

## SOFTWARE REVIEW

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### *CAMBRIDGE FIRST CERTIFICATE IN ENGLISH CD-ROM*

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**Title:** *Cambridge First Certificate in English CD-ROM*

**Authors:** University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate with Alan Battersby

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<http://www.cambridge.org/elt/fcecdrom/help.htm>

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

### **Overview**

*Cambridge First Certificate in English CD-ROM* is a programme for young adults and adults based on four real past FCE exam papers. It contains papers to be practised, as well as tips for the exercises. The programme additionally provides a "notebook" to save student's own work, a scoring chart to check test results, and a glossary with detailed information on Cambridge First Certificate in English examination procedure.

### **Description**

The programme consists of the following papers:

- Paper 1- Reading
- Paper 2- Writing
- Paper 3- Use of English
- Paper 4- Listening
- Paper 5- Speaking

The papers can be chosen by clicking the Navigation & progress icon in the Main menu. To select a needed paper a specific icon should be clicked.

Each Paper in the programme is prefaced with a general description of tasks included whereas full details are provided in particular parts of the papers. All parts start with introductory and

practice stages which provide students with thorough description of a given paper and sample exercises. The activities are carefully chosen and include such items as answers to all types of activities or models for writing and speaking.

The writing paper additionally has a "Set books" section which provides some of the titles from the list of books to be studied by FCE candidates. Also information on how to use the books to answer examination questions and model answers are supplied.

In the listening paper candidates are exposed to different types of listening texts e.g. phone messages, commentaries, instructions, news reports, advertisement speeches, conversations, quizzes and so on.

The speaking paper gives a student the opportunity to participate in interactive video conversations simulating typical oral exam situations.

The programme also highlights vital pieces of advice, which may be quickly saved in a student's Dossier by clicking the Remember note icon. Students are also given immediate feedback on their work. On the screen appear not only red ticks for good answers and red crosses for the bad ones but also correct answers with detailed commentary are provided. All the introductory activities lead to four tests which close each Paper unit. The tests are typical FCE exam tests and may be done without any help or with optional assistance.

While working on a particular paper you may move on or go back by clicking arrow buttons on the screen. If you desire to switch off an audio commentary and follow only the written form of instructions or get a quick help, click proper icons at the bottom of the screen.

Each paper provides a selection of activities usually performed at FCE examinations.

The activities are of the following types:

Paper 1 – reading

- multiple matching, multiple choice, gapped text

Paper 2 – writing

- transactional letter, report, composition, story

Paper 3 – use of English

- multiple-choice cloze, open cloze, key-word transformations, error correction, word formation

Paper 4 – listening

- multiple choice, note taking or gap filling, multiple matching, a selection of different types of tasks section

Paper 5 – speaking

- interactive video tasks: interview, one-minute turn, discussion with partner, three-way discussion

### **Advantages**

1. Exact FCE examination papers are practised.
2. Information about exams is given with full particulars.
3. Advice on how to prepare for each part of the examination is provided.
4. Students are not left unassisted throughout their work, including the test stage which can be done with optional help.
5. Useful tips concerning particular papers are highlighted and can be easily saved in students' remember note.
6. Test results are collected in the score chart which helps candidates to monitor their progress.
7. Interactive video to practise oral examination skills makes students feel more confident as they will know what to expect in real exam situations.
8. The programme identifies the user and keeps his score (whenever you start the programme you need to type in the username and the password), so it can be used by multiple students

### **Disadvantages**

1. Limited range of language material is revised as there are no grammar or lexical reference sections.
2. It takes a while for the chosen unit to be loaded.

### **Recommendation**

This programme is easy to use and navigate even by those who are not much computer-literate. Instructions are clear and easy to follow. Any accidental clicks are prevented so you will never get lost.

The fact that the programme is based on real past FCE exam papers with thorough commentary and additional information makes it a perfect aid in self-study for FCE candidates.

*Cambridge First Certificate in English CD-ROM* can be used by young adults and adults who prepare themselves for the First Certificate in English examination. It is designed for personal use at home, however, it can be successfully used in class. The programme can be strongly recommended as worth buying.

### **Minimum system requirements**

IBM PC compatible computer:

- 133MHz Pentium
  - Windows<sup>®</sup> 95/98
  - 16 MB RAM
  - at least 500k free space on hard drive (additional 6-10 MB required for recording),
  - 640 x 480 display (800 x 600 recommended), 16-bit colour/64k colours,
  - SoundBlaster<sup>™</sup>-compatible audio card and speakers (microphone required for recording),
  - double speed CD-ROM drive,
  - QuickTime<sup>™</sup> 2 32-bit, QuickTime 4, 32-bit ODBC (all supplied on CD-ROM).
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