

2024



Preparation Guide

FOR TEACHERS



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Michigan Language Assessment's ECPE Preparation Guide for Teachers. The Examination for the Certificate of Proficiency in English (ECPE) certifies English proficiency at the C2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). It is recognized in several countries as official proof of advanced proficiency in the English language, and is backed by the University of Michigan and Cambridge University Press and Assessment, part of the University of Cambridge.

At Michigan Language Assessment, we know teachers play a vital role in their students' language learning success. You know your students the best and are in a great position to choose engaging and helpful activities that will get your students excited about learning English. This preparation guide has been designed to help teachers confidently prepare students to earn this international English language certification. It features sections on the proficiency expectations for C2-level language users, the four sections of the ECPE, and some suggested strategies and classroom activities to use at this level.

The guide has been designed to be useful for both teachers who are new to teaching ECPE and teachers with experience in preparing students for the examination.

Remember to visit our website at michiganassessment.org for more information and free preparation resources for ECPE and other Michigan Language Assessment exams.

The Michigan Language Assessment team



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ECPE SECTION OVERVIEW

The ECPE is a 4-skill test of English proficiency at the C2 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is a secure exam administered by Authorized Test Centers around the world. The writing, listening, and reading sections are taken in that order during a single session, while the speaking section is taken separately with a certified oral examiner.

ECPE QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

- 3 hours
- 4 skills
- Advanced (C2) level of English

ECPE Writing

1 task | 45 minutes

Test takers are given a choice between two writing tasks: (1) an article or a proposal, and (2) an essay. ECPE writing tasks will ask the test taker to consider and present multiple points of view. Three sources in the form of simple charts, graphs, figures, and quotations are provided, at least one of which should be incorporated into the response.

For the article or proposal, a situation and a purpose for writing is briefly described, followed by writing instructions. For the essay, a topic is briefly set up, followed by writing instructions.

There is no word limit for this task, and test takers are encouraged to produce a well-developed response which demonstrates their ability to communicate their ideas in written English.

Written responses are evaluated by certified raters, taking into account the following categories:

Task Completion, Development, Language, and Authorial Voice. Each category is described at various levels in the [ECPE Writing Rating Scale](#).

ECPE Listening

3 parts | 50 questions | 50 minutes

Listening Part 1 consists of short conversations followed by a multiple-choice question. Each conversation is played once.

Listening Part 2 consists of short talks delivered by a single speaker (monologues) followed by six questions each. Each talk is played once.

Listening Part 3 contains discussions with multiple speakers followed by six multiple-choice questions. Each recording is played twice.

The ECPE Listening Section is scored automatically by computer.

ECPE Reading

4 parts | 70 questions | 55 minutes

The reading section includes grammar, cloze, vocabulary, and reading comprehension.

Grammar and vocabulary questions are each presented as an incomplete statement, with a choice of four words or phrases to complete the sentence correctly. There are 16 grammar and 16 vocabulary questions.

Cloze items are informational passages with words and phrases removed. There are 10 deletions in each passage. Each deletion is followed by a choice of four words or phrases to complete the text. There are two cloze passages, with 20 questions in total.

The fourth part of ECPE Reading contains three informational reading passages of academic or general interest, each followed by six multiple-choice questions. There are 18 questions in this part of the test.

The ECPE Reading Section is scored automatically by computer.

ECPE Speaking

1 task | 5 stages | 30 minutes

The speaking section of ECPE is taken separately from the other sections of the test; Authorized Test Centers may schedule speaking tests either before or on the same day as the rest of the test. The speaking test is conducted in person, with two or three test takers and two examiners.

The speaking section is a chance for test takers to demonstrate their ability to ask and answer questions; orally explain and paraphrase written descriptions of people, places, or things; provide recommendations; negotiate a decision; present a position or decision; and justify a position or decision. The five stages of the test build on each other and the linguistic and interactional demands of the test become increasingly more challenging as the test progresses.

The ECPE Speaking Section is evaluated by certified speaking examiners. Ratings take into account the Discourse and Interaction, Linguistic resources, Delivery, and Intelligibility demonstrated by the test taker during the test. These criteria are described at various levels on the [ECPE Speaking Rating Scale](#).



CEFR OVERVIEW (C2 LEVEL)

ECPE is aligned with the ¹*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* developed by the Council of Europe. The CEFR describes what language learners need to learn in order to communicate in another language. It also provides a way for learners' progress to be measured at each stage of their learning.

ECPE is designed for teenagers and adults who want to certify their exceptional level of English language proficiency, or C2 on the CEFR. In order to successfully prepare students for ECPE, it can be helpful to understand what is expected of a user of English at the C2 level both in general linguistic terms and in each of the specific skills.

The following statements are taken from the ²*2020 CEFR Companion Volume*, and describe what a user of the language can do at the C2 level in general linguistic terms. "Can-do" statements for each of the four skills relevant to ECPE can be found in the individual skill sections of this guide.

According to the CEFR, a C2 user of English:

- can exploit a comprehensive and reliable mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity. They demonstrate no signs of having to restrict what they want to say. (Council of Europe, 2020: 130)
- can understand with ease virtually any kind of language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast natural speed. (Council of Europe, 2020: 48)
- can understand a wide range of long and complex texts, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning. (Council of Europe, 2020: 54)
- can understand virtually all types of texts. Can summarize information from different oral and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. (Council of Europe, 2020: 175)
- can express themselves spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations. (Council of Europe, 2020: 175)

It is also expected that learners at the C2 level will have mastery of the skills included in the lower levels of the CEFR (A1 to C1). For brevity, the lower levels have not been included in this guide but they can be found on the Council of Europe's website. At this level of proficiency, classroom activities should be designed to give students an opportunity to stretch and develop their linguistic skills to a very high degree. Having an understanding of the advanced linguistic expectations at this level can help identify classroom strategies and activities to help students achieve success on ECPE. Purposeful tasks can be designed to help students learn how to use the language effectively, and also to help them self-assess their language use as they prepare for the examination. It is recommended teachers share these level descriptors (or other self-assessment checklists from CEFR publications) with students, in order for them to be able to regularly self-assess their progress.

Some suggestions for classroom activities designed for C2-level students have been outlined in the individual skill sections of this guide.

PREPARATION TIP

Completing an independent research project is a useful and engaging way to improve all language skills at this level. The project could be based around a topic chosen by the teacher, or teachers can encourage students to choose their own. Whichever route is taken, the topic should be something which has multiple viewpoints in order for students to practice presenting a viewpoint or solution and supporting that viewpoint with evidence, reasons, and explanations. Students should conduct their own research, develop their ideas, plan, and present their final project either as a written essay, or, possibly, an oral presentation. All of these stages will help support the holistic language development of learners and will prepare them well for ECPE, if completed in line with the linguistic expectations of the C2 level of the CEFR.

¹ Council of Europe. Council for Cultural Co-operation. Education Committee. Modern Languages Division. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge University Press.

² Council of Europe (2020) *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment - Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Available at: www.coe.int/lang-cefr

ECPE TEST CONTENT

ECPE content reflects a range of situations likely to be familiar to test takers in most countries. The CEFR identifies four basic domains, namely personal, public, educational, and occupational (Council of Europe, 2001: 48–49), which are all represented in ECPE. The following table lists some examples of settings that commonly occur in each domain.

Domain	Common settings
Personal	home (house or any private space) and interactions or settings among family members or social networks (friends, acquaintances)
Public	public spaces (street, shops, restaurants, sports or entertainment) and other social networks outside the home
Educational	schools, colleges, classrooms, and residence halls, etc.
Occupational	workplace settings (offices, workshops, conferences), etc.

ECPE includes a variety of topics across these domains. Test items are designed to ensure test takers do not need any particular specialized knowledge or experience to understand the content. Test takers are expected to demonstrate exceptional accuracy and specificity and are able to elaborate on topics included in the test commensurate with the C2 level outlined in the section above.

PREPARATION TIP

ECPE test takers are expected to be able to understand and engage with complex topics outside of their own field of specialization. ECPE test takers need to be encouraged to read and listen to authentic English material as much as possible. They should be exposed to

- a wide variety of topics from within the four domains outlined above,
- a range of different genres,
- material written for varied purposes including persuasion, information, or entertainment,
- material which is intended for different audiences, both professional and personal, and
- different styles of spoken or written English, including formal and informal language.

Analyzing examples of texts, speeches, or other materials on different academic or professional topics will aid students in acquiring the syntactic and semantic resources to communicate effectively and appropriately as defined for the C2 level.

