

Quick guide for teachers



How do CEM tests assess vocabulary?





Good vocabulary is important for success in education

What is assessed?


'Vocabulary' is the body of words that make up a language. Our many years of data show that students' English vocabulary predicts their success in all school subjects at GCSE, IGCSE, A level and International Baccalaureate. Students with good vocabulary do better across the curriculum! For English, history and some foreign languages, vocabulary is the best predictor that we have. It is also a particularly good predictor for geography and mathematics. Our data is in line with extensive published research.



Picture questions

Each picture question contains a single picture and the student is required to recognise its content. The student is asked: "Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning." The four response options are usually single words and the student must pick one.

Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning.



slope

sign

arrow

point

Word questions

Each word question contains a single word and the student is required to recognise its meaning. The student is asked: "Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning." The four response options are either single words or short phrases and the student must pick one.

Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning.

CROSS

angry

curious

odd

happy

Phrase questions

The phrase questions present students with a sentence that is missing a single word or short phrase. This could either be at the end of the sentence, or somewhere in the middle it. The student is asked: "Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning." These questions test the student's understanding of multiple words within the sentence.

Select the word or phrase with the closest meaning.

The engine _____ poisonous fumes.

emitted

submitted

exhausted

omitted

Adaptive testing

Our tests are adaptive. This means that for each student, the vocabulary section starts with some common words which are easy to understand. If the student does well, answering questions correctly and demonstrating their knowledge of these words, then the vocabulary gets harder. That is, the student will see questions containing more unusual and/or complex words. However, if the student struggles to answer questions correctly, then next they will see questions containing easier words.

References

- ¹ Hirsh, E. D. (2013). 'A wealth of words. The key to increasing upward mobility is expanding vocabulary.' *City Journal*, 23 (1). <https://www.city-journal.org/html/wealth-words-13523.html>
- Spencer, S., Clegg, J., & Stackhouse, J. (2012). 'Language and disadvantage: A comparison of the language abilities of adolescents from two different socioeconomic areas'. *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*. 47: 274-284.
- Spencer, S., Clegg, J., Stackhouse, J. & Rush, R. (2017). 'Contribution of spoken language and socio-economic background to adolescents' educational achievement at aged 16 years.' *International Journal of Language Disorders*, 52: 184-196. https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/98306/9/WRRO_98306.pdf