct part of the picture
2	Scene card and 8 small object cards; instructions to place object cards on the scene card	Carry out instructions; place the object cards in various places on the scene card
3	Questions about the scene card	Answer questions with one-word answers and/or short phrases
4	Questions about the object cards	Answer questions with one-word answers and/or short phrases
5	Questions from interlocutor on topics such as name, age, family, school, likes, dislikes	Answer questions with one-word answers and/or short phrases

## Wordlist

You may notice that there are some words that appear in these tests that are not in the Vocabulary List. These are words that are commonly used in coursebooks at this level and that students will be familiar with.

# Tips

## Listening

All the information students need to answer the questions is repeated on the recording in each part, and each part is heard twice.

Part 1	Tips
<p>Students look at a picture surrounded by objects, then listen to instructions about where the objects go. Students have to place the objects in the picture by drawing lines from the objects to the appropriate place in the scene. All key information is heard twice.</p> <p>Test focus: listening for lexical items and understanding prepositions of place</p>	<p><b>Teaching tips</b> For each new word students learn, ask one student to draw and colour in a small picture of it on a card, e.g. an apple, a tiger, a bus. Group pictures into theme-related topics. Use the groups of pictures for a classroom game in which students are asked to place between 10 –15 pictures in different parts of the classroom, e.g. <i>Put the banana on the floor, Put the apple next to the banana.</i></p> <p>Alternatively, turn the pictures over so students cannot see what is on them. In groups, students then have to try to remember where the objects are, e.g. <i>The banana is next to the apple.</i></p> <p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students to listen carefully for prepositions so that they know where to draw their line.</li><li>• It's important that the line they draw shows clearly where the object should be.</li></ul>
Part 2	Tips
<p>Students listen to a conversation between a child and an adult which is divided into seven short dialogues, each containing a number or a name. The first two dialogues provide examples for the students. The students then answer five questions by writing down a name, which is spelt out, or a number. A visual provides the context for the conversation and help with the examples and first two questions.</p> <p>Test focus: recognising numbers, names and letters of the alphabet</p>	<p><b>Teaching tips</b> Whenever students learn a new item of vocabulary, make sure they can spell the word aloud. Practice spelling sounds which are sometimes confusing, e.g. <i>a</i> and <i>e</i>, <i>g</i> and <i>j</i>.</p> <p>Give students a list of recently learned words. In pairs, one spells out the words and the other writes the word down. They then compare their lists and reverse roles.</p> <p>Read, or get students to read, prepared conversations or short texts. Tell them to listen for names to spell (the letters will be spelt out for them), and numbers from 1–20, and to write them down. Prepare conversations which are similar to those students will hear on the recording and read them out twice.</p> <p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage students to learn easy boys' and girls' English names such as Sue, Kim, Pat, Ben, Nick, Tom, and to recognise titles e.g. Mr., Mrs., Miss. Colours are also used for names, e.g. Mr. Brown, Miss Green.</li><li>• Tell students to listen very carefully for names and numbers. If they need to put a name, it will be spelt out on the recording. If it isn't spelt out, the answer will be a number.</li></ul>

**Part 3****Tips**

Five short dialogues between a variety of paired speakers. Students have to answer five questions that are printed in their books and are heard on the recording. For each question the students look at three pictures and as they listen, tick the appropriate picture by deciding how the pictures differ from each other.

Test focus: listening for detailed information

**Teaching tips**

Using sets of pictures from past papers, read out a simple description of one of the pictures in each set. Students have to say which picture you are describing. Once students get the hang of this they can then work in pairs to describe and identify pictures for each other.

Using pictures, e.g. cut from magazines, read out some statements about the pictures. Some of the statements are correct, others are not. Students call out *No* when the statement is incorrect, and *Yes* when it is. Again, more confident students could go on to try this as a pairwork activity.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students to look carefully at the pictures and try to work out what the differences are before they listen.
- Tell them to listen to the whole conversation before they decide and not to decide on an answer too quickly. Remind them that they will get the opportunity to hear the conversation again. They should be encouraged to listen to check their answer even if they have managed to tick a picture on the first listening.

