

TEST OF READING AND WRITING

Time: 1 hour 30 minutes

READING				
PART	Main Skill Focus	Input	Response	Number of questions
1	Reading – understanding short, real world notices, messages, etc.	Notices, messages, adverts, leaflets, etc.	Multiple choice	5
2	Reading – detailed comprehension of factual material; skimming and scanning skills	Notice, list, plan, contents page, etc.	Matching	5
3	Reading – interpreting visual information	Graphs, charts, tables, etc. (The information may be presented in 8 separate graphics or in a composite graphic comprising up to 3 visuals.	Matching	5
4	Reading for detailed factual information	Text (approx. 150 – 200 words): advert, business letter, product description, report, minutes, etc.	Right/Wrong/ Doesn't say	7
5	Reading for gist and specific information	Text (approx. 300 – 400 words): newspaper or magazine article, advert, report, leaflet, etc.	Multiple choice	6
6	Reading – grammatical accuracy and understanding of text structure	Text (approx. 125 – 150 words): newspaper or magazine article, advert, leaflet, etc.	Multiple choice cloze	12
7	Reading and information transfer	Short memos, letters, notices, adverts, etc.	Form-filling, note completion	5
WRITING				
PART	Functions/Communicative Task	Input	Response	Register
1	e.g. (re-)arranging appointments, asking for permission, giving instructions	Rubric only (plus layout of output text type)	Internal communication (medium may be note, message, memo or e-mail) (30 – 40 words)	Neutral/ formal/ informal
2	e.g. apologising and offering compensation, making or altering reservations, dealing with requests, giving information about a product	One piece of input which may be business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or e-mail), internal communication (medium may be note, memo or e-mail), notice, advert, etc. (plus layout of output text type)	Business correspondence (medium may be letter, fax or e-mail) (60 – 80 words)	Neutral/ formal

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS

READING

Part One

In this part there are five short texts, each of which is accompanied by a multiple choice question containing three options. In all cases the information will be brief and clear and the difficulty of the task will not lie in understanding context but in identifying or interpreting meaning.

A wide variety of text types, representative of those likely to be encountered in international business, can appear in this part. Each text will be complete and have a recognisable context.

Preparation

In order to prepare for this part it would be useful to expose students to a wide range of notices and short texts taken from business settings. It is also useful to practise answering sample questions, asking students to explain why an answer is correct (and why the two incorrect options do not apply).

Part Two

This is a matching task comprising one text and five questions, which are often descriptions of people's requirements. Candidates are required to match each question to an appropriate part of the text, labelled A – H. (As there are only five questions, some of the labels are redundant.) The testing focus of this part is vocabulary and meaning, using skimming and scanning skills.

Preparation

For preparation purposes, students need to be familiar with text types that are divided into lists, headings or categories; e.g. the contents page of a directory or book, the departments in a business or shop, the items in a catalogue, etc. Many of the questions in this part require a simple interpretation of what different parts of the text mean, and preparation for this could involve setting students real-world tasks of this kind using authentic (but simple) sources.

Part Three

This task consists of eight graphs or charts (or one or more graphics with eight distinct elements) and five questions. Each question is a description of a particular graphic (or element of a graphic) and candidates are expected to match the questions to their corresponding graphs which are labelled A – H.

Preparation

This part focuses on understanding trends and changes. Candidates need to be able to interpret graphic data and understand the language used to describe it. Expressions

such as 'rose steadily', 'remained stable', 'decreased slowly', 'reached a peak' should be introduced to students, along with relevant topics, such as sales of goods, share price movement and monthly costs.

Part Four

This task is a text accompanied by seven, three-option multiple choice items. Each question presents a statement and candidates are expected to indicate whether the statement is A 'Right' or B 'Wrong' according to the text, or whether the information is not given in the text (C 'Doesn't say'). Candidates will not be expected to understand every word in the text but they should be able to pick out salient points and infer meaning where words in the text are unfamiliar. The questions will refer to factual information in the text, but candidates will be required to do some processing in order to answer the questions correctly.

Preparation

This can be a difficult task for candidates who are not familiar with the three choices represented by A, B and C, and who might not understand the difference between a statement that is incorrect and one that depends on information that is not provided in the text. Students need to be trained to identify a false statement, which means that the opposite or a contradictory statement is made in the text, and to recognise that this is not the same as a statement that is not covered in the text.

Part Five

This part presents a single text accompanied by six multiple choice comprehension items. The text is informative and is often taken from a leaflet, or from a newspaper or magazine article.

Candidates are expected to employ more complex reading strategies in this task, in that they should demonstrate their ability to extract relevant information, to read for gist and detail, to scan the text for specific information, and to understand the purpose of the writer and the audience for which the text is intended.

Preparation

In preparing candidates for this part, it would be a good idea to expose them to a variety of texts of a similar length. As texts become longer, slow readers are at a disadvantage and some practice in improving reading speed would be beneficial for this part. It would also be useful to discuss the following areas:

- title
- topic
- the writer's purpose
- the theme or main idea of each paragraph

- factual details that can be found in the text
- the writer's opinions (if they are evident)

Part Six

This is a multiple choice cloze test. Candidates have to select the correct word from three options to complete twelve gaps. This part has a predominantly grammatical focus and tests candidates' understanding of the general and detailed meaning of a text, and in particular their ability to analyse structural patterns.

Preparation

Any practice in the grammatical and structural aspects of the language is useful in preparing students for this part. However, it is equally important for students to analyse the structure and coherence of language within longer discourse so that they are encouraged to read for meaning beyond the sentence level. As tasks such as this typically focus on common grammatical difficulties, it is also useful to ask students to analyse errors in their own work. Pairwork activities might be productive as students can often help each other in the areas of error identification and analysis.

Part Seven

Candidates are given two short texts, for example a memo and an advertisement, and are asked to complete a form based on this material. There are five gaps, which should be completed with a word, a number or a short phrase. In this part, candidates are tested on their ability to extract relevant information and complete a form accurately.

For this part, candidates need to transfer their answers in capital letters to an Answer Sheet.

WRITING

For BEC Preliminary, candidates are required to produce two pieces of writing:

- an internal company communication; this means a piece of communication with a colleague or colleagues within the company on a business-related matter; the delivery medium may be a note, message, memo or e-mail
- a piece of business correspondence; this means correspondence with somebody outside the company (e.g. a customer or supplier) on a business-related matter; the delivery medium may be letter, fax or e-mail.

