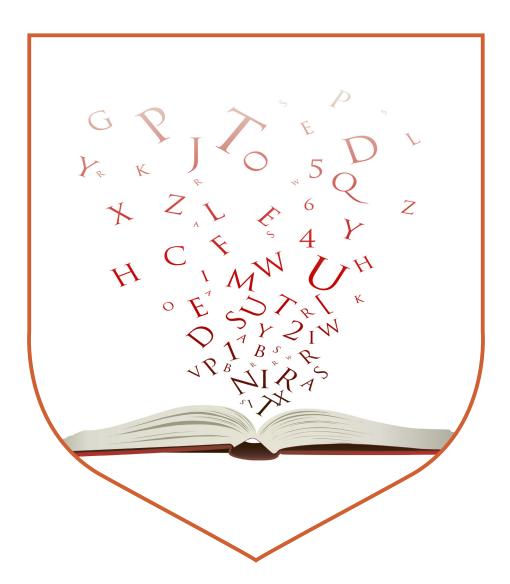


Syllabus Cambridge O Level English Language 1123

Use this syllabus for exams in 2027 and 2028. Exams are available in the June and November series.



Version I



For the purposes of screen readers, any mention in this document of Cambridge IGCSE refers to Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education.

Why choose Cambridge?

We work with schools worldwide to build an education that shapes knowledge, understanding and skills. Together, we give learners the confidence they need to thrive and make a positive impact in a changing world.

As part of the University of Cambridge, we offer a globally trusted and flexible framework for education from age 3 to 19, informed by research, experience, and listening to educators.

With recognised qualifications, high-quality resources, comprehensive support and valuable insights, we help schools prepare every student for the opportunities and challenges ahead.

Qualifications that are recognised and valued worldwide

From the world's top-ranked universities to local higher education institutions, Cambridge qualifications open doors to a world of opportunities.

Setting a global standard

With over 160 years of experience in delivering fair, valid and reliable assessments to students worldwide, we offer a global, recognised performance standard for international education.

Your path, your way

Schools can adapt our curriculum, high-quality teaching and learning resources and flexible assessments to their local context. Our aligned offer helps Cambridge schools support every learner to reach their potential and thrive.

Learning with lasting impact

Cambridge learners build subject knowledge and conceptual understanding, and develop a broad range of skills, learning habits and attributes to help make them ready for the world.

Improving learning outcomes through data-led insight and action

Our trusted baseline and diagnostic assessments, together with our insights and evaluation service, help schools turn data into knowledge and actionable insights, to inform teaching decisions and improve learner outcomes.

Bringing together a community of experts

We bring together the collective knowledge of experts and our diverse community of educators worldwide, supporting them to learn from one another and share ideas and information.

Tackling the climate crisis together

We believe that education is key to tackling the climate crisis. Together with Cambridge schools, we can empower young people with the skills and knowledge to take action on climate change, helping them be ready for the world.

School feedback: 'We think the Cambridge curriculum is superb preparation for university.'

Feedback from: Christoph Guttentag, Dean of Undergraduate Admissions, Duke University, USA

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Important: Changes to this syllabus

The latest syllabus is version 1, published September 2024. There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2024 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

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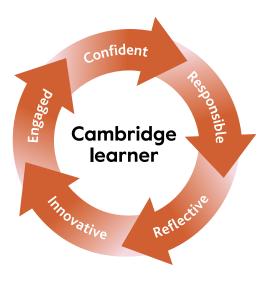
1 Why choose this syllabus?

Key benefits

Cambridge O Level is typically for 14 to 16 year olds and is an internationally recognised qualification. It has been designed especially for an international market and is sensitive to the needs of different countries. Cambridge O Level is designed for learners whose first language may not be English, and this is acknowledged throughout the examination process.

Our programmes promote a thorough knowledge and understanding of a subject and help to develop the skills learners need for their next steps in education or employment.

Cambridge O Level English Language encourages learners to read a variety of texts and improve their use and style of language in a range of contexts. Learners develop the ability to understand and respond to what they read and to communicate



effectively in writing. These skills equip them for progression to further study or employment.

