

Preliminary English Test

Examination Report

March 2004

CONTENTS

	Page
Website Reference	1
Introduction	2
Paper 1 - Reading and Writing	4
Paper 2 - Listening	13
Paper 3 - Speaking	18
Feedback Form	23

WEBSITE REFERENCE

This report can be accessed through the Cambridge ESOL website at:

www.CambridgeESOL.org

INTRODUCTION

This report is intended to provide a general view of how candidates performed on each paper in the March 2004 session, and to offer guidance on the preparation of candidates.

The overall pass rate for the March 2004 session was **79.48%**.

The following table gives details of the percentage of candidates at each grade.

March 2004	
GRADE	PERCENTAGE
Pass with Merit	26.84
Pass	52.64
Narrow Fail	8.76
Fail	11.76

- **Grading**

Grading took place during May 2004 (approximately six weeks after the examination).

The final mark a candidate receives in PET is an aggregate of the marks obtained in each of the three papers (Reading/Writing, Listening and Speaking). There is no minimum pass mark for individual papers.

PET has two passing grades:

Pass with Merit
Pass

and two failing grades:

Narrow Fail
Fail

The overall pass rate for the March 2004 examination was 79.48% of the candidates. The minimum successful performance which a candidate typically requires in order to achieve a 'Pass' grade corresponds to about 70% of the total marks. 'Pass with Merit' corresponds to approximately 85% of the total marks available. A 'Narrow Fail' grade means that the candidate is within 5% of the 'Pass' level.

Statements of results contain a graphical display of a candidate's performance in each skill. These are shown against a scale of Exceptional – Good – Borderline – Weak and indicate the candidate's relative performance in each paper.

- **Special Consideration**

Special Consideration can be given to candidates affected by adverse circumstances immediately before or during an examination. Examples of acceptable reasons for giving Special Consideration include illness and bereavement. All applications for Special Consideration must be made through the local Centre as soon as possible after the examination affected.

- **Irregular Conduct**

The cases of candidates who are suspected of copying, collusion or breaking the examination regulations in some other way will be considered by the Cambridge ESOL Malpractice Committee. Results may be withheld because further investigation is needed or because of infringement of the regulations.

- **Notification of Results**

Candidates' Statements of Results are issued through their local Centre approximately two months after the examination has been taken. Certificates are issued about six weeks after the issue of Statements of Results. Requests for a check on results may be made through the local Centre, within one month of the issue of Statements of Results.

Cambridge ESOL produces the following documents which may be of use to teachers or institutions preparing candidates for PET:

- *Regulations* (produced annually, for information on dates, etc.)
- *PET Handbook* (for detailed information on the examination and sample materials)
- *Examination Report* (produced once a year)
- *Past Paper Pack* (available approximately 10 weeks after the selected examination session, including Question Papers 1 and 2, tape/CD and tapescript for Paper 2, answer keys, sample Speaking test materials and Paper 1 Mark Schemes and sample scripts).

Users of this Examination Report may find it useful to refer simultaneously to the relevant Past Paper Pack. This, together with further copies of this report, can be purchased using the order form on-line at **www.CambridgeESOL.org**

If you do not have access to the Internet, you can obtain an order form from:

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Feedback on this report is very welcome and should be sent to the Reports Co-ordinator, Cambridge ESOL, at the above address. A feedback form is included on page 23

PAPER 1 – READING and WRITING

Reading			
PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	Three-option multiple choice. Five short discrete texts: signs and messages, postcards, notes, emails, labels, etc. plus one example.	Reading real-world notices and other short texts for the main message.	5
2	Matching. Five questions in the form of descriptions of people to match to eight short adapted-authentic texts.	Reading multiple texts for specific information and detailed comprehension.	5
3	True/False. Ten questions with an adapted-authentic long text.	Processing a factual text. Scanning for specific information while disregarding redundant material.	10
4	Four-option multiple choice. Five questions with an adapted-authentic long text.	Reading for detailed comprehension; understanding attitude, opinion and writer purpose. Reading for gist, inference and global meaning.	5
5	Four-option multiple-choice cloze. Ten questions, plus an integrated example, with an adapted-authentic text drawn from a variety of sources. The text is of a factual or narrative nature.	Understanding of vocabulary and grammar in a short text, and understanding the lexicographical patterns in the text.	10

- **Marking**

Candidates record their answers on a separate answer sheet. The answers for Parts 1-5 are scanned by computer. Each of the 35 questions carries one mark. This is weighted so that this comprises 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

- **Candidate performance**

Part 1, Questions 1-5: Multiple choice

The five multiple-choice questions in this task test understanding of short texts. These now comprise 'public' texts (notices, signs and packaging labels) and personal messages (emails, post-it notices, postcards, etc). Both types of text occur in a range of settings and reflect core PET topics. For a full list of these topics, see the PET Handbook.