Part One

Candidates are asked to produce a concise piece of internal company communication of between 30 and 40 words, using a written prompt. The text will need to be produced in

the form of a note, message, memo or e-mail. Candidates are given the layout of memos and e-mails (e.g. to/from/date/subject) on the question paper, and need not copy this out as part of their answer. The reason for writing and the target reader are specified in the rubric, and bullet points explain what content points have to be included. Relevant ideas for one or more of these points will have to be 'invented' by the candidate.

Part Two

Candidates are asked to produce an extended piece of business correspondence of between 60 and 80 words. This task involves the processing of a short text, such as a letter or advertisement, in order to respond to it. A number of bulleted content points below the text clearly indicate what should be included in the answer. Some of this information will need to be 'invented' by the candidate.

Where the delivery medium specified for a Part Two answer is a letter, candidates need not include postal addresses in their answer. Similarly, where the delivery medium specified is a fax, candidates need not include 'fax header' details, and where the delivery medium specified is an e-mail, candidates need not include to/from/subject details.

Although the use of some key words is inevitable, candidates should not 'lift' phrases from the question paper to use in their answers. They would not receive credit for the language in these phrases.

Accuracy and Appropriacy in Faxes and e-mails

Nowadays a significant proportion of written business communication is transmitted electronically, both within the company and to people outside the company.

In some contexts, this technological change may have changed the nature of what people actually write. It may be argued that a new 'fax' genre has emerged, characterised by brevity and informality (and sometimes by the mixing of handwritten and typewritten text in the same fax). It can also be argued that a new 'e-mail' genre may be starting to emerge, characterised by even greater informality and a (possibly temporary) lack of conventions and even of regard for linguistic accuracy.

However, there is also mounting evidence to suggest that linguistic inaccuracy and inappropriate informality within electronic business communications is considered unacceptable by many individuals and organisations, and can be counterproductive if employed in real life.

As well as being used informally, fax and e-mail are also widely used within business cultures in which appropriacy and accuracy are perceived to be important, and this is the context of use on which BEC focuses.

Candidates at all levels of BEC should be aware that appropriacy, accuracy, range and organisation are important features of their writing, regardless of the delivery medium specified in the task.

Please see the 'Assessment of Writing' sections for further details of the criteria against which candidates' writing is assessed at each level of BEC.

Preparing for the Writing Questions

In preparing students for the Writing tasks it would be beneficial to familiarise them with a variety of business correspondence. Analysing authentic correspondence would help students understand better how to structure their answer and the type of language to use. When doing this, it would be useful to focus on the following areas:

- the purpose of the correspondence
- references to previous communication
- factual details
- the feelings and attitude of the writer
- the level of formality
- the opening sentence
- the closing sentence
- paragraphing
- the desired outcome.

If students are in a class, it might be possible to ask them to write and reply to each other's correspondence so that they can appreciate the importance of accurate content.

In a similar fashion, internal company memos and messages might also be written and analysed in terms of the above so that students can recognise the different levels of formality involved. It is a necessary part of preparing for the test that students understand the uses of, and styles inherent in, different types of business communication so that they are aware of how and why different types of correspondence are used.

For the BEC Preliminary Writing component, candidates write their answers on the answer sheet provided.

SPORTMASTER
 Pakistan-based manufacturer of sports items wishing to do business in Europe is looking for importers
 TEL: 92 555 4321

2

Sportmaster wants to

- A sell its products abroad.
- B import products into Pakistan.
- C manufacture in Europe.

NOTICES FOR DISPLAY ABOVE THIS
 PHOTOCOPIER MUST FIRST BE
 HANDED TO RECEPTION

3

- A You can photocopy notices at Reception for display here.
- B Photocopied notices can only be displayed at Reception.
- C Take your notice to Reception if you want it displayed here.

THE AIRPORT EXPRESS DEPARTS FROM PLATFORM 3 EVERY 20 MINUTES
 DURING THE DAY (EVERY 30 MINUTES AT NIGHT)

4

- A The train service to the airport runs 24 hours a day.
- B Airport trains leave Platform 3 at 20 minutes past the hour.
- C The airport express takes half an hour at night.

Goods not normally dispatched unless paid for at time of ordering -
 payment on delivery by special arrangement only

5

Customers should normally pay for goods

- A when their order is processed.
- B when the goods are delivered.
- C when they place an order.

Turn Over ▶ 3

READING
 QUESTIONS 1 – 45

PART ONE
 Questions 1 – 5

- Look at questions 1 – 5.
- In each question, which sentence is correct?
- For each question, mark one letter (A, B or C) on your Answer Sheet.

Example

Telephone message
 Bill Ryan caught 9.30 flight - due here 11.30 now, not 12.30.

When does Bill Ryan expect to arrive?

- A 9.30
- B 11.30
- C 12.30

The correct answer is B, so mark your Answer Sheet like this:



Office Staff Required
 Experience essential
 Full training given (leading to
 recognised qualifications)

1

Applicants must have

- A relevant qualifications.
- B previous experience.
- C recognised training.

2

PART TWO
Questions 6 – 10

- Look at the advertisement below. It shows services offered by a business consultancy.
- For questions 6 – 10, decide which service (A – H) would be suitable for each person.
- For each question, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.

THINKING OF STARTING A BUSINESS?

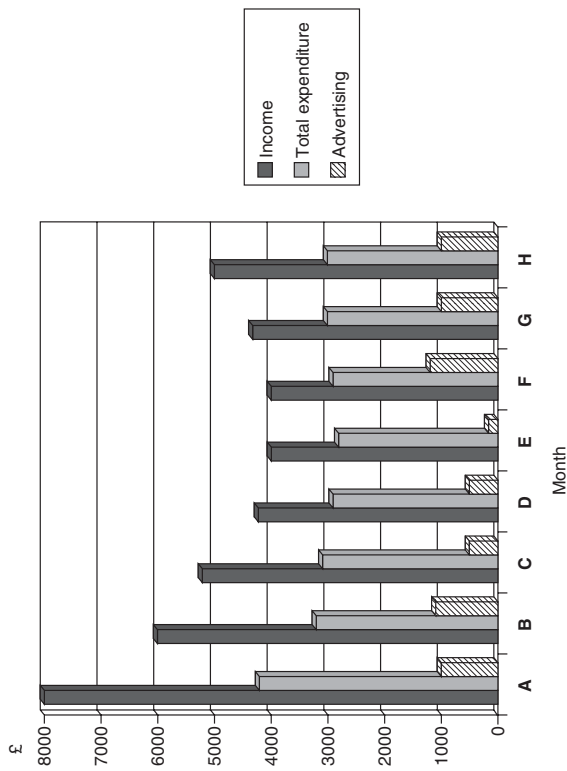
Need expert advice and/or assistance in one or more of the following areas?

