

C1 PREPARATION MATERIALS

C1 Reading & Use of English — Practice Exam 1

An eight-part practice exam covering Reading and Use of English.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Original practice material. This document is not an official Cambridge English assessment.

Part 1: The Rise of Social Media

Choose the word that best completes each gap. Focus on collocations, prepositions, and linkers.

Over the past two decades, social media has become deeply _____ (1) _____ in everyday life. For many people, it is no longer just a way to stay in touch; it has also become a primary source _____ (2) _____ news, entertainment, and even professional networking. Although its growth has been extraordinarily rapid, experts continue to debate whether its influence has been entirely _____ (3) _____. Supporters argue that it allows users to build communities, share ideas, and respond quickly _____ (4) _____ global events. Critics, _____ (5) _____, warn that constant connectivity can reduce attention spans and encourage comparison with others. _____ (6) _____ the challenges, social media remains a powerful force in modern communication, and it shows no sign _____ (7) _____ disappearing soon.

1

- A. embedded
- B. included
- C. inserted
- D. placed

2

- A. for
- B. of
- C. with
- D. at

3

- A. positive
- B. reasonable
- C. useful
- D. helpful

4

- A. to
- B. for
- C. at
- D. on

5

- A. however
- B. therefore
- C. meanwhile
- D. otherwise

6

- A. Despite
- B. Although
- C. Because
- D. Unless

7

- A. of
- B. to
- C. in
- D. for

Part 2: The History of Chocolate

Read the text below and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only one word in each gap.

Chocolate is a treat that is enjoyed by millions of people all over the world, but it has not always been the sweet luxury we know today. Rich in history, chocolate actually has _____ (1) _____ roots in the ancient civilizations of Mesoamerica. For the Mayans and the Aztecs, chocolate was consumed as a bitter liquid _____ (2) _____ than the solid bar we are familiar with now.

The drink, which was made from roasted cacao beans, hot water, and spices, was often used in religious ceremonies. _____ (3) _____ cacao beans were highly valued, they were also used as a form of currency. In fact, Aztec emperors are said to _____ (4) _____ consumed vast quantities of the drink on a daily basis.

It was not _____ (5) _____ Spanish explorers arrived in the Americas that chocolate made its way to Europe. Initially, Spanish nobility kept the drink a secret, but _____ (6) _____ eventually spread to other European courts. Over time, sugar was added to tone _____ (7) _____ the bitterness, making the drink much more appealing to the European palate. However, it was not until the nineteenth century _____ (8) _____ the English company Fry & Sons produced the first solid eating chocolate, paving the way for the modern confectionery industry.

Part 3: Building Stronger Communities

Complete each gap using a word derived from the base word in capitals. Write the correct form only, using one word for each gap.

Across the city, a growing number of young people are getting ⁽¹⁾ INVOLVE in community projects that support older residents, local schools, and public spaces. What began as a small ⁽²⁾ INITIATE has become a highly respected movement that encourages people to contribute their time and skills.

Many participants say that the work is not only ⁽³⁾ BENEFIT but also deeply rewarding, because it helps them understand the needs of others more clearly. One volunteer described the experience as ⁽⁴⁾ CHALLENGE at first, because it gave her the confidence to speak to strangers and organise events. Another said that the most ⁽⁵⁾ INSPIRE aspect was seeing children and adults working together on the same goal.

The organisers believe that consistent ⁽⁶⁾ COMMIT is essential if the programme is to continue growing. They also stress the ⁽⁷⁾ IMPORTANT of training volunteers properly, since even simple tasks can have a major impact when they are done well. Their long-term aim is to create a more ⁽⁸⁾ SUSTAIN model for local support.

Part 4: Key Word Transformation

For questions 1-6, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between three and six words, including the word given.

1. We didn't go on holiday because we didn't have enough money.

WOULD

If we had had enough money, we _____ on holiday.

2. I'm sure that she didn't mean to offend you.

INTENTION

I'm sure she _____ you.

3. It's a pity you didn't tell me about the change of plan.

WISH

I _____ me about the change of plan.

4. They had to cancel the outdoor concert because of the heavy rain.

LED

The heavy rain _____ the outdoor concert.