ECPE SKILLS & SUBSKILLS

ECPE certifies proficiency in all four skills of the English language at the C2 level, which is the highest level on the CEFR. The test includes the four main language skills of writing, reading, listening and speaking. Subskills are identified within these macro skills and are divided into three areas, global, local, and inferential. The subskills, some example question types, and suggested activities are outlined below.

Global subskills

The global subskills refer to identifying the main, or wider, idea of a text or item of listening. It can also include identifying the speaker's/writer's opinions and purpose, and synthesizing ideas, among others.

Example Reading Task

This passage is about the travel industry.

Solo travel is on the rise. Travel industry data show that traveling alone is the top trend among travelers, particularly for women and young adults. One web analysis tool used to assess consumer interest shows web searches for "solo female travel" increased by 52 percent in recent years, and a report from the travel industry found that 65 percent of American women are taking trips without a spouse/partner. Travel agencies and online booking sites are also seeing an increase in solo millennial travelers.

For women in particular, a shift in societal values from a focus on marriage and family to a focus on careers has resulted in more flexibility and money to spend on such trips. Some industry sources report that these women, whose lives are often filled with multiple responsibilities, appreciate setting their own itinerary, giving them the freedom to do what they want when they want. In addition, women report this type of travel builds confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. One 31-year-old woman who has traveled to Thailand and Croatia alone explained the emotional benefits to an online health magazine: "There's something exhilarating about getting to a new place and having an experience that is my own. It's liberating and makes me feel independent and accomplished."

Solo travel can bring about positive personal growth. Another major trend is traveling for the purpose of such change—not just to relax. The industry labels it "transformative travel," and its popularity might further explain why young people and women are taking more solo trips. Marketing toward these two groups promotes travel as a "fulfilling" experience, one that may lead to greater "self-actualization." In addition, some claim travel to be a form of "self-care," a trending practice often undertaken on one's own.

Some companies hope to take transformative travel a step further by offering experiences that have the added benefit of transforming the individual traveler in such a way that they return ready to help their own communities. One travel company owner, whose doctoral research was on transformative travel, articulates this noble goal: "What are we as an industry doing not just to give travelers a great time, but to awaken in them passion and energy to do good in this world? That's possibly our greatest opportunity right now."

Q1. What is the main purpose of this passage?

- A. to explain how travel can lead to personal change
- B. to show how changes in society have impacted women's habits
- C. to illustrate how traveling solo changes young people
- D. to consider what some trends in travel have in common

Although the information in the first three answer options is included in the passage, the fourth answer option summarizes the entire text by mentioning multiple trends in travel (i.e., solo female travel, solo millennial travel, and "transformative travel").

Correct answer: Option D

Example Listening Task

Woman: One of the other grad students is doing a research project on kids who grew up in bilingual homes. Are you going to sign up?

Man: What? How could I? Oh...ha! My parents are actually both English speakers.

Woman: Wait a minute, how's that? You grew up in Germany!

Man: Yeah, we moved there for my mom's job. But we only spoke English at home.

Q: What are the speakers mainly discussing?

Q1. What are the speakers mainly discussing?

- A. the woman's parents
- B. the woman's vacation
- C. the man's childhood
- D. the man's research

The woman's parents or the woman's vacation are not topics mentioned in the passage, so options A and B are not correct. The research is conducted by graduate students, not by the man, so option D is not correct. The main topic that the speakers are discussing is the man's childhood, growing up in Germany.

Correct answer: Option C

WAYS TO PRACTICE

Identifying opinions: Review vocabulary that is often used for expressing opinions as well as facts, and ensure learners understand the difference between objectivity and subjectivity in both written and spoken language. Whenever possible, ask students to identify whether key ideas and content are based on fact ("65 percent of American women are taking trips without a spouse/partner") or opinion ("It's liberating and makes me feel independent and accomplished"), before delving deeper into the way the language has been used to establish the author's or speaker's point of view. In the example reading passage above, the inclusion of positive opinions and statistics that support the rise in solo travel and that emphasize the benefits of such a trend suggests that the author is in favor of this shift in habits. At this level, learners should be able to recognize nuances of expression and subtle details that indicate such perspective.

Synthesizing ideas: Test takers may be asked to demonstrate their ability to synthesize information from multiple sources or viewpoints in all four sections of ECPE. Give students lots of opportunities to practice this important skill by reading or listening to more than one passage on the same or a similar topic. Review similarities, differences, or any other links between the passages using Venn diagrams or a similar visual aid, to help students visualize the connections between the passages. Synthesizing ideas is also sometimes required within a single passage. In the example reading task above, the test taker would need to combine all the details provided in the text in order to determine the main idea and answer the question correctly.

Local Subskills

The local subskills refer to identifying more detailed information within a text or listening passage. This can include identifying supporting details, understanding vocabulary, synthesizing details, or recognizing restatement, among others.

Example Reading Task

This passage is about the travel industry.

Solo travel is on the rise. Travel industry data show that traveling alone is the top trend among travelers, particularly for women and young adults. One web analysis tool used to assess consumer interest shows web searches for “solo female travel” increased by 52 percent in recent years, and a report from the travel industry found that 65 percent of American women are taking trips without a spouse/partner. Travel agencies and online booking sites are also seeing an increase in solo millennial travelers.

For women in particular, a shift in societal values from a focus on marriage and family to a focus on careers has resulted in more flexibility and money to spend on such trips. Some industry sources report that these women, whose lives are often filled with multiple responsibilities, appreciate setting their own itinerary, giving them the freedom to do what they want when they want. In addition, women report this type of travel builds confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. One 31-year-old woman who has traveled to Thailand and Croatia alone explained the emotional benefits to an online health magazine: “There’s something exhilarating about getting to a new place and having an experience that is my own. It’s liberating and makes me feel independent and accomplished.”

Solo travel can bring about positive personal growth. Another major trend is traveling for the purpose of such change—not just to relax. The industry labels it “transformative travel,” and its popularity might further explain why young people and women are taking more solo trips. Marketing toward these two groups promotes travel as a “fulfilling” experience, one that may lead to greater “self-actualization.” In addition, some claim travel to be a form of “self-care,” a trending practice often undertaken on one’s own.

Some companies hope to take transformative travel a step further by offering experiences that have the added benefit of transforming the individual traveler in such a way that they return ready to help their own communities. One travel company owner, whose doctoral research was on transformative travel, articulates this noble goal: “What are we as an industry doing not just to give travelers a great time, but to awaken in them passion and energy to do good in this world? That’s possibly our greatest opportunity right now.”

Q1. According to the passage, what is “transformative travel”?

- A. changing the world through traveling
- B. taking trips to experience personal change
- C. traveling to practice care for oneself
- D. a marketing campaign for young people and women

To answer this question, we need to scan the text to locate the term “transformative travel” in the third paragraph. Reading the preceding sentences closely gives us the additional information needed to answer the question - taking trips to experience personal change (option B). This is also confirmed in the fourth paragraph, where the writer mentions “experiences that have the added benefit of transforming the individual traveler.”

Correct answer: Option B

Example Listening Task

Speaker 1: Do you still need a ride home from school today?

Speaker 2: No, I think I'm going to stay late and go to the environmental club meeting.

Speaker 1: Oh really? I didn't know you were in that club.

Speaker 2: Well, not yet. I'm still on the fence. It's either that, or singing in the choir.

Q. What does the woman say about the choir?

Q1. What does the woman say about the choir?

- A. She enjoys participating in it.
- B. She is thinking of joining it.
- C. Its schedule conflicts with the Environmental Club's.
- D. It is going to perform later.

To answer this question, the test taker needs to hear and understand the key word *choir*, as well as the earlier phrase "on the fence," to mean that the speaker is undecided about joining the environmental club. The next phrase "it's either that, or" tells us that the speaker is deciding between joining either the environmental club or the choir. Therefore, option B is correct - she is thinking of joining the choir. The details in the other three options are not mentioned in the passage.

Correct answer: Option B

WAYS TO PRACTICE

Understanding vocabulary: At the C2 level, learners should have a "broad lexical repertoire" (Council of Europe, 2020: 131). Nevertheless, they may still encounter new, less-frequently used vocabulary items in ECPE. As such, it is a good idea to continue practicing the skill of working out new vocabulary from contextual clues, background knowledge, and other cues at this level of proficiency. Any time learners encounter new words or phrases, ask them to use the surrounding information and their own background knowledge to come up with a definition. They should check to see if they are correct, and then record this new vocabulary into a vocabulary notebook. Effort should be made to use these new lexical items frequently in order for them to be internalized and become a part of the learners' own broad lexical repertoire. To enhance lexical knowledge, have students note down more than just the word and definition - consider also writing down details like common collocations, idioms, synonyms, and antonyms.

