

September 2023

Dear Tutor,

Thank you for reviewing our Updated '**All About COBE Handout**', one of the resource documents among those on the ESRA website: **Resource Material For Tutors**.

It has been prepared to give you information about how to optimize the time you spend with students while preparing them to speak fluently and naturally for the oral exam known as COBE (Computerized Oral Bagrut Exam).

The material in this handout reflects the specific guidelines as set out by the Ministry of Education and is self-sufficient for all sessions. Material prepared by teachers for their own students is suitable for the teaching they do in their own classrooms. Your singular task is to afford students the unique opportunity to speak in a supportive and non-judgmental environment.

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Lola Katz

ETP COBE Consultant

lolak@esra.org.il

052 265 3847

All about COBE: (Computerized Oral Bagrut Examination)

1. Introduction

- a. The Computerized Oral Bagrut Exam (COBE) has been introduced into schools as a more objective, fair and accurate assessment of students' English-speaking abilities. The tasks in the COBE all require that students answer questions spontaneously, fluently and in detail without notes or intervention. Questions are asked on a computer and students record their answers. There is no human interaction on the exam, but answers are marked by teacher markers.
- b. **As tutors, we do not have the right to express personal opinions about this program.**
- c. Our role as volunteer tutors is to help students prepare for the COBE by giving them the opportunity and confidence to practice speaking English in a supportive non-judgmental environment. And this means THEY do 90% of the talking!
- d. Teachers are told that most of our tutors are not qualified teachers. Tutors are not expected to do anything else in a tutoring session other than help students practice their speaking skills.
Please check with your Branch Coordinator if you are asked to do anything else.
- e. The explanations and notes in this handout have been taken from material available on the Ministry's website and developed in consultation with the Ministry COBE counsellor. Tutors do not need any additional material for their COBE tutoring sessions.
Please check with your Branch Coordinator if you are given different guidelines.

2. Structure of the COBE

- a. The exam is divided into three parts: (Details appear later in this handout.)
Part A: **Personal Response to a Prompt**
Part B: **Project / Bridging Project Presentation Responding to a Prompt**
Part C: **Response to an Audio-Visual Prompt**
- b. The exam will be open for 30 minutes although it is estimated that students will not require more than 15 minutes to record their answers to the sets of questions asked in all in 3 parts of the exam.
- c. The COBE is only one part of the overall Bagrut English Exam. There are different levels for students taking Bagrut exams. 5 point students are at an advanced level. 4 point students at a lower level. All students take the **same** exam irrespective of whether they are doing 4 or 5 points. However, they are graded more leniently if they are 4 pointers.
Note: Although grammatical accuracy is important, it is evaluated as being less important than fluency and the ability to include in-depth answers to questions.
A document listing the ministry's criteria for evaluation is included **for background information only**. (See page 10)
- d. The time factor is not taken into consideration when grading although there is a minimum time requirement of one minute **relevant only** for the response in Part B. There are no minimum time requirements in Part A and C but a student who speaks for less than 20 seconds in Part A will get a zero grade.

3. Points to keep in mind during a tutoring session

- a. Allow students to answer questions **without intervention** for at least 1 minute. Thereafter give feedback and model an answer if necessary.
- b. Students cannot use Hebrew words in their answers except for talking about holidays or culturally bound words.
- c. The students' level of English should be that of a foreign language learner NOT an English speaker. They should be encouraged to use words they already know.
- d. No additional material or aids (projects, notes, any kind of dictionaries, phones, paper and pencils, etc.) are allowed into the exam room.
Discourage the use of notes during a tutoring session.
- e. If it sounds that an answer has been pre-prepared, students will get a zero grade.
- f. If a tutoring session is virtual, it is **ESSENTIAL** that the students' cameras are open. If there are technological hitches with Zoom, use a WhatsApp **Video Call**.

COBE: PART A: Production – Personal Response

2 - 3 minutes for listening viewing questions and answering 30 Points

Note

Tutoring sessions are intended to help students prepare for COBE. Simulation of the format of Part A is an integral part of that preparation. Tutors offer students the opportunity to practice the format used in COBE as described below.

