



UNIVERSITY of CAMBRIDGE
International Examinations

REVISION CHECKLIST for IGCSE First Language English 0500

A guide for Students

How to use this guide

The guide describes what you need to know about your IGCSE First Language English (FLE) examination.

It will help you to plan your revision programme for the examinations and will explain what the examiners are looking for in your answers. It can also be used to help you to revise by using the tick boxes in Section 3, 'What you need to do', to check what you have covered.

The guide contains the following sections:

Section 1 - How will you be tested?

This section will give you information about the different examination papers that you will take.

Section 2 - What will be tested?

This section describes the skills that the Examiners will test you on.

Section 3 - What you need to do

This section shows the syllabus in a simple way so that you can check that:

- You have practised each skill.
- You can understand and respond, in English, in a variety of contexts and situations.
- You are well prepared for the level of examination (Core or Extended) you will be taking. (You will need to check which level with your teacher.)
- You have covered enough types of task to enable you to show your skills in writing (and possibly speaking) English.

Section 4 - Revision

This section gives advice on how you can revise and prepare for the examination.

Section 1: How will you be tested?

You will probably take **two** elements:

1. Reading Passages question paper 1 OR 2 (Core OR Extended tier)
2. Directed Writing and Composition question paper 3 OR Coursework portfolio paper 4

In addition, you may take EITHER an optional Speaking and Listening test (paper 5) OR offer Speaking and Listening coursework (paper 6).

Your teacher will assess your skills during the IGCSE course and will discuss with you which papers and which level of examination (Core or Extended) you should take. Extended tier gives grades A* to E; Core tier gives grades C to G.

Paper number and level of examination	How long and how many marks?	What's in the Paper? Which skills are being tested?	What's the % of the total examination?
Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core)	1 hour 45 minutes 50 marks	Questions 1 and 2 – Reading	50%
Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)	2 hours 50 marks	Questions 1, 2 and 3 – Reading	50%
Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition (Core and Extended)	2 hours 50 marks	Section 1 - Directed Writing Section 2 - Composition	50%
Component 4 Coursework Portfolio	n/a 50 marks	3 Assignments: informative; imaginative; response to a text	50%

In addition, you may EITHER take an optional Speaking and Listening test OR offer Speaking and Listening coursework

Paper number and level of examination	How long and how many marks?	What's in the Paper? Which skills are being tested?	What's the % of the total examination?
Component 5	10 minutes 30 marks	Part 1 - Individual Task Part 2 - Discussion	n/a
Component 6	n/a 30 marks	Task 1 - Individual Task Task 2 - Pair-based Activity Task 3 - Group Activity	n/a

These Speaking and Listening Components do not contribute to your overall result, since they are marked as a separate examination, for which you will be given a separate result. You should check with your teacher whether you will be taking Component 5 or 6.

Section 2 - What will be tested?

The syllabus sets out the skills which will be tested in the examination papers. In FLE, there are four main skills – two which test how well you understand and receive information, and two which test how well you are able to convey, or pass on, information. This information might be information you have just received, or it might be new and original information.

The skills are as follows:

Assessment Objective	Core	Extended
Reading	demonstrate understanding of words within extended texts	show a more precise understanding of extended texts
	scan for and extract specific information	
	identify main and subordinate topics, summarise, paraphrase, re-express	recognise the relationship of ideas
		draw inferences, evaluate effectiveness, compare, analyse, synthesise
	show some sense of how writers achieve their effects	show understanding of how writers achieve their effects
	recognise and respond to simple linguistic devices including figurative language	recognise and respond to more sophisticated linguistic devices
Writing	express thoughts, feelings and opinions in order to interest, inform or convince the reader	show a wider and more varied sense of different styles to interest, inform or convince the reader
	show some sense of audience	show a clear sense of audience
	demonstrate adequate control of vocabulary, syntax and grammar	demonstrate a sophisticated use of vocabulary and structures
	exercise care over punctuation and spelling	demonstrate accuracy in punctuation and spelling
	write accurate simple sentences	write accurate complex sentences
	attempt a variety of sentence structures	employ varied sentence structures
	recognise the need for paragraphing	write in well-constructed paragraphs
	use appropriate vocabulary	use imaginative and varied vocabulary

Speaking and Listening	understand and convey both simple and detailed information	understand and convey more complex information in an interesting and authoritative way
	present facts, ideas and opinions in an orderly sequence	consciously order and present facts, ideas and opinions for a particular audience
	make relevant comments on what is heard, seen or read	evaluate and reflect on what is heard, seen or read
	describe experience in simple terms and express intelligibly what is thought and imagined	describe and reflect on experience and express effectively what is thought and imagined
	recognise and give statements of opinion and attitude	discuss statements of opinion and attitude, discerning underlying assumptions and points of view
	speaking audibly and intelligibly with appropriate tone, intonation and pace	

The Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening Objectives to be tested are divided as follows:

Reading:

- R1 Understand and collate explicit meanings
- R2 Understand, explain and collate implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 Select, analyse and evaluate what is relevant to specific purposes
- R4 Understand how writers achieve effects

Writing:

- W1 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 Order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- W3 Understand and use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 Use language and register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 Make accurate and effective use of paragraphs, grammatical structures, sentences, punctuation and spelling

Speaking & Listening

- S1 Understand, order and present facts, ideas and opinions
- S2 Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- S3 Communicate clearly and fluently
- S4 Use language and register appropriate to audience and context
- S5 Listen to and respond appropriately to the contribution of others

In addition to the main skills outlined above, you will also be tested on how accurate and consistent your usage of English is. The Examiners will assess your usage of English according to:

- How well you can control your grammar and structures. This applies to writing as well as speaking.
- The range of vocabulary you use. You will be tested on your understanding and whether you are able to use words accurately and/or appropriately, in both writing and speaking.
- How accurately you spell.
- Your use of sentences, paragraphs and punctuation in longer pieces of writing.
- Your awareness of 'register' in formal and informal situations, for example, whether you are aware that you should not write a letter to a friend in the same tone and style as a letter to your Head Teacher, and also that spoken English is generally less formal than written English. You will be expected to give most of your responses in formal English.

Section 3 - What you need to do

The FLE course doesn't cover content in the same way as most other IGCSE courses do. In Science, for example, you might need to learn how a particular process works. This means understanding and being able to recall all the steps involved in the process in a logical way. Once you have reached a certain level of knowledge, you can move on and extend that knowledge base.

The same principle can be seen in Mathematics, where understanding formulae is the basis for making accurate calculations. Learning both of these subjects is, therefore, structured in a logical, step-by-step manner. English is quite different. The best way to approach the 'content' of your FLE course is to make sure that you have practised English in a wide variety of contexts, that you understand the different ways that English can be used and can respond appropriately.

FLE teachers in different parts of the world probably use different textbooks and teaching materials. This is because there is no single 'correct' textbook that should be used. It is generally agreed that the best approach to learning FLE is to use a variety of books, articles, newspapers, magazines, as well as the Internet; also to use recordings (to develop listening) and oral activities (to develop speaking). Success in learning FLE is linked to using a variety of different resources that will enable students to practise all the skills that they will be tested on.

The table below – containing the checklist – is therefore simply a guide to the types of activities which are useful. However, you should not think of the table as a list of activities that you must do, or as a list of contexts that you must cover. If you do not tick some areas, it does not mean that you have not completed the whole course!

Skill:	All students should be able to:	Those taking the Extended examination should also be able to:	Ways in which the skills might be practised (appropriate contexts)	Checklist – tick if you have worked on something similar
Reading. Locating specific information as quickly as possible = Skimming	Read short non-fiction texts, such as leaflets, news reports and advertisements	Cope with more detailed and extensive informative texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at leaflets, reports, guidelines Analysing brochures 	
Reading. Locating more detailed information; looking more carefully = Scanning	Read longer non-fiction texts, such as articles from newspapers and magazines	Cope with longer and more challenging articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading similar articles (in style and in length) to those seen frequently in past examination papers Reading factual articles Extracting relevant information from articles 	
Reading & Writing. Integrated reading and writing	1. Read a text which contains information and respond using the relevant material from the text	Convey a thorough understanding by writing a lengthy response in a different genre from the original text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practising using the same material in different genres Practising writing formal letters 	
	2. Understand descriptive texts and select relevant information and phrases from them	Select, explain and analyse the effect of the usage of certain phrases in the text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading passages from literary texts and identifying the ways in which feeling or atmosphere have been created 	
	3. Adopt an appropriate voice in which to express a response to a text	Adopt a sophisticated or official persona	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practising using different registers and styles for different aims according to specific tasks 	
	4. Show awareness of audience	Target your audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practise using devices which show ability to address your audience directly and manipulate its response 	
	5. Write short summaries	Summarise two passages which have similarities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Writing a summary based on a set of notes of between 7 and 15 points 	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practising the use of own words • Becoming familiar with the concise and precise language of summary style 	
Writing	1. Describe, discuss, argue and narrate	Carry out longer writing tasks on a range of topics, paying attention to structure, sequence and style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing descriptions of events, places, people using all five senses and imagery • Planning openings and endings to stories • Structuring and supporting points for an argument 	
	2. Use language for a specific purpose, e.g. to persuade, to consider, to evaluate, to inform, to entertain, to convey an impression	Create sustained and cohesive responses to continuous writing tasks, showing an awareness of the generic characteristics of different types of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing (and performing) debate speeches • Balancing ideas for and against a discussion topic • Analysing the devices used in letters, articles and editorials stating a point of view • Writing stories which have gripping openings, pace, dialogue, climax, strong endings 	
Speaking & Listening	1. Understand and respond to questions and instructions	Construct a sustained speech on a chosen topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan and deliver a talk • Explain a viewpoint and support it with evidence 	
	2. Understand the speech of others and the views they express 3. Describe a personal experience	Listen to and respond appropriately to the contributions of others Use detail and example to engage the listener	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening to recordings of interviews on news or chat • shows and differentiating between fact and opinion • Role-playing dialogues and interviews 	
	4. Engage in discussion	Develop a topic into wider issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking part in and contributing to group discussions 	

