Oxford Test of English
For Schools

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

THE OXFORD TEST OF ENGLISH IS CERTIFIED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Your preparation journey

Building the real-world English skills your students need to succeed



OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Prepare your students for test success!

Welcome to the interactive Teachers' Preparation Guide for the Oxford Test of English for Schools. This 7-step guide brings together all the materials you need to prepare your students, plus professional development resources to build your own assessment expertise. Follow it to help students feel confident, prepared, and ready to succeed on test day and beyond.

Step 1: Introduce the test format

What to do:

Help students understand how the test is organized, including task types, task timings, and the language skills tested in each part of the four modules: Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing.

Why this helps:

Being familiar with the test format helps students focus their preparation and perform better on test day.

How to do this:

1. Go through the test format overview with students, drawing attention to:
   - the number of parts in each module
   - how much time students have to answer
   - the task types in each part
   - the language skills tested in each part
2. Use pair work or quick quizzes to check understanding.
3. Optionally, ask students to create a simple visual summary of one module and present it to the class.
4. Repeat for each of the remaining modules: Listening, Reading and Writing.



Step 2: Experience the demo test

What to do:

Familiarize students with how the test platform looks and works.

Why this helps:

Understanding the test screen layouts, timers, navigation, and how to enter, record and submit answers helps students stay calm and focus on the questions on test day.

How to do this:

1. Familiarize yourself with the **online demo test**. You can jump to different modules and parts, which is not possible in the real test.
2. Ask students to use the demo and explore how to:
   - complete the sound check
   - adjust the volume
   - change text size and display settings
   - see how the timer works in each part
   - move between questions and parts
   - enter and submit their responses in each part (for example, record, type, drag and drop)

Note: Students can set their preferred text size and display options before starting their real test.

3. If possible, let students try the demo individually. Ask them how confident they feel about using the features, and help with anything they are unsure about.



*Note: Answers are not marked in the demo test. The answer key for the questions in the demo test is available in the **Sample Test.***



Step 3: Understand how the test is marked

What to do:

The Speaking and Writing modules are marked by human assessors. Learn the marking criteria for Speaking and Writing, and help students understand what assessors look for.

Note: Reading and Listening modules are marked by computer.

Why this helps:

When students know what assessors expect, it is easier to meet the criteria and reach their target scores. Focus on the band that matches your students' target level.

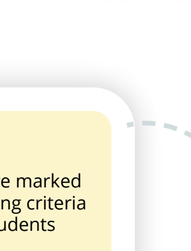
How to do this:

SPEAKING



1. Familiarize yourself with the marking criteria for Speaking on page 20 of the **Oxford Test of English Test Specifications**. Explore the teacher-training resources to deepen your understanding (see 'Learn more' below).

   Note: Speaking is marked as two separate scripts. Script 1 covers Parts 1 and 2; Script 2 covers Parts 3 and 4. Each script is marked individually. The marks are then combined and converted to a standardised score and CEFR level for the Speaking module.



2. Read through the marking criteria with students. Ask students to look at the Speaking tasks from page 23 of the **Test Specifications**. For each task, elicit what they think they need to demonstrate in their responses (e.g. range of vocabulary, understanding of the task).
3. Ask students to complete a Speaking task under timed conditions. Record responses if possible.
4. Show example responses with the assessor marks and commentary in the Test Specifications.
5. Ask students to compare their responses with the examples:
   - Are their responses better?
   - In what way?
   - What could be improved?

Use the criteria to guide discussion, peer feedback, and teacher feedback.

WRITING



1. Familiarize yourself with the marking criteria for Writing on page 22 of the **Oxford Test of English Test Specifications**. Explore the teacher-training resources to deepen your understanding (see 'Learn more' below).

   Note: Writing is marked as two separate scripts. Script 1 is Part 1; Script 2 is Part 2. Each script is marked individually. The marks are then combined and converted to a standardised score and CEFR level for the Writing module.



2. Read through the marking criteria with students. Ask students to look at the Writing tasks from page 29 of the **Test Specifications**. For each task, elicit what they think they need to demonstrate in their responses.
3. Ask students to complete a Writing task under timed conditions.
4. Show example responses with the assessor marks and commentary in the Test Specifications.
5. Ask students to compare their responses with the examples:
   - Are their responses better?
   - In what way?
   - What could be improved?

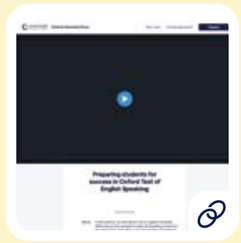
Use the criteria to guide discussion, peer feedback, and teacher feedback.

Adjusting for level:

With A2 and lower B1 classes, work through the activity in point 5 above as a class first. Then ask students to do this in pairs or on their own.

Learn more:

Deepen your understanding of Speaking and Writing:



Preparing students for success in Oxford Test of English **Speaking webinar**



Oxford Test of English **Writing marking criteria webinar 1**



Oxford Test of English **Writing marking criteria webinar 2**



Oxford Test of English **Speaking and Writing Pathway webinar**

Step 4: Plan your preparation lessons

What to do:

Create a clear, flexible preparation lesson plan.

Why this helps:

A clear, flexible plan helps you manage classroom time, target the key skills the test assesses, and adapt to your students' needs as preparation progresses.

How to do this:

1. Review the **sample test** yourself, then use selected parts in class under timed conditions. Note which modules, task types, or language skills students find difficult.

   Sample test (PDF, 1MB) **Audio files** (MP3, 15MB)



2. Plan your **lessons** based on what you find. Decide which areas to focus on and which resources from Steps 5 and 6 to use.
3. Use selected parts of the **sample test** in class under timed conditions.