**Part 4****Tips**

Students look at a black and white picture and listen to instructions in the form of a conversation between an adult and a child. Students have to locate and colour in five objects in the picture. At this level the objects are the same, e.g. five books. There will be an extra object that they do not need to colour. Students can write the colour if they prefer.

Test focus: following instructions, recognising colours, lexical items and understanding prepositions of place

**Teaching tips**

Photocopy black and white pictures suitable for the level, e.g. a kitchen scene, a garden scene. Give each student a copy of the same picture. Read out instructions, e.g. *Colour the flower pink*, quite slowly to begin with. Read each instruction twice. The student who produces the best, accurately coloured picture wins.

As students gain in confidence, make the instructions more difficult, e.g. *Colour one flower pink and the other yellow*, and read out the instructions more quickly.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students to make sure that they have the full range of coloured pencils for the test (listed in the Revision section on page 10).
- Encourage students to listen carefully for the preposition telling them *where* the object is and *what colour* to use. Students should be told that this is not a test of their colouring skills and that they should move on from one question to the next, without worrying whether they have completely finished colouring every part of the object.

# Reading & Writing

Part 1	Tips
<p>Students look at five individual pictures and read a sentence attached to each picture. They indicate with a tick or cross whether the sentence is true or false.</p> <p>Test focus: understanding lexical items</p>	<p><b>Teaching tips</b> Prepare a set of flashcards on a specific topic, e.g. animals, clothes, places, and for each set prepare separate cards with sentences which describe the pictures, e.g. <i>This is a snake, This is a shirt, This is a station</i>. These can then be used for various games.</p> <p>Divide students into groups. Each group of students matches their sentences to the pictures as quickly as they can.</p> <p>Students can play <i>snap</i> in small groups. One student has the pictures and puts one down on the table. The other students share the sentences and shout <i>snap</i> when the picture matches one of their sentences.</p> <p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students to underline the important word in each sentence and look at the pictures carefully before they decide.</li><li>• It's important that they make sure their ticks (✓) or crosses (✗) are very clear.</li></ul>

Part 2	Tips						
<p>Students look at a picture, read five short sentences and indicate with <i>yes</i> or <i>no</i> whether the information is correct or not.</p> <p>Test focus: understanding of verbs in present continuous, lexical items, prepositions of place</p>	<p><b>Teaching tips</b> Find pictures in children's books that are suitable for the level, e.g. the home, the classroom, the farm, the park. Prepare a set of cards containing different sentence halves that describe each picture, e.g. to describe a scene in a park:</p> <table border="0"><tr><td>1 There are birds</td><td>a) with a kite.</td></tr><tr><td>2 The children are playing</td><td>b) on a chair.</td></tr><tr><td>3 The man is sitting</td><td>c) in the trees.</td></tr></table> <p>Divide students into groups and give one picture and one set of sentence halves to each group. Students match the sentence halves to describe the picture. They then exchange pictures and sentences with another group.</p> <p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell the students to underline the nouns, prepositions and verbs in each sentence. Tell them to read each sentence carefully and ask themselves questions to find out if all the information is correct. E.g. <i>Are there <b>five</b> fish? Are the birds in the <b>trees</b>? Is the boy <b>between</b> the two girls?</i></li><li>• Ensure students are familiar with action verbs, e.g. <i>run, walk, ride, throw, hold</i>, etc.</li></ul>	1 There are birds	a) with a kite.	2 The children are playing	b) on a chair.	3 The man is sitting	c) in the trees.
1 There are birds	a) with a kite.						
2 The children are playing	b) on a chair.						
3 The man is sitting	c) in the trees.						

**Part 3** **Tips**

Students look at five pictures accompanied by five anagrams. They need to arrange the letters correctly to spell the word. Dashes represent the number of letters in the target lexical item.