The texts in this test were a handwritten note about arrangements for a school trip, a warning sign outside a physics laboratory, a post-it note on a kitchen table, a notice outside a library and a notice for rail passengers.

None of the questions proved too challenging to candidates. Question 1 proved the easiest, while Questions 3 and 5 were more challenging. In Question 3, the post-it note, some weaker candidates chose option C (sugar), possibly because this is mentioned first in the note or because of the informal shortening of the message 'Have bought some sugar...'. In Question 5, weaker candidates were attracted to both A and B. In A, the use of 'unless' may have caused problems, and this option contains several key words from the notice: 'queue', 'ticket', 'staff'. Option B also reflects some elements of the notice: 'queue here...' 'our staff...' and it appears that weaker candidates may have matched these with the text. Students should be reminded to think carefully about the meaning of both text and options before selecting their answer. See suggestions for candidate preparation on page 7.

Part 2, Questions 6-10: Matching

The topic for this session was guidebooks about Britain, which seems to have been accessible to candidates. Most candidates handled the task reasonably well.

Questions 9 and 10 were the most challenging. In Question 9, many weaker candidates chose the distractor text E and some were also drawn to B, possibly because the description about Paolo mentions the 'countryside' and this word features in both B and E. Students must avoid simple 'wordspotting' in this task, as they will most likely be misled if they do this. Although text E mentions walking in the countryside, E cannot be the right answer as this guidebook has 'little practical information for the traveller' (Paolo needs to find out about accommodation). The key, G, provides this in its 'suggestions of reasonably-priced places to stay'.

In Question 10, the distractor text B again attracted some weaker candidates. However, there is no reference here to towns or cities, so it cannot be the correct answer. The key, C, mirrors the description in all its requirements, though this is achieved by means of paraphrase. So, for example: 'see the less popular towns' becomes 'the many towns and villages which are usually forgotten' and 'which quiet country roads to use' matches up with 'suggested routes avoiding the busy motorways' and 'opportunity to drive through the beautiful countryside'. From these examples, it is clear that candidates need to engage fully with the people's requirements and look out for ways of paraphrasing the information given.

Part 3, Questions 11-20: True/False

The text for this task is the longest in the Reading component and is usually factual in nature. Candidates have to decide whether ten sentences about a text are correct or incorrect and these sentences follow the order of information in the text. This session's text was about a mobile phone service.

The task was well handled by most candidates. Questions 13 and 15 were the easiest and Question 12 was the most challenging. This question tested the understanding of 'up to', which often confuses candidates at PET. The sentence is incorrect, because 'more than 85% of people' does not mean the same as 'up to 85%'.

As in Part 2, the ability to recognise paraphrase is very important. Candidates must allow themselves enough time to read the sentences carefully first, in order to scan the text for relevant information. See further suggestions for candidate preparation on page 7.

Part 4, Questions 21-25: Multiple choice

This task is typically the most challenging part of the Reading component, probably because it tests attitude and opinion, which is less straightforward to process and understand than factual information. The text for this session was about a musician who won some money in a competition and who then decided to buy a very expensive violin. It contained the quoted opinions of both the violinist and his wife.

This session, the task again proved to be the hardest on the Reading component. Questions 22, 24 and 25 were the most difficult. In Question 22, many weaker candidates chose options A or D rather than the key, C, and option D also attracted a few of the stronger candidates. While both of these distractor options are plausible, A is ruled out by what the text says: Colin's dream did not end unhappily because he bought the violin and his wife supported this decision. D cannot be correct because the text does not quantify how much money musicians need.

In Question 24, several candidates chose B instead of A. However, the suggestion that Colin would save some of his prize money comes in the opening paragraph before the visit to the violin shop. When Colin found the violin, he is quoted as saying that he was not sure he could afford to buy it. This equates with option A, 'might not have enough money'.

Question 25 tests global understanding and therefore draws on information throughout the text. Just over half the candidature chose the correct option, D, possibly because the use of 'in spite of' here caused candidates to be in some doubt about its veracity. The distractor B proved very attractive but is not supported by the text: although Colin did in the end spend all his prize money, in the beginning he had decided to save some and retire; therefore, he would never have announced that he 'would spend every penny'.

Candidates must allow enough time for this part of the paper. Even though there are only five questions, each one needs to be thought about carefully and all four options checked against the text.

Part 5, Questions 26-35: Multiple-choice cloze

This multiple-choice 'cloze' task tests mainly vocabulary but also focuses on grammatical areas of language, such as the clausal structure and use of prepositions in this session's text about filming Everest. The task was reasonably well done by most candidates, although Questions 33 and 35 proved rather challenging.

Question 33 tests the semantic group of verbs dealing with arrival. Strong candidates coped well with this question, choosing the key C (reached), whilst many of the weaker candidates chose the higher frequency verb in A (arrived), which does not fit the space as there is no preposition following it.