Step 5: Build students' language skills and knowledge

What to do:

Build the speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills the test assesses, and strengthen students' grammar and vocabulary.

Why this helps:

The test targets CEFR A2 to B2. Stronger language skills help students understand more in the Reading and Listening modules, and use a wider range of grammar and vocabulary in their Speaking and Writing responses.
This helps them achieve better scores across the test.

How to do this:

1. Use the **free online preparation course** to develop the skills and strategies students need to do their best in the test.



2. During your lessons, work through the **Speaking and Writing Tips and Practice** with students. Each guide covers tasks in each of these modules, with explanations, tips, skill building exercises and sample answers. Work through one part at a time.

   Use the first exercise of each part to build success criteria with your class, then use the other exercises to apply them.



   Speaking tips and practice (PDF, 2.3MB)



   Speaking tips and practice audio files (MP3, 78MB)

   Writing tips and practice (PDF, 1.8MB)

3. Boost students' overall English level. Consider a general English class with a coursebook at the target CEFR level. OUP offers secondary-level coursebooks mapped to these levels. Find out more at Secondary | English Language Courses | Oxford University Press.

4. Improve students' vocabulary. Use the free Topic Dictionaries and the Oxford 3000 and 5000 word lists at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries to build vocabulary in class or as homework.

5. For structured speaking and writing practice, use the iSpeaker and iWriter tools (paid) at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries.

6. Check students' vocabulary range. Use the Text Checker when marking students' Writing and Speaking responses. Encourage students to use it to review and improve their own responses.

Step 6: Use practice tests in your classroom

What to do:

Work through the practice tests with your students under timed conditions and check answers carefully.

Why this helps:

Timed practice builds familiarity with the format and timings at the target level. Reviewing mistakes shows which task types or skills need more focus, and helps students feel confident and prepared for test day.

How to do this:

FREE PRACTICE TEST PDFS

The Oxford Test of English for Schools provides two practice tests at each level (A2, B1 and B2). To select the practice tests you need, click here.

Start with Practice Test 1

1. Ask students to work through Practice Test 1, one part at a time (in class as a focused practice session, or as homework followed by in-class review).
2. Set a timer using the official test timings for each question and part (see Test Format Overview).
3. Check answers together using the Answer key. If students answer incorrectly, ask them to try again, then read the explanation. Use class discussion to focus on common mistakes.

Adjusting for level:
With A2 and lower B1 classes, run a task once with support before doing it under timed conditions.

Repeat Practice Test 1

1. Set a timer using the official test timings for each question and part.
2. Ask students to compare their performance with their first attempt:
   - Did they improve?
   - Which task types felt easier?
   - What do they still need to practise?

Take Practice Test 2 at the same level

1. Ask students to work through Practice Test 2 under test conditions (approx. 2 hours).
2. Set a timer using the official test timings for each question and part.
3. Review answers and common mistakes.
4. Use the results to identify patterns across the class, and plan targeted practice for specific skills or task types.

Adjusting for level:
If students do well on both practice tests at their current level, try the practice tests at the next level to check readiness and identify new learning needs. Use the results to inform your teaching.

ONLINE PRACTICE TESTS

Online Practice Tests for the Oxford Test of English for Schools are coming soon on Oxford English Hub (paid). Students will be able to practise with the same task types, timing, and interface as the real test. Listening and Reading are marked automatically, and Speaking and Writing include sample answers and explanations. Students can use review mode to check their results and see which areas to work on next.

Check for updates at our website.

Step 7: Prepare students for test day

What to do:

Make sure your students:

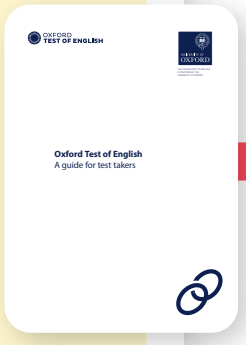
- have registered correctly
- know where the Test Centre is and how to get there
- know which identity documents to bring
- understand what will happen when they arrive
- review the online demo test once more before test day

How to do this:

1. Watch the **'Your test experience' video** and read the **Test Taker Guide** yourself. Make sure you understand what happens before, during, and after the test, what students need to bring, and how results are delivered.



2. Go through the key information with students, including what to do before, during, and after the test. Allow time for questions.
3. If students are unsure about practical arrangements, advise them to check with their Test Centre.
4. Encourage students to try the online demo test again shortly before test day to refresh their familiarity with the test interface.



Why this helps:

Understanding the practical details in advance helps test day run smoothly, so students can stay calm and do their best.

Professional development resources

Find more about the Oxford Test of English for Schools and other tests in the Oxford Test of English suite on our website.



OTE skills webinars

- Preparing students for success in Oxford Test of English Speaking
- Preparing students for success in Oxford Test of English Listening
- Oxford Test of English – Writing marking criteria webinar
- Oxford Test of English – Writing marking criteria webinar 2
- OTE Speaking and Writing Pathway webinar

Assessment insights webinars

- Rethinking language assessment for a changing world
- Unlock the Power of Assessment in Your Classroom: Creating Positive Washback
- Oxford English Assessment Professional Development webinars

Research and focus papers

- Oxford English Assessment Research
- The Impact of Assessment on Teaching and Learning: Creating positive washback
- The future of English proficiency testing: why universities are rethinking language assessment

Professional opportunities

- Become a Pretesting Research Partner
- Become a Speaking and Writing assessor for Oxford Test of English

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