- A** Market Research
- B** Constructing a schedule
- C** Calculating costs
- D** Meeting legal requirements
- E** Obtaining finance
- F** Renting or purchasing premises
- G** Recruiting and training staff
- H** Promoting products and services

- 6 Margaret Williams needs help in choosing the business loan with the most competitive terms.
- 7 Ibrahim Shah wants to be sure that there will be enough demand for his product.
- 8 Maria Fernandez would like some advice about where to advertise a new line of goods.
- 9 Kim Seng wants to research new laws on constructing buildings.
- 10 Peder Andersen needs to know whether his existing funds are enough to set up his business.

PART THREE
Questions 11 – 15

- Look at the chart below. It shows a restaurant's income, total expenditure and advertising costs during an eight-month period.
- Which month does each sentence (11 – 15) on the opposite page describe?
- For each sentence, mark one letter (A – H) on your Answer Sheet.
- Do not use any letter more than once.



- 11 In this month, total expenditure, like income, showed a fall, while spending on advertising demonstrated the opposite trend.
- 12 Total expenditure rose slightly in this month, while advertising costs reached their peak, leading to a higher income in the following month.
- 13 Despite a decline in advertising costs in this month, expenditure as a whole rose.
- 14 This month's improvement in income was particularly welcome, as it was not matched by an increase in expenditure.
- 15 While this month saw a low point in the restaurant's income, expenditure continued to fall.

PART FOUR
Questions 16 – 22

- Read the advertisement below for a hot drinks machine.
- Are sentences **16 – 22** on the opposite page 'Right' or 'Wrong'? If there is not enough information to answer 'Right' or 'Wrong', choose 'Doesn't Say'.
- For each sentence **16 – 22**, mark one letter (**A**, **B** or **C**) on your Answer Sheet.

ADVERTISING FEATURE

Save money and keep your staff happy

It can be expensive to keep the canteen open to serve drinks to your staff through the day. Our QVM hot drinks machine replaces this service, so that you can close the canteen between mealtimes.

You can install the QVM hot drinks machine anywhere in the building. One machine is suitable for a staff of ten to fifteen people. It costs £1300 to buy, or £11.00 per week to rent over 60 months. It is not expensive to operate: for example, the cost of power for one day is 30p, nearly as cheap as the price of one hot drink from the machine.

Our company will carry out a weekly service, at a charge of £10.00. We can also refill the machine with drinks ingredients for an extra charge of £8.00. Some customers prefer to do this themselves, however.

There are eight choices of hot drink available from the QVM machine, and our company offers one month's trial free of charge, so that you can estimate how popular the machine will be and see what the actual savings are.

16 With a QVM machine, companies can avoid having a canteen altogether.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

17 The QVM machine provides enough hot drinks for up to fifteen people.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

18 Most customers prefer to rent the QVM machine over sixty months.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

19 The electricity used daily by the machine costs less than the price of a hot drink.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

20 The machine company empties the money from the machine as part of its service agreement.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

21 Customers can refill their machines with drinks ingredients, if they want to.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

22 During the trial period, the customer pays a reduced amount to rent the machine.

- A** Right **B** Wrong **C** Doesn't say

PART FIVE
Questions 23 – 28

- Read the following review of a book called *The Bosses Speak*.
- For each question 23 – 28 on the opposite page, choose the correct answer.
- Mark one letter (A, B or C) on your Answer Sheet.

The Bosses Speak

John Stuart is an executive recruitment specialist who has turned to writing. The result is this book, based on interviews with twenty Chief Executives.

Each top manager – none of them famous names, surprisingly – is given a short chapter, and there is some introductory material and a conclusion. This means you can jump from one person to another, in any order, which is good for people who are too busy to read a book from cover to cover. For a management book it isn't expensive, although whether it's good value for money is doubtful.

Some of the twenty interviewees started their own businesses, while others joined a company and worked their way up. Some are fairly new in their position, and others have had years of experience, though, strangely,

Stuart doesn't seem interested in these differences. The interviewees work in everything, from retailing to airlines to software, and it is this variety that forms the main theme of Stuart's book.

I have to say that Stuart's approach annoys me. He rarely stays at a distance from his interviewees, who are mostly presented in their own, positive words. If this were always the case, at least you would know where you were. But he seems to dislike certain interviewees. As a result, I don't know whether to accept any of his opinions.

Stuart seems to think that his book would be useful for people aiming for the top, and that it might even make a few want to start their own company; but, in fact, what they could learn here is very limited. Seen as light business reading for a doctor or teacher, though, this book would provide some good entertainment.

23 The reviewer suggests that one advantage of the book is that

- A it is better value than other management books.
- B it does not need to be read right through.
- C it is about well-known people.

24 The book concentrates on the fact that the twenty executives who are interviewed

- A work in a number of different industries.
- B started their companies.
- C have worked for different lengths of time.

25 The reviewer cannot accept Stuart's opinions because Stuart

- A makes unreasonable complaints about the interviewees.
- B writes too positively about the interviewees.
- C has different attitudes towards different interviewees.

26 Reading the book made the reviewer think that

- A there are certain qualities which all Chief Executives need.
- B it is difficult to discover how people really run a company.
- C running a company is easier than many people think.

27 Which parts of the book did the reviewer most enjoy reading?

- A how the interviewees became Chief Executives
- B what sort of people the interviewees are
- C the advice given by the interviewees

28 The reviewer recommends the book for people who

- A intend to set up in business.
- B want to become senior managers.
- C are outside the field of business.

Turn Over ▶

11

10

PART SIX
Questions 29 – 40

- Read the article below about team-building.
- Choose the correct word to fill each gap, from **A**, **B** or **C** on the opposite page.
- For each question **29 – 40**, mark one letter (**A**, **B** or **C**) on your Answer Sheet.

TEAM-BUILDING THROUGH ACTIVITIES

Nowadays, company bosses are increasingly trying to find unusual team-building events as part of their training programme. An activity park **(29)** Fast-track has just opened to offer **(30)** events. It specialises **(31)** events to attract the corporate entertainment market. **(32)** is growing all the time.

The park is situated just a few kilometres outside the city centre **(33)** it provides events that **(34)** entertain as well as train.