Test focus: names of lexical items and spelling

**Teaching tips**

As a follow-up to a lesson on a particular vocabulary topic, e.g. Food and Drink, make cards containing letters of the alphabet. Prepare more copies of the high frequency letters e.g. vowels, and consonants like *s, b, r*. Spread the cards out on a table. Allow two or three minutes for students, working in pairs, to make as many words as they can on the vocabulary topic using the letters on the table. Give students a mark for each word that is spelt correctly. The letters could also be used for other simple vocabulary games such as scrabble, where students are given seven letters and have to use their letters to make or build up a grid of words on the table.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students that if they know the word for the object, they should circle the first and last letter of the word, then try to arrange the other letters correctly.
- Tell them to cross the letters out as they use them to check that they have used all the letters and have not missed, e.g. double letters, or the letter *e* on the end of a word.

**Part 4** **Tips**

Students fill in five gaps in a text with singular or plural nouns. They choose from eight labelled visuals and put the nouns into the correct place in the text. The first is given as an example and there are two options which the students will not need to use.

Test focus: reading, names of lexical items and spelling

**Teaching tips**

Put students into small groups and give them a pile of cards showing different nouns from the Starters wordlist. Place the cards face down. Each student takes a card. Tell them not to show their cards to each other. Ask them to take it in turns to give one piece of information about their picture and each time the other students have one guess about what's in the picture. The first student to guess what is in someone else's picture wins the card. The students keep going until they have used all the cards and the student who has got the most cards at the end of the game is the winner.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students to check all the possible nouns in each space before making their decision.
- Remind students that some of the nouns will be singular and some plural. They should check the spaces to see whether the missing noun is singular or plural. Teach them to look for clues, e.g. 'a', 'an', 'two' etc.

**Part 5** **Tips**

Students look at three pictures which tell a simple story and are asked to produce one-word answers to five *wh*-questions.

Test focus: understanding and spelling of, e.g. numbers, verbs in present continuous tense, lexical items

**Teaching tips**

Show students one of the pictures you prepared for Part 2. Read out 10 statements about the picture. Tell students that some of the sentences are correct, others are not. In groups, students decide how many sentences they think are correct. Give each group a point for each correct sentence. At the end ask the class if they can correct the sentences which are wrong, e.g. *There are five children in the park. This is wrong because there are four.* As in other parts of the test, activities that encourage accurate spelling will be helpful.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students to read the question words very carefully so that they know what they are looking for, e.g. *Where? Who? How many?*
- Ensure they know how to spell colours and the numbers from 1–20, and tell them to count carefully.

## Speaking

Before the test starts the student is introduced to the examiner by an usher, for example, their teacher. The examiner then greets the student.

Throughout the test the examiner will ask back-up questions if the student has difficulty in responding.

Part 1	Tips
<p>Students are shown a large picture of a scene that the examiner makes comments about, e.g. <i>Look at this. This is a street. The children are going to school.</i> The students are asked to identify two different lexical items in the scene, e.g. <i>Where's the bus? Where are the flowers?</i> They point to the appropriate items in the picture.</p> <p>Test focus: identifying lexical items</p>	<p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students not to worry as it will be easy to see where the things are in the scene. All they are expected to do in this part of the test is to point to them.</li></ul>
<p>The examiner lays out a set of cards showing pictures of different objects. Students point to one of the cards and put it in a particular place on the scene card, e.g. <i>Which is the bird? Put the bird on the house.</i> Students are then asked to place two further object cards on the scene card.</p> <p>Test focus: identifying lexical items, prepositions of place</p> <p><b>Please note:</b> the object cards are in the Student's test pages and will need to be cut out before use.</p>	<p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students not to worry if they are asked to put things in what they consider to be the wrong place, e.g. the giraffe in the bedroom, but just to do what the examiner asks them to.</li><li>• Tell them to have a good look at the scene and to listen for the preposition and objects mentioned by the examiner.</li></ul>
<p>Students are asked four <i>wh</i>- questions about the scene card. These questions test vocabulary, colour, number and verbs in present continuous tense. e.g. <i>What's this?</i> (a) parrot <i>How many parrots are there?</i> five <i>What's the girl doing?</i> (She's) writing.</p> <p>Test focus: understanding lexical items, colour, number, present continuous tense</p>	<p><b>Tips for the test</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tell students to have a go even if they're not quite sure of the answer. A one-word answer is enough.</li><li>• Ensure students know and can use the following expression: <i>Sorry, I don't understand.</i></li></ul>

