

# SYLLABUS

Cambridge O Level  
English Language

**1123**

For examination in June and November 2018, 2019 and 2020

## Changes to syllabus for 2018, 2019 and 2020

This syllabus has been updated. Significant changes to the syllabus are indicated by black vertical lines either side of the text.

### Changes to syllabus content

- Syllabus sections have been updated.
- The wording of assessment objectives has been revised to make it more concise. (The reworded assessment objectives test the same knowledge and skills of English Language as the existing syllabus and continue to be grouped as AO1 Reading and AO2 Writing.)
- The description of components has been updated to reflect changes to the papers.

### Changes to components

#### Paper 1 Writing

- Section 1: Directed Writing: the rubric on the question paper has been amended to show clearly how marks are awarded – 15 marks for task fulfilment and 15 marks for language.
- Section 2 has been re-named Composition (previously named *Creative Writing*). The number of marks for this task is unchanged at 30 marks.
- There will continue to be a choice of 5 essay questions. These will be grouped as:  
Description ×1  
Argument ×2  
Narrative ×2  
The single word essay option has been removed.

#### Paper 2 Reading

- Section 1 *Reading for Ideas* (25 marks): The summary task has been updated as follows:
  - Q1a: 12 marks for content points
  - Q1b: 10 marks for the written summary (for relevance and for coherence)
  - candidates write a summary of approximately 150–180 words
  - 3 marks for short answer questions.

Section 2 *Reading for Meaning* (25 marks): Tasks have been updated, including:

- in questions which require a paraphrase of a section of the text ('own words' questions), the section of the text to be paraphrased will be given in the question
- the introduction of multiple choice style questions
- a separate part with questions on writer's craft.

Please see the published specimen papers for reference.

**You are strongly advised to read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme.**

Cambridge International Examinations retains the copyright on all its publications. Registered Centres are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use. However, we cannot give permission to Centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within a Centre.

® IGCSE is the registered trademark of Cambridge International Examinations.

© Cambridge International Examinations 2015

---

# Contents

---

1. Introduction.....	2
1.1 Why choose Cambridge?	
1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level?	
1.3 Why choose Cambridge O Level English Language?	
1.4 How can I find out more?	
2. Teacher support.....	5
2.1 Support materials	
2.2 Endorsed resources	
2.3 Training	
3. Syllabus content at a glance.....	6
4. Assessment at a glance.....	7
5. Syllabus aims and assessment objectives .....	9
5.1 Syllabus aims	
5.2 Assessment objectives	
5.3 Relationship between assessment objectives and components	
6. Syllabus content.....	11
7. Description of components.....	12
7.1 Paper 1 Writing	
7.2 Paper 2 Reading	
8. Other information.....	14

---

# 1. Introduction

---

## 1.1 Why choose Cambridge?

Cambridge International Examinations is part of the University of Cambridge. We prepare school students for life, helping them develop an informed curiosity and a lasting passion for learning. Our international qualifications are recognised by the world's best universities and employers, giving students a wide range of options in their education and career. As a not-for-profit organisation, we devote our resources to delivering high-quality educational programmes that can unlock learners' potential.

Our programmes set the global standard for international education. They are created by subject experts, are rooted in academic rigour, and provide a strong platform for progression. Over 10 000 schools in 160 countries work with us to prepare nearly a million learners for their future with an international education from Cambridge.

### Cambridge learners

Cambridge programmes and qualifications develop not only subject knowledge but also skills. We encourage Cambridge learners to be:

- **confident** in working with information and ideas – their own and those of others
- **responsible** for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
- **reflective** as learners, developing their ability to learn
- **innovative** and equipped for new and future challenges
- **engaged** intellectually and socially, ready to make a difference.