Inferential Subskills

The inferential subskills refer to identifying information which is not explicitly stated in the reading or listening passage. This can also include understanding rhetorical function, inferring meanings, and understanding pragmatic or sociocultural implications, among others. Test takers will be tested on their ability to infer meaning using context clues and other variants within the passage. Inferential skills are explicitly included in the CEFR descriptors for this C2 level, as it is expected that a C2-level user of English, "can make appropriate inferences when links or implications are not made explicit." (Council of Europe, 2020: 50).

Example Reading Task

This passage is about the travel industry.

Solo travel is on the rise. Travel industry data show that traveling alone is the top trend among travelers, particularly for women and young adults. One web analysis tool used to assess consumer interest shows web searches for “solo female travel” increased by 52 percent in recent years, and a report from the travel industry found that 65 percent of American women are taking trips without a spouse/partner. Travel agencies and online booking sites are also seeing an increase in solo millennial travelers.

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Some companies hope to take transformative travel a step further by offering experiences that have the added benefit of transforming the individual traveler in such a way that they return ready to help their own communities. One travel company owner, whose doctoral research was on transformative travel, articulates this noble goal: “What are we as an industry doing not just to give travelers a great time, but to awaken in them passion and energy to do good in this world? That’s possibly our greatest opportunity right now.”

Q1. Which opinion does the author likely agree with?

- A. Solo travelers must be especially careful.
- B. International trips provide the most beneficial aspects of travel.
- C. Transformative travel can benefit communities as well as travelers.
- D. Self-care is the most common reason to travel solo.

The author of this passage does not explicitly state their opinion, but it can be deduced from clues in the text passage. The author mentions individual travelers being transformed and ready to help their communities as an “added benefit,” meaning option C is the correct answer. The author also describes the travel companies’ goals for transformative travel as “noble,” which suggests they feel positively about these trends. To be sure of the correct answer it can also be helpful to read the other options in order to remove incorrect answers. Safety and being careful are not mentioned, which removes option A. International travel is only included as an individual’s personal anecdote, thus discounting option B. Finally, self-care (option D) is discussed as a similar trend, but not in the context of being the most common reason for traveling solo.

Correct answer: Option C

Example Listening Task

Speaker 1: How do you like the office remodel?

Speaker 2: Uh, I'm not sure what those interior designers were thinking.

Speaker 1: I agree. The colors actually distract me from work sometimes. They hurt my eyes.

Speaker 2: And those chairs...

Speaker 1: I wonder how much the company paid for all this.

Speaker 2: Whatever it was, it was too much.

Q: Why does the woman mention some chairs?

Q1. Why does the woman mention some chairs?

- A. to suggest she and the man sit down
- B. to imply that she has work to do
- C. to comment on their cost
- D. to criticize their appearance

The woman does not explicitly say that she does not like the chairs, but there are many clues in the passage which suggest how she feels. The following are clues to identify the correct answer.

- the negative context of the conversation ("I'm not sure what those interior designers were thinking," "the colors distract me...they hurt my eyes," and "whatever it was, it was too much"),
- the woman's tone of voice ("And those chairs..."), and
- the timing of the mention of the chairs, immediately following criticism of the new office colors.

All of the above clues imply that the woman mentions the chairs in order to criticize how they look. It may be socially unacceptable to explicitly express her opinion in the context of her workplace, so she gets her point across in a more subtle way.

Correct answer: Option D

WAYS TO PRACTICE

Understanding socio-cultural implications: At the C2 level, a learner is expected to be able to recognize "sociocultural implications (e.g. use of register, understatement, irony and sarcasm)" (Council of Europe, 2020: 91) and demonstrate cultural competence. To develop students in this area, incorporate materials from across cultures and around the world - including literature, nonfiction texts, podcasts, television shows, folktales, films, and more. Highlight the cultural differences that are apparent in the materials, in particular any examples of social interaction that differ from what students are used to in their own culture and experiences. An increased understanding of cultural practices and norms will benefit students' ability to identify implicit information on ECPE.

PREPARATION TIP

Using current events and the news media is a convenient and effective way to practice all three of these subskill areas. Exposure to news stories from around the world can also aid in socio-cultural understanding and increase awareness of global current affairs, all important skills for success on ECPE. A few suggestions for incorporating current events into the classroom as part of preparation for ECPE are outlined below.

- Encourage daily reading of or listening to local, national, and global news stories. Facilitate classroom discussions about what students have been reading and how the information is presented in different formats (comparing news articles with news videos, for example) and in different publications.
- Examine stories on the same topic from different publications and explore the opposing perspectives. This provides an opportunity to compare the presentation of the stories; explore implied meanings, opinions and attitudes; identify different purposes for writing; and synthesize information from multiple sources.
- Ask students to write about what they have read, or to give their opinions on the topic. Include references to the source material and practice incorporating these external sources into students' own writing.

PREPARE FOR ECPE WRITING

ECPE test takers are expected to have achieved a C2 level on the CEFR in all skill areas. According to the CEFR, writers at a C2 level...

- can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader identify significant points. (Council of Europe, 2020: 66)
- can exploit idiom and humor appropriately to enhance the impact of the text. (Council of Europe, 2020: 67)
- can produce clear, smoothly flowing, complex reports, articles or essays which present a case, or give critical appreciation of proposals or literary works. (Council of Europe, 2020: 68)
- can provide an appropriate and effective logical structure which helps the reader identify significant points. (Council of Europe, 2020: 68)
- can set out multiple perspectives on complex academic or professional topics, clearly distinguishing their own ideas and opinions from those in the sources. (Council of Europe, 2020: 68)

While preparing students for ECPE, it is important to be familiar with both the expectations of a C2-level user of English (see previous section), the format of the ECPE Writing Section, and the ECPE Writing Rating Scale in order to design appropriate tasks and activities.

ECPE Writing Section Format

The ECPE Writing Section has two possible tasks to choose from, and test takers have 45 minutes to complete ONE of these two tasks. The first option will be either an article or a proposal. The second option is an essay.

The article and proposal question will usually have the following components:

1. A situation which introduces the topic,
2. One or more possible viewpoints or perspectives to consider,
3. An instruction about the task,
4. An instruction about the use of sources.

Two examples are provided below.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Article

A local high school is planning to close its doors at the end of the school year and begin offering online instruction only. Some parents and students are concerned about this idea. Write an **opinion article** for the local community website discussing the impact of the high school's decision, and share your opinion about it. Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Article

Situation	A local high school is planning to close its doors at the end of the school year and begin offering online instruction only.
Viewpoints	Some parents and students are concerned about this idea.
Task instruction	Write an opinion article for the local community website discussing the impact of the high school's decision, and share your opinion about it.
Source instruction	Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Proposal

Some residents who live in a building downtown would like to rent their apartments to tourists who visit the city. Other residents of the building are concerned about this idea. Write a **proposal** to the building manager evaluating the different options, and explain what you think should be done. Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Proposal

Situation	Some residents who live in a building downtown would like to rent their apartments to tourists who visit the city.
Viewpoints	Other residents of the building are concerned about this idea.
Task instruction	Write a proposal to the building manager evaluating the different options, and explain what you think should be done.
Source instruction	Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

The essay question will usually have the following components:

1. A claim or a statement that provides some relevant background information,
2. A question that describes the main topic for the essay and encourages test takers to present both sides of the argument,
3. An instruction about the task, and
4. An instruction about the use of sources.

An example is provided below.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Essay

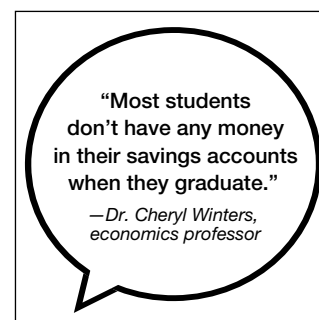
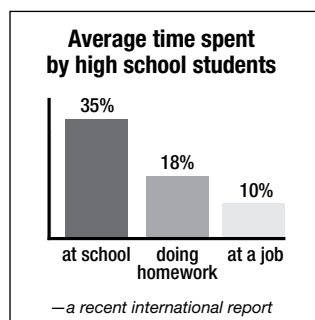
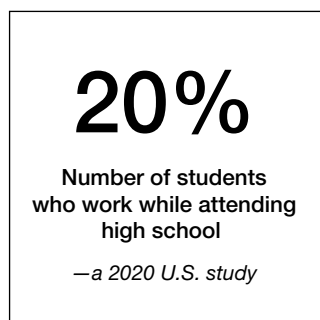
Some people believe that the government should ban students under the age of 18 from working jobs so that they can focus more on their education. What positive and negative effects might this have on students? Write an **essay** addressing this topic, and explain your opinion. Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

ECPE Writing Tasks: Essay

Claim	Some people believe that the government should ban students under the age of 18 from working jobs so that they can focus more on their education.
Question	What positive and negative effects might this have on students?
Task instruction	Write an essay addressing this topic, and explain your opinion.
Source instruction	Include at least one piece of information given above to support your response.

