

Accessible English language testing

password

About Password testing

Designed by leading academics in testing and assessment, Password online English language tests balance the desire for speed, convenience and accessibility with the need for accurate, reliable and secure test results. The tests have been benchmarked to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Unlike other English language tests, Password tests measure English language knowledge. For the many candidates who have not yet had the opportunity to undertake significant skills-based instruction, Password tests offer a more reliable and equitable solution. As English language knowledge is both a necessary condition for and powerful predictor of language task performance, Password tests also ensure accurate and reliable results.

Password tests are securely delivered and assessed online, and test-takers receive instant results. Reporting facilities are outstanding and certification is instantly available at the click of a mouse.

Password tests are widely used by universities, colleges and schools who wish to accurately measure English language level to:

- Speed up offer making and aid international student recruitment.
- Enable accurate pre-arrival counselling.
- Place in English language classes on arrival.
- Test students' progress.
- Diagnose students joining university programmes in need of English language support.

Password tests are offered at accredited Password Test Centres and Password English Language Counselling Centres around the world, and can also be used by institutions themselves to test their own students pre- or post-arrival.

Password tests are fast becoming the test of choice for students all over the world. They are affordable, less stressful than alternative skills-based tests (especially for lower level students), quick to take, easy to access and offer immediate results which are widely accepted.

“There is no test that can compete with Password for its combination of state-of-the-art question design, security, reliability and simplicity of use, delivered at such a low cost. NCUK has used the Password Test as our standard test of entry since 2009, as it has proved to be an extremely reliable indicator of academic language ability and predicted final NCUK EAP grade. We now have the Password Test in use in more than 30 centres in ten countries across the world, and it continues to be popular amongst teachers and candidates.”

Michael A. Abberton Subject Leader EAP, NCUK

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The Password approach

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Commitment to quality and innovation

Password tests provide an accurate and reliable indication of a learner's knowledge of the English language, with a focus on lexico-grammatical competence. There are a number of reasons for this focus:

- Grammar and vocabulary are powerful indicators of overall language ability. It has long been acknowledged that tests of grammar and vocabulary knowledge can provide a useful indication of a learner's general language abilities and of their performance on skills-based test components, particularly reading and writing.
- Across tests that include components addressing grammar and vocabulary together with skills-based sections, the highest correlations between individual test parts and the overall scores are generally those for lexico-grammatical components.
- Grammar and vocabulary components tend to be the most efficient and reliable sections of a test. They are less susceptible to measurement error than other test sections and so provide more consistent scores.
- The relationship between lexico-grammatical measures and overall ratings of language abilities is so strong that grammar tests are often used by researchers as indicators of general language proficiency.

The Password approach involves a commitment to quality and innovation in test design, administration and validation. This approach is:

- Based on current understandings of language use.
- Supported by a programme of empirical validation.
- Grounded in test security considerations.

Password tests are set apart from other tests by their commitment to continuous refreshment and validation. There are regular reports on the performance of the test material, and systems in place for the routine monitoring of differential item functioning and related issues of test bias. The test developers have unparalleled test development experience in both testing for language programme placement and testing for academic purposes.

“Griffith University has found the Password test to be a very useful and reliable tool for establishing indicative English Language levels.”

Pamela Humphreys, Test Centre Manager, GELI,
Griffith University, Australia

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The suite of Password tests

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English language testing

Password (CEFR A2 to C1)

Password is a test of intermediate academic English and is frequently used to measure how much English language preparation an international student needs before beginning a university programme. The test is widely recognised for entrance to the following university preparation programmes:

- English for Academic Purposes (EAP)
- International Foundation Programmes
- Pre-Masters Programmes
- Pre-Sessional Courses

In addition, many universities use Password as a quick and cost effective diagnostic test for students joining undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Students scoring below Password Plus can be quickly identified as needing urgent in-sessional help. Using Password in this way is enabling universities to increase the quality of the international student experience leading to enhanced student outcomes.

Password is recognised by BALEAP (The British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes), which has 75 university members. It is used by over seventy institutions in the UK and a growing number in Australia. It is also now being introduced into English medium universities around the world.

Password has 72 questions in 5 sections and takes one hour or less to complete.

Password with Skills (CEFR A2 to C1)

The core Password test can also be combined with the Password test of writing (32 randomised essay titles) and/or an institution's own speaking and listening assessments, for example a structured telephone interview. These scores can be entered into the Password website by the institution's own staff and certificates can be customised to reflect the additional test components.

“From our perspective, Password is solidly reliable, enabling us to place students quickly and confidently into our pre-sessional classes at an incredibly busy time of year. Password is a test of lexico-grammatical knowledge and our experience has shown that results give an accurate indicator of a student's overall proficiency in English. There was no discernible difference in the pass rates for students who entered our 2009 pre-sessional with IELTS and those who entered with Password. For the student, the benefits are obvious: the test is affordable, widely accepted, easily accessible, short and “low stress”, and the results are instantaneous. The latter of course helps to expedite the whole process of obtaining the necessary visa.”

