

Examinations

Cambridge Advanced Exam Hints!

Listening DOs and DON'Ts

Do

- Listen to, and read, the instructions to understand what you have to do.
- Think about the topic, the speaker(s) and the context as you read the questions.
- Use the pause to read the questions and try to predict the answer.
- Remember that the information/questions on the page follow(s) the order of information in the recording.
- Try to use the actual words you hear on the tape (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- Use the pause between the first and second listening to check your answers.
- Check that your answer makes sense in the gap. Look at the information both before and after the gap when checking your answer (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- Check that your answer is correctly spelled after the tape has finished. (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- Copy only the missing words onto the answer sheet (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- Read through both tasks in Part 4 multiple matching in the pause before you hear the recording for the first time.
- Remember that there are two questions for each speaker in Part 4.
- Copy your answer carefully onto the answer sheet and check that you have followed the numbering correctly.

Don't

- Don't try to write very long answers.
- Don't repeat information which is already in the sentences (Parts 1, 2 and 3).
- Don't panic in Part 2. There is plenty of time to write your answers as you listen.
- Don't worry if you miss a question. Continue with the next question then listen again for the missing information when you hear the recording for the second time.
- Don't leave a blank space on the answer sheet. If you're not sure, guess.

Speaking DOs and DON'Ts

Do

- Show that you can communicate effectively.
- Give full and extended responses.
- Raise the level of your language above the mundane.
- Listen carefully to what the examiner has asked you to do.
- Remember the instructions and focus on the task set.
- Speculate on the content of the visual stimuli even if you are unsure about what they are illustrating.
- Involve your partner in the conversation and create opportunities for them to speak.

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Don't

- Don't panic if you cannot remember, or do not know, a particular word. Just keep going and paraphrase instead.
- Don't merely describe the visuals, try to relate them to your life!
- Don't speak during your partner's 'long turn'.
- Don't let your partner always 'take the lead'. You also must initiate at times. (It's a good idea to agree in advance the turns you will take at leading)
- Don't arrive at a conclusion too quickly in Part 3. Take time to evaluate all the visuals.
- Don't speak too quietly in Parts 2 and 3. Remember the examiners need to hear what you are saying.

Writing Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Read the opening paragraphs and instructions in Part 1 very carefully to make sure you know what your role is and who you are writing to.
- Plan your answer to Part 1. Remember you do not necessarily need to use all the input information. Usually part of the task is to select the appropriate information.
- Try to use your own words when using information from the input in Part 1.
- Select your Part 2 question carefully. Consider the vocabulary, grammatical structures and register required by the task.
- Read the task carefully and plan an answer which addresses all the content points of the task. Try to develop each point fully.
- Remember that, in order to get a good mark at CAE level, you not only need to write accurately but also to demonstrate a good range of vocabulary and structures.
- Consider who the 'target reader' is and the genre (e.g. newspaper article, formal letter) for each question and try to write in an appropriate style and tone.
- Think carefully about whether the task requires you to persuade or justify your opinion and make sure you do this in your answer.
- Allow time to check through what you have written.

Don't

- Don't write answers that are much longer than the 250 word limit as this means you may have included a lot of irrelevant material. It also means that you lose time, which you could spend checking your work.
- Don't attempt the work-related question (Question 5) unless you have the appropriate experience.
- Don't use a pencil.

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Reading Strategies for each part of the paper

The abilities outlined above are reflected in the CAE Reading paper. Candidates must employ specific strategies and learned skills to demonstrate understanding at the paragraph or whole text level and not just at sentence level.

Strategy or skill	Tested in
Form an overall impression by skimming a text	All parts of the paper
Retrieve specific information by scanning a text	Parts 1 and 4: Multiple matching (longer texts)
Interpret text for inference, attitude and style	Part 3: Multiple choice
Demonstrate understanding of text as a whole	Part 2: Gapped text and (sometimes) final multiple choice question
Select relevant information to perform a task	All parts of the paper but particularly multiple matching
Demonstrate understanding of how text structure operates	Part 2: Gapped text
Deduce meaning from context	All parts of the paper

Exam Preparation checklist

Before the exam

- Box of HB Pencils
- Pens
- Allow plenty of time to get to the exam centre. (Latecomers will not be allowed in.)
- Go to the toilet before the exam begins. (There are no toilet breaks in the exam)
- Don't talk to other students about the exam, before the exam.

In the exam

- Remember time is important, if you don't know an answer guess and move on....
- Don't leave the exam early, use any time available to check and DOUBLE check.
- If you can't hear the tape for any reason... You must say so at the beginning of the exam. (They have an obligation to make sure that the tape is clearly audible to everybody)
- Copy answers to the answer sheet as you go along in the English In Use and Reading papers.... No extra time at the end of the exam for this!
- Trust your instincts at this level they are often testing the EXCEPTION to the rule, rather than the norm.

GOOD LUCK!