Three sources are included with the writing prompt. Both tasks will be on a similar topic and use the same three sources. Students are expected to include at least one of these sources in their answer.

The following sources accompany the example essay prompt above.



Classroom Strategies and Activities

Strategies and activities for developing ideas

ECPE test takers have limited time to think about the content and organization of their essay or written response. The following teaching strategies can help learners develop ideas for their written response.

- Use tables or charts to list and sort ideas, either “for and against” or into columns, for different topics or points.
- Have students create mind maps or spider diagrams to group together and find connections between ideas.
- Foster a culture of collaboration among learners. Brainstorming, mind mapping and discussing topics with peers can be very helpful during the idea generation process as they may be exposed to different viewpoints or ways of thinking. Working collaboratively allows students to help and support each other as well as generate ideas together during the preparation stage for the exam. They can develop skills in this way to use on their own when they take the test.
- Encourage students to consider every topic they write about from multiple perspectives: financial, socio-economic, geographic, environmental, or cultural, for example. While not every essay topic can be considered from every perspective, this will give them a good starting point for developing their ideas to write about and producing a well-developed written response that considers multiple viewpoints.

Strategies for building vocabulary

In order to successfully incorporate external sources into their writing, test takers may need to build their knowledge of appropriate sophisticated vocabulary. Some suggestions for how to help students build a wide lexical range are listed below.

- Read a wide range of text types including academic papers, journals, fiction, and nonfiction texts. Teach learners how to write annotations and how and when to look up unfamiliar words. Reading will help broaden horizons as well as provide exposure to new vocabulary and other linguistic features that can be incorporated into the learners’ own writing.
- Incorporate vocabulary notebooks into daily classroom routines and practice. Students should look up and record unfamiliar vocabulary encountered during their daily reading practice, noting down pronunciation, common collocations, and any other features that they find useful. They should also make an effort to utilize new vocabulary in their own spoken and written English in order to internalize new words and become comfortable with using them accurately.
- Introduce students to tools and sources that can be used to identify vocabulary at the C2 level. Ensure students fully understand the meaning and usage of their chosen words so that the reader does not have to work to understand their meaning.

Strategies to help students incorporate evidence

ECPE Writing tasks include three sources, which may consist of graphs, charts, statistics, quotations, or other forms of evidence. Test takers are expected to use this external information to support their ideas and also to acknowledge that this information comes from an external source. As such, an important focus of ECPE preparation should be the incorporation of external sources into a written response. Utilizing external sources is common at this level of proficiency, in both educational and professional contexts, and these sources need to be cited accurately. This may be a new skill for some test takers, so teachers should ensure that students have ample opportunities to learn and practice both incorporating evidence into their writing and accurately citing where the information came from.

Scaffold the writing process by...

1. finding and analyzing examples of written texts that include sources as part of the narrative. Identify the devices the writer used to incorporate the sources into the main text, how the evidence supports the writers' argument or idea, and how the external source is acknowledged. News articles, academic papers, and other nonfiction texts can be useful materials for this.
2. teaching students the importance of properly citing sources and strategies to incorporate them into their writing. Avoiding plagiarism and promoting academic integrity are key issues for learners to understand and practice.
3. offering students a clear paragraph structure, using graphic organizers or other tools where appropriate, showing them where and how the evidence can be included within the paragraph content. Using acronyms or visual aids can be helpful at first, though at this level the writing should sound fluent and natural; sticking to a strict structure can at times come across as rigid and rehearsed.
4. giving students the headline of a current event, and asking them to find five sources of information to help prepare a report on the topic.
5. starting slowly, by providing structure (as above) and sentence stems to help students introduce evidence effectively, and gradually offering less support as they develop the independent skills they need.

Suggestions for engaging the audience

Authorial voice is one of the categories included in the rating scale for writing, and includes consideration of the test taker's ability to engage the reader in their written response. When helping students to prepare for ECPE, focus on

- rhetorical devices and techniques, such as asking rhetorical questions to stimulate the reader's thinking, or appealing to the reader's emotions or sense of logic to support the points being made in the writing.
- including personal examples where appropriate, to help support and develop the ideas presented in the response.
- the use of vivid language, such as when using descriptive adjectives and expressions to paint a clear picture in the reader's mind and to clearly illustrate the points being made. Language used when writing should be appropriate to the intended audience, maintaining a consistent register and tone to suit the topic, purpose, and audience.
- varied sentence structure, mixing short and longer sentences, thus creating interest for the reader and demonstrating the students' advanced linguistic abilities.
- an engaging hook, or opening, which grabs the reader's attention and creates interest. This could be a thought-provoking question or interesting anecdote. This should be followed by an introduction which contains a clear thesis statement so that the reader knows what to expect from the written response.
- writing a strong and effective conclusion, which clearly summarizes the main points of the response and ends with a thought-provoking statement or a call to action where appropriate.



General Writing Tips

- Practice makes perfect! Give students plenty of opportunities to practice writing exam-style responses on topics from all four domain areas. At the C2 level, learners should be able to write about a broad range of complex topics, so they need extensive practice writing spontaneously on a variety of subjects. Encourage learners to keep practicing outside of the classroom in order to keep developing their skills as independent and proficient writers.
- Assign purposeful and meaningful writing assignments relevant to the students' interests and passions, and provide constructive feedback.
- It helps to view and teach writing as a 4-stage process:
 - Stage One: Read and analyze
 - Stage Two: Pre-writing
 - Stage Three: Compose
 - Stage Four: Edit and revise
- Practice exam timing by using timers in the classroom. Start by giving learners slightly more time than the exam allows, and gradually reduce the time available until students are able to plan and write a response in slightly less time than the exam allows. For paper-based exams, practice writing by hand rather than on a computer.
- Use the CEFR-C2 level descriptors as a guide to assess students' abilities in writing and to develop purposeful practice activities. Encourage students to self-assess and peer-assess, using simplified rubrics based on the ECPE rating scale. There are several self-assessment resources available through the Council of Europe on their website.
- Remind students to pay attention to the audience for the chosen writing task. **The proposal or article may specify the audience, and students should adjust their language accordingly.** The essay will always be a formal academic essay, and students should be well prepared to write in a formal style. Teach a variety of linking words appropriate for each genre of writing, and ensure students understand how to use them accurately.
- Make sure written ideas are fully supported, are relevant to the topic, and are well developed with lots of examples. Different sides of the argument should be addressed in the body of the writing task.
- Self-assessment, including editing and revision, is an integral part of the writing process. Time should always be spent on learners reviewing their own work, either before or after receiving feedback from teachers and/or classmates. Ensure students are familiar with the rubric or rating scale being used, and have them give themselves a score and provide reasons and evidence for that score.

PREPARATION TIP

Using graphic organizers or visual analogies for paragraph structure can be useful when practicing incorporating evidence into writing. Giving students a clear structure, with a visual aid, can help those who struggle with structuring their writing to include evidence and supporting details as they can see clearly where such evidence should be included. As an example,

1. begin with a topic sentence or statement related to the question,
2. support it with evidence from an external source, and
3. then explain how the evidence supports the statement.

This highly structured approach can be gradually lessened as the learners develop in confidence and become more accustomed to including evidence. As they begin to do this more naturally as part of their writing process, they will need to rely on such visual aids less and less until it becomes internalized.

PREPARE FOR ECPE LISTENING

At this level of proficiency, it is expected that students will have achieved an excellent level of oral comprehension.

According to the CEFR, a C2 level user of English:

- can understand with ease virtually any kind of language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast natural speed. (Council of Europe, 2020: 48)
- can identify the sociocultural implications of most of the language used in colloquial discussions that take place at a natural speed. (Council of Europe, 2020: 49)
- can follow specialized lectures and presentations employing colloquialism, regional usage or unfamiliar terminology. (Council of Europe, 2020: 50)
- can make appropriate inferences when links or implications are not made explicit. (Council of Europe, 2020: 50)
- can get the point of jokes or allusions in a presentation. (Council of Europe, 2020: 50)

At this level, test takers are expected to have mastered abilities described under lower levels of competence (A1-C1) in addition to the C2-level expectations. Learners should be exposed to, and be well practiced with, the following examples of types of audio as part of their preparation for ECPE Listening:

- Extended speech on abstract and complex topics
- Extended speech which is not clearly structured and in which meanings or links are only implied and not signaled explicitly (C1 level)
- Speech that is affected by moderate background noise (B2 level)
- A wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, understanding changes in register of the spoken language (C1 level)

ECPE Listening Section Format

ECPE listening has three parts: short conversations between two people (dialogues), short talks (monologues), and discussions with multiple speakers. All three parts have multiple-choice questions that have a single correct answer.. The ECPE Listening Section reflects language used in real-life situations and assesses the test takers' ability to understand speech in personal, public, educational, and occupational contexts.

