

No more surprises at exams

(at least the Cambridge ones and Maturita)



Introduction

What is 'backwash'?

How is the English part of Maturita similar to the Cambridge exams?
Or different?

The basic questions we will explore today – how would Cambridge mark the typical teenage Czech student? How can you help Czech teens avoid the most obvious mistakes? And boost their marks? We'll use the FCE for examples since this is the most widely-taken.

What obvious mistakes do teens make in the Cambridge exams?

Reading Paper

1. They run out of time
2. They are not used to the second question and a) spend too much time on it b) can't do it

small-scale model of his invention. He did tests on it by attaching it to a mini toy school bus and seeing how it performed in a little wind tunnel he built in his garage. **40** Because of this he knew he now needed to step it up and create a life-sized version that could be put to the test on a real bus.

- A** So they began writing to local universities to see if anyone would provide the advice and knowledge they needed.
- B** This made it clear to them that the design would have to be changed.
- C** This prompted him to look for a way to use what he had learned.

3. They try to answer the other 2 questions from general reading, not looking for evidence in the text (not using skimming and scanning techniques)

From Maturita Focus Students' Book 3 p.66

5.5 Grammar

Non-defining relative clauses

I can use non-defining relative clauses.

1 Read story A. How did the elephant save the rancher's life?



THE ELEPHANT AND THE RANCHER

A rancher, **who was working in the bush**, came across a small herd of about twenty elephants. The leader of the herd, **which is usually the largest, oldest and most aggressive female elephant**, attacked him and he fell off his horse. Later, rescuers found the rancher, **whose leg was broken**. The same elephant was standing over him. The rancher told his rescuers that the elephant had lifted him with her trunk and placed him under a tree, **where he was protected from the sun**. For the rest of the day she watched over him, brushing him gently with her trunk every so often.

2 Read the GRAMMAR FOCUS. Then cross out the non-defining relative clauses in blue in story A. Does it make sense without them?

GRAMMAR FOCUS

Non-defining relative clauses

You use non-defining relative clauses to give extra information about the person or thing you are talking about. The sentence makes sense without it.

A rancher, **who was working in the bush**, came across a small herd ...

Note:

Start and end a non-defining relative clause with a comma. Use the relative pronouns *who*, *which*, *where* and *whose*, but don't use *that*.

3 **CD-2.43 MP3-86** Complete story B with relative clauses a-f. Then listen and check. How did the gorilla save the boy's life?

- whose baby was still in her arms
- which was called Binti Jua
- who is now twenty-one years old
- where he made a complete recovery
- who was unconscious
- where a female gorilla was feeding her baby



B THE GORILLA AND THE TODDLER

An American boy, ¹ _____, owes his life to a gorilla at Brookfield Zoo. When he was three years old, his family took him to the zoo. He wanted a better view of the gorillas, so he climbed a wall and fell six metres into the gorilla cage, ² _____. The gorilla, ³ _____, went over to the boy, ⁴ _____. Then, the gorilla, ⁵ _____, lifted the boy up gently and carried him to the door. The boy spent four days in hospital, ⁶ _____. Binti Jua is still at Brookfield Zoo near Chicago.

4 Read the extra information from story C. What do you think happened? Read the story and check your ideas.

- Todd Endris lived next to the beach.
- The shark was five metres long.
- Todd's friend was surfing close by.
- Todd's right leg was now in the shark's mouth.
- Dolphins had been playing in the waves nearby.
- Surgeons managed to save his leg.