### Recognition

Cambridge O Level is internationally recognised by schools, universities and employers as equivalent in demand to Cambridge IGCSE® (International General Certificate of Secondary Education). There are over 700 000 entries a year in nearly 70 countries. Learn more at [www.cie.org.uk/recognition](http://www.cie.org.uk/recognition)

### Support for teachers

A wide range of materials and resources is available to support teachers and learners in Cambridge schools. Resources suit a variety of teaching methods in different international contexts. Through subject discussion forums and training, teachers can access the expert advice they need for teaching our qualifications. More details can be found in Section 2 of this syllabus and at [www.cie.org.uk/teachers](http://www.cie.org.uk/teachers)

### Support for exams officers

Exams officers can trust in reliable, efficient administration of exams entries and excellent personal support from our customer services. Learn more at [www.cie.org.uk/examsofficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsofficers)

Our systems for managing the provision of international qualifications and education programmes for learners aged 5 to 19 are certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard for quality management, ISO 9001:2008. Learn more at [www.cie.org.uk/ISO9001](http://www.cie.org.uk/ISO9001)

## 1.2 Why choose Cambridge O Level?

Cambridge O Levels have been designed for an international audience and are sensitive to the needs of different countries. These qualifications are designed for learners whose first language may not be English and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process. The Cambridge O Level syllabus also allows teaching to be placed in a localised context, making it relevant in varying regions.

Our aim is to balance knowledge, understanding and skills in our programmes and qualifications to enable students to become effective learners and to provide a solid foundation for their continuing educational journey.

Through our professional development courses and our support materials for Cambridge O Levels, we provide the tools to enable teachers to prepare learners to the best of their ability and work with us in the pursuit of excellence in education.

Cambridge O Levels are considered to be an excellent preparation for Cambridge International AS and A Levels, the Cambridge AICE (Advanced International Certificate of Education) Group Award, Cambridge Pre-U, and other education programmes, such as the US Advanced Placement program and the International Baccalaureate Diploma programme. Learn more about Cambridge O Levels at **[www.cie.org.uk/cambridgesecundary2](http://www.cie.org.uk/cambridgesecundary2)**

### Guided learning hours

Cambridge O Level syllabuses are designed on the assumption that learners have about 130 guided learning hours per subject over the duration of the course, but this is for guidance only. The number of hours required to gain the qualification may vary according to local curricular practice and the learners' prior experience of the subject.

## 1.3 Why choose Cambridge O Level English Language?

Cambridge O Levels are established qualifications that keep pace with educational developments and trends. The Cambridge O Level curriculum places emphasis on broad and balanced study across a wide range of subject areas. The curriculum is structured so that students attain both practical skills and theoretical knowledge.

Cambridge O Level English Language is accepted by universities and employers as proof of linguistic ability and understanding. The Cambridge O Level English Language syllabus encourages students to develop lifelong skills, including:

- the ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively
- the use of a wide range of vocabulary and correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- a personal style and an awareness of the audience being addressed.

Students are also encouraged to read widely, both for their own enjoyment and to further their awareness of the ways in which English can be used. Cambridge O Level English Language study also develops more general analysis and communication skills such as synthesis, inference, and the ability to order facts and present opinions effectively.

Students may also study for a Cambridge O Level in Literature in English. In addition to Cambridge O Levels, Cambridge also offers Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International AS and A Levels for further study in English as well as other languages. See [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk) for a full list of the qualifications you can take.

### Prior learning

We recommend that candidates who are beginning this course should have sufficient competence in English to be able to achieve a level of English equivalent to First Language competence during the course.

### Progression

Cambridge O Levels are general qualifications that enable candidates to progress either directly to employment, or to proceed to further qualifications.

Candidates who are awarded grades C to A\* in Cambridge O Level English Language are well prepared to follow courses leading to Cambridge International AS and A Level English Language, or the equivalent.

## 1.4 How can I find out more?

### If you are already a Cambridge school

You can make entries for this qualification through your usual channels. If you have any questions, please contact us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk)

### If you are not yet a Cambridge school

Learn about the benefits of becoming a Cambridge school at [www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge](http://www.cie.org.uk/startcambridge). Email us at [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk) to find out how your organisation can register to become a Cambridge school.

---

## 2. Teacher support

---

### 2.1 Support materials

We send Cambridge syllabuses, past question papers and examiner reports to cover the last examination series to all Cambridge schools.

