

Chapter 1 : Cambridge English: Young Learners - Wikipedia

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History[edit] Cambridge English: Young Learners was first introduced in 1987, following extensive test development and piloting during the early 1980s. There was immediate interest in the tests, and by 1990 worldwide candidature had reached nearly 1 million, with large numbers of candidates in countries such as China, Spain, Argentina and Italy. The increase in teaching of English to young learners aged approximately 7 to 12 years old had led to growing demand for assessment. The key question for Cambridge English Language Assessment was whether it was possible to create an international English language test for children which was accurate, fair and had a positive impact on future language learning. Development work began in 1987. The planning phase involved extensive research and consultation, since relatively little research had been carried out into the assessment of second language learning in children. Research focused on three related fields: This helped inform the choice and treatment of test topics and tasks. For example, tasks involving scanning were rejected since children only demonstrate search and stop strategies from around age 7. The research also recognised that children are motivated by and perform best on tasks directly related to their own experiences of teaching and learning; a wide range of course books and teaching materials were reviewed to identify the main content areas topics, vocabulary, etc. Draft specifications and sample materials were developed, covering all four skills – speaking, listening, reading and writing – with greater focus on oral skills because of the emphasis on spoken language over written language among young children. The trial feedback was used to construct the live tests. For example, schools need to enter children when the children are ready, which could be at any time in the year. In 1990, 10 years after the initial development work, the tests were reviewed again. This involved further consultation with test centres, teachers and examiners. The consultation indicated high levels of satisfaction with the tests in general, but identified several tasks where changes might be made to improve the tests. A total of 4, trial tests were taken. Following analysis of the results, the Young Learners tests were revised and went live in January 1997. From January 1997, the paper-based tests feature new graphics designed to motivate and engage young learners. In addition, computer-based tests are being launched on a country-by-country basis. Each of the exams has three papers: Each paper is worth a third of the total marks. Results are reported using shields as an indication of how well the candidate has done in each skill. A maximum of five shields are available per paper and a maximum of 15 shields are available in total. The exams are available in pen-and-paper format. From January 2000 there are updated paper-based tests with new graphics designed to motivate young learners. Cambridge English Language Assessment has also launched computer-based tests in some countries. This provides learners with a wider availability of test dates and faster results. Both formats of the exams have the same task types, topics, number of questions, timings and marks. And both formats lead to the same certificate. Where the computer-based test differs is the speaking paper – in the computer-based Speaking test, children respond to audio and visual prompts, rather than to an examiner. Children answer a few warm up questions to get them used to interacting with an animated character. Starters[edit] Paper 1. Listening 20 minutes The Listening paper has four parts and 20 questions in total. Each part begins with one or two examples. The children will hear each recording twice. Part 1 has a big picture and pictures of seven small objects. Children listen to five short conversations between a man and a woman. Children listen to information in the conversations and draw a line from each of the objects to the place where it should be on the big picture. Part 1 tests listening for words and prepositions. Part 2 has a set of questions and a short conversation between a child and an adult. Children listen to information in the conversation to answer each of the questions. The answer will be a name or a number. Part 2 tests listening for numbers and spelling. Part 3 has five short conversations between different pairs of people. There is a question and three pictures for each conversation. Children listen to each conversation and choose the right picture A, B or C. Part 3 tests listening for specific information. Part 4 has a big picture with seven examples of the same object e. Children listen to a conversation between an adult and a child and colour in each object using the colour

mentioned in the conversation. Part 4 tests listening for words, colours and prepositions. Reading and Writing 20 minutes The Reading and Writing paper has five parts and 25 questions in total. Children must spell their answers correctly in all parts of the test. Part 1 has five pictures of objects. There is a sentence underneath each picture, e. If the sentence is false, children should put a cross next to the picture. Part 1 tests reading short sentences and recognising words. Part 2 has a big picture and some sentences about the picture. Part 2 tests reading short sentences and writing one-word answers. Part 3 has five pictures of objects. Children have to find the right word for the object. After each picture there are some dashes - - - that show how many letters are in the word. There are also some jumbled letters e. Children have to put the jumbled letters in the right order to make the word e. Part 3 tests spelling simple words. Part 4 has a text with some missing words gaps. Below the text there is a box with some pictures and some words. Children have to choose the right word from the box and copy it into the right gap. Part 4 tests reading a text and writing missing words nouns. Part 5 has three pictures, which tell a story. Each picture has one or two questions. Children answer each question based on what they can see in the pictures. They only have to write one word for each answer. Part 5 tests reading questions and writing one-word answers. Speaking 3 to 5 minutes The Speaking test has five parts. In the computer-based test, the learner responds to audio and visual prompts, and will answer a few warm up questions to get them used to interacting with an animated character. In the paper-based test the learner takes the test with an examiner. Someone they know will introduce them to the examiner and explain what is going to happen in their own language. In Part 1 the examiner greets the child, asks them their name and asks them to point to things in a big picture. Part 1 tests understanding and following spoken instructions. In Part 2 the examiner shows the child small pictures of some objects. The examiner names three objects and asks the child to point to them. The examiner then asks the child to put each object card somewhere on the big picture used in Part 1 e. Part 2 tests understanding and following spoken instructions. In Part 3 the examiner asks the child some questions about the big picture used in Part 1 e. Part 3 tests understanding and answering spoken questions. In Part 4 the examiner asks the child some questions about the small pictures of objects used in Part 2 e. Part 4 tests understanding and answering spoken questions. In Part 5 the examiner asks the child some questions about themselves e. Part 5 tests understanding and responding to personal questions. Movers[edit] Paper 1. Listening 25 minutes The Listening paper has five parts and 25 questions in total. Part 1 has a big picture. The picture shows people doing different things. Above and below the picture are some names. Children listen carefully to a conversation between an adult and a child. They draw a line from each name to the correct person in the big picture. Part 1 tests listening for names and descriptions.

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Anne is a seminar presenter for Cambridge Assessment English. She is co-author of the Fun for Starters, Movers and Flyers series. Cambridge English Flyers 1 Find.