Clients can try outdoor attractions such as sailing or climbing. **(35)** availability clearly depends entirely **(36)** the weather. Activities of **(37)** kind are perfect team-building exercises.

'I'd **(38)** been to an activity park before,' explained James Black, a company manager. 'Before we came, I didn't think we **(39)** enjoy ourselves so much and I didn't expect the huge difference that Fast-track's programme has **(40)** to my team. Now we work better together than we did before.'

- | | | | |
|----|-----------|------------|----------|
| 29 | A calling | B calls | C called |
| 30 | A such | B like | C so |
| 31 | A at | B for | C in |
| 32 | A who | B which | C what |
| 33 | A and | B but | C or |
| 34 | A ought | B will | C shall |
| 35 | A because | B although | C since |
| 36 | A on | B of | C with |
| 37 | A a | B these | C this |
| 38 | A still | B ever | C never |
| 39 | A must | B would | C might |
| 40 | A made | B had | C done |

PART SEVEN
Questions 41 – 45

- Read the memo and note below.
- Complete the claim form on the opposite page.
- Write a word or phrase (in CAPITAL LETTERS) or a number on lines 41 – 45 on your Answer Sheet.

MEMO

TO: Barbara Sinclair
FROM: Peter Rogers
DATE: 25 May 2002
SUBJECT: Insurance Claim

Could you deal with this? It's our insurance claim, for the damage at the weekend. The insurance policy is in my name, and we bought the carpet for £300, although it will cost at least £500 to replace. Luckily our office carpets seem fine.

Thanks

OWEN SMITH INSURANCE COMPANY

with compliments

Thank you for your recent phone call regarding flood damage in your photocopy room.
Could you please complete the attached form and return it to me as soon as possible.

Martin Morris

Insurance Claim

NAME OF POLICY HOLDER: (41)

POLICY NUMBER: LD4756030C

ITEM(S) TO BE REPLACED: (42)

LOCATION OF ITEM(S): (43)

VALUE WHEN PURCHASED: (44)

CAUSE OF DAMAGE: (45)

DATE OF DAMAGE: Sunday 19 May

Turn Over ▶

15

14

WRITING
QUESTIONS 46 and 47

PART ONE
Question 46

- You are going to attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt soon.
- Write a **memo** to your assistant:
 - explaining why you will be away
 - letting her know the dates you will be away
 - saying what work she should do while you are away.
- **Write 30 – 40 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet.**

MEMO

To: Sara Lyons
 From:
 Date: 14 March 2003
 Subject: Trip to Frankfurt

PART TWO
Question 47

- Read this part of a letter from Mary Bennett applying for a job.

With reference to your advertisement in The Times, I am writing to apply for the post of training assistant.
 I am moving to your country next month with my husband. As you will see from the enclosed CV, I have had a lot of experience in training and I feel that I have much to offer your company.
 If I am selected for interview, please could you give me information about how to reach your offices by public transport?

- Write a **letter** to Mrs Bennett:
 - acknowledging her letter
 - offering her a date and time for an interview
 - requesting the names and addresses of two referees
 - telling her the best way to reach you by public transport.
- **Write 60 – 80 words.**
- **Write on your Answer Sheet. Do not include any postal addresses.**

Dear Mrs Bennett

READING ANSWER KEY

Part One	Part Two	Part Three	Part Four	Part Five	Part Six	Part Seven
1 B	6 E	11 B	16 B	23 B	29 C	41 PETER ROGERS
2 A	7 A	12 F	17 A	24 A	30 A	42 (A/THE/ONE) CARPET
3 C	8 H	13 G	18 C	25 C	31 C	43 PHOTOCOPY ROOM
4 A	9 D	14 H	19 B	26 B	32 B	44 £300
5 C	10 C	15 E	20 C	27 A	33 A	45 FLOOD/FLOODING
			21 A	28 C	34 B	
			22 B		35 B	
					36 A	
					37 C	
					38 C	
					39 B	
					40 A	

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING

An impression mark is awarded to each piece of writing. For each task, a General Impression Mark Scheme is used in conjunction with a Task-specific Mark Scheme, which focuses on criteria specific to each particular task.

For Part 1, examiners use the mark schemes primarily to assess task achievement. For Part 2, examiners use the mark schemes to assess both task achievement **and** language.

The band scores awarded are translated to a mark out of 5 for Part 1 and a mark out of 10 for Part 2. The total score for Writing is then weighted to 30 marks.

Both General Impression Mark Schemes are interpreted at Council of Europe level B1.

Summaries of the General Impression Mark Schemes are reproduced below. Examiners work with a more detailed version, which is subject to regular updating.

Part 1 Summary of General Impression Mark Scheme

Band 5

Very good attempt at task, achieving all content points.

Band 4

Good attempt at task, achieving all content points.

Band 3

Satisfactory attempt at task, achieving all content points with some effort by the reader, or achieving 2 content points.

Band 2

Inadequate attempt at task, achieving 1 content point, possibly with noticeable irrelevance.

Band 1

Poor attempt at task; no content points achieved, has little relevance.

Band 0

No relevant response or too little language to assess.

Part 2 Summary of General Impression Mark Scheme

Band 5

Full realisation of the task set.

- All four content points achieved.
- Confident use of language; errors are minor, due to ambition and non-impeding.
- Good range of structure and vocabulary.
- Effectively organised, with appropriate use of simple linking devices.
- Register and format consistently appropriate.

Very positive effect on the reader.

Band 4

Good realisation of the task set.

- Three or four content points achieved.
- Ambitious use of language; some non-impeding errors.
- More than adequate range of structure and vocabulary.
- Generally well-organised, with attention paid to cohesion.
- Register and format on the whole appropriate.

Positive effect on the reader.

Band 3

Reasonable achievement of the task set.

- Three or four content points achieved.
- A number of errors may be present, but are mostly non-impeding.
- Adequate range of structure and vocabulary.
- Organisation and cohesion is satisfactory, on the whole.
- Register and format reasonable, although not entirely successful.

Satisfactory effect on the reader.

Band 2

Inadequate attempt at the task set.

- Two or three content points achieved.
- Numerous errors, which sometimes impede communication.
- Limited range of structure and vocabulary.
- Content is not clearly organised or linked, causing some confusion.
- Inappropriate register and format.

Negative effect on the reader.

Band 1

Poor attempt at the task set.