1. Format of Part A

- Alfi asks **two** Question Sets.
(They are called Question Sets because there are several questions in each set.)
- Students listen to **both** and then choose **ONLY** one question set to answer.
- Key words** appear on the screen as Alfi asks the questions and remain there to remind the students about what to refer to.
- If students answer both questions, only the first answer will be related to by markers.
- Students are expected to answer **ALL** the questions asked in the question set they choose.

2. Examples of questions sets and guidelines for what to include in answers

Question Set 1 (Q1)

“Today I'd like you to talk about... games. What kind of games do you like to play? Explain. Do you think playing some kinds of games can affect your behavior? Explain and give an example.”

Answer Guidelines

The answer should flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question.

The student should describe what kind of games they like to play. This should be followed by an explanation. The student should express an opinion on whether some games can affect their behavior.

Their ideas should be supported by an explanation.

NOTE: The student must relate to all the questions asked.

OR

Question Set 2 (Q2)

“Today I'd like you to talk about... studying at home. How has distance learning affected the way you study? Do you think it's better for you to keep your camera on during an on-line lesson? Explain.”

Answer Guidelines

The answer should flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question.

The student should express an opinion on how distance learning affected the way they study. This should be followed by an explanation. The student should express an opinion on whether it's better for them to keep their camera on during an online synchronous lesson. Their ideas should be supported by an explanation.

NOTE: The student must relate to all of the questions asked

3. Summary of possible topics and questions for Part A

Below is the range of topics which the ministry has listed as possible topics for Part A of COBE.

- Advertising
- Favorite books and movies
- Future plans
- Hobbies and habits / Routines
- Holidays and customs
- Personal belongings
- Personal strengths & weaknesses
- Reflection on personal experiences
- Animals
- Food
- Games
- Hometown
- School
- Sports
- Respect
- Education
- Free time activities
- Health
- Languages
- Professional ambitions
- Technology
- Vacations
- Fame and celebrities
- Friendship
- Music
- Volunteering
- Transportation
- Role models
- Suggesting individual/ community change

4. Tips for tutors

- a. Always offer students TWO topics so they can decide which to choose to talk about. In doing so, you simulate the format of PART A of the exam and thereby enable students to experience the option of choice. Remember the role of tutors in this program is to help students build confidence to succeed in their oral exam.
- b. Model the questions asked according to the examples above. Avoid asking yes/no questions. Include the word explain.
- c. Tell students it's OK to hesitate and to use sounds like 'um' 'er' or to be silent while recording to allow themselves time to think before they continue speaking.
- d. Encourage students to talk without notes during a tutoring session by thinking of answers to a question which relate to WHY / WHEN/ WHERE / WHAT / HOW
- e. Encourage students to produce a flow of language without any prompting from you.
- f. Emphasize that there will always be two Question Sets asked in the exam. Students should decide which of the two sets is easier for them. If for example, the choice is between talking about their hometown or Corona and they can't think of anything factual to say, tell them to **make up some facts**.
- g. Remind them it's **not the content** that they are being examined on but their ability to speak English.
- h. Remind them to use the key words in the top right-hand corner of the screen to remind them of what they need to talk about.
- i. Suggest that they incorporate the questions that Alfi asks into their answers. Help them to do this if their level of English is low.

5. Possible topics with Question Sets to practice Part A

Taken from the ministry website

NOTE: Please remember to offer students TWO topics so they can decide which to choose to talk about.

In doing so, you simulate the format of PART A of the exam and thereby enable students to experience the option of choice.

Please note there will not be any family-related questions or questions related to the army on the exam.