Our approach in Cambridge O Level English Language encourages learners to be:

confident, exploring and evaluating ideas and arguments in a structured, critical and analytical way. They are able to communicate and defend views and opinions as well as respect those of others

responsible, understanding how to use English language in different contexts and for different purposes to influence and affect the world around them

reflective, critically reviewing their own work and identifying ways to improve. They develop successful learning strategies to consolidate their skills

innovative, applying their knowledge and understanding to engage with a range of texts and styles of writing. They adapt their skills in order to respond to tasks in different contexts

engaged, taking inspiration from, and being interested in, the variety of language around them. They read critically, learn from others and understand how their English Language learning fits within the wider context.

School feedback: 'Cambridge O Level has helped me develop thinking and analytical skills which will go a long way in helping me with advanced studies.'

Feedback from: Kamal Khan Virk, former student at Beaconhouse Garden Town Secondary School, Pakistan, who went on to study Actuarial Science at the London School of Economics

Qualifications that are recognised and valued worldwide

Cambridge qualifications prepare and equip learners with the skills they need to thrive at university and beyond. The world's best higher education institutions recognise our qualifications and value the critical thinking skills, independent research abilities and deep subject knowledge that Cambridge learners bring.

We continually work with universities and colleges in every part of the world to ensure that they understand and accept our qualifications. Cambridge O Level provides a springboard to the Cambridge Advanced stage, as well as other post-16 routes. The combination of knowledge and skills in Cambridge O Level English Language gives learners a solid foundation for further study. Candidates who achieve grades A* to C are well prepared to follow a wide range of courses including Cambridge International AS & A Level English.

Many universities require a combination of Cambridge International AS & A Levels and Cambridge O Levels or equivalent to meet their entry requirements.

Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/recognition

Supporting teachers

We believe education works best when teaching and learning are closely aligned to the curriculum, resources and assessment. Our high-quality teaching support helps to maximise teaching time and enables teachers to engage learners of all backgrounds and abilities.

We aim to provide the following support for each Cambridge qualification:

- Syllabus
- Specimen question papers and mark schemes
- Specimen paper answers
- Schemes of Work
- Example candidate responses
- Past papers and mark schemes
- Principal examiner reports for teachers

Sign up for email notifications about changes to syllabuses, including new and revised products and services, at www.cambridgeinternational.org/syllabusupdates

These resources are available on the School Support Hub at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/support**, our secure online site for Cambridge teachers. Your exams officer can provide you with a login.

Additional teaching & learning resources are also available for many syllabuses and vary according to the nature of the subject and the structure of the assessment of each syllabus. These can include readybuilt lesson materials, digital resources and multimedia for the classroom and homework, guidance on assessment and much more. Beyond the resources available on the Schools Support Hub, a wide range of endorsed textbooks and associated teaching and learning support are available from Cambridge at **www.cambridge.org/education** and from other publishers. Resources vary according to the nature of the subject and the structure of the assessment of each syllabus.

You can also contact our global Cambridge community or talk to a senior examiner on our discussion forums.

Professional development

Find the next step on your professional development journey.

- **Introduction courses** An introduction to Cambridge programmes and qualifications. For teachers who are new to Cambridge programmes or new to a specific syllabus.
- Focus on Teaching courses These are for teachers who want to explore a specific area of teaching and learning within a syllabus or programme.
- Focus on Assessment courses These are for teachers who want to understand the assessment of a syllabus in greater depth.
- **Marking workshops** These workshops help you become more familiar with what examiners are looking for, and provide an opportunity to raise questions and share your experiences of the syllabus.
- Enrichment Professional Development Transform your approach to teaching with our Enrichment workshops. Each workshop focuses on a specific area of teaching and learning practice.
- **Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs)** Practice-based programmes that transform professional learning for practicing teachers. Available at Certificate and Diploma level.

For more information visit www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-for-teachers



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Supporting exams officers

We provide comprehensive support and guidance for all Cambridge exams officers. Find out more at: **www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide**

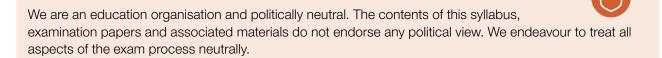
2 Syllabus overview

Aims

The aims describe the purposes of a course based on this syllabus.

