



Dear Tutor,

Thank you for accessing our 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).

It includes online links A, B C & D which give more detailed information related to COBE. For a full version of the handout which includes all this information without having to access the online links A, B, C & D, please contact Anat at [admin@esra.org.il](mailto:admin@esra.org.il)

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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## 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. They record their answers on a computer. There is no human interaction on the exam.
- b. It is important to note that students are not to speak Hebrew except for talking about holidays or culturally bound words.
- c. It is important to note the students' level of English should be that of a foreign language learner NOT an English Speaker.
- d. **As tutors, you do not have the right to express personal opinions about this program.**

Your role as volunteer tutors is to help students 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! Schools will reject tutors who monopolize interaction during tutoring sessions.

- e. Please work in conjunction with the students' teacher and if available, use the specific material the teacher has given the student which should be like the examples of the questions below.
- f. The explanations and notes in this handout have been taken from material available on the Ministry's website. Your sessions should replicate this format as detailed below.  
**Please check with your Branch Coordinator if you are given different guidelines.**

### 2. Structure of the COBE

- a. You can see an example of the exam at this site:  
<https://storage.cet.ac.il/ExamsViewer/SpokenEnglish/016487/2019/sim/Day1/Ver1/instructions.htm>
- b. The exam is divided into three parts: (See below for details)  
 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**
- c. Students are graded according to specific criteria depending on whether they are doing 4 or 5 points

We suggest that familiarize yourself with these, so you know what to focus on in your sessions and are able to discuss these with students so they know how they are expected to answer [\(Click here for detail Click D\)](#)

**Note:** Grammatical accuracy is important but less important than fluency, and the ability to include in-depth answers to questions.

- d. 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.

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.

- e. No additional material or aids (projects, notes, any kind of dictionaries, phones, paper and pencils, etc.) are allowed into the exam room.

## COBE: PART A: Production – Personal Response

2 - 3 minutes for listening viewing questions and answering 25 Points

### 1. Examples of questions sets

#### Question Set 1 (Q1)

*"Tell me where you live and a little bit about the place. What is your favorite place in your hometown? Explain why".*

OR

#### Question Set 2 (Q2)

*"Describe your volunteering experience in high school. Do you think you will continue volunteering in the future as a result of your volunteer work in high school? Explain."*

[Click here for Answer Guidelines \(Click A\)](#)

### 2. Tips for tutors

- Model the questions you ask according to the examples above. Avoid asking yes/no questions. Include the word explain.
- Tell them it's OK to hesitate (be silent while recording) to allow themselves time to think while they are speaking and then go on once they have gathered their thoughts.
- Encourage students to talk without notes during your tutoring session by thinking of answers to a question which relate to WHY / WHEN/ WHERE / WHAT / HOW
- Encourage students to produce a flow of language without any prompting from you.
- 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 school and they can't think of anything factual to say, tell them to **make up some facts**.
- Remind them it's **not the content** that they are being examined on but their ability to speak English.
- 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.
- Suggest that they incorporate the questions that Alfi asks into their answers. Help them to do this if their level of English is low.

### 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.

**You should always check with the students' teachers for instructions on how to work with the students** and ask for any specific questions they have given the students so you can practice that material.

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

### 4. Possible topics with question sets to practice Part A

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

- Where do you live? Do you like your **hometown**? What would you like to change in your hometown? Explain.
- What do you think about **volunteering**? Do you **volunteer** in your free time? How does it make you feel? Explain.
- Tell me something about the place where you live? Where would you like to live when you are older? Explain why. Have you ever lived in a **different community**? If not, would you like to? [Click here for a full list of question sets \(Click B\)](#)

## COBE: Part B:

### Project / Bridging Project Presentation, Responding to a Prompt

**25 points 1 – 2 minutes speaking**

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

#### 1. Background information about the project

[Click here for a background information about the project \(Click C\)](#)

#### 2. 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.

***“Now we will talk about your project. I’m going to ask you a set of questions about your project.”***

***What was your project about and what were you hoping to learn from it?***

***What did you already know about the topic you chose and what did you discover?***

***Explain through examples from your project.***

**Answer Guidelines:** The answer must flow as one continuous cohesive response, not short answers per question. The students should state what their project was about and what they were hoping to learn by researching this topic. In addition, they should discuss if there was anything they thought they knew and found out otherwise. If they didn’t know anything about the topic, they should state that as well. The response must include examples from their project to support what they are discussing.

NOTE: Students must relate to all of the questions asked which they talk about as ‘a presentation’ of their project. They will be asked to answer all the questions by speaking for one minute.

#### 3. Examples of other possible question sets for Part B

**Note:** These are based on ‘Summary Question Topics’ listed below

##### Example Set 2

***What was the topic of your project?***

***“What surprised you the most while doing the project and why?”***

***What were the most challenging moments while working on your project? Explain.***

##### Example Set 3

***What was the topic of your project?***

***“What resources did you use? Which resources were especially helpful? Why?”***

***If you had more time to do the project, how would you use it? Explain.***

#### 4. Question topics in 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

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

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

#### Note to tutors about Part C

- a. The National Counsellor for COBE at the Ministry advises that our tutors not be asked by teachers to work in this part of the COBE with their students.
- b. ETP endorses this view. However, if your teacher requires that your student practices answering questions about PART C, s/he MUST take the responsibility for this decision, give you very clear instructions and provide you with the video clip or listening clip depending on which version of COBE the school is doing.

## Additional in-depth support activities

### 2. 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.

- 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.
- 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 suggested here: [Click B](#).  
**Tip:** Use the Chat option or write the words on an erasable whiteboard and hold it up to camera.
- 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.  
**Tip:** Take a picture of the list with your phone camera and send it on WhatsApp.
- 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 'a' 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.)

### 3. General tips to promote fluency

- 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.
- 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**"
- 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

- Always be positive and let students feel you believe in their ability to succeed.
- 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.
- Encourage students to answer questions in one, in depth response **using words they already know** without prompting them as they speak.
- 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.

**Background data evaluation parameters for COBE** [Click here for detail \(Click D\)](#)

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