

EXAM DAY SURVIVAL GUIDE



B2 First Certificate— Strategy & Time Management

Are you getting ready for your First Certificate exam? Here are some last minute reminders!! Fill in the gaps as you go to build your own exam-day strategy.

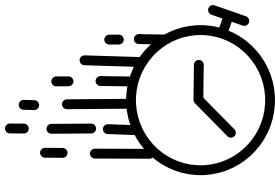
BEFORE THE EXAM Complete the sentences with words from the box:	Word box: phone / computer-based / different / pencil / early
1. The exam can be paper-based or _____. 2. On the paper-based version, always use _____ on the answer sheet — pen can't be read by the marking machine. 3. You cannot bring a _____ into the exam room, on either version. 4. Arrive _____ — you must be there before the exam starts. 5. The Speaking test may be on a _____ day from the other three papers	
Write it down: What do you need to check with your school before exam day?	

PAPER 1 — READING AND USE OF ENGLISH *(1 hour 15 minutes, 7 parts, 2 separate scores)*

Part	Task	Counts toward...
1	Multiple-choice cloze	Reading
2	Open cloze	Use of English 
3	Word formation	
4	Key word transformation	
5	Long text, 6 multiple-choice questions	Reading 
6	Text with 6 gaps — choose the correct sentence	
7	Text(s) with 10 matching questions	

Suggested timing (75 minutes total): Parts 1–4 ≈ 7 minutes each. Parts 5–7 ≈ 14 minutes each.

Write it down:



- Which part will you do first? Why? _____
- Which part usually takes you the longest? _____

TRUE OR FALSE?

1. Part 1 counts toward your Use of English score. **True / False**
2. If you're not sure of an answer, it's better to leave it blank than guess. **True / False**
3. You can do the 7 parts in any order you like. **True / False**
4. In Part 4 (Key Word Transformation), you should write out the full sentence. **True / False**
5. Part 6 is mostly about idioms and fixed phrases. **True / False**

PAPER 2 — WRITING (1 hour 20 minutes, 2 parts)

Part 1: Compulsory essay, 140–190 words, using the ideas given plus one of your own.

Part 2: Choose 1 of 3 options (article, email, letter, review, or story), 140–190 words.

Write it down — my time plan for each task (40 minutes total):

Stage	Minutes
Planning (brainstorm, structure)	_____
Writing	_____
Checking (grammar, spelling, word count)	_____
Total	40

SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

	1. Why does underlining the question help before you start writing?	
	2. What happens to your score if you write more than 190 words?	
	3. Name the 4 assessment criteria for the Writing paper.	
	4. Which Part 2 option (article, email, letter, review, story) do you feel most confident writing, and why?	

PAPER 3 — LISTENING *(about 40 minutes, 4 parts)*

Part	Task	
1	Several short recordings, multiple-choice	
2	One speaker (3–4 min), complete 10 sentences	
3	Five short recordings, match to 8 options	
4	Two speakers (3–4 min), 7 multiple-choice questions	



MEMORY CHALLENGE

Work with a partner. How many of these questions can you answer?? Check together after.



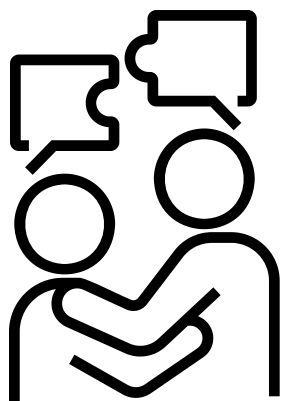
1. How many parts does the Listening paper have?
2. How many times do you hear each recording?
3. How long is the Listening paper approximately?
4. In Part 2, should you write the exact words you hear, or your own words?
5. How much time do you get at the end to transfer your answers?

PAPER 4 — SPEAKING *(about 14 minutes, in pairs or groups of 3, 4 parts)*

Part	Task
1	Brief conversation with the examiner
2	Each candidate speaks 1 min about 2 photos, then 30 sec responding to your partner
3	Decision-making task with your partner
4	Wider discussion with the examiner, linked to Part 3

Complete the sentences with these words: interlocutor / interrupt / memorise / familiar

1. Don't try to _____ answers in advance — you must answer the actual question you're asked.
2. If you don't know a topic, connect it to something _____ instead of switching topics completely.
3. Listen to your partner and don't _____ them.
4. The _____ is the examiner who talks to you and gives an overall mark.



SPEAKING: DISCUSS WITH A PARTNER

Take turns asking and answering. Try to give a reason for each answer, not just a one-word response!

1. Which paper are you most confident about? Which worries you most? Why?
2. Imagine your partner is nervous about the Speaking test. What advice would you give them?
3. What's one exam-day tip from this worksheet that you didn't know before?
4. Compare your Writing time plan with your partner's — whose do you think works better, and why?