- One or two content points achieved.
- Serious lack of control; frequent basic errors.
- Little evidence of structure and vocabulary required by task.
- Lack of organisation, causing a breakdown in communication.
- Little attempt at appropriate register and format.

Very negative effect on the reader.

Band 0

Achieves nothing. Either fewer than 25% of the required number of words or totally illegible or totally irrelevant.

WRITING PART I

CANDIDATE A

I am going to attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt, and the ticket's date is 20th March, I will be away for one week, during this week I would like you to arrange the training meeting which we have decided and make an appointment with selling manager. I would like to see him 27th morning 10:30.

EXAMINER COMMENTS

All points clearly achieved with only minor errors of punctuation and the occasional missing preposition or article. Band 5

CANDIDATE B

Next week I go to an exhibition in Frankfurt. It's from the 9th to the 11th. While I am in Frankfurt you should write the business letters. If there are any problems – call me!

EXAMINER COMMENTS

All the content points have been achieved but '*Next week I go*' and '*write the business letters*' are awkward. Band 4

CANDIDATE C

I must go attend an engineering exhibition in Frankfurt from 15 March to 18 March. Can you tell Mr Meier to ask him confirmation for the fly on Monday and finish to made the travel documents for departure in April?

Yours sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

The third content point (what work the assistant should do while the writer is away) is not achieved as the second sentence is confused and the role of Mr Meier is not clear. Band 3

CANDIDATE D

I will go on a trip to Frankfurt about attend an engineering exhibition tomorrow (15/March), so I want you help me to leave a message if I have phone call. Thank you!

EXAMINER COMMENTS

The candidate has failed to achieve both the second and third content points (the dates when the writer will be away and what work the assistant should do during this time), making this an inadequate attempt at the task. Band 2

WRITING PART 2

CANDIDATE E

Dear Mrs Bennett

Thank you for applying our company. We arranged an interview for you. The date is 4th April. Please arrive at 9.15 in the morning, the interview star at 9.30. Please arrive on time.

We also need the names and address of 2 referees.

The best way to reach our office is use underground. You can find the name of the street where our office is from the map. And use underground from trainstation to our company. You don't need change train.

If you have any questions, please contact us.

Yours sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

All the content points have been achieved and the candidate has demonstrated confident control throughout most of the letter, although there are a few non-impeding errors and a slightly abrupt register. Band 5

CANDIDATE F

Dear Miss Bennett

Thank you for your curriculum vitae and for the interest in this job.

We are pleased to have an interview with you at Monday, 23 April at 10 a.m. in our location. So we have the possibility to introduce you to the team.

Could you please confirm me this requested date and please send me the name of two referees in advance. We hope to see you soon. If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

EXAMINER COMMENTS

The language used by this candidate is consistent with band 5, but the fact that the last content point (how to reach the company by public transport) is not achieved holds the mark awarded at band 4. Band 4

CANDIDATE G

Dear Mrs Bennett

I have received your letter of application of post of traning substance, we have arrengeed for you an interview with Mr John on 26 April, please tell me your 2 referees names and addresses you can reach us by busses numbered 610, 611 from city centre

Yours faithfully

EXAMINER COMMENTS

All the content points have been achieved and the candidate has used an adequate range of structure and vocabulary. However, there is an impeding error (*traning substance*) and this, together with the lack of punctuation and that the fact that the script is slightly short, holds the mark awarded at band 3. Band 3

CANDIDATE H

To Mrs Bennett

I receive your letter including CV we were also looking for the person who is experienced in work. The date for interview for you is 20-03-02 and we will very happy to interview you. The best way you can reach us by public transport. If you need any further information please don't hesitate to contact me.

Your sincerely

EXAMINER COMMENTS

Only the first two content points have been achieved, which holds the mark awarded at band 2. Band 2

TEST OF LISTENING

Time: approx. 40 minutes including 10 minutes' transfer time

PART	Main Skill Focus	Input	Response	Number of Questions
1	Listening for specific information	Eight short conversations/monologues	3-option multiple choice	8
2	Listening for specific information	Short telephone conversation or prompted monologue	Gap filling (numbers and spellings)	7
3	Listening for specific information	Monologue	Note-taking (content words)	7
4	Listening for gist/specific information	Conversation/interview/discussion between two or more people	3-option multiple choice	8

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS**Part One**

The eight questions in this part of the paper are three-option multiple choice questions. For each question, candidates hear a short conversation or monologue, typically lasting around 15 to 30 seconds. Each monologue or dialogue is repeated on the tape in order to give candidates a chance to check their answers. The multiple choice options may be textual or they may be in the form of pictures, graphs or diagrams.

In the extracts in Part One candidates are being tested on their understanding of spoken English used in a range of situations and on their ability to extract factual information. They may need to pick out a name or time or place.

Alternatively, they may have to identify a trend in a graph, or a place on a map, or the location of an object in a room. In every case it will be necessary for candidates to follow the conversation closely.

Part Two

This part consists of a short conversation or monologue, typically lasting around a minute and a half, which contains factual information. On the question paper there is a form, table, chart or set of notes with seven gaps where information is missing. Candidates have to complete each of the gaps. The answers may include dates, prices, percentages or figures. This part has a numerical focus, although common words may be tested, and sometimes there will be names that are spelt out on the tape; answers to these have to be written with correct spelling.

Part Three

Candidates hear a monologue. On the question paper there is a set of notes or a form with gaps. There are seven gaps to complete and the answers may be one or two words. On occasion, the key to one of the gaps may be a date.

Part Four

This part, which lasts about three minutes, contains a longer listening text which generally takes the form of an interview, or a discussion between two or possibly more speakers. There are eight, three-option multiple choice questions on the question paper and these are always in a written format. In this part of the Listening component, candidates are being tested on their ability to understand the gist of a longer text and to extract detailed and specific information as required by the questions. They may also be tested on the speakers' opinions.

At the end of the Listening test, candidates have ten minutes to transfer their answers to their Answer Sheet.

Preparing for the Listening Paper

The Listening component is carefully paced and candidates are tested on short extracts in Part One so that they can gradually 'tune in' to the spoken language and improve their listening skills without losing their place in the test. Listening can be a very demanding activity and candidates should practise their listening skills regularly using a wide variety of listening sources. Candidates who enter the Listening test having done this will be at an advantage.

At BEC Preliminary level, it is advisable to collect as much listening material as possible that is suitably paced and of an appropriate length. Native speakers speak at many different

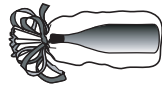
speeds and some speak much more clearly than others. If it is possible to collect a bank of authentic material that is carefully chosen, this would prove useful practice for students. Otherwise it might be better to make use of specially designed materials for this level.