You can also go to our public website at [www.cie.org.uk/olevel](http://www.cie.org.uk/olevel) to download current and future syllabuses together with specimen papers or past question papers and examiner reports from one series.

For teachers at registered Cambridge schools a range of additional support materials for specific syllabuses is available online from Teacher Support, our secure online support for Cambridge teachers. Go to <http://teachers.cie.org.uk> (username and password required).

### 2.2 Endorsed resources

We work with publishers providing a range of resources for our syllabuses including print and digital materials. Resources endorsed by Cambridge go through a detailed quality assurance process to ensure they provide a high level of support for teachers and learners.

We have resource lists which can be filtered to show all resources, or just those which are endorsed by Cambridge. The resource lists include further suggestions for resources to support teaching.

### 2.3 Training

We offer a range of support activities for teachers to ensure they have the relevant knowledge and skills to deliver our qualifications. See [www.cie.org.uk/events](http://www.cie.org.uk/events) for further information.

---

### 3. Syllabus content at a glance

---

Cambridge O Level English Language offers candidates the opportunity to respond confidently to a range of reading material, including fiction and non-fiction.

Candidates will also have the opportunity to enhance their writing skills by writing in a range of text types for different audiences.

Candidates are encouraged to become appreciative and critical readers and writers.



## 4. Assessment at a glance

Candidates for Cambridge O Level English Language must take two compulsory components – Paper 1 and Paper 2. Both papers are externally marked.

Component		Weighting
<p><b>Paper 1 Writing</b></p> <p>Candidates answer <b>two</b> questions: the compulsory question in Section 1 and one question from Section 2.</p> <p><b>Section 1: Directed Writing (30 marks)</b></p> <p>Candidates are presented with one compulsory writing task. Candidates write a response of 200–300 words.</p> <p><b>Section 2: Composition (30 marks)</b></p> <p>Candidates complete one writing task from a choice of five descriptive/argumentative/narrative essay titles. Candidates write a response of 350–500 words.</p> <p>This component is externally assessed.</p> <p>60 marks</p>	<b>1 hour 30 minutes</b>	50%
<p><b>Paper 2 Reading</b></p> <p>Candidates answer all questions in both sections.</p> <p><b>Section 1: Reading for Ideas (25 marks)</b></p> <p>Candidates scan a factual text and identify key points.</p> <p>Candidates use their notes to produce a written summary of 150–180 words.</p> <p>Candidates answer questions to identify examples of a function in the text, e.g. opinions, advice, criticism or warnings.</p> <p><b>Section 2: Reading for Meaning (25 marks)</b></p> <p>Candidates respond to questions about one narrative passage.</p> <p>Both passages in Paper 2 will be approximately 700 words each.</p> <p>This component is externally assessed.</p> <p>50 marks</p>	<b>1 hour 45 minutes</b>	50%

### Availability

This syllabus is examined in the June and November examination series.

This syllabus is available to private candidates.

Detailed timetables are available from [www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers)

Cambridge O Levels are available to Centres in Administrative Zones 3, 4 and 5. Centres in Administrative Zones 1, 2 or 6 wishing to enter candidates for Cambridge O Level examinations should contact Cambridge Customer Services.

## Combining this with other syllabuses

Candidates can combine this syllabus in an examination series with any other Cambridge syllabus, except:

- syllabuses with the same title at the same level
- 0500 Cambridge IGCSE First Language English
- 0510 Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language
- 0511 Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (count-in oral)
- 0522 Cambridge International Level 1/Level 2 Certificate First Language English
- 0627 Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) First Language English
- 1119 Cambridge O Level English Language (Malaysia)
- 1120 Cambridge O Level English Language (Brunei)
- 1125 Cambridge O Level English Language (Mauritius)
- 1126 Cambridge O Level English Language Syllabus B (Mauritius)
- 1128 Cambridge O Level English Language (Singapore)

Candidates for Cambridge O Level English Language **MUST** enter as follows:

- Candidates in **Brunei** *must* enter for **Subject 1120**
- Candidates in **Mauritius** *must* enter for **Subject 1125** or **1126**
- Candidates in **Singapore** *must* enter for **Subject 1128**
- Candidates elsewhere (including previous subject 1115) *must* enter for **Subject 1123**.