Section 4 - Revision

Here are some of the ways in which you can prepare for the examination.

4.1 Reading

- It is worth learning the meanings of common prefixes so that you can guess meanings e.g. 'hyper-active' means 'over' active but 'hypo-thermia' means 'below' temperature.
- Summarising a passage is a specific and almost scientific skill which, once gained, makes it easily possible to get 20 out of 20. You must adopt the right approach, however, which is to follow a 5-step process:
 - i) read and underline relevant material; count that there are at least 15 points altogether, and preferably 20 (fewer for Paper 1)
 - ii) transfer the points into a plan, whilst changing them into your own words
 - iii) group the points logically (using arrows/brackets); put them in order (using numbers), and decide which ones can be combined into one sentence
 - iv) write the summary in two paragraphs (one for Paper 1), using complex sentences
 - v) check the summary for accurate expression; adapt the length and improve if necessary by adding material overlooked or by removing repetition.

Remember that summaries never include:

- i) examples
- ii) repetitions
- iii) direct speech
- iv) figurative language
- v) minor details.

All these must be removed from the passage, and then you use only the facts, which are what you have left.

- Practice turning passages into news reports; they have a particular style, and structure which is different from any other kind of writing:
 - i) style - short paragraphs; short sentences; dramatic vocabulary; statistical information; stacking of adjectives and descriptive phrases before the noun (e.g. 'The Japanese-owned lightweight racing yacht Sunshine II...', 'Divorced former model and mother of two, Susan Smith...')
 - ii) The expression should be impersonal (do not use 'I' or 'We' and do not give any opinions).
 - iii) Use interview material and direct speech as well as reported speech.
 - iv) structure - contrary to normal chronological sequence, news reports begin with the very recent past (usually yesterday); go on to fill in past background prior to the event; return to the immediate present and how things are developing; then finally speculate about the future
- Practise writing formal letters; it is highly likely you will be asked to write a letter on either the Reading or Writing paper. Letters to people in official positions and whom you don't know typically adopt a formal style and polite tone, and they are structured in three paragraphs:
 - i) the topic of the letter/reason for writing it
 - ii) background information, arguments and factual details
 - iii) request or suggestions for future action

4.2 Writing

- Your teacher will keep telling you that each question should be answered in a different style. What is style?
 - i) matching the expression to the type of speaker/writer - writing in role
 - ii) matching the expression to the recipient - writing for audience
 - iii) matching the expression to the aim - writing for purpose
 - iv) choosing appropriate structure and devices - writing in genre
 - v) choosing appropriate vocabulary and syntax - writing in register
- Practise joining simple sentences into complex sentences, using a range of connectives and participles. Above all avoid using 'and', 'but' and 'so'.
- To develop competency and variety of style, practise varying the order of clauses so that your sentences don't all follow the same formula and start the same way. Your choices are:
 - i) main clause followed by one or more subordinate clauses e.g. 'The cat fell asleep, after it had eaten, although someone had switched on loud music.'
 - ii) subordinate clause(s) followed by main clause e.g. 'After it had eaten, the cat fell asleep.'
 - iii) subordinate clause followed by main clause followed another subordinate clause e.g. 'After it had eaten, the cat fell asleep, although someone had switched on loud music.'
 - iv) main clause containing embedded subordinate clause e.g. 'The cat, which had been sleeping all day, fell asleep again.'
 - v) main clause containing embedded subordinate clause, followed by another subordinate clause e.g. 'The cat, which had been sleeping all day, fell asleep again, even though there was loud music playing.'
- Learn commonly misspelt words which you know you are likely to need to use e.g. separate, definitely, business, opportunity, surprise, privilege. The best way to learn them is:
 - i) to stare at them and try to 'photograph' them; cover them while you write them from the imprint on your memory; check back to see if you were correct. This is the Look, Cover, Write, Check method. Copying words letter by letter does not fix the 'letter-strings' in your mind successfully.
 - ii) to remember the rule: 'i' before 'e' except after 'c', if the sound you are making is long double 'ee'. (The only known exception, apart from in names, is 'seize'.)
 - iii) if in doubt whether a word has a single or double consonant apply the generally sound rule that if the vowel is short the consonant is double, but if the vowel is long the consonant is single e.g. 'hopping and hoping', 'sitting and siting', 'dinner and diner', 'writing' and 'written'.
 - iv) to create mnemonics, little sayings and rhymes which, however silly, actually work e.g. 'necessary' is spelt with one c and two s because 'one coat has two sleeves'; 'possesses' possesses five esses
 - v) to be aware of prefixes, so that you can work out which words have double letters and which don't e.g. 'dis-satisfied' as opposed to 'dismay', and the spelling of words like 'extra-ordinary' and 'con-science'.
 - vi) be aware of suffixes, so that you can work out which adverbs end in 'ly' and which in 'lly' (i.e. only those which already have an 'l' at the end of the adjective, like 'beautiful - beautifully').

