



Guidance Notes for Teachers: Special Arrangements Writing Papers

Please read through the following information about Braille and Modified Large Print versions of Cambridge Assessment English Writing papers and make sure the test-taker:

- is familiar with the task instructions in these versions
- practises with the sample material available

Braille versions of Writing Papers

What changes are made?

1. The content or wording of the questions

Sometimes a question (or part of a question) may not be appropriate for a blind candidate, so we change it:

For example:

The standard paper asks:

*Describe what you can **see** when you go into your favourite garden.*

The adapted task asks:

*Describe what you can **hear** when you go into your favourite garden.*

2. Instructions for email-writing tasks

For email-writing tasks, the instructions in Braille versions include header information (because the candidate is not writing on the following page in the booklet). For example:

Start your email like this:

To: Jo

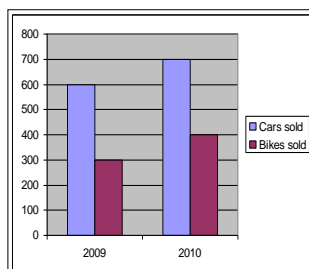
Sent: 7 December

Subject: Shopping

3. Tasks which use bar charts, or graphs, for input

If input for the writing task is in graphical form or presented as a bar chart/pie chart/graph, etc. the task is adapted so that the input is presented in written or list form. For example:

Graph version:



Special Arrangements version:

Year: 2009

Cars sold: 600

Bikes sold: 300

Year: 2010

Cars sold: 700

Bikes sold: 400

4. Rubrics (the instructions at the beginning of each task or part)

For sections of Writing papers where candidates choose one from a selection of tasks, rubrics are changed. e.g. *B2 First Writing, Part 2*:

Write an answer to **one** of the questions **2 – 5** in this part. Note that question 5 is in the separate booklet. Write your answer in **140 – 190** words in an appropriate style on your answer sheet, together with the number of the question.

5. Set text questions are printed in a separate booklet

Please make sure blind students know that questions on set texts will be printed **in a separate booklet**.

6. Extra headings may be inserted

Some tasks may include two or three separate pieces of information as input material. Each piece of input is given a separate heading in the Braille version to help blind candidates easily locate that piece of information.

B2 First task:

Read the following essay title and notes.

Essay title

Every country in the world has problems with pollution and damage to the environment. Do you think these problems can be solved?

Notes

Write about:

1. transport
2. rivers and seas
3. your own idea

Write your essay using **all** the notes and giving reasons for your point of view.

7. Speech bubbles, etc. are presented differently in Braille versions

Tasks where people's comments are given in a 'speech bubble' (or similar) are changed.

B1 Preliminary for Schools task:

Read this email from your English teacher Mrs Lake and the notes you have made. The notes are written in brackets in the email.

Email from: Mrs Lake

Subject: End of year party

Dear Class,

I'd like our class to have a party [*Great!*] to celebrate the end of the school year.

We could either have a party in the classroom or we could go to the park.

Which would you prefer to do? [*Explain*]

[*Suggest...*] What sort of activities or games should we do during the party?

[*Tell Mrs Lake*] What food do you think we should have at the party?

Reply soon!

Anna Lake

Write your **email** to Mrs Lake using **all the notes**.

Other important points:

1. Extra time

Reference to the candidate's additional time allowance is made on the cover/first page:

TIME: 50 minutes plus your additional time allowance.

2. Use of assistive technology

Blind candidates may apply to use various types of assistive technology to enable them to read the paper and write their answers.

Please see *Special Arrangements – 'I have visual difficulties'*.

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements/>

3. Candidates may apply to dictate their answers

Candidates who are blind can ask for permission to speak their answers to a person who will write their answers down. This person is called an *amanuensis* or *scribe*. The amanuensis will ask the blind candidate to spell some less common words.

The amanuensis will usually write the candidate's answers on the lined answer pages inside the print version of the Braille question paper booklet.

Candidates (or the amanuensis/scribe) must make sure each page of their answer sheet has the correct name and candidate number written on it and that each answer is clearly numbered.

Modified Large Print versions of Writing Papers

What are Modified Large Print (MLP) versions?

Modified Large Print versions of Writing papers contain adapted material, a simplified layout and standardised fonts (Arial 18 point bold).

Who are these versions for?

Modified Large Print versions are designed for:

- candidates with visual difficulties
- any candidate who has a physical difficulty which makes it difficult for them to read smaller print
- candidates with specific learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) who may find the layout and standardised font more accessible.

How can candidates write their answers?

Candidates using Modified Large Print versions can choose to write their answers:

1. on the question paper on the lined answer pages
2. on a separate sheet of paper

They may also apply to dictate their answers to an amanuensis.

What changes are made?

1. The same **enlarged print (font) size** is used throughout. It looks like this:

Arial 18 point bold

2. As far as possible, all instructions and texts on a page are **aligned left**.

3. The following are generally placed in **capital letters**:

- **headings, titles and section indicators** e.g. **PART 1**
- **words in bold** in the original question paper.
- **italicised words** in the original question paper e.g. titles of newspapers or books

Additionally, titles for stories or first lines of stories are presented in **single quotes**. Below is an example.