No candidate may enter for more than one English Language subject.

Please note that Cambridge O Level, Cambridge IGCSE and Cambridge International Level 1/Level 2 Certificate syllabuses are at the same level.

## 5. Syllabus aims and assessment objectives

### 5.1 Syllabus aims

The syllabus aims are set out below and describe the educational purposes of a course in O Level English Language. They are not listed in order of priority.

A qualification in this syllabus demonstrates to universities and employers that candidates can communicate effectively in Standard English through:

- **communicative competence:** the ability to communicate with clarity, relevance, accuracy and variety
- **creativity:** the ability to use language, experience and imagination to respond to new situations, create original ideas and make a positive impact
- **critical skills:** the ability to scan, filter and analyse different forms of information
- **cross-cultural awareness:** the ability to engage with issues inside and outside own community, dealing with the familiar as well as the unfamiliar. (This is not an assessment objective but forms the context of writing tasks and reading passages.)

	Writing to:	Reading to:
Communicative competence	communicate precisely and appropriately	understand exact and implied meaning
Creativity	develop ideas effectively	
Critical skills		identify and respond to main ideas
Cross-cultural awareness	reflect on the familiar	have strategies to deal with the unfamiliar

### 5.2 Assessment objectives

#### AO1: Reading

- R1 Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 Analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions
- R4 Demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects
- R5 Select for specific purposes

#### AO2: Writing

- W1 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 Sequence facts, ideas and opinions
- W3 Use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 Use register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar

### 5.3 Relationship between assessment objectives and components

The approximate weightings allocated to each of the assessment objectives (AOs) are summarised below.

The table shows the assessment objectives as a percentage of each component and across the qualification as a whole.

Component	AO1 %	AO2 %
<b>Paper 1 Writing</b>	5	45
<b>Paper 2 Reading</b>	45	5
<b>Weighting of AO in qualification</b>	50	50

## 6. Syllabus content

Reflecting the communication demands facing candidates in the real world, the syllabus distinguishes between **task** and **language** as the focus of Section 1 and Section 2 respectively in each paper:

Section	Focus	Writing	Reading
1	Task	Directed Writing	Reading for Ideas
2	Language	Composition	Reading for Meaning

The **Task** aspect of Paper 1 is **Directed Writing**, where communication of key information in a range of text types is required to achieve a specific purpose for a certain audience in a particular situation. Task fulfilment and language are tested in Section 1 and are given equal weighting in terms of marks. **Language** (as well as content) is tested in the **Composition** section, where candidates have an opportunity to display their English language skills in order to express their opinion, experience or imagination in a range of discourse types: descriptive, argumentative or narrative.

The **Task** aspect of Paper 2 is **Reading for Ideas**, where, for example, scanning for and summarising specific information is required to achieve and convey a global understanding of a text. The focus of assessment for the summary is Task Fulfilment: the inclusion of only relevant ideas and the coherence of the writing. **Language** is tested in the **Reading for Meaning** section, where there is a greater demand for English language skills in order to demonstrate more in-depth understanding of a text, including literal and implied meaning, deducing meaning of vocabulary from context, and writer's craft.

In this way, it is hoped that candidates will develop strategies to be able to transfer these communication skills to other subjects and to their future careers/studies as they encounter a variety of texts and are required to make a positive impact through the written word.

**Speaking and listening are not tested but the development of these vital communication skills is encouraged across the curriculum.**

---

## 7. Description of components

---

### 7.1 Paper 1 Writing

**1 hour 30 minutes, 60 marks – external assessment, 50 per cent of qualification**

This paper has two sections and candidates **answer in a separate answer booklet**.

#### Section 1: Directed Writing (30 marks)

- Candidates are presented with **one task**, e.g. write a letter, speech, report, article, which is fit for purpose and relevant to the world of study, work or the community.
- Candidates should write 200–300 words to inform or persuade a particular audience.
- A total of 15 marks are allocated for task fulfilment and 15 marks for language.