In Part 1, the test takers will hear 20 short conversations. Each conversation will be played once, followed by a multiple-choice question. The questions have four possible answers, with one correct answer per question. Conversations take place in a variety of contexts and test global, local, and inferential listening skills. It is recommended that students look at the questions before the audio is played, in order to consider what the passage might be about and what information they should be listening for.

Here is an example of an ECPE Listening Part 1 question. The transcript below is only provided for practical purposes in this guide and is not available to test takers during the listening test.

Speaker 1: I put my lunch in the refrigerator this morning, and now it's gone!

Speaker 2: It gets so crowded in there when everyone in the office brings lunch. Are you sure it didn't get pushed to the back?

Speaker 3: That happened to me last week. Someone moved my lunch. I found it in the drawer.

Speaker 1: Let me check one more time.

Speaker 2: Well, if it comes to that, I'll go out to lunch with you today.

Q1. What will the man do next?

- A. put his lunch in the drawer
- B. look for his lunch
- C. move someone's lunch
- D. go out for lunch

Correct answer: option B

In Part 2, the test takers will hear three short talks delivered by a single speaker. Each monologue will be played once, followed by six multiple-choice questions with four possible answers. These talks reflect a variety of situations people in most countries could experience. As with Part 1, ECPE Listening Part 2 questions test global, local, and inferential listening subskills.

Here is an example of an ECPE Listening Part 2 question, with the accompanying transcript:

Listen to an employee talking to a group of customers.

Welcome to Maker Place! I'm Tara. Before I start, raise your hand if you heard about Maker Place from our demonstration at the city festival. That's.. wow, that's great! And for the rest of you, don't worry, we'll get you caught up in no time. Maker Place offers memberships... Do any of you have a gym membership? It's kind of like that. You pay a monthly fee to have access to all of the tools, equipment, and workshop space. Our members make all kinds of awesome things, from computers and furniture, to small objects like jewelry. I love seeing what people come up with. In general, you can bring your own materials - wood, paint, fabric. We sell special materials in our shop for some tools, because we want to be sure they are compatible. Not always the case if you buy online.

So, here at Maker Place we combine our introductory tour of the workshop with a free class to show you the right way to use our tools. And considering we even have lasers - yes, lasers - using them the wrong way would be a bad idea. After I show you the various rooms containing equipment, we'll grab safety glasses for everyone. We also have ear protection since some of the tools are very loud. Then, I'll teach you the proper way to use the hand tools. As for the larger and more complex equipment, they require more instruction than what we have time for today so we have additional safety classes for those. But you can do a lot of interesting stuff with hammers and battery-powered drills. I can give you examples later!

Everybody ready?

Q1. Why does the speaker mention the city festival?

- A. to see if people have already heard some information
- B. to understand what people are interested in
- C. to find out who will be leaving her event early
- D. to determine if people are from areas that are nearby

Correct answer: option A

Q2. What will probably happen next?

- A. The speaker will demonstrate equipment.
- B. The audience will get safety glasses.
- C. The audience will purchase memberships.
- D. The speaker will give a tour.

Correct answer: option D

Q3. What is the purpose of the talk?

- A. to demonstrate how to use equipment
- B. to show projects made by members
- C. to learn what tools people want to use
- D. to explain what activities are done at a business

Correct answer: option D

ECPE Listening Part 3 consists of two recordings with multiple speakers, followed by six comprehension questions. Each multiple-choice question has three possible answer options. The recordings are played twice.

Here is an example of a question and accompanying audio transcript for ECPE Listening Part 3:

Speaker 1: Every day, residents of large metropolitan cities such as New York, London, and Tokyo consume millions of pounds of food. Fresh produce, grown on farms in the countryside, must be shipped to thousands of grocery stores and restaurants in urban areas. All this transportation is expensive, both ecologically and economically. Janet Jones reports:

Speaker 2: Because the cost of transporting food into cities every day is high, researchers are looking for ways to make locally grown food available in large metropolitan areas. Although a few city residents are able to plant small gardens on their rooftops, these can only produce a small fraction of the residents' dietary needs. In most urban areas, there is simply no space to support substantial agriculture. However, urban architecture professor Anthony King has an idea.

Speaker 3: For decades, large cities have been able to sustain growth by building skyscrapers and expanding upwards. Large skyscrapers have traditionally been used primarily for commercial and residential purposes. But there's no reason they couldn't be used for agriculture as well. This could be done through something called hydroponics, which is a well-established technique used to grow plants directly in water instead of soil. It's an efficient form of farming that drastically reduces the amount of land needed to grow crops. In fact, after a 30-acre strawberry farm in the United States was destroyed by a hurricane, the owners switched to hydroponics and found that they were able to grow just as many strawberries as before, but on only a single acre.

Speaker 2: Professor King reasons that this technique could be used to create, what is in essence, a vertical farm—a tall building with dozens of floors, each growing different kinds of fruits and vegetables. Each floor would be surrounded by glass windows, and the roof could house solar panels to generate electricity. The result would be a largely self-contained growing area that could supply food to thousands of city residents.

Speaker 3: The fact that a vertical farm would be self-contained offers a number of important advantages. For example, plants grown inside a vertical farm wouldn't be very accessible to insect invasion, or soil-based diseases, which would reduce the need for dangerous pesticides. And also, as with standard greenhouses, because light and water conditions can be carefully controlled a vertical farm would be at a much lower risk of damage from storms and droughts. Humidity and temperature controls would also allow many crops, even ones naturally found only in special climates, to be produced year-round.

Speaker 2: No vertical farms have been constructed yet, primarily due to the high cost of doing so. Nevertheless, Professor King has some very concrete plans. He hopes to see vertical farms in production in the next ten to fifteen years. First though, he'll need to attract the interest and support of a governmental program or research foundation interested in innovative applications of existing technology, as well as in helping the environment.

Q1. What could happen if a vertical farm were constructed in a large city?

- A. The city's water resources would be exhausted.
- B. Residents would grow more of their own food.
- C. Less food would have to be shipped into cities.

Correct answer: option C

Q2. Why is hydroponics ideal for vertical farms?

- A. Large areas of land are not necessary.
- B. Hydroponic farms can be self-contained.
- C. It is easy to store water in tall buildings.

Correct answer: option A

Q3. Why might pesticides not be necessary in a vertical farm?

- A. Most dangerous insects do not live in urban areas.
- B. Climate controls could be used to eliminate pests.
- C. Insects could not easily enter the growing area.

Correct answer: option C

For more examples of each part of the listening section, or to download a full sample ECPE test, visit the ECPE [Test Preparation Resources](#) page.

Classroom Strategies and Activities

When preparing students for success on ECPE Listening, it is important to use authentic materials that replicate the types of speech they will hear on ECPE as much as possible. Active listening is an essential strategy for the classroom; always ensuring there is a goal to the listening activity and a task to complete will keep students focused and engaged. Teaching effective note-taking strategies can also help students to listen effectively in the exam, particularly for Listening Parts 2 and 3.

Encourage students to discuss the strategies they use for listening with each other. This type of collaboration can help students explore new techniques as well as reflect on what works for them individually. After each activity, allow time in class for students to reflect on the task by asking them to discuss what listening strategies they used and how successful they were.

Developing advanced listening skills requires listening to a variety of different authentic listening sources, and using a range of techniques to practice the different subskills. Some suggested activities to practice some of the subskills have been included below.

Global Skills

Understanding the main idea:

- Use podcasts where two or more speakers discuss something; it could be about an issue or topic, or merely an informal conversation.
- Listen to an excerpt of around two minutes and then have students summarize the main idea either in writing or by explaining it verbally to someone else.

Identifying speaker's purpose:

- Ensure students understand three important communicative purposes of informing, persuading, and entertaining, and the key elements of each purpose.
- Gather a variety of spoken examples for each purpose and mix them up. Have students work either individually or collaboratively to identify the purpose of each example and explain the clues and cues they used to draw their conclusions. An interesting follow on activity can be to have learners then adapt one or two of those examples for a different purpose or audience.