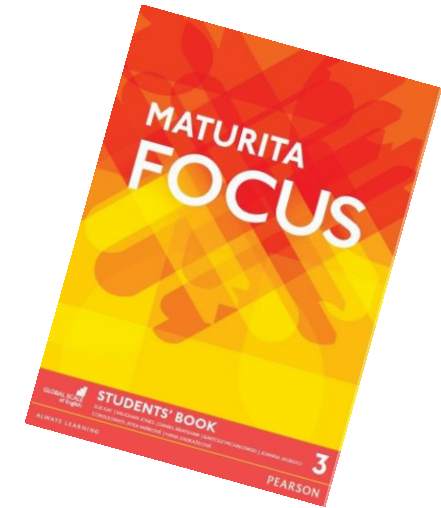


C THE SURFER, THE SHARK AND THE DOLPHINS

It was a perfect day for surfing off the coast of California. Todd Endris, **who lived next to the beach**, was out on his surfboard. Without warning, something hit him from under the water. Todd knew immediately that it was a shark. He got back on his board, but the shark bit him on the back. Todd's friend saw the huge shark and at first thought it was a whale. Todd was kicking the shark with his free leg and didn't see the dolphins. Suddenly, the shark let go of his leg. The dolphins had surrounded the injured surfer and were protecting him from the shark. Three friends helped Todd get back on his board and reach the beach. A helicopter transported him to hospital. Six weeks later Todd was back in the water.

5 **CD-2.44 MP3-87** In pairs, rewrite story C including the extra information in Exercise 4.

- Find appropriate places in the text to add the extra information 1-6.
- Include each sentence as a suitable relative clause.
- Listen to the completed story and check your answers.



What obvious mistakes do teens make in the Cambridge exams?

Use of English Paper

1. They run out of time (or spend too long on it and then miss some of the Reading Paper!)
2. They are not used to the second question and put in lexis rather than function words

For questions 9 – 16, read the text below and think of the word which best fits each gap. Use only **one** word in each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0). The most distinctive feature of a camel is the hump, or humps, on (0) back. In these humps

3. They don't realise the words are in order on question 3 *or* they don't read for sense so they miss the negatives.

(22) before making a move. I discovered that every single error **CARE**
in chess gets instant (23) , enabling your opponent to take control **PUNISH**
and putting you at a great (24) in the game. **ADVANTAGE**

4. They don't know you get a mark for each half of a question *or* they change the given word *or* they write too many/ few words.

29 I only went to see that film because you told me how good it was.

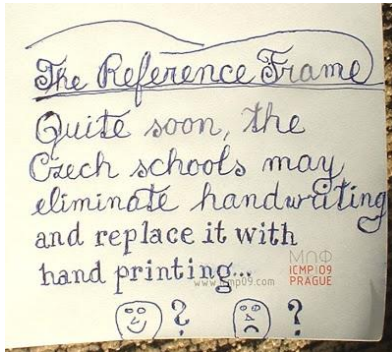
HAVE

I to see that film if you hadn't told me how good it was.

What obvious mistakes do teens make in the Cambridge exams?

Writing Paper

1. They run out of time
2. They do the paper exam and the examiner can't read their handwriting



3. They write too many, or few, words
4. They go off-topic

What obvious mistakes do teens make in the Cambridge exams?

Listening Paper

1. In part 2, they paraphrase the word or write too much detail

Duncan was surprised to find out that young puffins are driven by

(13) to leave their nests.



2. They can't get the accent



From Maturita Focus Students' Book 2

1.3 Listening

Gap-fill

I can identify specific detail in a monologue.

- 1 In pairs, look at some of the places where people do voluntary work. Discuss why you would or wouldn't like to volunteer in each place.

in a developing country in a hospital in a library
in a nursery in a prison
in a soup kitchen for homeless people
in an old person's home on a farm

- 2 **CD 1.19 MP3-19** Listen to two volunteers, Karen and Martin. Where do they do their voluntary work?



Martin

Karen

- 3 Read questions 1–8 in Exercise 4. Match the underlined words and phrases with these words and phrases from the interview.

confident elderly impresses people
in a team more likely to do something
pigs and chickens Saturday and Sunday
two or three

- 4 **CD 1.19 MP3-19** Listen again and answer the questions. Write K (Karen) or M (Martin).

Who:

- 1 helps old people in the local area?
2 works with farm animals?
3 volunteers a few hours a week?
4 does volunteering work every weekend?
5 thinks that volunteers are more active than other people?
6 enjoys working with other people?
7 thinks that voluntary work makes you more sure of yourself?
8 thinks that doing voluntary work makes a good impression?

- 5 Imagine you could volunteer anywhere in the world. Which country would you choose? Why? Discuss in pairs.

- 6 **CD 1.20 MP3-20** Listen to Becky talking about international volunteering. Answer the questions.

- 1 Who do you think Becky is talking to?
2 Did Becky enjoy her volunteering work?
3 What does she think are the benefits of volunteering?