1. Today I'd like you to talk about **the Corona crisis**. How did you feel when it first started? What were some of the challenges that you experienced since the Corona crisis started? Explain and give an example.
2. Today I'd like you to talk about **games**. What kind of games do you like to play? Explain. Do you think playing some kinds of games can affect your behavior? Explain and give an example.
3. Today I'd like you to talk about **studying at home**. How has distance learning affected the way you study? Do you think it's better for you to keep your camera on during an on-line lesson? Explain."
4. Today I'd like you to talk about **games**. What kind of games do you like to play with your friends? Explain. Do you play different kinds of games with different friends? Explain and give an example.
5. Today I'd like you to talk about **seasons of the year**. What is your favorite season? Explain. What do you enjoy doing during this season? Explain and give two examples.
6. Today I'd like you to talk about **public transportation**. What kind of public transportation is available where you live? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using public transportation?
7. Today I'd like you to talk about **getting around**. Do you think public transportation in Israel is good? Explain. What are the advantages and disadvantages of driving a car? Explain
8. Today I'd like you to talk about **different activities**. How do you spend a typical day in the summer? What is your favorite summer activity? Explain and give an example.
9. Today I'd like you to talk about **holidays and celebrations**. Which one of your holidays or celebrations would be the most interesting for tourists to see? Explain. Is there a special food connected to this holiday or celebration that tourists should taste? Explain.
10. Today I'd like you to talk about **living a healthy life**. What do you think it means to live a healthy life? Explain. Is it possible to live a healthy life in the modern world? Explain.
11. Today I'd like you to talk about **food**. Describe your favorite meal of the day. What makes it your favorite meal? Explain and give an example.
12. Today I'd like you to talk about **respect**. Do you think everyone should be respected? Explain. Do teenagers always respect adults? Explain.
13. Today I'd like you to talk about **driving**. Do you think teenagers are ready to start driving a car at the age of 16? Explain. Do you think learning to drive a car should be part of your education in high school? Explain.
14. Today I'd like you to talk about **presents**. What is the best present you have ever gotten? Explain why. Would you prefer a present someone bought for you or made for you? Explain.
15. Today I'd like you to talk about **presents**. What do you like better, to give or receive a present? Explain why. What is the best present you have ever given or received? Explain.
16. Today I'd like you to talk about **school**. What is your major in school and why did you choose it? Would you like to work in a job that is connected to this major? Explain.
17. Today I'd like you to talk about **visitors from other countries**. What places would you take them to visit and why? What food should they try while they are visiting? Explain.
18. Today I'd like you to talk about **asking for advice**. Who do you usually go to for advice or help and why? Describe a situation in which that person helped you.
19. Today I'd like you to talk about **your qualities**. Tell me about a job you'd like to have in the future. Explain why. What qualities do you have that would make someone hire you for this job? Explain

COBE: Part B:

Project / Bridging Project Presentation, Responding to a Prompt

20 points 1 – 2 minutes speaking

Note: A minimum time requirement of one-minute speaking time is required for Part B only

1. Examples of a questions set for Part B

Question Set: (Q3)

Alfi asks the students a set of questions about their project.

Below is an example of a question set which Alfi may ask in the exam.

“To begin with, tell me briefly about your project and what you were hoping to learn from it.

In addition, what did you learn were your greatest strengths while doing your project? Give examples and explain.”

Answer Guidelines: The answer should flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question. The answer should include a short description of their project, including the topic or theme and a short description of what it was about. They should also describe what they were hoping to learn from the topic and by doing this project on that topic. They should relate to the question of what they learned about their own strengths from doing this project. The answer can't be a general answer. It has to include examples and explanations.

NOTE: Students must relate to all of the questions asked.

2. Summary question topics for Part B

- Topic and reason for choice
- Learning skills improved
- Future use of information
- Further studies
- How the project helped them understand the literary text better
- What was learned
- Interesting facts learned
- Redoing it if opportunity arose
- How the project influenced them
- What they wanted to learn
- Surprising information
- Topic related to literary piece

Reflections on:

- Challenges of the work
- Teamwork vs Individual work
- Finding information on the topic
- Writing up their project
- Learning and language skills
- Personal achievement and feeling

3. Questions for Part B of COBE : The Project

(Taken from Ministry site)

1. To begin with, tell me briefly about your project and **what you were hoping to learn from it.**
Also, how did you feel about the project in the beginning and when you finished it?
Give examples from your project and explain.
2. To begin with, tell me briefly about your project and what you were hoping to learn from it.
In addition, what information from your project do you think is important to share with others?
Give examples from your project and explain.
3. To begin with, tell me briefly about your project and what you were hoping to learn from it.
In addition, if you could redo your project, what would you do differently?
Give examples from your project and explain.
4. To begin with, tell me briefly about your project and what you were hoping to learn from it.
In addition, who would you like to share what you learned from your project with and why?
Give examples and explain.