vii) think about how the word is spelt in other languages you know e.g. the French verb 'separer' will remind you of how 'separate' is spelt in English.

viii) break difficult words down into syllables in your mind, so that you can hear how 'in-ter-est-ing' must be spelt.

- Be aware that there are over thirty connectives available in English for joining parts of sentences (clauses) together. In addition present and present perfect continuous participles ('arriving', 'having arrived') can also be used, with or without prepositions ('after arriving', 'after having arrived'). You should therefore try to broaden the range of the connectives you habitually use.
- Use all three types of parenthesis rather than just one, and be aware that they create subtly different effects in the degree of separation of a group of words from the rest of the sentence, in which they are not grammatically necessary:
 - i) a pair of commas is the weakest way e.g. 'A dog, which was huge, approached.'
 - ii) a pair of dashes is stronger e.g. 'A dog - which was huge - approached.'
 - iii) a pair of brackets is the strongest e.g. 'A dog (which was huge) approached.'
- Practice persuasive writing. The exam is weighted towards this life skill in both the reading and writing papers. Support all points with proofs.
- There are different ways of beginning narrative, but setting the scene is necessary early on, whichever type of opening you choose:
 - i) start by setting the scene, referring to place and time, season and weather
 - ii) start with description of the main character
 - iii) start in the middle of the action
 - iv) start in the middle of dialogue
 - v) start with an intriguing or shocking statement
- There is also a range of ways to end a narrative:
 - i) ironic comment in direct speech
 - ii) an unexpected twist
 - iii) a return to the beginning
 - iv) a happy ending
 - v) a sad ending
 - vi) a 'cliffhanger'
- Revise direct speech punctuation, which is difficult. It is likely that in one or more parts of the 0500 exam you will be required to or will wish to use dialogue. Remember in particular that a change of speaker requires a change of line, and that all speech needs a final punctuation mark in addition to and before the closing inverted commas. Remember also that exclamations and questions which fall inside the speech are not followed by a capital letter if the sentence continues, and that commas not full stops are used to end speech unless there is no continuation to the sentence. e.g.
'Really?' she asked.
'Really,' he answered.
- Consider and practise the ways of beginning an argumentative essay:
 - i) an unexpected claim
 - ii) a provocative statement
 - iii) a summary of a situation
 - iv) a famous quotation
 - v) a direct question

- Learn, finally, those little things you've always got wrong and never bothered to work out why e.g. the difference between it's (it is/it has) and its (belonging to it); who's (who is/who has) and whose (belonging to who); continuous (without stopping) and continual (with stops); uninterested (without interest) and disinterested (without prejudice); lay (with object) and lie (without object).
- Remind yourself of any punctuation marks you have never been sure of, such as the rules for the use of the apostrophe (missing letter or possession) or the hyphen (using two words as one) or starting a new paragraph (change of time, place or topic). Lack of paragraphing is particularly detrimental to your mark as it is evidence of lack of planning and/or inability to sequence material and/or lack of consideration for the reader.
- Even if you've always had trouble knowing where to put full-stops, it's never too late to learn and now is the time, as your writing marks will be seriously reduced if you are unable to form proper sentences and try to use commas where you should use full-stops. If there is no connective you must use either a full-stop or a semi-colon at the end of a group of words containing a verb, before starting another one.
- Commas are also important, as they aid the meaning of the writing and the understanding of the reader. Their function is to separate parts of a sentence (phrases and clauses). A test you can apply as to whether a group of words needs commas around it is to try saying the sentence without them. If it still makes sense, then 'scissor' the phrase or clause with a pair of commas to show it can be removed, but if the group of words is necessary to the grammar of the sentence, then do not put commas around it.