Local Skills

Listening for and synthesizing details:

- Give students lots of opportunities to practice these important skills by listening to more than one audio passage on the same or a similar topic. Videos of TED Talks, or other short videos on academic or professional topics, can be an excellent resource for classroom practice.
- Ask students specific questions that require them to listen for detailed information in the passages. Then, review similarities, differences, or any other links between the passages using Venn diagrams or a similar visual aid to help students visualize the connections between the listening passages. Encourage them to incorporate their own background knowledge with the information they hear, and combine all available information to generate a complete understanding. This can be particularly helpful for the longer audio passages in Listening Part 3 of ECPE as they may hear information from more than one person during this part of the listening section.

Inferential Skills

Understanding rhetorical function:

- Explicitly teach students how to recognize specific rhetorical devices (such as appealing to an audience's sense of reason or emotions), then practice identifying these and other rhetorical techniques in authentic materials such as famous speeches or audio-visual media, and explore the impact such techniques have on themselves as the audience. Practice changing the content to employ a different rhetorical strategy, and discuss how the meaning or overall effect changes.

Making an inference:

- Use English-language songs that have multiple interpretations or hidden meanings. Listen to the lyrics and ask students to provide an interpretation of the song's meaning. Ask them to identify key words or phrases that caused them to draw their conclusions about the song's meaning and compare their interpretations with those of their peers. Using songs can also be a great way to practice their pronunciation; once students have analyzed the content, have them practice singing the words themselves!

Understanding pragmatic implications:

Test takers may be asked to demonstrate their ability to understand how language can be used in context, going beyond literal meaning by understanding both linguistic and situational cues (not just what to say, but how and when to say it).

- To practice this in the classroom, incorporate listening exercises that require critical listening and thinking, inferences, and connections to other content.
- Listen to examples where a decision is made in a situation, and have students discuss why they think that decision was made. Examples could include an apology, asking for advice, delivering a difficult message, and more. Ask them which clues or social cues led them to that conclusion, and how it could have been different if the context were changed slightly (a different time or place, or with different people involved, for example).

General Advice for the Listening Section

- Practice reading the questions and looking at the answer options before the listening track is played. This can help learners identify key words, phrases, or signposts to listen for.
- Encourage your students to answer all of the questions, even if they aren't sure of the answer. Teach them how to eliminate incorrect answers and make an educated guess based on their background knowledge and clues from the listening passage.
- Continue building vocabulary and background knowledge by providing ample opportunities to listen to a wide range of genres about different topics.
- Practice listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for detailed understanding, and listening for implications frequently.
- When planning lessons and activities for this level, it is helpful to refer to the CEFR descriptors for C2 level language users, and ensure each activity meets at least one of these statements each time so that students have the opportunity to develop mastery in each skill area.
- Ensure students get plenty of practice answering exam style questions under exam conditions. Getting used to the exam environment can help alleviate anxiety that students may experience on the actual day of the exam.
- Find even more activities and ideas for developing listening skills in the [ECPE Listening Resource Pack](#) on Michigan Language Assessment's website.



PREPARATION TIP

Have your students find their own examples of listening items, and use them to create their own listening activities for their classmates. Give them one or two subskills, or learning objectives, to work with and have them design their own listening tasks to practice that skill. Developing their own listening activities will help students familiarize with the skills they need to be successful on ECPE, involve them in the learning process, and encourage learner autonomy in a controlled way. It can also be fun for them to challenge their classmates and peers!

PREPARE FOR ECPE READING

Reading skills tested on ECPE include grammatical accuracy, vocabulary range and control, and reading comprehension. According to the CEFR descriptors, a C2-level user...

- has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows awareness of connotative levels of meaning. (Council of Europe, 2020: 131)
- maintains consistent grammatical control of complex language, even while attention is otherwise engaged (e.g. in forward planning, in monitoring others' reactions). (Council of Europe, 2020: 132)
- demonstrates consistently correct and appropriate use of vocabulary. (Council of Europe, 2020: 132)
- can understand virtually all types of texts including abstract, structurally complex, or highly colloquial literary and non-literary writings. (Council of Europe, 2020: 54)
- can understand a wide range of long and complex texts, appreciating subtle distinctions of style and implicit as well as explicit meaning. (Council of Europe, 2020: 54)
- can understand specialized, formal correspondence on a complex topic. (Council of Europe, 2020: 54)
- can understand the finer points and implications of a complex report or article even outside their area of specialization. (Council of Europe, 2020: 56)

ECPE Reading Section Format

There are four parts of the ECPE Reading Section, including

1. Grammar
2. Cloze
3. Vocabulary
4. Reading passages

Test takers have 55 minutes to complete 70 questions. The multiple-choice questions have four possible answer options and one correct answer.

Reading: Grammar

The grammar section of ECPE is where test takers show their understanding of reading at the sentence level and their knowledge of grammar. This section includes 16 grammar questions which take the form of a sentence with a word or phrase missing. Test takers choose the correct answer from four possible options; though all four options may be correct in different contexts, only one answer will correctly fit the context of the question.

Two example grammar questions have been included below.

Q1. _____ that everyone in our study group was confused about the same chapter in the book.

- A. That were interested
- B. To be interested
- C. They were interesting
- D. It was interesting

Correct answer: Option D

Q2. Almost all of the people in our office eat lunch at their desks _____ is a lunch room in the building.

- A. even though there
- B. whereas it
- C. due to there
- D. provided that it

Correct answer: Option A

PREPARATION TIP

Grammar takes time to master, and it is important to continually practice and reinforce grammatical rules at this level of proficiency. Noticing and identifying the grammar patterns seen in authentic English-language texts is a good way to improve learners' own understanding and use of grammar, and it can be helpful to elicit the rules from the students themselves after they've identified patterns of use. Delayed error correction can also be a useful tool; noting down mistakes that are heard during a lesson and then presenting sentences for the class to correct themselves can help them see where mistakes are being made. Eliciting the rules from students and having them identify why something is correct or not will also help to reinforce grammatical accuracy.

Reading: Cloze

The cloze subsection assesses test takers' overall proficiency at the C2 level, particularly reading, grammatical, and lexical skills. This section includes two informational passages which have ten deletions. Test takers are provided with four possible options to complete each deletion.

Cloze sets intend to measure the test taker's ability to

- select the best word to restore the intended meaning of a chunk of text,
- identify the correct grammatical form of a word for the blank, and
- identify the most appropriate content word for the blank.

An example of a cloze passage from ECPE is included on the next page.



Reading Example: Cloze

This passage is about children's use of technology.

Screens have come to play a major role in many aspects of people's lives. While television and electronic games __ (1) __ popular with kids, the availability of smartphones and tablets means that children of all ages--even babies and toddlers--now spend much more time than previous generations looking at, and interacting with, screens. Is this __ (2) __ during such an important time of development? Multiple studies indicate that this is the case __ (3) __.

Some researchers found that children who spent more than two hours per day __ (4) __ screen had more psychological difficulties, such as feeling depressed or lonely, __ (5) __. Another study found that children who went five days with no access to screens--and therefore __ (6) __ had more face-to-face interaction--were __ (7) __ discerning people's emotions from facial expressions or non-verbal cues. And a third study found __ (8) __ speech development among babies that __ (9) __ to the amount of time spent with handheld screen devices.

While many experts acknowledge that technology use has some benefits for children, __ (10) __ when it comes to screen time. Parents are encouraged to make time spent away from screens a priority for their kids.

- | | | |
|------|--|---|
| Q1. | A. have long been
C. were so long | B. are the long
D. are long being |
| Q2. | A. uncertain
C. precarious | B. problematic
D. ambiguous |
| Q3. | A. uncertain
C. precarious | B. problematic
D. ambiguous |
| Q4. | A. near to
C. along some | B. by way of the
D. in front of a |
| Q5. | A. than other children
C. including sympathy | B. toward each other
D. solved by the study |
| Q6. | A. presumably
C. precisely | B. genetically
D. electronically |
| Q7. | A. less comfortable
C. not interested in | B. not as good at
D. better at |
| Q8. | A. delays in
C. with delays | B. to delay
D. delaying |
| Q9. | A. commissioned
C. constrained | B. conformed
D. corresponded |
| Q10. | A. they offer no information
C. they often lack understanding | B. most still advise caution
D. many are not concerned |

Answer Key:

Q1. A Q2. B Q3. B Q4. D Q5. A

Q6. A Q7. D Q8. A Q9. D Q10. B

PREPARATION TIP

Success in cloze activities relies on the learners' ability to recognize the interrelationships of language with an extensive syntactic awareness. Reading broadly, being exposed to a wide variety of English language, and noticing how the language works together is the best way to improve in this area. An engaging yet challenging way to practice cloze activities is to have students create their own. Either provide them with a short reading passage, or ask them to source their own material for this task. Then, have them choose ten words or phrases to delete, ensuring that the missing words can be deduced from the surrounding context. Deletions should encompass a range of language including different parts of speech, different tenses, both high and low frequency vocabulary items, and different grammatical structures. Learners can then swap their activities, practice completing each others' cloze passages, and discuss the strategies they used with each other afterwards.