4. Expressions to incorporate into answers about projects in Part B of COBE

What is your project about?

- My project is about.....
- The topic that my project deals with is.....

Why did you choose this topic? / What interests you about this topic?

- I chose my topic XYZ because.....
- I've always been interested in.....
- I didn't know anything about the topic XYZ and I was interested to learn about it

How did you do it? / What sources did you use?

- I took information from the internet
- I interviewed my family / friends / neighbors / people in the street
- I read books in the library / I did some experiments

How did your group divide up the tasks?

- We allocated different tasks to different group members
- Somebody was responsible for I was responsible for.....
- Another member of the group typed the project report on the computer

What did you expect to find?

- I expected to find that....
- On one hand I was pleased to find that..... On the other hand I was disappointed to find that.....

What did you learn?

- I learned / discovered / found out that.....

What would you do differently?

- I would summarize more carefully / I would take notes / I would use more sources

What was difficult and what was enjoyable?

- The most difficult part of the project was.....
- The part that I enjoyed the most was.....

..

With whom would you like to share what you learned from your project and why?

- I learned ABC and I would like to share what I learned with other students in my class / with every student in Israel / with friends / with everyone in Israel.
- And why? Because

4b. Additional expressions/ words to incorporate into answers

Repeat the question in the answer / Firstly.../ To begin .../ The after that/ Finally .../ At the end .../ In conclusion

COBE: Part C- Response to an Audio-visual Prompt

50 points. 4-5 minutes for viewing and answering all questions

NOTE: The information which follows about PART C is optional for tutors to read.

Those who prefer not to work with their students on PART C should only focus on asking questions about PART A and PART B of COBE.

1. Note to tutors about Part C

- Previously the National Counsellor for COBE at the Ministry suggested that our tutors not be asked by teachers to work in this part of the COBE with their students and ETP endorsed this view. Tutors were told that if teachers wanted tutors to have students practice answering questions about PART C, they needed to take the responsibility for this decision and give tutors very clear instructions.
- Now, both the Ministry Counsellor and the ETP COBE team suggest that IF tutors are comfortable working on Part C with their students and their teachers request such assistance then this is acceptable. It is suggested that teachers present the clip to students ahead of a tutoring session to enable tutors to focus on answering the questions about the clip.
- Previously PART C required students to answer questions based **only on viewing a clip** with no speaking in the clip. However, this is in the process of changing. In some schools students are already doing the new format for PART C in which students answer questions based **both on viewing and listening** to a clip. By 2023 this format will apply in **all schools**