Suzanne Barrett, Assessment Co-ordinator,
University of the Arts London

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Password Intro (CEFR A1 to B1)

Password Intro is a test of general English, suitable for students from beginner through to lower intermediate. It is used mainly to test students joining general English language courses either pre- or post-arrival.

Password Intro is used by many language schools in the UK and a growing number in other countries around the world.

Password Intro has 64 questions in 4 sections and takes 45 minutes or less to complete.

“A fast, easy and independent assessment of students’ level of English.”

Tony Millns, Chief Executive, English UK

Password Pupil (CEFR A1 to B1)

Password Pupil has been designed for school children learning English from around the age of ten upwards. It is a test of general English in a context suitable for younger students.

Password Pupil has 64 questions in 4 sections and takes 45 minutes or less to complete.

Password Pupil can be used to bench mark the English language levels of pupils in different branches of the same school or even different regions against each other.

Password Pupil	Password Intro	Password	CEFR
		Password Plus	C1 and above
		Password 6.0	B2
		Password 5.5	
		Password 5.0	B1
		Password 4.5	
Pupil Plus	Intro Plus	Password 4.0	
Password Pupil 3.5	Password Intro 3.5	Password 3.5	A2+
Password Pupil 3.0	Password Intro 3.0	Password 3.0	A2
Password Pupil 2.5	Password Intro 2.5	Pre-Password	A1+
Password Pupil 2.0	Password Intro 2.0		A1
Pre-Pupil	Pre-Intro		Below A1

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Inside information

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How Password tests work and perform

Password tests are designed to balance a test-takers need for speed, convenience and accessibility with an institution's need for accurate, reliable and secure test results.

- Tests of English language knowledge.
- Thousands of questions in the Password database.
- Each test different and unique.
- 'Secure browser' which locks down the computer during the test.
- User-friendly visual navigation menu.
- Clock indicating time remaining.
- Instant results.
- Online reports and certificates which can be co-branded.
- On-line verification service.

Test Security

Password tests are securely accessed via the Internet. Password users are given two sets of unique codes. The first accesses the tests themselves, and the second accesses the test-takers results and certificates in user-friendly reports.

Each Password test is different and unique. As a test is downloaded via the Internet, a group of randomised questions is drawn from the extensive bank of questions in the Password system. New questions

are constantly being put into the system, old questions retired or rested and questions are constantly monitored to check that they are still performing well.

Each Password test is run on secure software. All information is transmitted using a secure sockets layer, the same type of technology which protects online payments. Whilst the test is in progress, browsers are locked down, which means that test-takers cannot access any other applications on the PC delivering the test such as Internet search engines, email or online dictionaries. Neither can test-takers print, screen capture or access any source code.

“The University of Essex uses Password as a diagnostic filter test to quickly identify incoming non native English speaking students who are unexpectedly weak at English. We test around 1,200 students each year on arrival and benefit from Password's ease of use, fast turnaround, security of test and of course accurate results. If the student has previously taken an IELTS test we compare the results and find that there is a close correlation. We also benefit from Password's flexibility (we have added our own writing element), and it's portability (“where there's a web there's a way....”). Finally, and very importantly, Password is good value for money.”

**Stuart Bannerman, Director, International Academy,
University of Essex**

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Working together

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The Password Partnership

The Password tests have been created by English Language Testing Ltd, whose shareholders include the University of the Arts London. The tests are designed by the Centre for Research in Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA) at the University of Bedfordshire, under the direction of Professor Cyril Weir, and delivered by the Password Team, based in West London.

The Password Team

The Password team build and maintain the Password tests, supporting Password users across the world.

CRELLA

CRELLA, directed by Professor Cyril Weir, has established a national and international reputation as a centre for research into, and development of, English language tests. Members of the centre have published widely on language testing and assessment issues and carry out pioneering research into the nature of English language proficiency and its measurement. Research consultancies provided by the centre in the fields of English language testing and evaluation for examination authorities worldwide are currently helping with the development of foreign language testing in a number of countries. Details of the work of the centre can be found on their website (www.beds.ac.uk/crella).

University of the Arts London

The University of the Arts London is a vibrant world centre for innovation, drawing together six Colleges with international

reputations in art, design, fashion, communication and performing arts. The University has a dedicated language centre, which provides pre-sessional and in-sessional language support to large numbers of international students on foundation, undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The Language Centre also operates a range of additional programmes for English language students from all over the world, and its teaching staff represent a wealth of experience and expertise in English language teaching and assessment, particularly in the area of English for Academic Purposes.

Also available

Password Maths

It is widely recognised that many students joining foundation and degree programmes in science, engineering and the social sciences struggle to solve simple mathematical problems, despite having otherwise excellent academic qualifications.

Building on the work of Dr. Harriet Jones (University of East Anglia) who has worked in this area for many years, the Password team have created a simple online test to identify students who are weak at mathematics. This test can be used either for entry screening or as a diagnostic filter to detect students needing additional support.

Password Maths has 44 questions in four sections and takes one hour or less to complete.

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