SCORING — HOW IT ALL ADDS UP

Your overall score = average of 5 sub-scores (Reading, Use of English, Writing, Listening, Speaking) on the Cambridge English Scale. You can score less than 160 on one paper, as long as your average is higher!

Score	Result
180+	Certificate for B2 First — CEFR C1
160–179	Certificate for B2 First — CEFR B2
140–159	Certificate — CEFR B1
Below 140	No certificate

MY EXAM DAY PLAN <i>(final reflection)</i>	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
My biggest strength is:	
The paper I need to focus on most is:	
One strategy I'll remember on the day:	
What I'll do the night before the exam:	
One thing I'll bring with me on exam day:	

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Exam Day Survival Guide — B2 First for Schools

Purpose: A comprehensive, interactive pre-exam session for B2 First for Schools candidates. Combines exam-format knowledge, personal time-management planning, and speaking/social practice, so students leave with both a clear picture of the exam and a concrete strategy for the day.

Setup: Works well as a single extended lesson (45–55 minutes) or split across two shorter sessions — e.g. Papers 1–2 one day, Papers 3–4 the next. Pair students for the Memory Challenge and Speaking Discussion sections.

Timing suggestion:

- Before the Exam + Paper 1: ~12 minutes
- Paper 2: ~10 minutes
- Paper 3 + Memory Challenge: ~8 minutes
- Paper 4 + Speaking Discussion: ~10 minutes
- Scoring section + final reflection: ~5–8 minutes

Section-by-section notes

Before the Exam: A quick warm-up to confirm logistics. If any students don't yet know whether their exam is paper-based or computer-based, or whether Speaking is on a separate day, use the "Write it down" prompt to have them note it as a homework check with their school.

Paper 1 — Reading and Use of English: The table clarifying which parts count toward Reading vs. Use of English is the key teaching point here — many students assume all 7 parts feed into one score. The suggested timing (7 minutes for Parts 1–4, 14 minutes for Parts 5–7) reflects that the later parts involve longer texts and take proportionally more time to read properly; walk through why the balance is skewed this way rather than splitting evenly.

Paper 2 — Writing: The time-planning table is the main activity — encourage students to actually commit to specific minutes (e.g. 5 planning / 30 writing / 5 checking) rather than leaving it vague, since this is the habit you want them to walk into the exam with.

Short answer questions: Open-ended — encourage full sentences, not one-word answers, since this mirrors the communicative skills tested in the real Writing paper. For Q2 ("What happens to your score if you write more than 190 words?"), guide students toward the nuance that length alone doesn't cost marks — it's only a problem if the extra content is irrelevant or makes the answer harder to follow.

Paper 3 — Listening: Short section by design — the Memory Challenge is the main activity here.

Memory Challenge: Meant to be lighthearted and low-pressure — frame it as a quick recall game with a partner, not a test. If a pair can't answer something, that's useful diagnostic information for you (it usually means that fact needs reinforcing before the real exam), not a mark of failure.

Paper 4 — Speaking: The fill-in-the-blank sentences reinforce key strategy points (not memorising, connecting unfamiliar topics to familiar ones, listening to your partner, knowing the examiners' roles).

Speaking Discussion: True speaking practice — circulate and listen in. Watch specifically for students giving one-word answers without reasons, since that mirrors the exact issue examiners look for in the real Speaking test. Worth pointing out in the moment if you notice it.

Scoring — How It All Adds Up: Keep this brief and reassuring — the main message for students is that one weaker paper doesn't sink the whole result, since the final score is an average across all five sub-scores.

My Exam Day Plan: Works well as an exit ticket — collect it, or have students photograph their own, so they can look back at their own plan on the morning of the exam.

Tips for running it

- Run this after students have already had some exposure to exam-style tasks, since the focus here is strategy and confidence, not first-time content teaching.
- Consider running the True/False section as quick-fire pair work, then confirming answers as a whole class.
- If short on time, Papers 1 and 2 (with their tables and planning activities) are the highest-value sections to prioritize; Papers 3 and 4's interactive elements work well as a quicker second half.

ANSWER KEY

Before the exam: 1. computer-based 2. pencil 3. phone 4. early 5. different

Paper 1 — True/False:

1. False (Part 1 counts toward Reading)
2. False (always guess — no answer scores 0 either way)
3. True
4. False (write 2–5 words only, not the full sentence)
5. False (fixed phrases/idioms are more typical of Part 2)

Paper 2 — Short answer (sample answers):

1. It helps make sure you address every part of the task and don't miss any required content.
2. Going over 190 words doesn't automatically lose marks — it's only a problem if the extra content is irrelevant or makes the writing harder to follow.
3. Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, Language.
4. Open — student's own answer.

Paper 3 — Memory Challenge:

1. 4 parts
2. Twice
3. About 40 minutes
4. The exact words
5. 5 minutes

Paper 4 — Fill in the blank: 1. memorise 2. familiar 3. interrupt 4. interlocutor