5. It was very difficult for me to understand his accent.

DIFFICULTY

I had _____ his accent.

6. Providing you pay in advance, you can get a discount.

LONG

You can get a discount _____ pay in advance.

Part 5: Multiple Choice Reading

Read the following article about the psychological effects of architectural design on public spaces and choose the best option (A, B, C, or D) for each question.

The Silent Dialogue of Cities

Step outside in any modern metropolis, and you enter an unspoken conversation. It is a dialogue conducted not in syllables, but in the soaring arcs of steel, the sweeping expanses of plate glass, and the deliberate configurations of concrete underfoot. Architecture, far from being a passive background to our daily scrambles, is an active agent in shaping human psychology. For decades, designers focused on the engineering mechanics or raw utility of buildings, but a growing consensus among environmental psychologists suggests that the layouts of our communal environments dictate our moods, social boundaries, and even our physiological stress levels with startling precision.

Consider the concept of "active edges"—the ground-floor zones of buildings that interact directly with the sidewalk. A study tracking pedestrian behavior in urban environments revealed that streets flanked by monotonous, blank concrete walls or mirrored glass office blocks prompt passersby to quicken their pace, showing measurable spikes in stress hormones. Conversely, active frontage—characterized by a high density of small shops, open cafes, and visually transparent doors—acts as a psychological anchor. It invites lingering, decreases overall walking speed, and fosters a sense of security. Human beings are evolutionary programmed to seek complex, visually rich environments; when deprived of them, our brains interpret the sterility as a potential hazard, triggering a subtle, chronic flight response.

Furthermore, the height and volume of spaces wield considerable influence over cognitive styles. According to psychologists, towering ceilings tend to trigger abstract, creative thinking patterns, encouraging individuals to make unexpected connections. Low ceilings, on the other hand, funnel attention onto concrete, focused tasks, making them optimal for deep concentrations or analytical refinement. By understanding these subtle cognitive shifts, architects can design libraries, creative hubs, and community centers that do not merely house activities, but actively prime occupants for the cognitive demands expected of them.

However, the implementation of these discoveries remains highly contested. Real estate developers frequently argue that visually complex structures and varied public amenities

1. What point is the writer making in the first paragraph about architecture?
 - A** It has historically been designed to ignore human social boundaries.
 - B** It plays an assertive role in influencing how people feel and interact.
 - C** Modern steel and glass structures have diminished our ability to communicate.
 - D** Environmental psychologists are only now beginning to understand its utility.
2. According to the second paragraph, streets with active frontage...
 - A** tend to cause a slight increase in pedestrian walking pace.
 - B** contain evolutionary hazards that people must navigate safely.
 - C** encourage people to slow down and create a feeling of safety.
 - D** have been proven to elevate stress levels in urban environments.
3. How can architects use ceiling height to benefit occupants, according to the third paragraph?
 - A** By building low ceilings in creative hubs to keep occupants analytical.
 - B** By maximizing ceiling heights in libraries to promote abstract logic.
 - C** By tailoring spatial volumes to match the desired cognitive state of users.
 - D** By minimizing height variations to ensure consistent focus across buildings.

represent redundant expenditures that yield little in terms of financial return. They posit that the primary obligation of municipal planning should be the maximizes of spatial and cost-efficiencies. This tension highlights a deeper cultural division: is a city's architecture a functional shelter meant to organize capital, or is it a shared psychological canvas upon which the mental health of entire populations is inscribed?

4. What central debate is outlined in the final paragraph?

A Whether developers or architects should have absolute authority over planning.

B Whether visually complex facades are worth the financial expense they require.

C Whether the primary focus of cities should be economic efficiency or human well-being.

D Whether public amenities actually reduce space utilization in office structures.

Part 6: The Future of Remote Work

Read the four experts' opinions below. For each question, choose the text (A, B, C, or D) whose writer expresses the stated opinion.

Text A

Mariam Osei — workplace strategist

I welcome the shift away from the office with genuine enthusiasm. For decades, the daily commute stripped employees of hours that could have been spent with family, on personal projects, or simply in rest. Remote work has handed that time back, and the results speak for themselves: parents can now collect their children from school, carers no longer have to choose between a career and a dependent, and employees report feeling trusted for the first time.