EXAM FOCUS Gap-fill

- 7 **CD 1.20 MP3-20** Listen again and complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

- 1 Becky did volunteering work in ¹ _____ last year.
2 She was there for ² _____.
3 Becky's job was to care for ³ _____.
4 Becky says that life can be very different in other countries and gives ⁴ _____ as an example.
5 She thinks that volunteers need to:
• be fit and ⁵ _____.
• have good ⁶ _____ skills.
• be responsible.
6 Becky recommends a volunteering agency which is called ⁷ _____.
7 Their phone number is ⁸ _____.



- 8 Are you a good candidate for international volunteer work? Why?/Why not? Discuss in pairs.

PRONUNCIATION FOCUS

- 9 **CD 1.21 MP3-21** Listen and put the adjectives in the correct group depending on the stress.

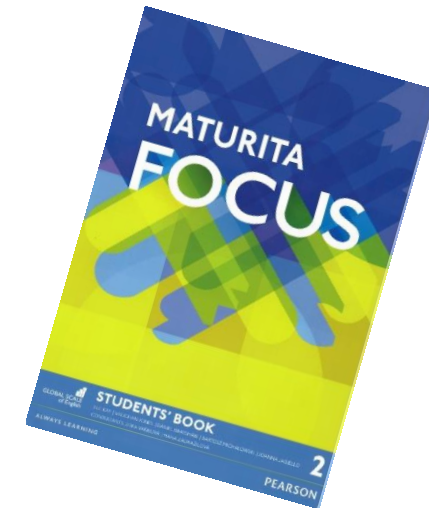
[ambitious disappointed interested]
[optimistic outgoing passionate]
[responsible unpopular]

A B C D

- 10 **CD 1.22 MP3-22** Listen, check and repeat.

WORD STORE 1D

- 11 **CD 1.23 MP3-23** Complete WORD STORE 1D. Write the adjectives to make pairs of opposites. Then listen, check and repeat.



What obvious mistakes do teens make in the Cambridge exams?

Speaking Paper

They don't know the format of the exam, and so...

1. In part one, they speak too little or much, *or* give rehearsed answers
2. In part two, they are flummoxed by giving a monologue while contrasting 2 pictures, dry up *or* they don't listen to their partner so can't give a follow-up comment
3. In part three, they continue giving monologues and don't interact with their partner, *or* don't know how to deal with a partner who's acting like that
4. In part four, they don't speak long enough, or deeply enough

Backwash

The **backwash effect** (also known as the washback **effect**) is the influence that a test has on the way students are taught (e.g. the teaching mirrors the test because teachers want their students to pass).

elt.wikia.com/wiki/Backwash_effect

Discuss whether you agree with these 2 statements and how your answers might affect your teaching:

English is not a grammatical language

In any language grammar alone will not enable communication

“A student of Gymnázium, who is checked continuously in the whole area of grammar, will get a worse mark, even though he knows the irregular verbs by heart as well and uses them in his speech correctly.”

https://is.muni.cz/th/221053/pedf_b/finalni_uprava.pdf

Helping students with writing: in depth

Shop assistants wanted for summer work

Good afternoon,

I'm writing because of the offer. I want to know more details about this job. I'm very interested in fashion so I'd love to work in some of your fashion stores. I'm very suitable for this kind of job because I like communication with people mainly with people from foreign countries. I love new modern clothes. I always watch latest models. I can speak English, German, Czech and Russian. I'm always positive and I am self-confident and that is for job as a shop assistant ideal. I can send you some of my photos with me, so you can see how do I look or better – I'd be glad to meet you somewhere and talk about it. As I said I'd want to know something more about this.

Contact me on number 563 500 234.

Petr Novák

How the writing is assessed:

25% Content 25% Language 25% Organisation 25% Communicative Achievement

From Maturita Focus Students' Book 3 p.56

4.7 Writing

A semi-formal email

I can write a semi-formal email.

- 1 Read this extract from a letter. Is it formal or informal? Think of three questions you would ask about the prize mentioned in the letter.