The aims are to enable students to:

- read a wide range of texts, fluently and with good understanding, enjoying and appreciating a variety of language
- read critically, and use knowledge gained from wide reading to inform and improve their own writing
- write accurately and effectively, using standard English appropriately
- work with information and with ideas in language by developing skills of evaluation, analysis, use and inference
- acquire and apply a wide vocabulary, alongside a knowledge and understanding of grammatical terminology and linguistic conventions.



Content overview

Cambridge O Level English Language offers candidates the opportunity to respond with understanding to a rich array of reading texts during the course as a whole. Candidates will use these texts to inform and inspire their own writing, and write in a range of text types for different purposes and audiences.

The reading texts cover a range of genres and types, including fiction and non-fiction, and may also include other forms of writing, such as essays, reviews and articles.

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

Assessment overview

All candidates take two components. Candidates will be eligible for grades A* to E.

All candidates take:		and:	
Paper 1	2 hours	Paper 2	2 hours
Reading	50%	Writing	50%
50 marks		50 marks	
Structured and extended writing questions		Directed writing question and a composition task	
Questions are based on two reading texts		Externally assessed	
Externally assessed			

Information on availability is in the Before you start section.

Assessment objectives

The assessment objectives (AOs) are:

AO1 Reading

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

AO2 Writing

Candidates will be assessed on their ability to:

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Weighting for assessment objectives

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

Assessment objectives as a percentage of the qualification

Assessment objective	Weighting in O Level %
AO1 Reading	50
AO2 Writing	50
Total	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

Assessment objective	Weighting in components %	
	Paper 1	Paper 2
AO1 Reading	80	20
AO2 Writing	20	80
Total	100	100

3 Subject content

This syllabus gives you the flexibility to design a course that will interest, challenge and engage your learners. Where appropriate you are responsible for selecting texts, resources and examples to support your learners' study. These should be appropriate for the learners' age, cultural background and learning context as well as complying with your school policies and local legal requirements.

The skills covered in the syllabus are outlined below.

Reading

- demonstrate understanding of written texts, and of the words and phrases within them
- summarise and use material for a specific context
- develop, analyse and evaluate facts, ideas and opinions
- demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve their effects and influence readers
- select appropriate information for specific purposes
- recognise and respond to linguistic devices, figurative language and imagery.

To develop reading skills, students should engage with a range of genres and text types from the twentieth and/or twenty-first centuries, including literature, fiction and non-fiction. Other forms of Reading should include blogs, essays, reviews or articles, short stories in their entirety or extracts from a longer work of prose or drama. Learning should include focus on writers' use of language and style and the ways in which writers achieve effects and influence readers. Students should study how influence may include facts, ideas, perspectives, opinions and bias.

Writing

- express what is thought, felt and imagined
- organise and convey facts, ideas and opinions effectively
- demonstrate a varied vocabulary appropriate to the context
- demonstrate an effective use of sentence structures
- demonstrate an understanding of audience, purpose and form
- demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

As developing writers themselves, students should be introduced to a range of writing skills, including the ability to create and compose texts with a variety of forms and purposes, e.g. descriptive, narrative, argumentative and persuasive. Learning should include focus on the following text types: email, letter, report, article, speech, and summary.

Faculty feedback: 'Understanding how and why our climate is changing and providing the knowledge and skills to explore the challenges plays a key role in every student's education.'

Feedback from: Dr Amy Munro-Faure, Head of Education and Student Engagement of Cambridge Zero

4 Details of the assessment

Paper 1 – Reading

Written paper, 2 hours, 50 marks

Candidates answer **all** the questions in two compulsory sections. Candidates write their answers in the space provided on the question paper.

The texts are printed in the question paper insert.

Dictionaries must **not** be used.

Section A Comprehension and Use of Language (25 marks)

Question 1 Comprehension task

Candidates respond to a series of sub-questions based on Text A, a narrative text. These are short answers testing understanding of both explicit and implicit meanings.

Text A is approximately 900 words long and is from either the twentieth or the twenty-first century.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (16 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitude.

Question 2 Use of Language task

Candidates respond to a series of sub-questions based on Text A. These are short answers worth a total of nine marks relating to the author's use of language and the effect this has.

This question tests the following reading assessment objective (9 marks):

R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers.

Section B Summary and Short response (25 marks)

Question 3a Summary task

Candidates answer a summary task in response to Text B. Candidates write a summary as continuous writing of no more than 150 words.

