

CAN I TAKE *FIRST FOR SCHOOLS*?

First Certificate in English is the Cambridge English exam which introduces you to practical language skills in real life situations. It tests your ability to communicate confidently with native speakers for everyday work and study purposes. It can be taken on paper or on a computer.

First for Schools is exactly the same exam, but is more specifically aimed at the interests and experiences of younger people of school age.

CAN YOU...	YES	NO
• ...follow a discussion on a familiar topic in English and maintain a conversation on a wide range of subjects?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...ask for explanations or information and understand the answer, as well as checking that instructions have been understood?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...give your opinion, start a conversation or discussion point and answer factual or predictable questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...check texts for relevant information, take down notes, or write both informal and formal letters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...read the media and understand it well enough to give your opinion?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...write a report with some evaluation and advice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• ...present arguments in writing and make notes for writing essays or for revision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you've ticked all the YES boxes...

...PROCEED TO THE PRACTICE PAPERS!

HOW TO GET READY FOR *FIRST FOR SCHOOLS*

TAKE A HINT FROM US

ASK

friends or relatives who go to English speaking countries to bring you back up-to-date material, such as newspapers and magazines, information leaflets for students, etc.

BUY

a notebook and jot down new vocabulary, especially idioms and collocations which you learn. This is a simple thing to do but far more useful than you may think.

CARRY ON

listening to songs in English and try and bring expressions from the lyrics into your own English vocabulary.

CHANGE

the instructions on your phone, tablet or laptop into English.

CHAT

online to English-speaking friends and relations and keep in practice by writing emails and letters to them.

KEEP

up-to-date with what is happening in the English-speaking world and current affairs in general.

TAKE

every opportunity to read everyday English in books, magazines and advertisements. Think how many ads have English slogans!

TRAIN

yourself to listen to a wide range of spoken English in different situations and with a variety of accents and speeds. Make sure you can listen not only for general understanding but also for specific detail.

TRY

to have a stay in an English-speaking country, even if it is only for a short time.

USE

the Internet sensibly to read news headlines and topical articles, as well as watching interviews with well-known personalities.

WATCH

films in English with English subtitles regularly. This is one of the most effective ways of improving your fluency and widening your vocabulary, as well as accustoming yourself to a variety of accents.

WORK

carefully through this book and always find out where and why you make mistakes.

BE

prepared for the exam and know exactly...

...WHAT TO EXPECT FROM *FIRST FOR SCHOOLS*.

THE EXAM

♦ WHAT IT CONTAINS

There are four papers: **Reading and Use of English**, **Writing**, **Listening** and **Speaking**.

PAPER 1

- contains both the **Reading** and **Use of English**
- lasts 1 hour 15 minutes and is worth 40% of the total marks
- has four parts with 30 questions in the Use of English section; there are three parts with 22 questions in the Reading section.

PAPER 2

- is the **Writing Test**
- lasts 1 hour 20 minutes
- is worth 20% of the total marks
- has two parts to it: one compulsory question and one to be chosen from four alternatives.

PAPER 3

- is the **Listening Test**
- lasts about 40 minutes
- is worth 20% of the total marks
- has four parts to it.

PAPER 4

- is the **Speaking Test**
- lasts 14 minutes and is worth 20% of the total marks
- has four parts to it and is taken together with another candidate; sometimes, if there are three remaining students at the end of an examining session, they will take it together.

♦ HOW IT IS GRADED

The total marks of the exam are out of 190 and it is graded as follows:

GRADE A	180 – 190	(YOUR CERTIFICATE WILL STATE THAT YOU SHOWED ABILITY AT C1 OR ADVANCED LEVEL)
GRADE B	173 – 180	
GRADE C	160 – 173	
NARROW FAIL	140 – 160	(BUT YOUR CERTIFICATE WILL STATE THAT YOU SHOWED ABILITY AT B1 OR PRELIMINARY LEVEL)
FAIL	0 – 140	

This means that you must get at least **160 marks** to pass the exam.

HOW TO BE PREPARED FOR THE EXAM

Your teacher will certainly know how to help you in the best possible way, but you can help yourself too by remembering the following:

DO

- read the instructions carefully and look at each example given to you before you begin
- answer ALL the questions, even if you are not sure that your answer is correct
- check your answers at the end and transfer them accurately to the answer sheet – you will have plenty of time to do this.
- time yourself while doing the practice tests.

DON'T

- worry if there are some words that you don't understand – you will still be able to guess the meaning from the rest of the text.
- leave a blank, if you write something, you have a 50% chance of getting a mark.
- underestimate the amount of preparation required to pass the exam!

WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE EXAM DAY

BEFORE

DO remember to

- go to bed early the night before
- have a good breakfast
- get there early too.

DON'T forget to

- check the date, time and address of your *First for Schools* exam
- find out how long it will take you to travel to the exam.

ON THE DAY

DO bring

- your I.D.
- pencils, sharpener and rubber
- a watch or small clock– it helps to keep a check on the time.

DON'T bring

- any food into the exam room
- your bag, phone or any other electronic device into the room.

AT YOUR DESK

DO

- listen carefully to the instructions given by the invigilator
- make sure you read all the instructions carefully, too
- put up your hand if you need help or to ask any questions
- put up your hand immediately if you are doing the Listening Part and cannot hear properly.

DON'T

- talk to anybody else in the exam room, or try to see what other people are writing
- panic, just do your best!

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED

DO

- put up your hand if you have any serious queries about the exam
- check your answers again if there is still time.

DON'T

- leave your seat until you have permission to leave
- talk about what you did right or wrong, forget about it until the results come out.

WHAT'S DONE IS DONE

First for Schools is the third step up the ladder of the Cambridge English Language Assessment. The first practice test is a chance to try yourself out on each part with some advice to help you. When you have completed this, then you are ready to work on all the practice tests.

REMEMBER:

FOLLOW THIS SOUND ADVICE and YOU WILL COME UP TRUMPS!