

Exam overview

What's in the exam?

Paper	Content	Marks (% of total)	Purpose
Reading (1 hour)	5 parts	25%	Shows you can deal confidently with different types of text, such as business publications and correspondence.
Writing (45 minutes)	2 parts	25%	Requires you to be able to produce two different pieces of writing, such as letters, reports, proposals and emails.
Listening (about 40 minutes including transfer time)	3 parts	25%	Requires you to be able to follow and understand a range of spoken materials, such as interviews, discussions and presentations.
Speaking (14 minutes per pair of candidates)	3 parts	25%	Tests your ability to communicate effectively in face-to-face situations. You will take the Speaking test with one or two other candidates.

Achieve your ambitions in international business

Cambridge English: Business Vantage is an upper-intermediate level qualification in Business English. It shows employers you are ready for success in the business world.

Language skills for real-life business situations

Cambridge English: Business Vantage is set at Level B2 of the [Common European Framework of Reference for Languages \(CEFR\)](#). At this level you would be able to:

- write short pieces of business correspondence, reports or proposals
- read extracts from business publications
- listen to, understand and contribute to discussions in meetings.

The content in *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* reflects everyday work and business tasks. Preparing for your exam will give you skills that will make you an asset to your employer.

Improving your employability and career prospects

Proving your business English abilities can open the door to career opportunities with a new employer, or can make your ambitions for promotion or career development within your current organisation a reality.

Clear, reliable evidence of your language ability

Employers value and rely on *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* because it is a thorough test of all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) in a business context.

Choice and flexibility

There is a choice of paper-based or computer-based exam formats and you can choose the format that works best for you. Computer-based exams offer shorter registration times and more exam dates throughout the year.

Fair and valid

We carry out detailed research and analysis to ensure all our exams are accurate, relevant and fair to the people that take them.

Our systems and processes meet the internationally recognised ISO 9001:2008 quality management standard.

What's in the Reading paper?

The *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper has different types of texts and questions. In part 1, you may be required to read one long text divided into four sections, or four shorter, related texts.

Summary

Time allowed:	1 hour
Number of parts:	5
Number of questions:	45
Marks:	25% of total
Lengths of texts:	150–550 words per text
Texts may be from:	Newspapers and magazine articles, reports, advertisements, letters, messages, brochures, guides, manuals, etc.

Parts 1–5

Part 1 (Matching)

What's in Part 1?	Either four short texts on a related topic or one text divided into four sections and a series of statements. You have to match each statement to the text or section where you can find the information.
What do I have to practise?	Reading – scanning for gist and specific information.
How many questions are there?	7
How many marks do I get?	One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 1

Now try Part 1 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper.

Part 2 (Matching)

What's in Part 2?	A text with gaps and some sentences (A–G). Each gap represents a missing sentence. You have to read the text and the sentences and decide which sentence belongs in each gap.
What do I have to practise?	Reading – understanding text structure.
How many questions are there?	5

How many marks do I get?

One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 2

Now try Part 2 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper.

Part 3 (Multiple choice)

What's in Part 3?

A single text with six comprehension questions. You have to read the text and choose the right answer for each question (A, B, C or D).

What do I have to practise?

Reading for gist and specific information.

How many questions are there?

6

How many marks do I get?

One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 3

Now try Part 3 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper.

Part 4 (Multiple-choice cloze)

What's in Part 4?

A text with gaps. Each gap represents one word or phrase. You have to read the text and choose the right word or phrase to fill each gap from a choice of four (A, B, C or D).

What do I have to practise?

Reading – vocabulary and structure.

How many questions are there?

15

How many marks do I get?

One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 4

Now try Part 4 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper.

Part 5 (Proof-reading)

What's in Part 5?

A text in which some lines are correct and some lines have an extra, unnecessary word. If the line is correct, you write 'CORRECT' on your answer sheet. If the line is not correct, you have to write down the extra word.

What do I have to practise?

Reading – understanding sentence structure and finding errors.

How many questions are there?

12

How many marks do I get?

One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 5

Now try Part 5 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Reading paper.

DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

1. Pay attention to the complete meaning of the sentences in Part 1.
2. Read the whole text in Part 2 and try to predict what kind of information is missing from each of the gaps, before working on the extracts.
3. Look very carefully at the pronouns in the extracts in Part 2. They must refer correctly to the nouns before and/or after the gap in the text.
4. Notice linking words and phrases in Part 2. For example, 'however' or 'but' must link two contrasting ideas.
5. Regularly check your answers in Part 2. If you are finding a question difficult, perhaps you have already used the correct answer to that question in the wrong place. Always leave enough time to double-check answers against the text.
6. Pay attention to the general theme of the paragraphs in Part 3.
7. Read the text and questions very carefully in Part 3. Remember that the options A–D in the question may mean something very similar to the text, but not the same.
8. Read the question or stem very carefully in Part 3. Perhaps all of the options occur somewhere in the text, but only one of them is correct with that particular question.
9. Keep vocabulary lists and try to use new vocabulary that you learn. This will be particularly useful for Part 4.
10. Look carefully at the sentences in Part 4. Does the word you have chosen usually go together with a certain preposition or grammatical structure? Does it make a good collocation with the surrounding words?
11. Remember that the extra word in Part 5 has to be grammatically wrong and not just unnecessary.
12. In Part 5, write your answer in capital letters.

DON'Ts

1. In Part 1, don't choose an answer just because you find matching words. There are usually some similarities between sections and you need to make sure that your choice matches the complete meaning of the question.
2. Don't forget that tenses in the Part 2 extracts need to fit logically with those already present in the text.
3. Don't choose more than one letter for any of the answers in Parts 1–4.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

What aspects of reading are tested in this paper?

You are tested on your ability to understand gist, detail and the text structure and to identify main points and specific information. You are also tested on vocabulary, understanding discourse features and the ability to identify errors.

How many marks is the Reading paper worth?

The Reading paper is worth 25% of the total score.

How long should I spend on each part?

There is no time limit for each task; some tasks may take longer than others and you should be aware of how long you need for different tasks. However, it's worth remembering that some tasks have more items and are, therefore, worth more marks.

How do I answer the Reading paper?

In this paper, you put the answers on an answer sheet by filling in a lozenge (a kind of box) or by writing a one-word answer on your answer sheet in pencil.

What's in the Writing paper?

The *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Writing paper has different types of texts and questions. In one part you may have to read one long text or two or more shorter, related texts.

Summary

Time allowed:	45 minutes
Number of parts:	2
Number of questions:	2 compulsory questions
Marks:	25% of total

Parts 1–2

Part 1

What's in Part 1?	A description of a business situation. You have to write an internal company communication using the information we give you.
What do I have to practise?	Writing a message, memo or email: giving instructions, explaining a development, asking for comments, requesting information, agreeing to requests, etc.
How many questions are there?	1 compulsory question
How much do I have to write?	40–50 words

Practise Part 1

Now try Part 1 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Writing paper.

Part 2

What's in Part 2?	Some material (letter, fax, email, note, notice, advert, graph, chart) to read. You have to write a piece of business correspondence, a report or a proposal based on the information.
What do I have to practise?	Writing business correspondence (e.g. explaining, apologising, reassuring, complaining), reports (e.g. describing, summarising) or proposals (e.g. describing,

How many questions are there?
How much do I have to write?

summarising, recommending, persuading).
1 compulsory question
120–140 words

Practise Part 2

Now try Part 2 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Writing paper.

DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

1. Read the question carefully and underline the important parts.
2. Make a plan before you start writing.
3. Write clearly and concisely.
4. Write so that the examiner can read the answer.
5. Check that you have included all the content elements.
6. Add relevant ideas and information of your own in Part 2.
7. Remember which format to use (email, report, etc.).
8. Use the correct style or register (e.g. formal/informal).
9. Use a range of business words and expressions.
10. Structure your writing with good linkers such as 'firstly', 'also', 'however', 'moreover', 'nevertheless' and so on.
11. Write in paragraphs.
12. Check the question and your work again after you have finished writing.

DON'Ts

1. Don't use white correction fluid but do cross out mistakes with a single line.
2. Don't forget to divide your time appropriately between the two questions. Remember that Part 1 is marked out of 10 and Part 2 out of 20.
3. Don't panic if other people in the exam start writing straight away. It's better to read the question carefully and plan before you start writing.
4. Don't copy too many words and phrases from the question paper – try to use your own words.
5. Don't repeat the same words and structures too often.
6. Don't waste time writing addresses for a letter, as they are not required.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

How many answers do I need to produce?

Two.

In what ways is Part 1 different from Part 2?

In Part 1, the task requires internal communication (writing to somebody within the same company), which may be a note, message, memo or email. In Part 2, the task may be a business letter, fax or email, or a report or proposal.

Is the input different in Part 1 than Part 2?

Yes. In Part 1, the input is a situation with instructions for what to write plus the layout of the task type. In Part 2, there are one or more pieces of input. These could be in the form of business correspondence – letter, fax or email, or internal communication – note, memo or email, or visuals such as graphs, charts, adverts, notices, etc. The layout is given if the task is to write a fax or an email.