**Part 4****Tips**

Students are shown three object cards that haven't been talked about. The examiner asks three questions about each card. The first question asks about the object on the card, e.g. *What's this?* The second question is more personal and requires a yes/no answer, e.g. *Have you got a cat?* The third question is also personal but requires the student to produce a short lexical response, e.g. *What's your favourite animal?*

Test focus: understanding lexical information and giving personal information

**Teaching tips****For the scene activity**

Divide students into pairs. Give student A a picture, (e.g. of a park scene) and a set of simple sentences describing the picture, (e.g. *The girl is playing with a kite. The duck is on the water. There are five birds in the tree. The dog is next to the tree.*) Tell student A not to show student B the picture. Give student B a piece of paper showing a basic outline of the complete picture, e.g. a lake, a tree. Student A then reads out the set of sentences, and student B draws the objects in the correct place on the outline picture. Students could then be asked questions about the picture, e.g. *Where is the dog? Where are the birds?* Students compare pictures at the end.

**For the object cards**

Prepare pairs of pictures showing nouns from the wordlist and divide students into groups. Give each group a set of 10 pairs of pictures for each group of students. Mix the pictures and place them face down on a table. Students take it in turn to turn over two pictures and say what they can see on the cards. If the two pictures are the same, the student keeps the pair of pictures. If they are different, students then replace the pictures in their *original* position. The student with the most pairs of pictures at the end wins.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students to listen carefully to the question words the examiner uses, e.g. *Which is ...? What colour is ...? How many ...? Where is ...?* and try to answer all the questions (one word is enough).

**Part 5****Tips**

The examiner asks the student three questions not related to any pictures that require one-word answers. e.g. *What's your friend's name? How old are you? What's your favourite lesson?* The examiner then thanks the student and says goodbye.

Test focus: giving personal information

**Teaching tips**

Give students plenty of practice of introducing themselves and talking about their life within the limitations of the wordlist. They should be able to say:

- what their name is.
- how old they are.
- where they live.
- what their best friend is called.
- what their favourite school subject is.
- what they like doing after school / at weekends.

**Tips for the test**

- Tell students not to worry about giving the right answer to the questions (it is unlikely at this level that they will be able to communicate all they would like to and this can be frustrating), but just to say something. So if the examiner asks them *What's your favourite lesson?* they should answer with a word they know, e.g. Reading, even if it's really Geography!

## Revision tips

Make sure your students:

- know their colours (black, blue, brown, green, grey, orange, pink, purple, red, yellow).
- are confident about counting and recognising the numbers from 1 to 20 and can recognise the difference, e.g. between 7 and 17.
- have learnt prepositions of place very carefully and are confident about the differences between them. Many questions rely on their knowledge of these prepositions.
- have had plenty of practice of spelling out words and recognising all letters of the alphabet. They should pay particular attention to the sound of vowels, e.g. the difference between the letters *e* and *a*.
- know the meaning of the word *double*, e.g. *double t*.
- look at pictures carefully, paying attention to details of where things are, what colour they are, what people and animals are doing, etc.
- revise lexical items using pictures of objects and verbs from the Starters vocabulary list, where possible arranged into lexical sets.

## Practical tips for test day

Tell your students to:

- arrive in good time for their tests.
- have several sharp pencils with them.
- write in pencil so that they can make changes neatly.
- take a rubber with them.
- make sure they have all the coloured pencils (ready sharpened) they will require for Listening Part 4.

Remind students to:

- look at the words and pictures very carefully.
- underline the important words in sentences.
- check carefully before deciding on an answer.
- make changes clearly.
- only put one word if the answer is written.
- stay calm if they miss something on the tape during the listening test as they will get another chance to hear key information.