Dear Miss Read,

We are delighted to inform you that you have won first prize in our 'Ideal School Meals Competition'. The menu you suggested represents an ideal combination of healthy and exciting food. Your prize is a place on one of our 'Teen Cuisine' weekend cookery courses for teenagers at the Manchester School of Cookery. For more information, please contact Diane Walsh at dwalsh@msc.org and include details of any cookery experience you may have so that we can place you in the correct group.



- 2 Read Mia's reply email. Does she ask any of your questions from Exercise 1?

Hi Diane,

Thanks for your letter telling me that I have won the competition. I'm very happy and I can't wait for the 'Teen Cuisine' experience. I am getting in touch to ask for more information about the course. I have lots of questions that I hope you can answer.

First, what are the dates and times of the next course? I would also like to know what I need to bring with me. I do not have my own special clothing or kitchen stuff.

You asked about cookery experience and in fact, I have never done a cookery course before. However, we did have some cookery lessons at school and I do quite a lot of cooking at home. You mentioned placing me in the correct group, but you didn't say which levels are available.

Thank you once again for choosing my menu as the winner. Write back and answer my questions soon.

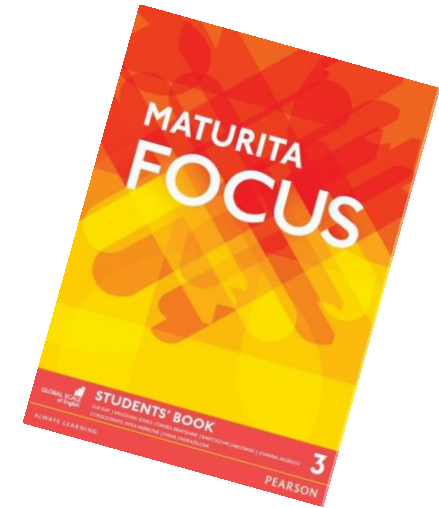
Yours sincerely,
Mia Read

- 3 Some parts of Mia's email are too informal. Match the underlined words in the email with these more suitable formal alternatives.

- 1 equipment
- 2 informing
- 3 I am looking forward to
- 4 a number of
- 5 Thank you
- 6 pleased

- 4 Now match the phrases in pink in the email with these more formal alternatives.

- a I hope to hear from you ...
- b I am ...
- c could you clarify ...?
- d Dear Ms Walsh,
- e contacting you ...?
- f could I ask about ...?



From Maturita Focus Students' Book 2 p.80

6.7 Writing

An email/A letter of application
I can apply for a summer job.

- 1 Read the job advert and answer the questions.
 - 1 What kind of job is it advertising?
 - 2 Is it a permanent job?
 - 3 Is it a well-paid job?
 - 4 How old do you have to be to apply?
 - 5 What characteristics should the candidate have?
 - 6 What are the working hours?

**ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A
summer job?**

**Johnson's Builders requires
an office helper – €10 per hour**

Are you
sixteen or over? * reliable and hard-working?
friendly and willing to learn?

We offer
excellent conditions * flexible hours
a chance to learn office skills

No previous experience necessary!

- 2 If you saw this job advert in your local paper, would you be interested? Why?/Why not? Discuss in pairs.
- 3 Imagine you want to apply for the job. Tick five pieces of information you should include in your letter of application.

1 Say where you saw the advert.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 Say what you are doing now.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 Say how you intend to spend your salary.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Give reasons why you are interested in the job.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 Mention your CV and any relevant work experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 Say why you liked or didn't like previous jobs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Say when you are available for an interview.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 Warn them not to call you at certain times.	<input type="checkbox"/>



- 4 Read the letter and check your ideas in Exercise 2. Then cross out the three sentences in the letter which are not appropriate.

Dear Sir or Madam,

With **reference** to your advertisement in yesterday's *Devonshire Times*, I would like to **apply** for the position of part-time office helper. **At the moment**, I am in my final year at school and I will be available to start work from 1 June. I really need this job because I want to earn some money to go on holiday.

I am **particularly interested** in your company because I hope to study architecture at university. I **enclose my CV** for your information. As you will see, I worked on a building site last summer. It was a bit hard, but I got a really good suntan.

I do not have much experience of office work, but I am a fast learner. I have good communication skills and I enjoy working as part of a team. **For these reasons**, I feel I would be a suitable candidate for the job you are advertising.