Original version:

You have decided to enter a short story competition in an international magazine, called *Global News*. The story must **begin** with the following words:

Ellen felt stronger than ever and knew that she could succeed.

Write your **story**.

Modified Large Print version:

You have decided to enter a short story competition in an international magazine, called GLOBAL NEWS. The story must BEGIN with the following words:

‘Ellen felt stronger than ever and knew that she could succeed.’

Write your STORY.

4. Some numbers are underlined to make sure candidates notice them. For example:
B2 First Writing, Part 1:

You MUST answer this question. Write your answer in 140 – 190 words in an appropriate style on pages 5 – 7 (or on a separate answer sheet).

5. **Page numbers** are placed at the centre and **bottom** of each page.

6. **TURN OVER** is only placed at the bottom of a page where absolutely necessary to make sure candidates do not miss a small final part of the question placed on the next page, e.g. a whole final sentence of a text or the final question in a set.

7. Occasionally, candidates may be given a more detailed instruction, which is placed at or near the top of a blank page, for example:

DO NOT TURN OVER UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD TO DO SO.

8. Generally, tasks which have been modified in Braille versions will also be used in Modified Large Print versions if this will help partially-sighted candidates and other candidates using these versions, e.g. a bar chart or graph will usually be presented in written or list form.

9. **Set text questions are printed in a separate booklet**

Please make sure candidates using Modified Large Print papers know that questions on set texts will be printed **in a separate booklet**.

10. Extra headings may be inserted

Longer writing tasks e.g. Part 1 of *B2 First* and *C1 Advanced* Writing papers usually provide two or three separate pieces of information as input material. Each piece of input is given a separate heading in the Modified Large Print version to help candidates to locate the piece of information easily.

FAQs

How much extra time is allowed?

Blind candidates are allowed up to 100% extra time.

Candidates using Modified Large Print versions are normally allowed 25% extra time but may be allowed more.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties are also normally allowed 25% extra time but may apply for more if their difficulty is severe.

If appropriate, candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing may also apply for extra time when taking a Writing paper (normally 25%).

Please contact your local centre for more details.

Can candidates who require special arrangements apply to use a computer to write their answers?

Yes. Candidates who require special arrangements (including candidates with specific learning difficulties) may apply to write their answers using a computer. If using a screen-reading program, candidates **may not use** any spellcheck, grammar check or thesaurus functions.

For reasons of test security, in the first instance, the exam centre's hardware should be used e.g. PC, laptop. However, use of the candidate's own laptop may be permitted where necessary, if all security requirements can be shown to have been complied with (please refer to your local centre for further advice).

Can candidates use assistive technology to read the question paper?

Candidates with **visual or physical difficulties** may use screen-reading software to **magnify** text or **to read out** all material in the question paper, as well as to write and revise their written answers. The same conditions as those for computers apply to spellcheck, grammar check or thesaurus functions, and use of a candidate's own laptop.

Candidates can also apply to use screen magnifiers as an alternative (or in addition) to printed question papers.

Candidates with specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia are **not** allowed to have a reader or an amanuensis.

Can partially-sighted candidates or candidates with specific learning difficulties request use of coloured overlays?

Yes. Candidates can request permission to use their own coloured overlays.

What if a candidate's handwriting is very difficult to read?

Candidates with specific learning difficulties are not allowed to have an amanuensis but may apply for a copier (transcriber) if their handwriting is difficult to read. This means that someone copies (makes a transcript of) the candidate's responses at the end of the Writing paper. The candidate will read out their answers to the copier, including all the spelling and punctuation. The copier will write down an **exact copy** of the answers, including any mistakes in grammar, spelling or punctuation.

How are a blind candidate's Braille answers transcribed?

Centres will arrange for blind candidates' answers to be transcribed from Braille – normally by dictation at the end of the Writing paper. Candidates should be given practice in spelling out words and indicating punctuation.

Some screen-reading programs include a facility for translation from Braille. If the transcript is being produced in this way, the candidate will be asked to check that the transcript is complete and accurate.

Preparation Tips for Teachers

1. Most of the advice applicable to standard versions of Writing papers will be relevant and useful for preparing candidates for Special Arrangements versions.
2. Make sure your student practises with any sample papers available so that they are familiar with:
 - changed rubrics (instructions)
 - layout of questions.

These can be converted to Braille using a Braille embosser, or accessed in Braille via a Braille display linked to a computer. Students may also access the paper using a screen-reader. Currently available sample Braille and Modified Large Print versions can be downloaded from:

<http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/help/special-requirements/>

3. It is important that all students plan their answers. If you teach a blind student and they use a Braille note-taker, they may apply to use this equipment in the examination.
4. Students, particularly those allowed extra time, should note how many marks are set aside for each question and not spend too much time on one question.
5. Partially-sighted students should tell the centre if they would prefer to write their answers on a separate blank sheet of paper (rather than on the lined answer pages inside the question paper).

Further advice and support can be obtained through your local centre, or by contacting the Helpdesk (<https://support.cambridgeenglish.org>).