Text B is approximately 550-600 words long.

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

This question also tests the following writing assessment objectives (10 marks):

- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context.

Question 3b Short response task

Candidates give a short response to show understanding of implicit meanings and attitude in response to Text B.

This question tests the following reading assessment objective (5 marks):

R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes.

Paper 2 – Writing

Written paper, 2 hours, 50 marks

Candidates answer **two** questions, one from section A and one from section B.

The texts are printed on the question paper.

Dictionaries must **not** be used.

Section A Directed Writing (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** compulsory question.

Candidates read one or two texts totalling approximately 400–450 words in length. They use, develop and evaluate the information in the text(s) to create a discursive/argumentative/persuasive speech, email, report, letter or article.

Candidates write about 250-350 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (15 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4 use register appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

This question also tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks):

- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

Section B Composition (25 marks)

Candidates answer **one** question from a choice of four: two descriptive and two narrative.

Candidates develop and write a composition.

Candidates write about 350-450 words.

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (25 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Descriptive:

A descriptive piece of writing describes a person, place or situation (including atmosphere) in detail so that the reader can picture it.

Narrative:

A narrative piece of writing tells a story containing a sequence of connected events which may be real or imaginary.

Command words

Command words and their meanings help candidates know what is expected from them in the exam. The table below includes command words used in the assessment for this syllabus. The use of the command word will relate to the subject context.

Command word	What it means
Consider	review and respond to given information
Describe	state the points of a topic / give characteristics and main features
Evaluate	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount, or value of something
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence
Give	produce an answer from a given source or recall/memory
Identify	name/select/recognise
Summarise	select and present the main points, without detail

5 What else you need to know

This section is an overview of other information you need to know about this syllabus. It will help to share the administrative information with your exams officer so they know when you will need their support. Find more information about our administrative processes at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide**

Before you start

Previous study

We recommend that learners starting this course should have studied a broad curriculum such as the Cambridge Lower Secondary programme or equivalent national educational framework.

Guided learning hours

We design Cambridge O Level syllabuses to require about 130 guided learning hours for each subject. This is for guidance only. The number of hours a learner needs to achieve the qualification may vary according to each school and the learners' previous experience of the subject.

Availability and timetables

All Cambridge schools are allocated to one of six administrative zones. Each zone has a specific timetable. Find your administrative zone at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/adminzone**. This syllabus is **not** available in all administrative zones.

You can enter candidates in the June and November exam series. You can view the timetable for your administrative zone at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/timetables**

Check you are using the syllabus for the year the candidate is taking the exam.

Private candidates can enter for this syllabus. For more information, please refer to the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*.

Combining with other syllabuses

Candidates can take this syllabus alongside other Cambridge International syllabuses in a single exam series. The only exceptions are:

- Cambridge IGCSE First Language English (0500)
- Cambridge IGCSE First Language English (9-1) (0990)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (count-in speaking) (0511)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (Speaking endorsement) (0510)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language (Speaking endorsement) (9–1) (0993)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as an Additional Language (0472)
- Cambridge IGCSE English as an Additional Language (9–1) (0772)
- Cambridge O Level English Language (Brunei) (1120)
- Cambridge O Level English Language (Mauritius) (1125)
- Cambridge O Level English Language Syllabus B (Mauritius) (1126)
- Singapore-Cambridge SEC G3 English Language (K300)
- syllabuses with the same title at the same level.

Entries for Cambridge O Level English Language **MUST** use the following codes:

- Entries in Brunei must enter for Subject code 1120
- Entries in Mauritius must enter for Subject code 1125 or 1126
- Entries in Singapore must enter for Subject code K300
- Entries elsewhere *must* enter for **Subject code 1123**.

Cambridge O Level, Cambridge IGCSE[™] and Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) syllabuses are at the same level.

Making entries

Exams officers are responsible for submitting entries. We encourage them to work closely with you to make sure they enter the right number of candidates for the right combination of syllabus components. Entry option codes and instructions for submitting entries are in the *Cambridge Guide to Making Entries*. Your exams officer has access to this guide.

Exam administration

To keep our exams secure, we produce question papers for different areas of the world, known as administrative zones. We allocate all Cambridge schools to an administrative zone determined by their location. Each zone has a specific timetable.