None of this has come at the expense of output. In most sectors, productivity has climbed rather than collapsed. The office, for all its rituals, was never the engine of work it claimed to be; it was merely a place where we could be observed. To insist we return to it is to prioritise the appearance of diligence over diligence itself.

Text B

Jürgen Holtz — design director

I remain unconvinced. My team generates its best ideas not in scheduled video calls but in the chaotic margins of the day: a remark in the corridor, a shared lift, a whiteboard sketched over coffee. These moments cannot be replicated through a screen, however sophisticated the software becomes.

What troubles me most is that we are sacrificing serendipity for convenience. Already I notice newer colleagues struggling to absorb our culture, since culture is caught, not taught. The office is far from perfect, but it provides the friction that turns strangers into collaborators. Without that proximity, we risk becoming a collection of efficient strangers who happen to share a logo.

Text C

Priya Ramanathan — HR consultant

The truth, as ever, lies somewhere between the zealots and the doubters. A blanket mandate — whether for five days in the building or five days at home — ignores the fact that different tasks have different needs. Collaborative workshops and onboarding flourish face-to-face; deep, focused work is frequently better done alone, away from interruption.

The most sensible employers I advise are settling on two or three anchor days in the office, leaving the remainder flexible. Neither camp holds a monopoly on wisdom, and pretending otherwise is unhelpful. We should be designing systems that flex with human reality, not bending people to a single doctrine.

Text D

Kofi Mensah — labour researcher

Though I am broadly sympathetic to remote arrangements, I am wary of presenting them as an uncontested good. Consider the young tenant sharing a cramped flat with no dedicated workspace, or the employee whose home circumstances make concentration impossible. For them, the office was a refuge: quiet, heated and connected.

A wholesale move to remote work would therefore widen the gap between those with comfortable homes and those without, and it would do so quietly, invisibly. We must measure productivity alongside equity, or we will simply export old inequalities into a new setting and call it progress.

1. Which writer argues that remote working allows people to reconcile their professional lives with personal responsibilities more easily?

Answer: _____

2. Which writer warns that working apart threatens the spontaneous exchange of ideas?

Answer: _____

3. Which writer cautions that a fully remote model could deepen existing social inequalities?

Answer: _____

4. Which writer advocates a flexible compromise rather than adherence to one extreme?

Answer: _____

Part 7: How Urban Gardens Change Cities

Read the article and choose the paragraph (A-G) that fits each gap. One paragraph is extra.

When people imagine a city garden, they often picture a few raised beds beside a community centre. Yet urban gardening has become much more ambitious than that. In many neighbourhoods, residents are using neglected plots to grow food, restore habitats and create places where people who might otherwise never meet can spend time together.

1

The first benefit is practical. A garden cannot replace a supermarket, but it can make fresh herbs and vegetables available in areas where affordable produce is difficult to find. It also gives residents a reason to learn how food is grown, rather than treating every item on a plate as something that simply appears in a shop.

2

That educational role is particularly important for children. When pupils sow seeds and return weeks later to see the first leaves, the process gives abstract lessons about science and nutrition a visible outcome. Teachers also report that outdoor tasks can help students who find conventional classroom routines difficult.

3

The social effects are less immediately measurable, but they may last longer. A shared plot requires people to negotiate, take turns and look after something that belongs to no single individual. In this way, the garden becomes a small exercise in civic life.

4

This does not mean that every project succeeds. Volunteers move away, funding runs out and enthusiastic plans can founder when no one is responsible for routine work such as watering or repairing fences. Successful groups therefore tend to establish clear roles before they begin expanding.

5

Local authorities are beginning to notice these wider effects. Some now offer unused land on long leases, while others provide water connections or small grants. Such support is modest compared with the cost of major

infrastructure, but it can determine whether a promising idea survives its first difficult summer.

6

For that reason, urban gardens should not be judged only by the weight of produce they harvest. Their real value lies in combining food, learning and companionship in a single space. The vegetables are visible at the end of the season; the stronger relationships are harder to count, but no less real.