Reading: Vocabulary

The vocabulary section of the ECPE is where test takers show their understanding of reading at the sentence level and their lexical knowledge. This section includes 16 vocabulary questions. Each ECPE vocabulary question comprises one to two sentences from which a word or lexical chunk has been removed. Test takers are given four possible answer options, of which only one option is correct. The wording of ECPE vocabulary items is intended to reflect, as closely as possible, language use in real-life situations and provide a representative sample of different frequently observed genres in written English.

Two example vocabulary questions are included below.

Q1. A system of canals _____ water from the river so it can be used for agriculture.

- A. congregates
- B. diverts
- C. detaches
- D. subsides

Correct answer: Option B

Q2. The storybook was written in a beautifully ornate _____.

- A. character
- B. expression
- C. scribble
- D. script

Correct answer: Option D

PREPARATION TIP

Success in the vocabulary section of ECPE requires a broad lexical repertoire; test takers should have a strong understanding of not only individual words but idioms, phrasal verbs, collocations, and semantic features, too. When students write down new words and phrases in their vocabulary notebooks, include a space to record common uses, including literal and figurative, and any other key information to help learners use the new language in the correct context. Exposure to a range of authentic resources such as books, articles, websites, podcasts, audio-visual media, real-life situations, and more can ensure students have access to a broad assortment of linguistic resources.

Reading: Text Passages

This section of the ECPE assesses the comprehension of written English at the C2 level of the CEFR. Each ECPE reading text consists of a self-contained passage that could be found in any formal written context. There are three passages included in ECPE's Reading Section, each followed by six multiple-choice questions. These reading questions test learners' global, local, and inferential reading skills, and will be on a range of topics.

Here is an example of a single text passage with multiple-choice questions:

This passage is about animal intelligence.

Humans have been studying animal intelligence for years. Historically, it has correlated with brain size, social bonds, communication, long lifespans, and recently, animals' "consciousness" of subjective experiences. For example, dolphins recognize whistle calls of previously familiar dolphins after twenty years apart; elephants work together to overcome complex tasks; and crows can learn cause-and-effect relationships. However, many of these parameters isolate one seemingly intelligent creature: the octopus. Octopuses live for about two years, are fairly solitary, and have unique nervous systems compared to other commonly cited "intelligent" animals. Aside from other cephalopods like themselves, most intelligent animals are vertebrates. Despite minimal common brain anatomy with vertebrates, their nervous systems are quite large: their arms contain hundreds of millions of neurons. Nonetheless, the primary question of consciousness remains.

Consciousness refers to awareness of self and experience, such as knowledge of one's past or understanding of one's future. Many scientists view consciousness as essential to learning processes and intelligence. Terry Wenger, an expert researcher and author, suggests testing animals' abilities to complete tasks in response to stimuli to gain a reward or to recognize themselves in mirrors as indicators of consciousness. Whereas cephalopods have failed the latter, training them on the former poses significant challenges. Octopuses are difficult to study in nature due to their unnavigable habitats and are notorious for being troublemakers in captivity. Some argue that this in itself is evidence of their intelligence. There are many documented anecdotes among scientists who have encountered such clever trickery that they had to release octopuses back into the wild. One octopus would squirt water at laboratory lighting systems to cause electrical problems; others have repeatedly sneaked out of their tanks. Many have hidden under nearby objects, like coconut shells, even in nature. These are just a handful of their escape strategies.

Psychology professor Lily Mahoney believes this evidence represents intelligence and reflects novel problem solving. She proposes these criteria as more helpful in defining intelligence than the difficult-to-prove state of consciousness, tests of which, she believes, often identify sheer reflex responses. "These animals can complete mazes. They can open jars to reach snacks inside. They force aquarium waters onto laboratory floors in attempts to escape. Is their intelligence really in question here because we can't prove consciousness?" Indeed, is this a question we even need to ask?

- Q1. Which fact would Terry Wenger most likely include in his publications?**
- A. Dolphins remember prior communications.
 - B. Elephants display social hierarchies.
 - C. Cephalopods contain complex nervous systems.
 - D. Octopuses thrive in inaccessible habitats.

Correct answer: Option A

- Q2. What does the author imply about scientists' animal stories?**
- A. Individual experiences can provide insightful data.
 - B. Results can sometimes differ too greatly to make conclusions.
 - C. Occurrences in laboratory settings may not reflect nature.
 - D. Research environments should be more tightly controlled.

Correct answer: Option A

- Q3. What is the main purpose of the passage?**
- A. to define a misunderstood term
 - B. to pose a solution to a common problem
 - C. to present the complexity of an idea
 - D. to give a variety of examples of a concept

Correct answer: Option C

Classroom Strategies and Activities

When preparing students to succeed on the ECPE Reading Section, it is essential to use authentic materials so students are exposed to a wide variety of genres, contexts, audiences, and purposes. Students should have practice working in particular with examples of formal written English such as reports, essays, and articles. At the C2 level, learners should be able to read and comprehend virtually any text on a range of topics and genres, and this is reflected in the content of ECPE reading tasks. Encourage students to read independently as much as possible, for pleasure as well as for educational purposes. Formal literary analysis can be helpful practice with reading comprehension, in particular inferring meaning and analyzing linguistic resources.

Metacognition, where students think about their thinking as they engage in reading tasks and activities, can be a helpful strategy for developing proficiency in reading. Teach specific metacognitive strategies such as predicting content before reading; referring to one's own background knowledge; questioning and self-monitoring comprehension while reading; and finally, reflecting on the text after reading. Students should be encouraged to review the strategies they used after completing a reading activity. As with listening, students could collaborate with each other by discussing the strategies they employed, how successful they were, and what they could do differently next time.

Global Skills

Understanding the main idea:

- Teach students how to write a book blurb for a text they have read recently. It could refer to the entire book, a chapter or even just a single page. The blurb should not contain detailed information about the contents, and should not give away major details or plot points. This can be a useful, and engaging, way to practice reading and identifying the main idea of a text.

Identifying the author's purpose:

- Explore a range of texts written to inform, to persuade, or to entertain, and teach ways to identify each of these broad purposes. Have students find examples of texts written for different purposes, and identify linguistic or other clues that indicate that purpose. Students could then discuss and collaborate with each other to see whether they came to the same conclusions or why they disagree.

Local Skills

Understanding detail:

- Provide plenty of opportunities for learners to read detailed text passages, and respond to questions that require them to identify and understand specific details. The answers to these questions should be explicitly mentioned in the text passage but may require an understanding of synonyms or other linguistic features.
- Choose reading passages on a range of topics and of different genres, to keep students interested and engaged while they practice reading and understanding detailed information.

Identifying referents:

- Reading comprehension at this level sometimes requires test takers to be able to successfully identify what a specific word or phrase is referring to within a text passage. Practice this skill by providing students with sentences that include unnecessary repetition and have them rewrite the sentences, substituting the repetitive words or phrases with referents such as pronouns. This exercise could then be used to challenge classmates to identify what each referent is referring to in the rewritten passages.

Inferential Skills

Understanding pragmatic implications:

Test takers may be asked to demonstrate their ability to understand how language can be used in context, going beyond literal meaning by understanding both linguistic and situational cues—in other words, the desired effect that a writer hopes an indirect statement to have on readers.

- Have students read a variety of short passages in which a situation or incident occurs, and then discuss and offer suggestions for why people in the situation acted in that way, or why the writer mentioned certain information indirectly. This is also a good opportunity to explore socio-cultural competence, by changing the context and discussing how the behavior expectations or reactions may differ in an alternative context.

General Reading Tips

- Divide reading practice into three key stages: pre-reading, while reading, and post-reading. All three stages should be completed whenever possible, in order to maximize the opportunities for students to develop effective reading strategies that they can use in the exam.
- Continue developing vocabulary to activate background knowledge on the topic and expand linguistic resources. This should be an ongoing process throughout the learning journey and will help with all aspects of the ECPE.
- Elicit and teach background content knowledge on the topic of the reading passage. This is known as frontloading and also helps activate any prior knowledge of the topic or relevant vocabulary. Frontloading the content knowledge allows students to focus on the linguistic challenges of the task, without needing to also work to understand the content. This can also be achieved through having students conduct research into the topic themselves or through collaboration in small groups, prior to completing the reading activity. Helping learners develop their background knowledge, particularly of current affairs, will help prepare them for content they may encounter during the exam.
- Summarize and/or paraphrase the text, either while or after reading. These types of activities demonstrate comprehension as well as provide opportunities to practice global, local, and inferential subskills. These can be done at whole text level, or individual paragraphs, or sections of a text, and helps students self-monitor their comprehension and identify misunderstandings or difficulties as they read.
- Explicitly practice the different subskills tested on ECPE: reading for the main idea (or gist), reading for detail, and inferring meaning. Always ask students to support their answers to any reading activity with evidence from the text, or indicate where they found the information within the text. This will ensure they are not just guessing the correct answer and are developing their skills effectively.
- More resources are available on the Michigan Language Assessment website, including our [Reading Resource Pack](#).

