



Visual difficulties

Visual difficulties may range from a minor condition to total blindness, and Cambridge ESOL can supply enlarged and **modified question papers** for less serious difficulties, or brailled and modified question papers where these are required.

1. Extra Time

Candidates with visual difficulties will almost certainly need extra time to complete a paper. They may ask for an extra 25% of the normal time allowed for a paper. If it takes a candidate a long time to read the questions or record their answers, they may ask for more than 25% extra time. However, it is worth bearing in mind that too much extra time may make the candidate very tired. The candidate will also be allowed to have breaks whilst taking a paper, in addition to any extra time they need.

2. Reading the question papers in a different way

Partially sighted candidates may use the following equipment:

- magnifying glass
- closed-circuit television (CCTV)
- hand-held scanning apparatus
- access technology

The candidate may ask a Reader to read and re-read questions to them (but see the important notes section below).

3. Writing answers in a different way

- Candidates may record their answers in the following ways:
- Braille machine
- Braille machine, linked to a printer
- typewriter or word-processor (with the spell check or thesaurus facility disabled)
- dictating answers to an amanuensis (see the Important notes section below).

4. Braille question papers

Braille versions of KET, PET, FCE, CAE, CPE, (certain papers only) can normally be made available. Please tell us whether you need your papers in Contracted or Uncontracted Braille.

Please note:

- the supervisor will also have a print version of each Braille paper
- in some papers we arrange for the texts and the questions to be brailled in separate booklets.

Cambridge ESOL can provide past exam papers in Braille as practice material.

5. Enlarged Question Papers

There are two different kinds of enlarged question paper available:

Type 1:

We enlarge the standard question paper making no changes to the layout or material, in A3 size question papers.

(Usually 15.5 point)

Type 2:

We change the question papers, removing 'visual' material which is not essential for answering the question. We then make large-print versions of the papers in A4 size.

(Usually 18 point bold)

Note that we can also supply reduced print question papers.

6. Listening Tests

Many of the questions in the Listening tests ask candidates to make notes while they listen to a CD. If a candidate is blind or have visual difficulties they may not be able to do this. We therefore produce a special version of the Listening test. The candidate will hear the same material and answer the same questions as other candidates.

However, the supervisor will:

- stop the CD before each part of the test to allow the candidate enough time to read the questions
- stop the CD at certain points during each part to allow the candidate enough time to write one or more answers
- stop the CD after each part to allow the candidate enough time to check their answers.

Candidates should note that when the CD is paused during a part, they:

- may not need to write an answer at all.
- may need to write more than one answer.

7. Speaking Tests

For KET, PET, FCE, CAE, CPE candidates must normally take the Speaking test with a partner.

- Candidates with visual difficulties can apply to:
- have extra time if it takes them longer than usual to read any exam material or decide what they want to say
- take the test with a partner who is not taking the examination
- take the test without a partner (i.e. in the parts of the test which usually ask both candidates to talk to each other, you talk to the examiner instead).
- use adapted visual material (see below).

Parts of the Speaking test for some exams are visual – for example they use pictures taken from newspapers or magazines.

Cambridge ESOL can supply enlarged copies of these pictures for partially-sighted candidates. If candidates find it difficult to use enlarged pictures we can supply enlarged print versions of written descriptions of the photographs. We can also supply material in Braille for blind candidates. For example, in the Braille version of the FCE Speaking Test:

- the examiner will spend a few minutes asking the candidate to talk about themselves
- the candidate will then be given short written descriptions of two photographs in Braille.

The examiner will ask the candidate to compare and contrast the situations in the descriptions and give their opinion about them. Candidates will have about a minute to do this

- finally the candidate will be asked to take part in various conversational activities using brailled notes or information.

8. Having a Reader or an amanuensis.

A Reader is a person who will read the questions out to the candidate. Note that the Reader will not explain the questions or offer any advice. A Reader is not usually allowed to read out the texts in a Reading test.

An Amanuensis is a person who will write down the candidate's answers. Candidates should note that:

- they will be asked to spell certain words
- they must also indicate punctuation.

The Amanuensis will also read answers back at the wishes of the candidate. We recommend that candidate practise with a Reader/Amanuensis before the examination. For example, the candidate should make sure that they can spell out the letters of the alphabet.

Important notes

Please note that it may not always be possible for a Braille version of a particular examination to be prepared. British Standard Braille is moving over towards the optional use of capital letters. Skills for Life Level 1 and 2 Reading may specifically test the use of capitals. Capitals will therefore be included in Braille versions of Skills for Life Reading in those tasks which test their use, and candidates who are preparing to take a Braille version of Skills for Life should be made aware of this. Capitals will not be included in texts or questions for other tasks for the time being. Cambridge ESOL reserves the right not to approve applications for Special Arrangements.

Adapted from Cambridge ESOL Special Arrangements for candidates.