Question 35 requires a good understanding of the whole sentence, since it tests the intensifying use of 'even' before the word 'harder', contrasting with the phrase 'difficult enough' in the first half of the sentence. Many weaker candidates chose B, seeing this option (more) as fulfilling a simple comparison. However, the comparative form 'harder' is already used in the text. This incorrect use of 'more' with an -er comparative adjective is in fact a common mistake at PET level.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION**

Part 1

Many of the notices used in this part are only found in English-speaking countries, so teachers may wish to familiarise their students with examples drawn from past papers or published practice tests. As for the new personal messages, teachers could produce similar short texts including emails, post-it notes and postcards, or ask their students to do so. It would be worth spending some time in class looking at the contrasting language used in public notices and personal messages. For example, imperatives and modal verbs (of obligation and necessity, prohibition, permission and advice) may be more frequently associated with public notices, while personal messages may include informal language such as contracted forms and phrasal verbs. As initial training for this task, students could be given just the short texts and asked to explain their meaning, either orally or in writing. They could then suggest different ways of expressing the meaning, so that students become familiar with the use of paraphrase in this part as well as in subsequent parts of the Reading component.

Part 2

Students should be trained in skimming and scanning, so that they can process the eight texts efficiently. As a training activity, it can be helpful to focus in detail on the people's descriptions, asking students to underline key words and phrases and then to think further about these, perhaps discussing them in pairs. For example, in Question 6 Keiko needs 'lists of inexpensive hotels': students will not only have to understand what a list is but also look for matches on the price range described.

As stated earlier, students need to be made aware of the perils of wordspotting. It is probably best to do this by reference to a past paper. Students could be asked to highlight all uses of a word that occurs in both the description and the texts, for example the use of 'countryside' already referred to above. Students should then look at all these examples, explaining how the texts they appear in match or do not match the person's requirements.

Part 3

Exposure in class to a range of factual texts of medium length is important for this part. The internet provides a readily available source of appropriate texts, and authentic brochures and leaflets can also work well as practice material. Since the essence of this task is paraphrase recognition, it would be helpful for students to be given a factual text and asked to try to express elements of its content in other ways. This type of practice activity could also be done with a task from a past paper, where only the text is handed out to students, with the key parts underlined or highlighted.

For weaker students, it is useful to indicate where approximately the answers come in a text, so that they initially have some guidance and support. It may also be useful to concentrate on key language areas such as comparison and conditional structures, since these regularly appear in the wording of some of the ten sentences.

Part 4

It is clear that students need to be familiar with ways of expressing attitude or opinion. Since this area of language is also tested on the PET Listening paper (in Part 4), it may be worth considering key vocabulary that is common to both exam tasks. This will include different 'functional' verbs, such as 'advise', 'complain', 'suggest', 'warn'. Verbs like these are often used in the first question of Reading Part 4, which tests the writer's purpose.

When training students for the exam task itself, discuss with students whether it might be better to answer the questions out of the order given: as Questions 21 and 25 test overall understanding of the text, students might find it easier to answer these last, after they have considered the text in depth.

Part 5

To perform well in this part, students need to have a fairly broad knowledge of vocabulary. They should organise their recording of new words by topic, and group words of similar meaning together. Regular vocabulary activities in class that revise and extend students' knowledge include 'odd man out' exercises, where students have to explain which word in a set of four or five is different and why; word square searches, containing fifteen words belonging to the same topic. Exercises that encourage students to group words by part of speech are also useful.

When training for the actual exam task, suggest that students try to fit all four options in the space, checking the words either side of the space before deciding on their answers. Work on dependent prepositions and phrasal verb particles is also relevant here.

Writing			
PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	<p>Sentence transformations.</p> <p>Five questions, plus an integrated example, that are theme-related. Candidates are given sentences and then asked to complete similar sentences with no more than three words, using a different structural pattern, so that the sentence still has the same meaning.</p>	<p>Control and understanding of Threshold/PET grammatical structures. Rephrasing and reformulating information.</p>	5
2	<p>Short communicative message.</p> <p>Candidates are prompted to write a short message in the form of a postcard, note, email etc. The prompt takes the form of a situation to respond to.</p>	<p>A short piece of writing (35-45 words) focusing on communication of specific messages.</p>	1
3	<p>A longer piece of continuous writing.</p> <p>Candidates are presented with a choice of two questions, an informal letter or a story.</p> <p>Candidates are primarily assessed on their ability to use and control a range of Threshold-level language. Coherent organisation, spelling and punctuation are also assessed.</p>	<p>Writing about 100 words focusing on control and range of language.</p>	1

- **Marking**

Questions 1-5 carry one mark each. Question 6 is marked out of 5; and question 7/8 is marked out of 15. This gives a total of 25 which represents 25% of the total marks for the whole examination.