For Part One, candidates should try to listen to short extracts of speech, concentrating on understanding the general idea or main points of what is said. For Parts Two and Three, practice should be given in note-taking. Prior to hearing tapes or audio materials, students should be given details of the information they need to listen for. Teachers should discuss the task with the students beforehand and encourage them to listen for clues and prompts that will help them identify the points they need to find. When listening to longer texts, it would also be useful to discuss areas such as:

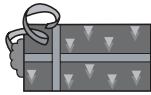
- the purpose of the speech or conversation
- the speakers' roles
- the speakers' opinions
- the language functions being used
- factual details
- conclusions.

LISTENING SAMPLE PAPER

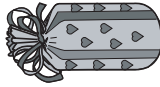
2 What kind of packaging do they decide to use?



A



B



C

3 Where is Mike going to take the visitors first?

Customer Relations

A

Production

B

Warehouse

C

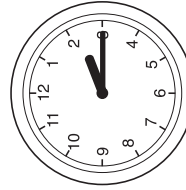
4 Who is Anne going to write to?

A the clients

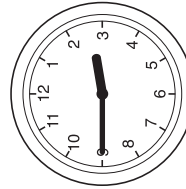
B the supplier

C the staff

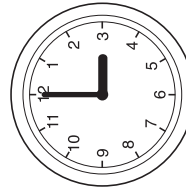
5 What's the new time for the meeting?



A



B



C

PART ONE
Questions 1 – 8

- For questions 1 – 8 you will hear eight short recordings.
- For each question, mark one letter (A, B or C) for the correct answer.

Example:

When were the machine parts sent?

Monday 31

A

Tuesday 1

B

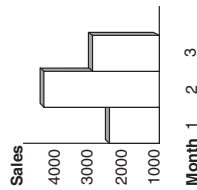
Thursday 3

C

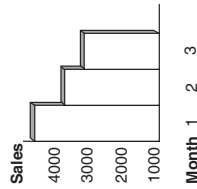
The answer is A.

You will hear the eight recordings twice.

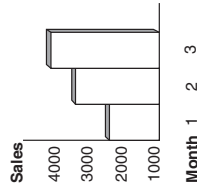
1 Which chart is correct?



A



B



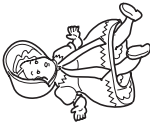
C

Turn Over ▶

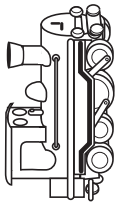
6 Which product has been the most successful?



A



B

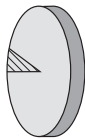


C

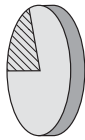
7 What is the purpose of the meeting?

- A to look at applications
- B to write a job advertisement
- C to prepare for interviews

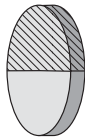
8 Which chart shows the company's market share this year?



A



B



C

PART TWO
Questions 9 – 15

- Look at the notes below.
- Some information is missing.
- You will hear a manager telephoning Human Resources about vacancies in his department.
- For each question 9 – 15, fill in the missing information in the numbered space using a **word, numbers or letters**.
- You will hear the conversation twice.

Customer Services Vacancies

NUMBER OF VACANCIES:	(9)	<i>telephone operators</i>
SALARY:	(10) <i>max. £</i>	
TOTAL HOLIDAY (PER ANNUM):	(11)	<i>days</i>
JOB REFERENCE:	(12)	
JOB START DATE:	(13)	<i>2002</i>
LINE MANAGER:	(14) <i>MJ SHE</i>	
TEL NUMBER (FOR ENQUIRIES):	(15)	

Turn Over ► 5

PART THREE
Questions 16 – 22

- Look at the notes about a publisher's plans for promotion this autumn.
- Some information is missing.
- You will hear part of a talk by the company's Marketing Director.
- For each question **16 – 22**, fill in the missing information in the numbered space using **one or two** words.
- You will hear the talk twice.

Autumn promotion plans

- (16) *main titles: pocket dictionary and*
- (17) *Advertising space booked in magazine*
- (18) *New colour for display stands:*
- (19) *Free gifts include and keyrings*
- (20) *Alien has made a deal with*
- (21) *For mailing to booksellers in September:*
- (22) *Venue for dictionary launch party:*

Turn Over ▶
7

PART FOUR
Questions 23 – 30

- You will hear a conversation between a senior manager, called Sue, and her assistant, called David.
 - For each question **23 – 30**, mark one letter (**A, B or C**) for the correct answer.
 - You will hear the conversation twice.
- 23** Sue is particularly pleased about the company

- A** receiving an award.
- B** increasing its share price.
- C** getting a new client.

24 What is the main cause of the company's rising costs?

- A** import taxes
- B** publicity
- C** premises

25 Which expenses do they want to reduce?

- A** entertainment
- B** stationery
- C** telephone

26 More training is required because the company has

- A** bought new computer software.
- B** recruited new members of staff.
- C** increased its range of customers.

27 How will the company organise the training?

- A** send staff to a college
- B** use current staff members
- C** employ external trainers

8

28 When the next brochure is printed, it will

- A have an improved design.
- B include a new product.
- C contain extra information.

29 What problem are they experiencing with Johnsons's?

- A the quality of goods
- B the high prices
- C the speed of deliveries

30 What will they do about the problem with Johnsons's?

- A send them a letter
- B check every order
- C contact other suppliers

You now have 10 minutes to transfer your answers to your Answer Sheet.

9

LISTENING ANSWER KEY

Part One

- 1 C
- 2 A
- 3 B
- 4 C
- 5 B
- 6 A
- 7 C
- 8 A

Part Two

- 9 8 (TELEPHONE OPERATORS)
- 10 (£) 16,950
- 11 33 (DAYS)
- 12 CS08011
- 13 6(TH) OCTOBER/OCTOBER 6 (2002)
(THE) SIXTH (OF) OCTOBER (2002)
- 6/10/02
- 6/10 (2002)
- 14 (MS SUE) BLACKMANN
- 15 795335

Part Three

- 16 (NEW) ROAD MAP(S)
- 17 TRAVEL (MAGAZINE)
- 18 ORANGE
- 19 CALENDARS
- 20 RADIO EAST
- 21 (OUR) INFORMATION SHEET(S)
- 22 (THE) MANAGEMENT CENTRE/CENTER

Part Four

- 23 A
- 24 B
- 25 C
- 26 C
- 27 B
- 28 A
- 29 A
- 30 C

TAPESCRIPT

PART ONE. QUESTIONS 1 to 8.

