

# THROUGH THE LABYRINTH



Das Angebot an Business-Englisch-Qualifikationen ist groß. Was davon sollte man zu welchem Zweck anstreben, und wo kann man sich selbst einstufen? CAROL SCHEUNEMANN und ELISABETH SCHNEIDER-EICKE zeigen Ihnen verschiedene Wege. medium [www.](http://www.)

**W**hen Cindy Hauert teaches business English in Swiss companies, she often tries to persuade her learners to work towards a qualification. “It’s good for companies, because they can see where their training money is going,” she explains. “It’s good for the students, because they have something in their hand after putting in class and private time. And it’s good for me, because I can show return on investment to the companies.”

Many learners agree with Hauert and see a business English qualification as an important step on the path to an international career. A qualification — whether a certificate or a high score on an assessment test (see the table on page 14) — is proof that you can understand, speak, read and write business-related English. Choosing a route through the labyrinth of certificates



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Andy Hewitson, Siemens, Munich

and assessments is not as complex as it may seem, and depends mainly on the goals you would like to reach.

Employers increasingly want to know whether employees can use English in practical business situations rather than whether they can produce mistake-free sentences. “Tests of English proficiency used to focus on the niceties of grammar, which in modern business communication don’t matter at all,” says Andy Hewitson, head of English-language training at Siemens in Munich. “Nowadays, companies emphasize fluency rather than accuracy, and the ability to perform well in English at work” (see “Going global”, *Business Spotlight* 2/2007).

As in many companies, English training at Siemens is needs-based. Courses are provided in response to requests from Siemens employees, and the content is chosen on the basis of what the learners need in their jobs. Some years ago, Hewitson introduced courses leading to the **Business English Certificates (BEC)** from Cambridge ESOL. “We chose the BEC exams because we felt they reflected authentic work tasks,” Hewitson says. “The exams test what is required at work and ▶

## Frequently asked questions

### What types of qualification are there?

There are two main types of business English qualification. One is an exam that you pass or fail, and that leads to a certificate, usually with a mark that shows how well you performed. The other type is an assessment that measures your results in points on a scale (for more details, see the table on page 14).

### What skills are tested?

The qualifications measure some or all of the following skills in business contexts: reading, writing, listening and speaking. For example, you may have to answer multiple-choice questions on vocabulary or grammar, respond to an e-mail, write a message based on what you hear in a phone call, or take part in a conversation related to a typical business situation.

### How are these skills tested?

You use paper and pencil for most tests, usually at a test centre. Sometimes, part of the exam can be taken in an electronic version or online. Some exams also involve speaking with another test taker or with an examiner.

### Do I need to take a course beforehand?

Not necessarily. However, you might want to contact the relevant exam board for sample tests. It can be helpful to take an exam-related course or use preparatory self-study material that has been specially created for the exam. A list of self-study books is available at [www.business-spotlight.de/services/](http://www.business-spotlight.de/services/). Many of the materials can be ordered through [www.spracherthop.de](http://www.spracherthop.de)

<b>accuracy</b> [ˈækjərəsi]	Genauigkeit; hier: Fehlerlosigkeit
<b>assessment</b> [əˈsesmənt]	Bewertung, Messung
<b>content</b> [ˈkɒntent]	Inhalt(e)
<b>emphasize sth.</b> [ˈemfəsaɪz]	etw. in den Vordergrund stellen
<b>exam board</b> [ɪgˈzæm bɔ:d]	Prüfungsgremium
<b>fluency</b> [ˈflu:ənsi]	flüssiges Sprechen
<b>mark</b> [mɑ:k]	Note
<b>niceties</b> [ˈnaisətiz]	Feinheiten
<b>pass (a test)</b> [pɑ:s]	(einen Test) bestehen
<b>perform</b> [pəˈfɔ:m]	abschneiden
<b>preparatory</b> [prɪˈpærətəri]	Vorbereitungs-
<b>proficiency</b> [prəˈfɪʃnsi]	(gute) Kenntnisse
<b>put in (time)</b> [ˌpʊt ˈɪn]	(Zeit) aufwenden
<b>return on investment</b>	Rentabilität
[rɪˌtʊ:n ɒn ɪnˈvestmənt]	
<b>sample test</b> [ˈsɑ:mpl̩ test]	Mustertest
<b>scale</b> [skeɪl]	(Bewertungs-)Skala
<b>score</b> [skɔ:]	Punktezahl
<b>table</b> [ˈteɪbəl]	Tabelle
<b>work towards sth.</b> [ˈwɜ:k təˈwɔ:dz]	auf etw. hinarbeiten