- **Candidate performance**

Part 1, Questions 1-5: Sentence transformations

This sentence-transformation task now requires only a short answer of at most three words, but more typically of one or two words only. Candidates have to fill in the missing middle part of the second sentence, so that it means the same as the first.

This session, the sentences in this part were about the singer Madonna. Some candidates lost marks because their answers were incorrectly spelled. In this part of the Writing component, everything must be correctly spelled, with capital letters where necessary. American English is acceptable, if used consistently.

Candidates found Questions 1 and 5 the most challenging. In Question 1, a common wrong answer was 'young'. However, in order to mirror the meaning of the first

sentence, with its use of 'eldest', a comparative form is needed in the second sentence. Question 5 also tested comparison, this time with the use of 'more'. A few candidates gave the answer as 'more popular', but this was not accepted, as it resulted in a slight difference in meaning from the first sentence.

Part 2, Question 6: Short communicative message

The testing focus of this new Part 2 task is on task achievement, and the quality of the language produced by candidates is only a factor if it affects the communication of the message. For this session, candidates were shown a picture postcard bought at an art gallery and had to imagine they were sending this postcard to a friend in Australia.

In common with all Part 2 tasks, there were three content points to include: candidates had to say something about the art gallery, give an explanation as to why they chose this postcard, and ask the friend a question about the weather in Australia. Most candidates handled the task well and wrote within the word limits specified. Candidates who wrote unduly long answers tended to lose marks because the clarity of their writing suffered and some irrelevant material was introduced.

A few candidates dealt inadequately with the first content point, merely mentioning the art gallery rather than saying something about it. For the second content point, candidates gave a variety of reasons for the choice of postcard, sometimes including impressive language range, such as 'it reminds me of your personality', 'it's very colourful, it's crazy'. The third content point caused candidates no difficulty, although weaker candidates had problems with the word order of questions.

Part 3, Question 7 or 8: Continuous writing

A new general markscheme for PET Part 3 was in operation (reproduced in the current PET Handbook on page 12). The assessment focus is now largely on language, rather than the previous dual scales of task achievement and language. Up to fifteen marks are available for Writing Part 3, representing 60% of the total marks on the Writing component.

Question 7, the letter, asked candidates to write to a friend about birthday presents for teenage boys. Question 8, the story, had the title 'A very unusual evening'. Both tasks appear to have been accessible in terms of topic, but more candidates chose Question 7, possibly because they were familiar with the 'traditional' PET letter format. However, Question 8 had the higher average mark of the two tasks and there was noticeably more ambitious use of language in many of the answers to this story task.

In Question 7, better candidates showed good use and range of language, but weaker candidates did not develop their answers beyond merely listing their ideas of presents to buy. A few candidates continued the extract of the friend's letter rather than replying to it and were penalised according to the general markscheme.

Question 8 gave rise to some imaginative stories, written in either the first or third person. Better candidates showed an excellent range of language and organised their writing effectively. Weaker candidates often got into difficulties when attempting to use a range of past tenses and the lack of accuracy of irregular past tense forms was a recurrent problem.

Candidates are asked to lozenge their choice of question on their Answer Sheet, but a significant number failed to do so.

A few candidates attempted to answer both questions. Where this happened,

examiners marked both tasks and applied the higher mark of the two. However, the relative shortness of these answers often dictated the maximum mark that could be awarded.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION**

Part 1

As this part tests structural knowledge, students need to have a good grasp of intermediate level structures and be able to apply these accurately. The PET Handbook contains a list of the grammatical areas covered in PET on pages 7-8. Correct spelling is also essential, so time should be spent in class practising spelling, focusing on key problem areas such as pluralisation, comparative forms, past tenses and gerund forms.

Students could work through past papers in pairs, discussing what is required in the space or checking each other's answers.

Part 2

Regular practice in writing short communicative messages will benefit not only this part but also Reading Part 1. Students could be encouraged to email each other in English or to leave messages on post-it notes around the classroom.

Students should be taught useful expressions and other language appropriate to common functional areas, for example, apologising, explaining, suggesting, thanking. They should be discouraged from using any phrases that appear on the question paper, since this may not be the most natural way of communicating a given function in informal language and will not show their true language ability.

Part 3

Students should be given regular opportunities to write extended answers of around 100 words. It is often useful to ask students to write a first and second draft, where comments on accuracy on the first draft are supplemented by suggestions for improving the language range used. Students should regularly be encouraged to be more ambitious, for example, using a variety of adjectives instead of 'playing safe' with one or two, and varying how they start their sentences. Work on simple linking devices may also be required.

For the letter, students will need to be confident in their use of informal opening and closing formulae and be able to draw on a range of informal expressions. Some class work on phrasal verbs may also be advantageous.

