

Notes

A2 Key and B1 Preliminary (KET, PET) · Cambridge English · A2 Key (KET)

A2 Key

A2 Key, tasks from 2020; digital and remaining standard paper sessions

Reading/Writing 60 min: 7 parts, 30 reading items and two writing tasks (25+ and 35+ words). Listening about 30 min: 5 parts, 25 items. Speaking 8–10 min per pair: 2 parts. Standard paper A2 Key ends after 3 December 2026; A2 Key Digital and Key for Schools continue.

Official scope: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/610842-a2-key-handbook-for-teachers.pdf>

RW.1-3 · Key reading: messages and short texts

- For Part 1, identify who is speaking, who must act and what the message asks. Check negatives, dates and conditions.
- For Part 2, find each description's key need, then compare all three texts. A repeated word is not enough.
- For Part 3, read the whole passage for its main idea, then locate detail evidence. Keep the time and person correct.
- All objective answers must follow the text. Do not replace a notice's instruction with what you would usually do.

Checked example

Notice: "Library closes at 4 today. Return books through the outside box after 4." The message allows returns after closing, through the box. "No books can be returned after 4" contradicts the second sentence.

Common error

A distractor often repeats the same place or time while reversing the instruction.

RW.4-5 · Key cloze: vocabulary and grammar in context

- Read the complete text before filling gaps. Topic and tense help narrow choices.
- Part 4 has three choices per gap and chiefly tests words in context. Check collocation and meaning.
- Part 5 asks for one word per gap. Pronouns, prepositions, auxiliaries and linking words are common targets.
- Reread the completed sentence. The answer must agree with nearby grammar and the text's meaning.

Checked example

“She was tired, _____ she went to bed early.” So expresses the result. But would introduce contrast; because would wrongly make going to bed the reason she was tired. Read both clauses before deciding.

Common error

Open cloze allows one word, not a phrase. Check spelling even when you know the rule.

RW.6 · Key writing: a message of at least 25 words

- Part 6 asks for a short email or note of 25 words or more. Turn the three prompts into a three-point checklist.
- Give a direct answer to each content point. Add enough detail for the reader to act.
- Use short complete sentences and a suitable greeting. Connect related information with and, but or because.
- Check content, organisation and language. A teacher reviews the open response; a multiple-choice check is only preparation.

Checked example

Task: invite Sam to study, giving place, time and what to bring. “Hi Sam, let’s study in the school library on Friday at four. Please bring your science notes and a pencil. We can practise together. See you, Lin.” The reader has all three details.

Common error

Do not count a greeting as a substitute for a required content point. Avoid memorised messages that ignore the task.

RW.7 · Key writing: a three-picture story

- Look at all pictures first. Identify who appears, what happens and how the ending relates to the beginning.
- Write about every picture. Use past forms for a completed story, with simple links such as then and finally.
- Use names or pronouns clearly so the reader knows who acts. Add only plausible details consistent with the images.
- Part 7 requires 35 words or more. The teacher checks content, organisation and language; the pictures remain the task stimulus.

Checked example

Practice picture sequence: Lin packs a picnic; rain starts at the park; friends eat under a shelter. Story plan: preparation → interrupted picnic → sheltered meal. Do not claim they went swimming when no picture supports it.

Common error

Ignoring the last picture leaves the required story incomplete, even when the opening is fluent.

L.1-3 · Key listening: visual choices, notes and conversations

- Before audio, compare picture differences or read note headings. Predict the type of information needed.
- Part 1 tests short-dialogue details. Listen to the final decision, not the first option mentioned.
- Part 2 requires one word, number, date or time. Practise names, spelling and similar numbers.
- Part 3 asks details from a longer conversation. Track who gives each fact and corrections. Use a teacher's live reading when no licensed audio is available.

Checked example

Teacher script: “Please meet at the museum entrance at ten fifteen. I first said ten, but the doors open later.” Note answer: 10:15. Hearing ten is not sufficient because the speaker corrects it.

Common error

Reading a transcript is reading practice. It becomes listening practice only when the learner cannot see the script during delivery.

L.4-5 · Key listening: gist and matching

- Part 4 asks the main message, purpose or topic of each short exchange. Listen for the whole exchange.
- Part 5 connects people or objects to options. Record the relationship, not a list of every word heard.
- Distractors can be activities the speaker rejected. Contrast words but and instead often reveal the final choice.
- Use the second hearing to check uncertainty. Do not change an answer simply because another word sounds familiar.

Checked example

Teacher script: “I wanted to play football, but my leg hurt, so I watched the match instead.” Main action: watched, not played. For matching, “Mina borrowed the red book; Leo chose the blue one” assigns colour to each person.

Common error

Match each person’s own choice. A nearby mention of someone else can be a distractor.

S.1-2 · Key speaking: interview and collaborative discussion

- Part 1 asks personal information, routines and preferences. Answer the question directly, then add one relevant detail.
- Part 2 uses visual prompts for a discussion with another candidate. Give a preference and a reason.
- Listen to your partner and respond. Invite a view with “What do you think?” rather than delivering a memorised speech.

- Teachers observe grammar/vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication, with global achievement. Use actual paired speaking, not a written replacement.

Checked example

A: “I like reading because I can relax. What about you?” B: “I prefer sport. Reading is good, but I like being outside.” Both give a view, explain it and respond to a partner. There is no single correct hobby.

Common error

Speaking is not a speed contest. Clear meaning and interaction matter more than producing a long unbroken answer.