Some of our syllabuses offer candidates different assessment options. An entry option code is used to identify the components the candidate will take relevant to the administrative zone and the available assessment options.

Support for exams officers

We know how important exams officers are to the successful running of exams. We provide them with the support they need to make entries on time. Your exams officer will find this support, and guidance for all other phases of the Cambridge Exams Cycle, at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide**

Retakes

Candidates can retake the whole qualification as many times as they want to. Information on retake entries is at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/retakes**

Language

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

Accessibility and equality

Syllabus and assessment design

At Cambridge we recognise that our candidates have highly diverse socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and may also have a variety of protected characteristics. Protected characteristics include special educational needs and disability (SEND), religion and belief, and characteristics related to gender and identity.

We follow accessible design principles to make our syllabuses and assessment materials as accessible and inclusive as possible. We review language accessibility, visual resources, question layout and the contexts used in questions. Using this approach means that we give all candidates the fairest possible opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Access arrangements

Our design principles aim to make sure our assessment materials are accessible for all candidates. To further minimise barriers faced by candidates with SEND, illness or injury, we offer a range of access arrangements and modified papers. This is the principal way in which we comply with our duty to make 'reasonable adjustments', as guided by the UK Equality Act 2010.

Important:

Requested access arrangements should be based on evidence of the candidate's barrier to taking an assessment and should also reflect their normal way of working. This is explained in section 1.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* **www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide**

- For Cambridge to approve an access arrangement, we need to agree that it constitutes a reasonable adjustment and does not affect the security or integrity of the assessment.
- Details of our standard access arrangements and modified question papers are available in section 1.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Centres are expected to check the availability of access arrangements and modified question papers at the start of the course. All applications should be made by the deadlines published in section 1.3 of the *Cambridge Handbook* www.cambridgeinternational.org/eoguide
- Contact us at the start of the course to find out if we can approve an access arrangement that is not included in the list of standard access arrangements.
- Candidates who cannot access parts of the assessment may be able to receive an award based on the parts they have completed.

Some access arrangements are not allowed in this syllabus because they affect the assessment objectives:

- candidates must **not** use voice-activated software to dictate their written work
- candidates must **not** use a human reader.

After the exam

Grading and reporting

Grades A*, A, B, C, D or E indicate the standard a candidate achieved at Cambridge O Level.

A* is the highest and E is the lowest. 'Ungraded' means that the candidate's performance did not meet the standard required for grade E. 'Ungraded' is reported on the statement of results but not on the certificate.

In specific circumstances your candidates may see one of the following letters on their statement of results:

- Q (PENDING)
- X (NO RESULT).

These letters do not appear on the certificate.

On the statement of results, Cambridge O Level is shown as GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION ORDINARY LEVEL.

On certificates, Cambridge O Level is shown as General Certificate of Education.

How students and teachers can use the grades

Assessment at Cambridge O Level has two purposes:

1 to measure learning and achievement

The assessment confirms achievement and performance in relation to the knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the syllabus.

2 to show likely future success

The outcomes help predict which students are well prepared for or likely to be successful in a particular course or career.

The outcomes help students choose the most suitable course or career.

Changes to this syllabus for 2027 and 2028

The syllabus has been updated. This is version 1, published September 2024.

You must read the whole syllabus before planning your teaching programme. We review our syllabuses regularly to make sure they continue to meet the needs of our schools. In updating this syllabus, we have made it easier for teachers and students to understand, keeping the familiar features that teachers and schools value.

There are no significant changes which affect teaching.

Any textbooks endorsed to support the syllabus for examination from 2024 are still suitable for use with this syllabus.

Syllabuses and specimen materials represent the final authority on the content and structure of all of our assessments.

With a Customer Services team available 24 hours a day, 6 days a week, and dedicated regional teams supporting schools in 160 countries, we understand your local context and are here to guide you so you can provide your learners with everything they need to prepare for Cambridge O Level.

Quality management

We are committed to providing exceptional quality. In line with this commitment, our quality management system for the provision of international education programmes and qualifications for students aged 5 to 19 is independently certified as meeting the internationally recognised standard, ISO 9001:2015. Learn more at www.cambridgeinternational.org/about-us/our-standards/

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We are always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we are not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at **info@cambridgeinternational.org** with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.

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