1: Which chart is correct?

M: ...and I'm pleased to announce that we've had a small but steady increase in ice cream sales, in spite of the unusually low temperatures in the last three months. We'll see whether this trend continues.

2: What kind of packaging do they decide to use?

F: What packaging do you recommend for the smaller type of bottle?

M: Well, I'd wrap it in clear plastic and tie it at the top.
 F: OK. But don't you think a box would be better, perhaps with a pattern on it?
 M: Boxes are dull and a pattern on the plastic would look untidy.
 F: Right, we'll do as you recommend.

3: Where is Mike going to take the visitors first?

F: Mike, could you show some people round the factory tomorrow?
 M: Certainly. The usual tour – from reception to the warehouse?

- F: They are particularly interested in our production techniques, so I would start there.
- M: OK, and then through customer relations and into the warehouse.
- F: Thanks.

4: Who is Anne going to write to?

- M: Anne, that supplier we use has become very unreliable, and we've decided to look for another one.
- F: Seems a good idea.
- M: We don't need to inform our clients, but could you send a note round to all our departments when we've decided who to replace the supplier with?
- F: Yes of course.

5: What's the new time for the meeting?

- F: What time's the MD back tomorrow?
- M: Erm... just after lunch, I think. Why?
- F: Well, I've got a meeting tomorrow at a quarter past two, but I need to be here when the MD arrives – I'll rearrange my meeting for three.
- M: Well, Paul's coming to that meeting, and he has to leave early.
- F: OK, I'll make it a quarter to, then.

6: Which product has been the most successful?

- M: Our sales figures show that toy trains haven't done very well, although we've sold a reasonable number of the dolls. As for model cars, we've sold so many that we can't produce enough!

7: What is the purpose of the meeting?

- F: We've got to fill those vacancies in research urgently. That's why today's meeting's so important.
- M: Yes, but the advertisement's only just gone out. Why discuss the interviews now?
- F: The closing date is next Friday. It will take us a day to look at the applications. If we decide on the interview questions today that'll save time.

8: Which chart shows the company's market share this year?

- F: Is the company doing better this year?
- M: It's a mixed picture really. Sales have risen by about fifty per cent, which is excellent, but our total market share is down to five per cent from twenty per cent last year.

PART TWO. QUESTIONS 9 – 15.

- F: Human Resources, Helen speaking.
- M: Hello. It's Alan Thomas, phoning about the vacancies here in Customer Services.
- F: I'll just take the details to put in the ad. It's for 5 telephone operators, isn't it?
- M: It was 5, but we're busier now and also 2 staff are leaving this week, so we need 8 new people.
- F: OK. I'll put that. And are these grade 1 posts, salary 14 to 15 thousand?
- M: Starting salary is fourteen thousand, but I need some people with experience, so we'll pay up to sixteen thousand nine hundred and fifty. That's the top of grade 2.
- F: Fine.
- M: Holidays, next.
- F: The usual 21 days a year?
- M: Actually, the telephone staff are working longer shifts now, so they get an extra 12 days off a year. Together it's 33 days.
- F: OK. Do you have a reference number for these posts?
- M: Yes, it's CS zero eight zero double one.
- F: Right. We'll advertise next week, September the 7th. What start date shall I put? The 6th of October?
- M: I wanted them to start on the 1st, but your date is better. So, put that.
- F: And will you be their line manager, Mr Thomas?
- M: They'll actually report to Sue Blackmann, that's double N.
- F: And who can people contact?
- M: Sue. She's on 795 double 3 5.
- F: Right....

PART THREE. QUESTIONS 16 – 22.

- M: Okay, I just want to update you on our main plans for promotion this autumn. The main campaign will of course be the pocket dictionary, but we also have a reasonable budget for the new road map, which is coming out next month, as you know. For both titles, we've already taken full-page adverts in 'Travel' magazine and I'm also considering space for the dictionary in that new monthly 'Reference Now'. For window and general shop display, our designer has produced the wonderful stands you can see in the corner. I'm sure you'll agree that the orange is an improvement on the green stands we had last year! Erm, we're looking at a range of free gifts for handing out at exhibitions – currently on order are calendars and keyrings, but possibly in future larger things too, like umbrellas for major clients. I'd like your views on that idea before I go ahead. Alison's managed to negotiate some air time on Radio East and I'm going to visit a TV network on Friday – that's more relevant to our future titles

though. Now, publicity material – everything is listed in the annual catalogue, which will be ready to send to booksellers in December. And talking of bookseller mailshots we've also got one going out in September, which will be our information sheet. Finally, I can confirm the venue for the dictionary launch party, which is next month. Some of you know we were trying to get the university library, but in fact, we've now booked the management centre, which will be excellent. Their catering is supposed to be very good...

PART FOUR. QUESTIONS 23 – 30.

F: There's quite a lot to talk about.
 M: Well Sue, it doesn't matter if we don't cover everything today.
 F: Ok, David, let's see how we go.
 M: Things are looking good, aren't they?
 F: Definitely. I'm very pleased. We've gone beyond our sales targets. Our share price is stable. And, of course, you know Eurocom were going to move but they've chosen to keep their contract with us after all. But winning the prize for British Exporter of the year was the best thing, as far as I'm concerned.
 M: On the other hand, there is the problem of rising costs.
 F: Yes, even though we avoided another rent increase...
 M: But all those expensive newspaper advertisements...
 F: Yes, that's the real problem. Although they are partly balanced by the decrease in import duties.
 M: Mmm ... meanwhile, you want to limit our expenses where possible?
 F: Yes, certainly. Actually, the budget for entertaining clients is fairly reasonable, and very necessary. It's the cost of phone calls that worries me. It seems far too high.
 M: Everyone should be using e-mail wherever possible if you want to save on communications generally. Um, we've already got cheaper paper from the printers, which is a start.
 F: True. Now on to training. We need to be clear where this demand for training is coming from.
 M: Well, our own success, basically. Our customer base is expanding all the time. Our staff...
 F: ...who are up to date with new computer applications...
 M: Yes, they're ok for that, but they have to deal with all these new clients. They'll need a wider range of skills than they have at the moment...
 F: We could contact the business school. Perhaps they could send us some of their trainers.
 M: Or what about the courses they run?
 F: But then again, it seems a pity not to use our own training department.
 M: Doing it ourselves, you mean? Well, yes ... after all,

it's the people here who know what we do best and can really understand our needs.

