



CAMBRIDGE

Using accessible language to communicate clearly and fairly to learners what is expected of them in assessment tasks

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In this session, we will explore:

- Accessible language and why it's important
- Key principles of accessible language
- A chance for you to put those principles into practice
- How we use these principles in Cambridge exams

Who do we have in the session today?

- What role do you do?
- Name one thing you hope to get from the session

- The aim is to help you when you are writing assessment materials



What do you think is meant by accessible language?

Accessible language ...

- allows readers to read written information efficiently and accurately
- helps to reduce potential language hurdles/barriers
- deliberately uses words and sentence constructions to achieve accessibility
- maximises readability



Why do you think it is important?

Why it is important

- Recognises learners are different
- Supports key assessment principle of fairness
- Does not assume language skills
- Avoids ambiguity and provides clarity
- Puts the reader first and helps reader engagement
- It is not about making things easier

Best practice basis

- British Association for the Teaching of the Deaf
- Guided by best practice from Ofqual
- Our research

Principles of accessible language

1 Use short sentences

- One idea per sentence – one subject, one verb

Kathleen paints the fence. Kathleen tidies the garden.

- Avoid commas and embedded information
- Avoid long introductory clauses

2 Use familiar words

Avoid unfamiliar vocabulary and formality

Words with fewer syllables

- Construct
- Require
- Commence
- Locate
- Utilise

CEFR levels

3 Use the active voice

- Subject before the verb before the object
- How we tend to speak
- Clarifies and builds a picture

**The door was opened (by Michael).
Michael opened the door.**

4 Use chronological order

- Builds a picture – put what happens first at the beginning
- Works with active voice
- Avoid splitting content with subclauses

Explain, using the diagram, how something works...

CHANGE TO

Use the diagram to explain how something works...

5 Separate the fact from the question

What kind of cleaning agent will remove the hard water stains made by a dripping tap on a ceramic washbasin?

A dripping tap leaves hard water stains on a ceramic washbasin.

What kind of cleaning agent will remove them?

6 Use verbs not abstract nouns

- You can't touch an abstract noun – decision, performance
- **We decided** NOT: A decision was made
- **He performed well** NOT: His performance was good

7 Avoid idioms, metaphors and negatives

... unless that's what you're assessing

Idiom

- **Over the moon**

Metaphor – drawing a similarity – not literally true

- **The government frowned on the regime**

Negatives

- Swap to the positive

8 Avoid multiple meanings

Volume?

Revolution?

Settlement?

- Check the sentence is not ambiguous

9 Avoid missing parts of the sentence

- Missing parts of sentences is called ‘ellipsis’
- Many would argue that ...
- Many **people** would argue that

10 Avoid phrasal verbs

Phrasal verb - a verb with two parts which can't be worked out from the individual words

- Put off
- Set to
- Break down
- Take off
- Carry out

What precautions should a learner take when they carry out the experiment?

11 Consistency of language

- Avoid 'it' – repeat the noun instead
- Avoid synonyms and swapping the order of phrases

12 Remove unnecessary words

- Reduce wordiness
- Delete irrelevant words
- Edit ...

12 principles

- 1 Short sentences
- 2 Familiar words
- 3 Active voice
- 4 Chronological order
- 5 Facts then question
- 6 Verbs not abstract nouns
- 7 Avoid idioms, metaphors and negatives
- 8 Avoid missing parts of the sentence
- 9 Avoid multiple meanings
- 10 Avoid phrasal verbs
- 11 Consistency of language
- 12 Remove unnecessary words

Your chance to practise

Principles

in practice

Activity 1

What steps can you take to ensure the protection of steel?

Principles
into practice

Activity 1

In what ways protect

~~What steps can you take to ensure the protection of steel from rust?~~

Activity 2

You are required to place directly in your work record, screenshots that demonstrate the structure of the four tables that you have created.

Principles into practice

Activity 2

In
~~You are required to place directly in~~ your work record screenshots
, place
to show
your
~~demonstrating the structure of the~~ four tables ~~that you have created.~~
^

Activity 3

There are three main carbohydrate groups. Sugar is one of these.

Name the other two.

Principles

into practice

Activity 3

There are three main carbohydrate groups. Sugar is one of these.

groups



Name the other two.

carbohydrate groups



Activity 4

Suggest **three** routine checks to ensure proper functioning of an electrical system.

Principles

into practice

Activity 4

make sure the electrical system works properly

Suggest **three** routine checks to ensure ~~proper functioning of an electrical system.~~

Activity 5

What is meant by the term settlement hierarchy?

Principles into practice

Activity 5

What is ~~meant by~~ the term settlement hierarchy?
does *mean*
^

Activity 6

Outline measures that can be undertaken to avoid the destruction of wild habitats.

Principles into practice

Activity 6

Briefly describe ways of avoiding

~~Outline measures that can be undertaken to avoid the~~ destruction of wild habitats.

Where else could you use the principles?

- Reports
- Letters to staff
- Emails
- Letters to parents
- Briefings and notices
- Anywhere something is written down

- Role modelling accessible language to your learners – help them write to help their readers too



From the outset

- Training writers
- Training Cambridge staff
- In editing meetings

- Context and sources
- English as a second language
- Use professional language modifiers

- And feedback – reducing the number of modified language papers





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Any questions?

Cambridge Schools Conference, July 2024
Effective communication: from competence to confidence

Your feedback

Please let us know your views on this session

Scan the QR code and share your feedback with us