How many marks is each question worth?

Part 2 is worth twice as many marks as Part 1. The scores are converted to provide a mark out of 10 for Part 1 and a mark out of 20 for Part 2.

How many marks does the Writing paper carry in total?

The Writing paper is worth a total of 30 marks (25% of the total score).

Where do I write my answers?

In the question booklet. This booklet also contains enough space for you to write your rough work.

What if I write less than the number of words stated in the task?

If you write an answer which is too short, it may not have an adequate range of language and may not provide all the information required.

What if I write more than the number of words stated in the task?

You should not worry if you write slightly more than the word limit, but if you write far more than the word limit, your message may become unclear, and have a negative effect on the reader.

How is the Writing paper marked?

Writing Examiners mark candidate answers in a secure online marking environment. The software randomly allocates candidate answers to Examiners so they assess scripts from a variety of countries and centres. The software allows for examiners marking to be monitored for quality and consistency.

What's in the Listening paper?

The *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Listening paper has three parts. For each part you have to listen to a recorded text or texts and answer some questions. You hear each recording twice.

Summary

Time allowed:	About 40 minutes, including time to transfer your answers onto the answer sheet
Number of parts:	3
Number of questions:	30
Marks:	25% of total

Parts 1–3

Part 1 (Note completion)

What's in Part 1?	Three monologues or dialogues. For each recording, you have to listen and fill in four gaps in a short text, such as a form.
What do I have to practise?	Listening and noting specific information.
How many questions are there?	12
How many marks do I get?	One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 1

Now try Part 1 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Listening paper.

Part 2 (Matching)

What's in Part 2?	Two sets of five short monologues (recordings of one person speaking). All the monologues have a similar theme. Each set of monologues has a list of eight items (A–H) and you have to match each speaker to one of the items.
What do I have to practise?	Listening to identify topic, context, function, etc.
How many questions are there?	10
How many marks do I get?	One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 2

Now try Part 2 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Listening paper.

Part 3 (Multiple choice)

What's in Part 3?

One longer conversation or monologue (interview, discussion, presentation, etc.) and some comprehension questions. You have to listen to the recording and choose the right answer (A, B or C) for each question.

What do I have to practise?

Listening for details and main ideas.

How many questions are there?

8

How many marks do I get?

One mark for each correct answer.

Practise Part 3

Now try Part 3 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Listening paper.

DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

1. In the time before the first listening, read the instructions and task carefully, think about what you are going to hear, and underline key words in the instructions and questions.
2. Use the second listening to check, confirm or alter your answers from the first listening (remember that changing an answer in Part 2 may affect other answers in the same task).
3. Remember that in Part 1, spelling should be correct (British or American spelling).
4. Concentrate on an in-depth understanding of what is said in Parts 2 and 3.
5. Remember that in Part 2, the five answers in each task should be different.
6. Answer all the questions – you won't lose marks for wrong answers, and there's a chance that you'll guess correctly.
7. Carefully copy your answers in pencil onto the answer sheet during the 10 minutes at the end of the test.
8. Remember to pay attention to anything that appears after the gap in Part 1 questions.

DON'Ts

1. Don't leave any answers blank.
2. Don't spend too long thinking about a question: leave it until the second listening.
3. Don't attempt to rephrase unnecessarily what you hear in Part 1.
4. In Part 1, don't repeat information or words that already appear before or after the gap. For example, if the word 'days' is after the gap, don't write 'days' in your answer.
5. In Part 3, don't forget that you should only choose the option that actually answers the question – even if an option is true, it may not answer the question that has been asked.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

What sort of material is used in the test?

The recordings are scripted. They all deal with business topics and situations. All have one or two speakers.

How useful is exam preparation for improving my listening ability?

The exam tests listening skills that are required for most purposes – not only in business – so exam preparation is valuable, even if you are not taking the exam.

Can the Listening test be taken separately?

No, *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* consists of four papers testing listening, reading, writing and speaking. All four papers need to be taken in the same exam period, in order to pass the exam.

What's in the Speaking paper?

The *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Speaking test has three parts and you take it together with another candidate. There are two examiners. One of the examiners conducts the test and the other examiner listens to what you say and takes notes.