F: I agree. OK, what's next?
 M: Um, there's the printing of the new brochure.
 F: Is the basic information changing?
 M: I shouldn't think so but the whole thing really needs to look a bit better. The current one just doesn't give the right idea at all...
 F: Much too old-fashioned. Yes, a new presentation, a proper lay-out. What about out-of-date products?
 M: Steve's already taken them out. Now, do you want to talk about the supplier situation?
 F: You mean the situation with Johnson's?
 M: Yes, they're just not giving us what we need. Their prices have always seemed very reasonable, but the products aren't good enough. There's no point being cheap and on time if we don't actually get what we want.
 F: Right, well, we need to deal with the situation. What contact have you had with them?
 M: I wrote to them twice last month, and it didn't seem to have any real effect. We've looked at every order as it comes in, so we already have a fairly clear picture of the problem.
 F: Hmm... I think you should start by ringing some other firms, see if they can match Johnson's deal. Then I'll make a decision.
 M: Right. Great, we did manage to discuss everything.
 F: Yes, good.

TEST OF SPEAKING

Time: 12 minutes

PART	Format/Content	Time	Interaction Focus
1	Conversation between the interlocutor and each candidate General interaction and social language	About 2 minutes	The interlocutor encourages the candidates to give information about themselves and to express personal opinions
2	A 'mini-presentation' by each candidate on a business theme Organising a larger unit of discourse. Giving information and expressing opinions	About 5 minutes	The candidates are given prompts which generate a short talk on a business-related topic
3	Two-way conversation between candidates followed by further prompting from the interlocutor	About 5 minutes	The candidates are presented with a scenario supported by visual or written prompts which generates a discussion. The interlocutor extends the discussion with further spoken prompts.

A DETAILED LOOK AT THE TASKS

Part One

In the first part of the test, the interlocutor addresses each candidate in turn and asks them questions about themselves and their opinions. The questions will be slightly different for each candidate, and candidates are not addressed in strict sequence. In this part of the test, candidates are being tested on their ability to talk briefly about themselves, to provide concise information on subjects such as their home, hobbies and jobs, and to perform simple functions such as agreeing and disagreeing and expressing preferences.

Part Two

The second part of the test is a 'mini-presentation'. In this part, each candidate is given a choice of two topics and has one minute to prepare a piece of extended speech lasting approximately one minute. After each candidate has finished speaking the next candidate is asked which of the bullet points they think is the most important. In this part of the test candidates are being tested on their ability to sustain their talk accurately and appropriately.

Part Three

The third part of the test is a conversation between the candidates. The interlocutor outlines a scenario and provides prompts in the form of black and white pictures or written text to help the candidates. The candidates are asked to speak for about two minutes. The interlocutor will support the conversation as appropriate and then ask further questions related to the main theme. In this part of the test, candidates are being tested on their ability to interact appropriately using appropriate functional language and strategies.

Preparing for the Speaking Paper

It is important to familiarise candidates with the format of the test before it takes place, and a Speaking Test video with worksheets and notes for the teacher is available for this purpose from Cambridge ESOL publications. For an order form, please go to our website and click on Publications. Candidates can be further prepared through the use of pair and group activities in class as well as test practice material. It may be necessary for teachers to explain the benefits of the paired test format. The primary purpose is to sample a wider range of discourse than can be elicited from an individual interview, in particular allowing the assessment to focus on the interactive nature of oral communication.

Part One of the test is in an interview format. Classroom activities such as pair or group work where candidates exchange information would be useful preparation for this part of the test. Practice of simple repair strategies such as asking for repetition or clarification would also be useful.

Part Two requires a longer turn. Classroom activities which encourage longer contributions will prepare candidates for this part of the test. Discussions as well as short talks or presentations are ideal. Preparation might also include a focus on simple discourse markers and connectors.

Part Three is a discussion. Classroom activities which encourage candidates to interact well with each other, such as pair and group work, would be good preparation. Candidates should be encouraged to interact appropriately by taking turns to speak. It is also a good idea to encourage students to change partners in class so that they grow accustomed to interacting with a variety of people, some of whom they do not know well. Practice of particular functions such as giving opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, etc. would also be useful.

SPEAKING SAMPLE TASKS

Task Sheet for Candidate B

Task Sheet 2

A: WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN...?

Choosing a business language course

- Cost
- Size of group
- Qualification

B: WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN...?

Selling a new product

- Price
- Quality
- Advertising

BEC Preliminary – PART TWO

Task Sheet for Candidate A

Task Sheet 1

A: WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN...?

Choosing a training course

- Size of group
- Cost
- Times of course

B: WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN...?

Booking a hotel for a business trip

- Location
- Facilities
- Charges

BEC Preliminary – PART TWO

General training programme for new staff**Topics for training**

- Equipment
- Computer skills
- Company organisation
- Company rules
- Customer service
- Product training
- Health and safety
- Foreign languages

BEC Preliminary - PART THREE

Scenario:

I'm going to describe a situation.

**A company is planning to introduce a general training programme for new staff.
Talk together about the topics the company could include in the programme and
decide which three you think are most important.**

Here are some ideas to help you.

BEC Preliminary - PART THREE

ASSESSMENT OF SPEAKING

Candidates are assessed on their own performance and not in relation to each other, according to the following analytical criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. These criteria are interpreted at Preliminary level.

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test and is not related to particular parts of the test.

Both examiners assess the candidates. The Assessor applies detailed, analytical scales, and the Interlocutor applies a Global Achievement Scale which is based on the analytical scales.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This refers to range and accuracy as well as the appropriate use of grammatical and lexical forms. At BEC Preliminary level, a range of grammar and vocabulary is needed to deal with the tasks. At this level candidates may make frequent minor errors and use some inappropriate vocabulary, but this should not obscure intended meanings.

Discourse Management

This refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate's individual performance. Contributions should be adequate to deal with the tasks. At times, candidates' utterances may be inappropriate in length and some utterances may lack coherence.

Pronunciation

This refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances. At BEC Preliminary level, most meanings are conveyed through the appropriate use of stress, rhythm, intonation and clear individual sounds, although there may be some strain on the listener.

Interactive Communication

This refers to the candidate's ability to take an active part in the development of the discourse. At BEC Preliminary level, candidates are able to take turns and sustain the interaction by initiating and responding appropriately. Hesitation may demand patience of the listener.