For the story, students should revise narrative tenses and consult irregular verb tables in order to improve their accuracy of past tense forms. They should also be given practice in writing in both the first and third person, starting from different first sentences where the pronouns or names given indicate which should be used.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 1 READING and WRITING**

- DO** make sure you are familiar with the various test formats in Paper 1 through practice tests and past papers.
- DO** check with your teacher that you have covered the core PET topics in class.
- DO** make sure that you read as widely as possible in English so that you get regular exposure to authentic reading texts of different types (factual, narrative, opinion-based).
- DO** develop a range of reading skills, including skimming and scanning.
- DO** keep a vocabulary notebook organised by topic.
- DO** read the instructions for each part carefully.
- DO** study any examples given (Reading Part 1 and Part 5; Writing Part 1).
- DO** read each text carefully before attempting the questions, especially for Part 4.
- DO** consider all multiple-choice options before choosing your answer.
- DO** check your answers and transfer them accurately to the answer sheet.
- DO** be ambitious and use a range of language in Writing Part 3.
- DO** make sure that you mark the correct box for your choice of question in Writing Part 3.
- DO** approach the test calmly and confidently

- DON'T** leave any answers blank, even if you are unsure of the answer.
- DON'T** use a pen on the answer sheet. You should use a pencil.
- DON'T** panic if there is a word in a text that you don't understand. It is usually possible to guess the meaning from the context.
- DON'T** write more than three words to fill a space in Writing Part 1.
- DON'T** write more than 45 words in Writing Part 2, as this may affect the clarity of your answer.
- DON'T** spend time making a full rough copy for Writing Part 3. There isn't enough time to do this and it isn't necessary.
- DON'T** worry too much about spelling errors in Writing Part 3, as ambitious language is rewarded.

PAPER 2 – LISTENING

PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
1	<p>Multiple choice (discrete).</p> <p>Short neutral or informal monologues or dialogues.</p> <p>Seven discrete three-option multiple-choice questions with visuals, plus one example.</p>	Listening to identify key information from short exchanges.	7
2	<p>Multiple choice.</p> <p>Longer monologue or interview (with one main speaker).</p> <p>Six three-option multiple-choice questions.</p>	Listening to identify specific information and detailed meaning.	6
3	<p>Gap-fill.</p> <p>Longer monologue.</p> <p>Six gaps to fill in. Candidates need to write one or more words in each space.</p>	Listening to identify, understand and interpret information.	6
4	<p>True/False.</p> <p>Longer informal dialogue.</p> <p>Candidates need to decide whether six statements are correct or incorrect.</p>	Listening for detailed meaning, and to identify the attitudes and opinions of the speakers.	6

- **Marking**

Candidates record their answers on a separate answer sheet. A computer scans the answers for Parts 1, 2 and 4. The answers for Part 3 are marked by teams of trained markers. Each question carries one mark, so the Listening component has a total of 25 marks.

- **Candidate performance**

Part 1, Questions 1-7: Multiple choice

This part of the test contains seven visual multiple-choice questions. Candidates are asked a question and must choose the correct visual image from a choice of three in order to answer the question in the context of what they hear on the tape. This set of questions was well answered by the majority of candidates. The early questions were quite high scoring, especially question 1, whilst question 6 proved to be the most challenging. Taken as a whole, the set of questions was of average difficulty and

discriminated well, with stronger candidates choosing the correct option and weaker candidates selecting the distracting options.

Part 2, Questions 8-13: Multiple choice

This is a three-option multiple-choice task which tests understanding of the detailed meaning of a longer text. The questions were generally well within the candidates' competence with a high proportion getting the right answer to questions 9 and 10, for example. Questions 11 and 12, on the other hand, proved to be more challenging and discriminated well between weaker and stronger candidates. Weaker candidates tended to choose option A in question 11, and option B in question 12.

Part 3, Questions 14-19: Gap-fill

This task tests the candidates' ability to listen out for and write down specific information from the listening text. Candidates generally found this the most challenging part of the test, although most managed to write acceptable answers for questions 15, 16 and 18. Question 17, which tested a lower-frequency word at PET level, and question 19, which tested a high-frequency word in a less familiar context, proved more challenging. These questions did, however, discriminate well between weak and strong candidates. A range of unambiguous misspellings was accepted for all answers.

Part 4, Questions 20-25: True/False

This true-false task focuses on candidates' ability to understand opinion and attitude as well as factual information. The task was of average difficulty and there were no particular problems. Questions 20 and 24 proved to be the most accessible to candidates whilst Questions 21 and 22 were the most challenging. Again, there was good discrimination between weak and strong candidates on all items.

• RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION

Part 1

Unlike other parts of the listening test, Part 1 asks candidates to listen to a series of separate recordings, including both monologues and dialogues, each with its own context, speaker(s) and focus question. The question is written on the page above the three picture options and is also read out on the tape. Candidates should read and listen to the wording of this focus question very carefully so that they are sure what information they are listening for. In question 1, for example, the speakers mention the three different objects, but only one of them is chosen as the best present for the girl to take.