Section 1 tests the following assessment objectives:

- R1 Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

- W1 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 Sequence facts, ideas and opinions
- W3 Use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 Use register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

#### Section 2: Composition (30 marks)

- This is an essay, testing language and content combined.
- Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of five essay titles. Candidates will be presented with 1 descriptive, 2 argumentative and 2 narrative essay titles from which to choose.
- Candidates are advised to write a response of between 350 and 500 words.

Section 2 tests the following assessment objectives:

- W1 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 Sequence facts, ideas and opinions
- W3 Use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 Use register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

## 7.2 Paper 2 Reading

**1 hour 45 minutes, 50 marks – external assessment, 50 per cent of qualification**

This paper has two sections and candidates **answer on the question paper**.

### Section 1: Reading for Ideas (25 marks)

- Candidates scan a **factual** text (or texts) of approximately 700 words, e.g. report(s), article(s), advertisement(s), email(s), letter(s).
- Candidates **identify and note down required information**, e.g. similarities and differences, or causes and effects, or advantages and disadvantages, or problems and solutions, or actions and consequences.

Example content points will be given as guidance to candidates.

- A total of 12 marks are allocated for content points.
- Candidates use their notes to **write a summary** of between 150 and 180 words.
- A total of 10 marks are allocated for the summary based on relevance and coherence.

This task tests the following assessment objectives:

R5 Select for specific purposes

W2 Sequence facts, ideas and opinions

W3 Use a range of appropriate vocabulary.

- Candidates then answer questions to identify examples of a function in the text, e.g. opinions, advice, criticism or warnings.
- These will be **short answer** questions worth 3 marks.

These tasks test the following assessment objective:

R3 Analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions.

### Section 2: Reading for Meaning (25 marks)

- Candidates read a **narrative** passage (e.g. report, article, story) of approximately 700 words.
- Candidates respond to **short answer** and **multiple choice questions** testing their ability to understand the language (both explicit and implicit meanings).

Section 2 tests the following assessment objectives:

R1 Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings

R2 Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes

R3 Analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions

R4 Demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects.

---

## 8. Other information

---

### Equality and inclusion

Cambridge International Examinations has taken great care in the preparation of this syllabus and assessment materials to avoid bias of any kind. To comply with the UK Equality Act (2010), Cambridge has designed this qualification with the aim of avoiding direct and indirect discrimination.

The standard assessment arrangements may present unnecessary barriers for candidates with disabilities or learning difficulties. Arrangements can be put in place for these candidates to enable them to access the assessments and receive recognition of their attainment. Access arrangements will not be agreed if they give candidates an unfair advantage over others or if they compromise the standards being assessed.

Candidates who are unable to access the assessment of any component may be eligible to receive an award based on the parts of the assessment they have taken.

Information on access arrangements is found in the *Cambridge Handbook* which can be downloaded from the website **[www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers](http://www.cie.org.uk/examsOfficers)**

### Language

This syllabus and the associated assessment materials are available in English only.

### Grading and reporting

Cambridge O Level results are shown by one of the grades A\*, A, B, C, D or E, indicating the standard achieved, A\* being the highest and E the lowest. 'Ungraded' indicates that the candidate's performance fell short of the standard required for grade E. 'Ungraded' will be reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate. The letters Q (result pending), X (no results) and Y (to be issued) may also appear on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

### Entry codes

To maintain the security of our examinations, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as 'administrative zones'. Where the component entry code has two digits, the first digit is the component number given in the syllabus. The second digit is the location code, specific to an administrative zone. Information about entry codes can be found in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.



Cambridge International Examinations  
1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1223 553554 Fax: +44 (0)1223 553558  
Email: [info@cie.org.uk](mailto:info@cie.org.uk) [www.cie.org.uk](http://www.cie.org.uk)

® IGCSE is the registered trademark of Cambridge International Examinations.

© Cambridge International Examinations September 2015