PREPARATION TIP

Reading poetry can be a particularly helpful tool for practicing inferential skills at this level of proficiency, as well as an enjoyable way to access new language and styles of writing. Poetry often utilizes figurative language and layers of hidden meanings to express thoughts and feelings on a huge range of topics. Teach students techniques for exploring how writers create meaning through language, vocabulary, syntax, register, idiomatic expressions, organization of ideas, and more! Once they have been exposed to a variety of examples and have built some background knowledge of techniques and how meaning is created, have them write their own poetry and share with each other.

PREPARE FOR ECPE SPEAKING

ECPE test takers are expected to have achieved a C2 level on the CEFR in all skill areas. When speaking, users of English at a C2 level...

- can produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured discourse with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. (Council of Europe, 2020: 62)
- can give clear, smoothly flowing, elaborate and often memorable descriptions. (Council of Europe, 2020: 62)
- can argue a case on a complex issue, formulating points precisely and employing emphasis effectively. (Council of Europe, 2020: 64)
- can develop an argument systematically in well-structured language, taking into account the interlocutor's perspective, highlighting significant points with supporting examples and concluding appropriately. (Council of Europe, 2020: 64)
- have a good command of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms with awareness of connotative levels of meaning. Can convey finer shades of meaning precisely by using, with reasonable accuracy, a wide range of modification devices. Can backtrack and restructure around a difficulty so smoothly that the interlocutor is hardly aware of it. (Council of Europe, 2020: 72)
- can understand any interlocutor, even on abstract and complex topics of a specialist nature beyond their own field, given an opportunity to adjust to a less familiar variety. (Council of Europe, 2020: 72)
- can converse comfortably and appropriately, unhampered by any linguistic limitations in conducting a full social and personal life. (Council of Europe, 2020: 73)

While preparing students for the ECPE Speaking Section, it is important to be familiar with both the expectations of a C2-level user of English and the [ECPE Speaking Rating Scale](#).

ECPE Speaking Section Format

The ECPE Speaking Section assesses the test takers' abilities and skills in spoken English. As with the rest of ECPE, test takers should require no specialized knowledge or experience to engage with the content of the speaking section. The speaking test has been designed to elicit spoken language that reflects real-life situations and is appropriate for the C2 level. Test takers are expected to actively participate in the conversation and expand their responses to provide sufficient detail.

The semi-structured, multi-staged test is conducted with two examiners and two to three test takers. It is administered in person, at a separate time from the other sections. It lasts approximately 30 minutes.

The five stages of the test build on each other, and increase in complexity as the test progresses. The ECPE Speaking Section is an opportunity for test takers to demonstrate their ability to ask and answer questions; orally explain and paraphrase written descriptions of people, places, or things; provide recommendations; negotiate a decision; present a position or decision; and justify a position or decision. Test takers will receive a test taker sheet containing some information needed during the test (see below for an example sheet).

The general format of the test is represented in the following table:

Stage 1	Test takers and examiners introduce themselves.
Stage 2	Test takers summarize and recommend options or solutions.
Stage 3	Test takers negotiate a decision and attempt to reach a consensus.
Stage 4	Test takers present their decision or position.
Stage 5	Test takers justify and/or defend their decision or position.

The examiners are provided with the following information to read to the test takers:

Choosing an Activity to Raise Money

- The two (three)* of you are members of the high school basketball team. You need to choose the best activity to raise money for new uniforms.
- You are on the selection committee.
- Four (six) activities have made it to the final selection process.
- Each of you will be given descriptions of two of the four (six) activities.
- You will need to describe the two activities you are given to the other member(s) of the committee so that you both (all) know the four (six) activities. The goal is for you both (all) to know about the four (six) activities.

Examiner 2 is the basketball team coach.

*the information in parentheses is included in the event of a three-person examination.

The test takers are provided with the information on the cards below:

Test Taker 1

Choosing an Activity to Raise Money

Car Wash

The following list provides some information about the car wash:

- spend \$30 for supplies
- charge \$10 per car
- open for 1 weekend
- held in school parking lot
- earn up to \$600
- 10 volunteers needed
- professional car wash located nearby

Sell Cookies

The following list provides some information about selling cookies:

- spend \$2 to make each box
- charge \$6 per box
- sales for 1 week
- sell in school cafeteria
- earn up to \$450
- 2 volunteers needed each day
- only 1 type of cookie offered

Test Taker 2

Choosing an Activity to Raise Money

Resale Market

The following list provides some information about the resale market:

- rent space for \$25
- sell used items for \$3
- open for 1 day
- held at community center
- earn up to \$575
- 4 volunteers needed for sale
- donated items are low quality

Ask for Donations

The following list provides some information about asking for donations:

- \$40 for thank-you cards
- ask people to donate \$5
- after school for 2 weeks
- at local shopping mall
- earn up to \$525
- 8 volunteers needed
- difficult for shy students

More sample speaking tests can be found in the [Resources](#) section of our website.

Classroom Strategies and Activities

Speaking can take time to master, but it is an essential component of language learning for communication. It can sometimes be a source of anxiety for language learners, so an important strategy for exam preparation is to make efforts to eliminate the source of that anxiety and give learners enough practice so they are able to go into the speaking section of the ECPE with confidence.

Collaborative learning can be a useful strategy for practicing speaking in the classroom, encouraging learners to work together, and learning from each other as they develop their skills. This is particularly helpful for ECPE preparation, as the speaking task requires test takers to interact with each other and the examiners. Learners should work in groups to role play situations where they would be required to discuss options, make a decision, then present and justify their decision to someone in a position of authority. Provide opportunities for peer feedback and self-reflection, so that they can learn from each other and reflect on their own practices.

Teaching specific public speaking skills and strategies can be helpful for students to become more familiar with speaking in situations outside of their comfort zone, and to work on their delivery and intelligibility. Provide opportunities for them to speak in front of audiences where possible, and develop confidence in their ability to communicate their ideas successfully. Study and analyze examples of confident public speakers, paying attention not only to the words spoken but also how the speaker uses their voice (tone, pitch, and pace for example) and non-verbal cues such as body language.

General Speaking Tips

- Download the ECPE sample speaking test from Michigan Language Assessment's website, and have students practice the exam tasks with classmates or another teacher. Give feedback according to the ECPE Speaking Rating Scale and encourage students to assess themselves and their peers.
- Watch and listen to example performances and, where possible, read the commentary from ECPE examiners. It can be helpful to have students review the example performance along with the rating scale and give the performance a grade themselves. They can then compare their grade and feedback with the examiner commentary. This activity will not only help familiarize students with the format and exam tasks, but also with the linguistic expectations of the exam.
- Analyze examples of people orally presenting and justifying a decision, as well as providing suggestions and recommendations. Have students note down how the speakers present and support their ideas, as well as their delivery, pronunciation, intonation, and other aspects of their spoken language.
- Analyze rhetorical function and persuasive speaking in formal and informal situations, exposing learners to relevant language and techniques that can be incorporated into their oral performance.
- Use the CEFR level descriptors as a guide for assessing students' abilities in speaking and to develop purposeful practice activities. Encourage students to assess themselves and their peers, using the rating scale and the CEFR. There are several self-assessment resources available through the Council of Europe on their website.
- Practice timed speaking activities. Start with a visible timing device, and have students practice exam-style speaking tasks so they can get used to how much time they have available in the speaking section and self-regulate their time. Then, as they increase in confidence and are used to the time limitations, have them practice without the timer visible in order to replicate the exam conditions as much as possible.

PREPARATION TIP

Utilize technology! Many tools exist online for speaking practice, in particular apps where learners can record themselves speaking and listen to or watch their own performance and the performance of their peers. Some apps also allow for the teacher to record spoken feedback, which can help develop listening skills concurrently.

Recording a student (either audio only, or audio-visual) giving an oral presentation and then having them watch themselves is also a very effective way to encourage self-reflection. They could even give themselves and each other a rating, based on the ECPE Speaking Rating Scale. This can also provide a meaningful method of delivering immediate feedback; you can rewatch the presentation together and discuss the positives and areas for improvement.