I can be available for interview **at any time**. I have listed my contact details on my CV. Please don't call me before ten o'clock in the morning.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,

Richard Dawson

Richard Dawson

- 5 Complete the WRITING FOCUS with the words in purple in the letter.

WRITING FOCUS

An email/A letter of application

- * Say where you saw the advert.

I am writing in response to your advertisement in/
With **reference** to your advertisement in ...

- * Say why you are writing.

I am writing to express my interest in the position of/
I would like to ² _____ the position of ...

- * Say what you are doing now.

Currently, I am/At ³ _____, I am ...

- * Give reasons why you are interested in the job.

I found your advertisement very interesting because/
I am ⁴ _____ your company because ...

- * Mention your CV and any relevant work experience.

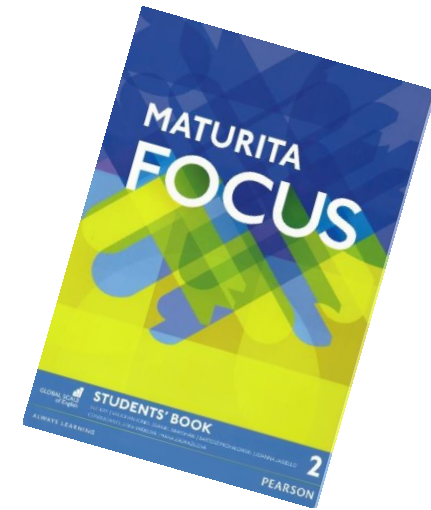
My experience includes/I worked for ... as .../
I ⁵ _____ for your information. As you will see,
I worked ...

- * Give reasons why you are suitable for the job.

I would be a suitable candidate for the job because .../
⁶ _____, I feel I would be a suitable candidate
for the job you are advertising.

- * Say when you are available for an interview.

I can be available for interview ⁷ _____.



How the Speaking is assessed

25% Grammar and vocabulary (range and accuracy)

25% Pronunciation

25% Discourse Management (or fluency)

25% Interaction

From Maturita Focus Students' Book 2 p.43

3.6 Speaking

Describing a photo

I can describe a situation in a photo and speculate about what is happening.

1 In pairs, look at the photos and answer the questions.

- 1 Who are the people?
- 2 Where are they?
- 3 What are they doing?



2 Complete sentences 1–3 in as many ways as possible with the adjectives in the box.

bored	crowded	empty	excited
famous	friendly	frightened	happy
irritated	miserable	nervous	noisy
proud	quiet	shy	tired
		young	

- 1 (describing people) He/She is ...
- 2 (describing feelings) He/She is feeling ...
- 3 (describing places) It is ...

3 **CD 2.11 MP3-55** Listen and decide which photo the speaker is describing. Give reasons for your answer.

4 **CD 2.11 MP3-55** Complete the description with words and phrases from the SPEAKING FOCUS. Then listen again and check.

1 _____ a famous author signing a book for a young boy. 2 _____ there are book shelves, so 3 _____ they're in a bookshop. The author is a woman with blond hair. She's sitting behind a desk. 4 _____ friendly and she's looking at the boy. She's 5 _____ asking him what his name is so that she can write a personal message. The boy 6 _____ is wearing a blue top. I think he's about eight years old. He looks a bit shy, but 7 _____ he's very proud to meet the author of his favourite book. 8 _____, I'd love to meet my favourite author.

SPEAKING FOCUS

Beginning a description

In this photo, I can see/there is/there are ...
This photo shows ...

Saying where (place)

There are ..., so I think they're in a bookshop/art gallery/at a concert, etc.

Saying where (in the photo)

in the background/in the middle/in the foreground
on the left/on the right
in front of/behind/next to

Speculating

He/She looks shy/bored/tired, etc.
She's probably ...
Perhaps/Maybe/I imagine/I'm sure he's very proud.

Giving your opinion

I think/I don't think ...
Personally, ...
In my opinion, ...

5 In pairs, take turns to describe the other two photos. Use the SPEAKING FOCUS to help you.

6 **CD 2.12 MP3-56** Now listen to people describing photos B and C. Are the descriptions similar to yours? How are they different?