2. What's different in PART C of COBE?

- In the 'old' format for PART C (AKA Regular COBE / old format for Module E) students are required to interpret what they see in the clip which does not have an audio component.
- Some schools are still doing this format of COBE and if tutors in these schools want to practice PART C with students, they should **only** use clips WITHOUT an audio component. Schools will know if they are doing the 'old' format which is without a listening element. An example of a video clip for the 'old' PART C (without audio)
[Share Care Joy: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkuKHwetV6Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HkuKHwetV6Q)
- The 'new' format for PART C (AKA Pilot COBE / new format for Module E) is different in that now there is an audio component and questions will relate **only to what students have heard**. What they see is helpful in terms of providing visual cues, but because the questions are oriented to what was **heard** they cannot just '**interpret**' what they see in the clip but need to **comprehend** what was said.
- Clips could be a conversation, an interview, a talk or a presentation like a Teen TED talk. The clip is followed by 2 Questions Sets (Q4 & Q5) with 25 points allocated for each Question Set.
- Students will be expected to answer questions about the MAIN IDEA of the clip and to be able to relate to specific examples from the clip. Accuracy will now be a factor in assessing their responses where this is not relevant for the 'old' format which was entirely **interpretive**.
- the **main idea** and DESCRIBING events in **sequence**.
Tip for tutors: At higher levels (5 points) encourage descriptions that include how people feel, react etc.
- Q5: Students respond in depth, to a set of questions relating to the same audio/visual prompt followed by a set of extended questions at a higher level.
Tip for tutors: Focus more on their opinions about what they've heard, what they think about SPECIFIC points that were made, giving SPECIFIC examples to support their view. They should focus on ONE aspect, what THEY thought was interesting, surprising...etc.
- Students record the answers to each Question Set separately (Q4 and Q5) after viewing the clip and question prompts through to the end, as many times as they like, time permitting.
- By 2023 all students will be doing the 'new' PART C of COBE which means that students in 10th grade can already start practicing how to answer questions based on clips WITH a listening component.

3. Examples of a Question Sets for Part C

Greta Arrives in NYC link to watch the clip - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h18a64MapS0>

Question Set: (Q4)

“What is this news report about? What is Greta's main goal as presented in the clip? Explain.”

Answer Guidelines: The answer should flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question. The answer should discuss the main topic of the news report, which is Greta's trip to the US, to New York, and how she arrived by sea on a racing yacht. Greta's main goal in the clip is to create awareness of climate change and global warning. She is trying to make sure people, especially adults, listen to the pleas of the children. NOTE: The student must relate to all the questions asked.

Question Set: (Q5)

“What does Greta do to help raise awareness to climate change? Give two examples from the clip. What was most interesting for you in the clip? Give an example.”

Answer Guidelines: The answer should flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question. The answers should discuss two examples of what Greta has been doing as presented in the clip: She created a school climate strike on Fridays among students around the world / She posted a video and caused a big stir / She posts her ideas and her worries on social media / She travels the world to talk to people and raise awareness. Furthermore, the answer should include an opinion regarding one of the points that they found most interesting as presented in the clip, giving and example and an explanation.

NOTE: The student must relate to all the questions asked.

4. A selection of clips with the listening component can be viewed at this site:

- a. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1H2z9ntN_2bmUzKNRYW1-BOkOu73_ya7ozc8KSZ1L32w/edit#slide=id.gadeaa27017_0_1
- b. It's recommended that teachers show clips in class ahead of a tutoring session so tutors can focus on helping the student answer the questions according to the guidelines above.

Additional In-depth Support Activities

1. Building vocabulary with students whose level of English is low

When students practise answering questions for any part of the COBE, you may find that they don't understand some key words in the questions that they have to answer.

Help them build confidence by using some of the strategies suggested below.

- a. Review with your student the vocabulary from the example Question Sets and the list of possible topic questions for Part A and B and highlight words that are unfamiliar.
- b. Students may not have the vocabulary necessary to talk about a topic in Part A. If necessary, offer key words or model the answer basing yourself on the [answer guidelines](#) given on page 3.
- c. It's important to note that Alfi, the avatar in COBE, speaks with an American accent.
When preparing students to understand the questions asked in COBE, we suggest you pronounce the word TASKS with an American 'ɑ' sound. (Please note this refers ONLY to the pronunciation of the word TASKS. Our tutors speak with a variety of accents, ALL of which are acceptable.)

2. General tips to provide feedback

- a. During your session there are several ways of giving feedback. You could list words on the Chat option or write the words on an erasable whiteboard and hold it up to camera.
- b. Make a list of words you have compiled together and send it to them after the session to remind them of the new vocabulary they built with you. (Take a photo and send the list on WuP!)
- c. If you feel comfortable using SHARE SCREEN, in advance prepare a Word document with your student's name and leave it open on your task bar. You can then use this document on SHARE SCREEN during your session and send it as a summary of your session to your student's email address. Save the document in your student's file and use the same document in any follow on session as a useful way of reviewing what you covered previously.