Candidates should try to tick the correct box the first time they hear each text, and then check their answers the second time. They should be ready to find the key information at any point in the recording, not necessarily at the beginning or end. For example, in question 6 the speakers consider various options before coming to a final decision, but the last word we hear does not, in fact, relate to their chosen programme. Some questions focus on information or opinions coming from one of the speakers, for example in Question 2, and this is indicated in the focus question. In other questions, for example, question 6, the key information may come from either speaker.

Part 2

In the Part 2 rubric, which is both printed on the page and read out on the tape, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the setting (e.g. telling some students), the topic (e.g. her work as a clothes designer), and the name of the speaker (e.g. Louise Bright). This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and for the questions on the page.

The listening text for Part 2 has a clear structure with a discrete piece of text relating to each question. Each question is cued by words in the text that correspond closely to the wording of the questions. For example, question 8 asks about Louise's first job, whilst the corresponding piece of text is cued by the phrase 'When I left school, I worked as ...' An important strategy for candidates to develop is listening for such cues, and using the wording of the questions to guide them through the text and prevent them from 'losing their place' as they listen.

This task involves listening for detail in order to pick out the correct option and disregard the incorrect ones. Once the initial prompt is established, however, the questions are unlikely to repeat the exact wording of the text in the multiple-choice options. Therefore, candidates need to listen for the meaning of what they hear and match this to the closest idea amongst the options. For example, in question 13 we are asked what 'Louise's aim' is, whilst what Louise says is: 'I intend to have my own business in the end and I'd like to design children's clothes' to give the key A. Often the questions include a simple rephrasing of the ideas in the text, but candidates sometimes need to recognise synonyms and should be aware of a range of common expressions suitable for the level. For example, the key to Question 9 is B, 'studied the history of fashion', which corresponds to the phrase in the text: 'looking back at the fashions of the past'.

Part 3

In Part 3, the information on the page represents a summary, in note or sentence form, of what the candidates are going to hear. This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and so helps them to listen out for the type of information which is missing. The spoken and written rubrics also supply further information about both the topic (e.g. a country park) and the context (e.g. a recorded message).

The questions are well-spaced so that there is plenty of time for candidates to write their answers as they listen. Most of the gaps require a single word, a number or a short noun phrase as an answer and candidates should be discouraged from attempting to transcribe longer pieces of text. For example, the answer to Question 16 is 'maps'. If candidates write 'maps are available free of charge' this is also correct and would get the mark, but they will have wasted time repeating information which is already on the page (and so is not part of the key) and risk missing the answer to the next question whilst doing so. The words or numbers that candidates need to write will all be heard on the recording, in the form in which they need to be written. As in Part 2, the wording of the prompts on the page echoes, to a certain extent, the wording of the text, but this is not a dictation test, so candidates need to listen for the meaning of the text in order to locate the correct information. For example, in Question 18 the message tells us about the three activities, but this information is not heard as the simple list presented on the page, so candidates must extract the name of the missing activity from what is heard.

Candidates should check their final answers to make sure they are clearly written and unambiguous, but should not become over-concerned about spelling, as a range of misspellings is accepted as long as the answer is clear. For example, in Question 17

various spellings of 'entrance' were accepted as correct answers (e.g. 'entrence', 'entrance'), but where candidates wrote, for example, 'in fence' or 'endrest' the meaning was lost and so the mark could not be given. However, high frequency words, such as 'Tuesday', in Question 14, should be correctly spelt.

In this task, candidates are listening for specific information and there will be some information in the recording which is not relevant to the questions. The skill of selecting and recording relevant information is a useful one for candidates to practise in the classroom and during their preparation for the PET examination.

Part 4

In the Part 4 rubric, which is both printed on the page and read out on the tape, there is information about the listening text. For example, candidates are told about the topic (e.g. watching television) and the name of the speakers (e.g. a boy called Tony). This is useful information for candidates as it will give them a context for what they hear and for the questions on the page.

Candidates should read the questions carefully, and think about the exact meaning of each of the statements. As in Parts 2 and 3, they are unlikely to hear the exact words repeated on the recording and so should be listening out for synonyms and parallel expressions. Candidates should listen for the gist of what speakers are saying, paying special attention to whether positive or negative views are being expressed. For example, in the text relating to Question 21, Rachel says: 'I don't mind people being around'.