Missing paragraphs

Choose from the paragraphs A-G the one which fits each gap. There is one extra paragraph which you do not need to use.

A In fact, some projects have gone further still, incorporating small ponds, composting areas and corridors for insects. Their organisers see these features not as decoration but as part of a functioning urban ecosystem.

B The lesson is not that gardening should replace every other school activity. Rather, it provides a memorable setting in which ideas introduced indoors can become concrete and personal.

C This is why the most resilient gardens are designed around regular contact between neighbours, not simply around the production of the largest possible harvest.

D A few councils have even appointed horticultural officers to coordinate these schemes, although such posts remain unusual outside the largest cities.

E The arrangement can also be valuable for older residents, who may bring decades of gardening knowledge and gain a regular social activity in return.

F Once the basic structure is in place, however, the work is rarely as demanding as outsiders expect. A short weekly session is often enough to keep a small plot productive.

G That is a surprising conclusion in an age when public projects are usually asked to justify themselves through statistics and financial forecasts.

Gap 1: _____

Gap 2: _____

Gap 3: _____

Gap 4: _____

Gap 5: _____

Gap 6: _____

Part 8: The First Year of Freelancing

You are going to read four people talking about their first year of freelancing. For each question, choose from the people (A-D). The people may be chosen more than once.

Section A

Elena Vargas — graphic designer

Leaving my agency job felt reckless at first, but I needed room to develop ideas that clients would never have approved in a corporate setting. That creative freedom has been the greatest reward of the year, even on weeks when the work itself was unremarkable.

Money has been the harder lesson. Some months are comfortable; others leave me recalculating every bill. I eventually found an experienced designer online who was willing to review my pricing and contracts, and her advice stopped me undercharging almost immediately. Without that guidance, I suspect I would still be treating every enquiry as a favour rather than a professional exchange.

Section B

Tomás Ribeiro — translator

What sold me on freelancing was the chance to collect my children from school and share evenings that used to disappear into a commute. That part of the arrangement has been everything I hoped for, and I would not trade it lightly.

The cost has been social rather than financial. I miss the quick conversations that once filled the edges of the working day, the jokes by the printer, the sense of belonging to a team. I have also discovered that winning new clients is a skill in itself. Producing excellent translations is not enough if nobody knows you exist, and learning to present my services confidently has taken far longer than the linguistic work ever did.

Section C

Aisha Rahman — software developer

I am more productive at home than I ever was in an open-plan office. Without constant interruptions, I can finish complex tasks in a single stretch, and clients have noticed the difference in delivery times.

The difficulty is knowing when to stop. When your laptop is always within reach, the working day expands until it occupies the whole evening. After a few burnt-out months I joined a local coworking space for three days a week. Having somewhere to go — and, just as importantly, somewhere to leave — restored a boundary I had lost. The membership fee pays for itself in clearer thinking alone.

Section D

Marcus Hale — journalist

The best feature of freelancing is choosing which stories deserve my time. In staff jobs I was often assigned topics I found dull; now I can pursue the investigations that matter to me, and that autonomy still feels luxurious.

What I failed to anticipate was the volume of unpaid administration. Invoicing, chasing late payments, updating a website and answering endless preliminary emails can swallow half a week before a single word of journalism is written. Income is uneven as well — a feast of commissions one month, almost nothing the next — so I keep a stricter reserve than I ever needed on a salary. The work is freer, but it is certainly not simpler.

1. Which person mentions finding it hard to advertise their work effectively?
Answer: _____
2. Which person received practical help from someone more experienced?
Answer: _____
3. Which person values being able to decide which projects to accept?
Answer: _____
4. Which person took a concrete step to reduce isolation at work?
Answer: _____
5. Which person compares irregular earnings with the stability of a former salary?
Answer: _____
6. Which person appreciates having more time for family life?
Answer: _____
7. Which person found it difficult to switch off at the end of the day?
Answer: _____
8. Which person was surprised by how much non-billable work freelancing involves?
Answer: _____
9. Which person feels freer creatively than in previous employment?
Answer: _____
10. Which person misses informal contact with former colleagues?
Answer: _____