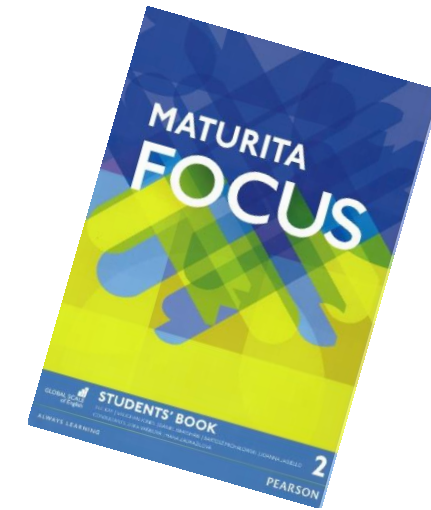
7 In pairs, follow the instructions and take turns to talk about music and art. Use the SPEAKING FOCUS to help you.

Student A: Ask Student B these questions:

- What kind of music do you enjoy listening to and who is your favourite band or singer?
- Describe a time when you saw live music.

Student B: Ask Student A the following questions:

- What kind of art do you like and why?
- Describe a time when you visited a gallery or museum.



From Maturita Focus Workbook 2 p.107



FUNCTION PHRASE BANK, WRITING

Accepting suggestions

That sounds fantastic!
I'd love to go.
Well, it's worth a try.
I suppose it'll work.

Agreeing with opinions

I (completely) agree that/with ...
I couldn't agree more that/with ...
That's fine with me.
I think so too.

Apologising

Informal phrases

I'm really sorry (that) ...
Sorry to bother you.
Sorry I haven't written for so long./Sorry for not writing for so long.
I'm writing to tell you how sorry I am to/about ...
It will never happen again.

Formal phrases

I apologise for ...
Please accept my apology for ...

Closing formulas: emails and letters

Informal phrases

Best wishes,
Bye for now,
See you!
Love,
Take care!
All the best,

Formal phrases

Yours sincerely,
Regards.

Contacting people

Ways to contact people

If you have any information, please contact/call/leave a message for Alison on (0961224466).
If you are interested in ..., call (John/Ms White).
To join us, call ...
Call me on ... for more details.

Maintaining contact

Drop me a line sometime.
I hope to hear from you soon.
Give me a call later.
Let me know if you can make it or not.
I was glad to hear about ...

Describing lost property

I lost (my bag/passport/coat/dog).

Describing features

It is/was ...
Size: huge/tiny/35cm x 25cm/big.
Shape: round/rectangular/square/narrow.
Colour: white/red and brown/light/dark green.
Material: made of leather/plastic/linen.
Age: new/young/old/six years old/modern/ancient.
It has/had (two handles/a leather strap/a blue cover/two pockets/short sleeves/a black tail).

Reasons for search

I keep (all my files there).
It was something I borrowed/got as a birthday present.
It is of great value./It's a really precious thing.
I can't live without it.

It means a lot to me. Disagreeing

I disagree that/with .../I don't agree that/with ...
I am totally against ...
I see what you mean, but ...
I see your point of view, but ...
I'm afraid I can't agree with ...
I'm not convinced about ...
I don't think it's the best solution.

Encouraging participation

Come on, don't be afraid/it's not difficult/it's easy!
Why don't you come ...?
Come and tell us what you think.
Come and have fun!
Don't miss it!

Ending an email/a letter

Informal phrases

It was good to hear from you.
Email me soon.
I'd better get going./I must be going now./Got to go now.
Looking forward to your news/to hearing from you again.
Say hello to ...
Give my love/my regards to ...
Have a nice (trip).
See you (soon/in the summer).
Write soon.
Keep in touch!

Formal phrases

I look forward to hearing from you/your reply.
I hope to hear from you soon.

Expressing opinions

I believe/think/feel (that) ...
I really believe (that) ...
In my opinion/view, ... / To my mind, ...
The way I see it, ...
It seems/appears to me (that) ...
My opinion is that ...
As far as I am concerned ...

Summary

For the feedback we give:

- Pay less attention to grammatical accuracy
- Pay more attention to range of vocabulary
- In writing, pay more attention to register ... in speaking to function

For the materials we use:

- Look for ones that constantly, even 'silently' practise the exam
- Look for integrated skills