



BEC Preliminary Writing Overview – Teacher’s Notes

Description

Students think about how important writing is in their jobs. They look at example Writing questions as well as information about the paper, and complete the gaps in two tables. Then they complete some sentences giving advice about the Writing paper.

Time required: 15 minutes

Materials required:

- *Student’s Worksheet (one per student)*
- *Answer Sheet from Handbook (enlarged; one per student)*

Aims:

- *to familiarise students with the structure of the Writing test*
- *to make clear to students what they need to do*

Procedure

1. Ask students what they need to (or expect to need to) write as part of their work, either in English or in their own language [e.g. reports, emails, notes], who they write to [e.g. colleagues, suppliers, customers], and what they are trying to achieve in their writing [e.g. give information, request action, refuse a request, negotiate agreement].
2. Explain that you want the students to get to know the Writing part of the Reading and Writing test. Give each student a copy of the **Student’s Worksheet**. Ask how many questions there are on the first page [two, Parts 1 and 2]. Tell them that this is the same as the Writing section of a BEC Reading and Writing paper.
3. Ask them to read the questions quickly, and, in pairs, to complete the table in Exercise 1.
4. Check the answers [see **Key to Student’s Worksheet**].
5. Ask them, in pairs, to complete the table in Exercise 2, getting the information from the tables on the following page. Point out that they don’t need to understand everything on that page – just to find the relevant information.
6. Check the answers [see **Key to Student’s Worksheet**].
7. Tell them that Exercise 3 gives advice about doing the Writing part of the paper. Ask them to read Exercise 3 and elicit the answers [see **Key to Student’s Worksheet**]. Encourage them to see the test as an opportunity to ‘show what they know’ – i.e. to use a range of language and to show how effectively they can communicate when writing in English. Ask them if accuracy is the most important thing in their writing [no, it’s effective communication that is important] and if they lose marks for making mistakes [not if it’s clear what they are trying to say].
8. Give students a copy of the Answer Sheet (p26 of the Handbook, found online at <https://www.teachers.cambridgeesol.org/ts/exams/professionalenglish/becpreliminary>). Explain that after you have looked at each part of the paper in more detail, they can try writing answers to the two tasks in this activity, using the Answer Sheet.



BEC Preliminary Writing Overview activity – Answer Keys

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 1

	WRITING PART 1	WRITING PART 2
Usual number of bullet points to write about:	...3...	...4...
Maximum number of words you need to write:	...40...	...80...
What you need to read:	instructions only	instructions and a ...text... (e.g. part of a piece of business correspondence)

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 2

	WRITING	
Percentage of total marks for BEC Preliminary:	...25...%	
Where to write:	on the ...answer sheet...	
What to write with:	a ...pencil...	
Total time to spend on Writing:	approximately 30 minutes (<i>this is long enough for most candidates, and should give enough time for the Reading part of the test</i>)	
	WRITING PART 1	WRITING PART 2
Approximate time to spend (you'll need to guess this yourself):	... 10... minutes	...20... minutes (<i>because Part 2 is twice as long as Part 1, and has twice as many marks</i>)
What to write:	a note, message, memo or ...e-mail... to a person or people inside your organisation	a ...letter... , fax or e-mail to someone outside your organisation
Number of marks:	...5...	...10...



Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 3

1. effectively
2. all
3. functions
4. organise
5. range
6. accurate
7. clear



BEC Preliminary Writing Overview – Student’s Worksheet

Read these two Writing test questions, then complete the table that follows.

PART ONE

- You have noticed that staff using company cars are forgetting to fill them with fuel on their return.
- You also want to remind staff of procedures for parking company cars and depositing keys.
- Write a **memo** to all staff:
 - explaining what to do about fuel after using a company car
 - saying where to leave the car
 - telling staff what to do with the keys.
- **Write 30 – 40 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet. Do not write in capital letters.**

PART TWO

- Read this part of a letter from Mary Bennett applying for a job.

With reference to your advertisement in The Times, I am writing to apply for the post of training assistant.

I am moving to your country next month with my husband. As you will see from the enclosed CV, I have had a lot of experience in training and I feel that I have much to offer your company.

If I am selected for interview, please could you give me information about how to reach your offices by public transport?

- Write a **letter** to Mrs Bennett:
 - acknowledging her letter
 - offering her a date and time for an interview
 - requesting the names and addresses of two referees
 - telling her the best way to reach you by public transport.
- **Write 60 – 80 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet. Do not include any postal addresses.**



Exercise 1: complete this table with information from the previous page.

	WRITING PART 1	WRITING PART 2
Usual number of bullet points to write about:
Maximum number of words you need to write:
What you need to read:	instructions only	instructions and a (e.g. part of a piece of business correspondence)

Exercise 2: complete this table with information from the next page.

	WRITING	
Percentage of total marks for BEC Preliminary:%	
Where to write:	on the	
What to write with:	a	
Total time to spend on Writing:	approximately 30 minutes	
	WRITING PART 1	WRITING PART 2
Approximate time to spend (you'll need to guess this yourself): minutes minutes
What to write	a note, message, memo or to a person or people inside your organisation	a , fax or e-mail to someone outside your organisation
Number of marks:



Overview of the Writing part of the Reading and Writing paper

Paper format	The paper contains seven Reading parts and two Writing parts.
Answer format	For the Writing paper, candidates write their answers on the answer sheet in pencil.
Timing	1 hour 30 minutes (for Reading and Writing)
Marks	Writing Part 1 carries 5 marks and Part 2 carries 10 marks. The scores for Writing are worth 25% of the total marks for BEC Preliminary.

PART	Functions/Communicative Task	Input	Response	Register
1	Writing a note, message, memo or e-mail, for example to (re-)arrange appointments, ask for permission or give instructions	Rubric only plus layout of output text type	Internal communication 30 – 40 words	Neutral/ formal
2	Writing a letter, fax or e-mail, for example to apologise and offer compensation, make or alter reservations, deal with requests, or give information about a product	One piece of input which may be business correspondence (the medium may be a letter, fax or e-mail), internal communication (the medium may be a note, memo or e-mail), notice, advert, etc. (plus layout of output text type, unless it's a letter)	Business correspondence (the medium may be a letter, fax or e-mail) 60 – 80 words	Neutral/ formal



Exercise 3

Advice about the Writing tasks

Complete each space with a word from the box. Use each word once only.

accurate	all	clear	effectively
	functions	organise	range

SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

- 1 Your marks will depend on how you communicate in the two tasks.

To get good marks, you should:

- 2 write about the bullet points.
- 3 carry out the various in the tasks, such as explaining, offering and requesting.
- 4 your answer well.
- 5 use a of grammar and vocabulary.
- 6 try to make sure your grammar and vocabulary are
- 7 make your message to the reader.

Three important steps:

- Read the question carefully.
- Write your answer.
- Check and improve your answer.