Several of the questions test attitude and opinion and candidates should be familiar with adjectives which express feelings such as 'disappointed', 'pleased', 'excited' etc. and simple reporting verbs, e.g. 'persuade', 'encourage', '(dis)agree', etc. as these may be tested. Candidates also need to make sure they are listening for the opinion of the correct speaker, e.g. in this task, two questions focus on Tony, two on Rachel and two on the interaction between speakers, for example, Question 21 which tests understanding of the attitude of both speakers.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 2 LISTENING**

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| DO | read the instructions carefully for each part so you have an idea of the topic. |
| DO | look at the question paper material (text and pictures) for each part before the listening text for that part begins, and think about what kind of information you have to listen for. |
| DO | look at the example question as you listen to the beginning of the recording. |
| DO | mark / write your answers on the question paper as you listen. |
| DO | answer as much as you can when you hear the recording for the first time. |
| DO | check your answers and find any missing answers when you hear the recording for the second time. |
| DO | answer all the questions even if you are not sure of the answer. You have probably understood more than you think you have. |
| DO | check that the options you choose in Part 2 really do answer the question or finish the sentence. |
| DO | write only one or two words or a number in Part 3. |
| DO | think about what kind of words to listen for in Part 3. |
| DO | remember that you are told which speaker is which in Part 4. |
| DO | transfer your answers to the answer sheet only when you are told to do so at the end of the test. |
| DON'T | worry too much if you don't hear the answer to a question the first time. You will hear everything twice. |
| DON'T | panic if you don't understand everything while listening, as some parts of the listening may not be tested. |
| DON'T | change your answers when you are transferring them to the answer sheet, because what you thought was right while you were listening was probably right! |
| DON'T | use a pen on the answer sheet. You should use a pencil. |

PAPER 3 – SPEAKING

PART	TASK TYPES AND FORMAT	TASK FOCUS	TIMING
1	<p>Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor.</p> <p>The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.</p>	<p>Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.</p>	2-3 minutes
2	<p>Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other.</p> <p>Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.</p>	<p>Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.</p>	2-3 minutes
3	<p>Extended turn.</p> <p>A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for up to a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.</p>	<p>Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.</p>	3 minutes
4	<p>General conversation. Candidates interact with each other.</p> <p>The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3.</p> <p>The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.</p>	<p>The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits etc.</p>	3 minutes

- **Marking**

Candidates are awarded marks by both examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the Speaking Test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction. The test takes ten to twelve minutes and consists of four parts. Marks are awarded throughout the test on the following four scales.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical structures and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirements at PET level. Candidates who do not have immediate access to the vocabulary they need should be able to convey their intended meaning by using alternative words or phrases without extensive repetition.

Discourse Management

At PET level, candidates are expected to be able to use extended utterances where appropriate. The ability to maintain a coherent flow of language over several utterances is assessed here.

Pronunciation

In general, this refers to the ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. At PET level, it is recognised that even in the top assessment band, candidates' pronunciation will be influenced by features of their first language.

Interactive Communication

This refers to the ability to take part in the interaction and fulfil the task requirements by initiating and responding appropriately and with a reasonable degree of fluency. It includes the ability to use strategies to maintain or repair communication.

The assessor awards a mark out of 5 on each of the four scales. This ranges from effective use at this level (5) to unintelligibility (0). The interlocutor gives an impression mark out of 5 for each candidate. The interlocutor's mark is then doubled to 10, which is added to the assessor's mark out of 20 to give each candidate a score out of 30. This mark is weighted to a final total out of 25. There is no pass mark for the individual scales.

- **Candidate performance**

Candidate performance in the March 2004 administration was consistent with that of previous years. Feedback indicates that the candidates were generally well prepared and that the materials were well received.

Part 1

Candidates tended to perform well in this part. The questions were usually predictable ones about family, studies or work, free-time activities, etc. Stronger candidates extended their responses to the more open-ended questions with details that backed up their answers. Weaker candidates tended to give one- or two-word answers to all questions, and failed to develop their answers, or required additional prompts from the interlocutor. Some weaker candidates had problems spelling their name in English.

Part 2

Candidates who performed well in this part listened carefully to the interlocutor's instructions, thought about the task and its context, and interacted meaningfully with their partner to reach a conclusion or decision. For example in Living Here (see 2004 Past Paper Pack), well-prepared candidates talked about each of the suggestions given by the visual prompts and gave reasons for their opinions. These candidates involved their partner by asking for an opinion and following up on the points made. In this way, they kept the discussion going for the allotted 2-3 minutes. Where time allowed, they summarised the reasons for their final choice to signal that they had completed the task.

Part 3

In this part of the test, candidates have the chance to demonstrate their range of vocabulary and their ability to organise language in describing a photograph. The sample materials show families. Strong candidates spoke for the full time allotted and talked about the people and activities in the foreground (their clothes, what they are

doing, the relationships between them, the objects in view, etc.), as well as commenting on the overall context (the location, furniture, etc.). Strong candidates were able to deal with unknown items of vocabulary by using paraphrase strategies, such as providing a fuller description of objects and activities when they were unsure of the specific word to use. Some candidates spent time unsuccessfully trying to produce sophisticated positional language (e.g. in the top right-hand corner, etc.) which is not expected at this level, and so wasted opportunities to demonstrate their range of PET-level vocabulary and expressions.