Answer key and explanations

Part 1: The Rise of Social Media

1. A. embedded
2. B. of
3. A. positive
4. A. to
5. A. however
6. A. Despite
7. A. of

Part 2: The History of Chocolate

1. its
2. rather
3. because / since / as
4. have
5. until
6. it
7. down
8. that

Part 3: Building Stronger Communities

1. **INVOLVE**: involved
2. **INITIATE**: initiative
3. **BENEFIT**: beneficial
4. **CHALLENGE**: challenging
5. **INSPIRE**: inspiring
6. **COMMIT**: commitment
7. **IMPORTANT**: importance
8. **SUSTAIN**: sustainable

Part 4: Key Word Transformation

1. If we had had enough money, we **would have gone** on holiday.
2. I'm sure she **had no intention of offending / did not have any intention of offending / had absolutely no intention of offending** you.
3. I **wish you had told / wish that you had told** me about the change of plan.
4. The heavy rain **led to the cancellation of / led to the cancelation of** the outdoor concert.
5. I had **great difficulty in understanding / great difficulty understanding / a lot of difficulty understanding / much difficulty in understanding** his accent.
6. You can get a discount **as long as you** pay in advance.

Part 5: Multiple Choice Reading

1. **B.** It plays an assertive role in influencing how people feel and interact.
Correct. The writer states that architecture is an active agent in shaping human psychology and dictates our moods, social boundaries, and even our physiological stress levels.
2. **C.** encourage people to slow down and create a feeling of safety.
Correct. The text states active frontage invites lingering, decreases overall walking speed, and fosters a sense of security.
3. **C.** By tailoring spatial volumes to match the desired cognitive state of users.
Correct. The text explains high ceilings trigger creative thought while low ceilings encourage focused tasks, letting architects prime occupants for expected demands.
4. **C.** Whether the primary focus of cities should be economic efficiency or human well-being.
Correct. The writer contrasts a functional shelter meant to organize capital with a psychological canvas affecting population mental health.

Part 6: The Future of Remote Work

1. Text A

Text A explicitly states that remote work lets parents collect children and carers avoid choosing between a career and a dependent.

2. Text B

Text B laments the loss of serendipitous moments and argues that physical proximity turns strangers into collaborators.

3. Text D

Text D worries that those without comfortable homes or dedicated workspaces would be disadvantaged.

4. Text C

Text C rejects blanket mandates and recommends anchor days with the rest flexible.

Part 7: How Urban Gardens Change Cities

1. Paragraph A

The opening describes gardens becoming more ambitious; A develops this idea with examples of ecological features.

2. Paragraph B

The following paragraph refers to children and classroom learning, so B correctly concludes the educational point before that discussion.

3. Paragraph E

E extends the social benefits to another group of residents and leads naturally into the broader social effects.

4. Paragraph F

F contrasts with the difficulties just listed and explains that routine work can remain manageable.

5. Paragraph D

D follows the mention of local-authority support by giving a specific example of institutional involvement.

6. Paragraph G

G comments on the difficulty of measuring the garden's less visible benefits and leads into the final conclusion.

Part 8: The First Year of Freelancing

1. **Section B**

Tomás says winning clients is a skill in itself and that learning to present his services confidently has taken a long time.

2. **Section A**

Elena describes finding an experienced designer online who reviewed her pricing and contracts.

3. **Section D**

Marcus highlights choosing which stories deserve his time and pursuing investigations that matter to him.

4. **Section C**

Aisha joined a coworking space for three days a week after struggling with blurred boundaries at home.

5. **Section D**

Marcus contrasts feast-or-famine commissions with the reserve he never needed on a salary.

6. **Section B**

Tomás explicitly values collecting his children from school and sharing evenings that used to disappear into commuting.

7. **Section C**

Aisha explains that when the laptop is always nearby, the working day expands into the evening.

8. **Section D**

Marcus says he failed to anticipate the volume of unpaid administration such as invoicing and chasing payments.

9. **Section A**

Elena says creative freedom has been the greatest reward after leaving agency work that limited her ideas.

10. **Section B**

Tomás misses quick conversations, jokes by the printer, and the sense of belonging to a team.