Summary

Time allowed:	14 minutes per pair of candidates
Number of parts:	3
Marks:	25% of total
You have to talk:	with the examiner with the other candidate on your own

Parts 1–3

Part 1 (Conversation)

What's in Part 1?	Conversation with the examiner. The examiner first asks general and then more business-related questions. You will have to talk briefly about yourself, your home, interests and job.
What do I have to practise?	Giving personal information. Talking about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans, expressing opinions, speculating, etc.
How long do we have to speak?	About 3 minutes

Practise Part 1

Now try Part 1 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Speaking paper

Part 2 (Mini-presentation)

What's in Part 2?	A 'mini-presentation' on a business theme. The examiner gives you a choice of three topics (A, B or C). You have 1 minute to prepare to give a speech lasting approximately 1 minute. Listen carefully when your partner speaks as the examiner will ask you a question about what your partner says.
-------------------	---

What do I have to practise?

Making a longer speech on your own.
Giving information, and expressing and
justifying opinions.

How long do we have to speak?

About 6 minutes

Practise Part 2

Now try Part 2 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Speaking paper.

Part 3 (Discussion)

What's in Part 3?

A discussion with the other candidate on a
business-related topic. The examiner gives
you a topic to discuss and you have to talk
to the other candidate about the situation
and decide together what to do.

What do I have to practise?

Expressing and justifying opinions,
speculating, comparing and contrasting,
agreeing and disagreeing, etc.

How long do we have to speak?

About 5 minutes

Practise Part 3

Now try Part 3 from the sample *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* Speaking paper.

DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

1. Get plenty of speaking practice in small groups, especially on topics that are likely to be used in the exam.
2. Listen to native (or good) speakers of English doing similar tasks.
3. Collect and keep records of words and phrases that are useful for carrying out the exam tasks.
4. Ask for clarification if you don't understand the instructions/task.
5. Speak clearly and loudly enough for the examiners to hear you.
6. Avoid long silences and frequent pauses.
7. Listen to your partner and respond appropriately.
8. Make sure turn-taking (taking turns to speak and listen to each other) is as natural as possible.
9. Use all the opportunities you're given in the test to speak, and extend your responses whenever possible.

DON'Ts

1. Don't memorise and practise long answers for Part 1.
2. Don't try to talk much more than your partner or interrupt in an impolite way.
3. Don't worry about not knowing a word or phrase – explain what you mean using other words.
4. Don't worry too much about making mistakes – you don't have to be word perfect.
5. Don't just respond to what has been said – be prepared to give your own ideas, ask for your partner's opinion and develop your partner's ideas and contributions.

FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)

How many marks is the Speaking test worth?

It is worth 25% of the total marks for the *Cambridge English: Business Vantage* examination.

What should I do if I don't understand a question?

Ask! Good communication involves asking when you don't understand in an appropriate way.

I communicate well but am not always very accurate in grammar and vocabulary. Can I still pass the Speaking paper?

For the Vantage level, you need to be accurate enough in your grammar and choice of words to get your meaning across. In other words, you do not need to be accurate all the time to pass. Also, remember that grammar and vocabulary is only one of the four areas that are assessed in the exam. The others are discourse management, pronunciation and interactive communication.

What sort of topics might I be expected to speak about?

Some examples: personal information, the office, general business environment and routine, entertainment of clients, travel and conference meetings, using the telephone, health and safety, buying and selling, management skills, promotion, training courses. These topics are spread across the four components of the exam (Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking).

Is it an advantage to know your partner in the Speaking test?

No. You should be encouraged to change partners in class so that you get used to interacting with a variety of people, including people you don't know well.

What if I am paired with someone much better than me?

As all students are assessed on their own performance and not on how they compare with their exam partner, this would not be a problem. So similarly, if you have difficulty in understanding your partner your grade will not suffer. It is important to try to communicate and interact with your partner, whatever their level.

How much do I need to know about business to be successful in the Speaking test?

The *Cambridge English: Business Certificates* were developed to test English language in a business context. They are not focused on any specific branch, e.g. banking or

computing, but you are expected to be familiar with a wide range of business situations and the vocabulary appropriate to them.

What if I don't know anything about any of the topics for the 1-minute presentation?

You do not need specialist knowledge for the topics used. There are three topics for you to choose from. The first topic is always the most general and is suitable for people with little or no working experience. The second topic is more specific to work contexts, and the third is most suited to people with experience of work situations. You are marked on your language and not on your knowledge of the topic or the originality of your ideas.

What happens if two candidates are 'mismatched', e.g. a shy person with a more dominant one?

Examiners know how to deal with this situation, and give both of the candidates an opportunity to speak – make sure you take this opportunity. It is important both to talk and to give the other candidate the chance to talk. The examiner can use the questions after the Part 3 task to encourage a quieter student to speak more.

Does the interview always have a 2:2 format?

No, if there is an uneven number of candidates, a group of three is allowed.