Part 4

Candidates who performed well in this part of the test listened carefully to the instructions and understood that they should talk together with their partner. They also covered both elements of the task – things they liked to do with their families (1) and things they preferred to do with their friends (2). Weaker candidates sometimes addressed their comments to the interlocutor, or produced a lengthy monologue, failing to bring their partner into the discussion. Where candidates were unable to fill the allotted time, additional prompts were provided by the interlocutor.

- **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CANDIDATE PREPARATION**

Candidates at this level are not expected to speak perfectly, nor understand everything that is said to them. Credit will be given, however, to those candidates able to use repair strategies to prevent communication breaking down. For example, they should learn to make use of simple phrases for asking the interlocutor or their partner to repeat or rephrase something they have not understood. They should also learn to use paraphrase strategies when they cannot call to mind a particular word needed for a task.

Part 1

Candidates should be given practice in the everyday language of talking about themselves. For example, they should be able to give information about their work or studies, free-time activities, family, home, home town, etc. They should also practise spelling their names using English letters.

Part 2

Candidates should be given practice in talking together about an imaginary situation. They need to understand that they are talking about the specific situation described in the instructions, as illustrated by the visual prompts, and not just generally about the topic. In class, they should practise using picture prompts as the basis for a discussion. Candidates also need to practise asking for their partner's opinions and suggestions as well as supplying reasons for their own opinions. They should be familiar with the language of agreement and disagreement and be able to explain why something is, or is not, a good idea.

Part 3

For this task, candidates need to be given practice in talking about photographs. At this level, however, they are only expected to comment on the actual content of the images they are shown, and not issues raised by the broader context. They should be encouraged to give a detailed description, however, mentioning even those details

(clothes, colours, weather, etc.) which might seem obvious. In this way, they will demonstrate their range of vocabulary. They should also be able to link their ideas together in a simple way, using prepositions and other simple expressions to locate aspects of the picture (e.g. behind, in front of, next to, etc.) and back up what they say with examples, e.g. 'It is summer because the sun is shining and they are wearing summer clothes.'

Part 4

As this part of the test is a conversation between the candidates, they should be encouraged to look at each other and show interest in what each other is saying. Candidates should not take long individual turns in this part, but should learn how to pick up and develop the points made by their partners. For example, a candidate might tell his/her partner interesting things about themselves, and then ask for the partner's views about a related issue. Candidates should, therefore, not only be given practice in talking about their opinions and personal experiences, but also in how to elicit these ideas from their partners.

- **DOs and DON'Ts for PET PAPER 3 SPEAKING**

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| DO | practise your spoken English both in and out of class as much as possible before the test. |
| DO | listen carefully to the examiner's questions. |
| DO | ask the examiner for clarification if necessary. |
| DO | speak clearly so that both examiners can hear you. |
| DO | remember that the examiners are sympathetic listeners and want you to give your best possible performance. |
| DO | answer the examiner's questions clearly and try to give extended answers to open-ended questions in Part 1. |
| DO | talk to your partner and not the examiner in Parts 2 and 4. |
| DO | show interest in what your partner is saying and ask your partner questions in Parts 2 and 4. |
| DO | listen to and look at your partner and give your partner a chance to speak in Parts 2 and 4. |
| DO | concentrate on the actual content of the picture and describe the picture thoroughly in Part 3. |
| DO | make sure you have some phrases to get around the problem of words you don't know in Part 3. |
| DO | try to relax and enjoy the test |
| DON'T | worry too much about making grammar mistakes. |
| DON'T | worry if you think your partner in the test is not as good, or much better at speaking English than you. The examiners look at each candidate's performance individually. |
| DON'T | let exam nerves prevent you from speaking. Examiners can't give marks to silent candidates. |
| DON'T | worry too much if you don't know a word. |
| DON'T | speak for too long without involving your partner in Parts 2 and 4. |
| DON'T | talk to the examiner rather than your partner in Parts 2 and 4. |
| DON'T | try to talk about things/ideas outside the photo in Part 3. |
| DON'T | stop talking if you come to a word you do not know in Part 3. |

FEEDBACK FORM

PET Examination Report – March 2004

We are interested in hearing your views on how useful this report has been.

We would be most grateful if you could briefly answer the following questions and return a photocopy of this page to the following address:

University of Cambridge
ESOL Examinations
Reports Co-ordinator
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

Fax: +44 1223 460278

1. Please describe your situation (e.g. EFL/ESOL teacher, Director of Studies, Examinations Officer, Local Secretary).

2. Have you prepared candidates for PET? YES/NO

3. Do you plan to prepare candidates for PET in the future? YES/NO

4. How have you used this report (e.g. to provide feedback to other teachers, for examination practice, etc.)?

5. Which parts of this report did you find most useful?

6. Which parts are not so useful?

7. What extra information would you like to see included in this report?

8. (Optional) Your name
- Centre/School

Thank you.