3. General tips to promote fluency

- a. When you are working with students on vocabulary, it is important to make them aware that often there can be more than one word in English for a single word in Hebrew.
- b. Many Hebrew speakers of English look for a word in English that is the direct translation of what they would say in English. This tendency reduces fluency. It's very important to encourage your students to use the words they already know when speaking.
If they ask you: **"How do you say XX in English?"** ask them to find another way of saying XX
e.g.: Instead of saying **"I enlarged my vocabulary"** they could say **"I learned new words"**
- c. Encourage your students to develop the strategy of **guessing meaning from context**.
e.g.: In Part A of COBE, Alfi asks:

"Today I'm going to ask you about celebrating holidays. What's your favorite holiday to celebrate?"

Your student gets uptight because s/he isn't sure what the word **favorite** means.

Ask your student: **"Is it a positive or a negative word? What do you THINK it could mean?"**

Even if s/he says something like **"best / nicest"** that's acceptable. It doesn't have to be an EXACT translation.

4. General tips for all parts of COBE

- a. Always be positive and let students feel you believe in their ability to succeed.
- b. Remind students that they are being tested on their ability to speak freely and fluently.
They need to be able to explain reasons for their opinions, elaborate on examples in order to demonstrate fluency and oral abilities. Answers in a single sentence are not sufficient.
- c. Encourage students to answer questions in one, in depth response using words they already know without prompting them as they speak.
- d. Discourage practice through reading from notes, because students become too reliant on them and then in the COBE they are unable to give spontaneous responses.
Moreover, remember that they CANNOT bring notes into the exam!

Background Data Evaluation Parameters for COBE

Note to tutors:

These data have been provided only because some tutors requested information about them. They ARE NOT intended to be used in any way by tutors, whether in feedback to students or discussion with teachers.

Skills to be evaluated in the COBE

Evaluation Parameters

Each part of the exam has parameters which define the underlying speaking skills being evaluated. They are listed for your background information. The grade allocated is defined according to a declining ability to perform the task across each of the parameters listed below. They range from:

'able to...'- 'mostly to...' partially to... minimally to... irrelevant / incomprehensible/ mostly incorrect ..

Note: 4 point students take the SAME COBE as 5 point students. However, evaluation is less stringent. e.g.: In evaluating **Topic Development**, the criteria **'complete / in-depth'** don't apply for 4 point students))

Topic Development (Extended answers) (50% of the allocated points / 60% for 4- point students)

When working with your students you should aim that their answers

- are relevant to topic asked (4 points: are **mostly** relevant to topic asked)
- show **complete** understanding of key information, questions and prompts
- are logical and well organized
- are well developed (**in-depth**, including detailed explanations/ examples to support answers)

Delivery (Clarity and Fluency) (15% of the allocated points /10% for 4- point students)

When working with your students you should aim that their speech is

- comprehensible (pace, intonation and word stress allow for clear and easy comprehension)
- has almost no hesitations

Vocabulary (20% of the allocated points)

When working with your students you should aim that their answers include

- correct and varied use of appropriate words, chunks and expressions

Language (10% of the allocated points)

When working with your students you should aim that their answers include

- mostly correct use of appropriate language structures
- only the use of English (other than for religious holidays, national celebrations and culturally bound phrases)

COBE: PART A: Production – Personal Response

Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- understand key information and questions presented to them
- enter unprepared into conversation on familiar topics
- express personal opinions
- exchange information on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life
- describe plans and arrangements, habits and routines, past activities, personal experiences

COBE: PART B: Project / Bridging Project Presentation, Responding to a Prompt

Students should be able to demonstrate the ability to:

- explain the main points
 - report on and/or reflect on what they learned from a range of sources
 - express and explain their choices, opinions, plans and actions
 - draw conclusions
- or** (if they have worked on a 'bridging task, connecting a literary piece with its background)
- discuss the historical, social, and cultural contexts of a literary text or its author
 - explain how these contexts are reflected in the text or have influenced the text
 - express their reactions to a literary work Topic and reason for choice

ETP COBE Support