Story

Set the scene, build tension and finish with a twist. The most creative task in Cambridge writing.

Plantilla para escribir una historia en los exámenes Cambridge: estructura, tiempos verbales, frases y modelo.

1 Where will you write it?

En qué examen aparece

A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
A2 Key	**B1 Preliminary**	**B2 First**	**C1 Advanced**	**C2 Proficiency**
35+	**~100**	**140–190**	Not in this exam	Not in this exam
Part 7 · story from 3 pictures	Part 2 · option · given first sentence	Part 2 · B2 First for Schools only		

Young learners write a short picture story in A2 Flyers (20+ words). There is no story in C1 or C2.

2 Know your reader

Lector, registro y objetivo

WHO READS IT?
Readers of a magazine or a story competition.

REGISTER
Neutral or informal. Lively and descriptive.

YOUR GOAL
Entertain the reader with a clear, exciting plot.

3 Structure

Estructura párrafo a párrafo

Opening Inicio	Use the given sentence. Who, where, when? Set the atmosphere.	**20** words
Build-up Desarrollo	What happens? Add detail and feelings.	**30** words
Climax Clímax	The most exciting or surprising moment.	**30** words
Ending Final	How does it end? A twist, a lesson or a feeling.	**20** words

Word guide based on a B1 Preliminary story (~100 words). Adjust for your level.

4 Plan your time

Cómo repartir el tiempo

2–3 min	5 min	25–30 min	5 min
Read	**Plan**	**Write**	**Check**
Underline every point.	Paragraphs + key phrases.	Follow your plan.	Use the checklist.

One task at B2–C2 ≈ 40–45 minutes. B1 Preliminary ≈ 20 minutes per task: same four steps, shorter.

5 Useful language

Frases útiles por nivel

Function	B1 B2 Good	C1 C2 Even better
Setting the scene Ambientar	It was a cold, dark night. · Last summer, ...	The sun was setting over... · It had been raining for days.
Sequencing Secuenciar	First, ... · Then, ... · After that, ... · Finally, ...	Moments later, ... · Meanwhile, ... · No sooner had... than...
Building tension Tensión	Suddenly, ... · I was really scared.	My heart was racing. · Little did I know that...
Feelings Emociones	I was so happy / surprised.	I couldn't believe my eyes. · I was speechless.

6 What the examiner checks

Los 4 criterios de corrección

Content
Contenido
Follow the given first sentence or pictures. The story must make sense.

Communicative Achievement
Registro y efecto
Entertain the reader: suspense, feelings, a good ending.

Organisation
Organización
Clear sequence of events with time linkers.

Language
Lengua
Narrative tenses: past simple, past continuous, past perfect. Strong verbs and adjectives.

B1 Preliminary to C2 Proficiency writing is marked on these four criteria, each out of 5.

7 Spanish speakers' traps

Errores típicos

✗ ~~When I arrived, the film already started.~~
✓ **When I arrived, the film had already started.**
past perfect = before

✗ ~~I was very very scared.~~
✓ **I was terrified.**
strong adjectives

✗ ~~Suddenly, suddenly, suddenly...~~
✓ **Suddenly / All of a sudden / Without warning**
vary your linkers

✗ ~~He said me...~~
✓ **He told me... / He said to me...**
tell someone

✗ ~~I heard a noise and then I see a man.~~
✓ **I heard a noise and then I saw a man.**
stay in the past

✗ ~~In the end of the story...~~
✓ **At the end of the story...**
at the end / in the end = finally

8 Level up a sentence

Sube de nivel

A2	I opened the door. I saw a dog.	Short, separate sentences.
B1	**When** I opened the door, I saw a **big black dog**.	Time clause + adjectives.
B2	**As** I opened the door, a huge black dog **came racing towards me**.	Strong verb + movement.
C1	**No sooner had I opened** the door **than** a huge black dog came hurtling towards me.	Inversion for drama.

9 Model answer

Respuesta modelo · B1 Preliminary

102 words

Task: Write a story that begins with this sentence: "When I opened the door, I couldn't believe my eyes."

1 When I opened the door, I couldn't believe my eyes. It was my birthday, but the flat was completely dark and silent.

2 I was looking for the light switch when I heard a strange noise in the kitchen. My heart was racing. I picked up an umbrella and walked slowly towards the sound, trying not to make any noise.

3 Suddenly, the lights came on and twenty people shouted "Surprise!" My best friend had organised a party and invited everyone from my English class.

4 I dropped the umbrella and started laughing. Everyone laughed with me. It was the best birthday I've ever had.

1 Given sentence + scene.
2 Past continuous + tension.
3 Climax + past perfect.
4 Short, satisfying ending.

10 Before you hand it in

Revisa antes de entregar

- [ ] I used the first sentence exactly as given.
- [ ] I used past simple, past continuous and past perfect.
- [ ] I used time linkers.
- [ ] I used some strong adjectives and verbs.
- [ ] The story has a clear beginning, middle and end.
- [ ] I included feelings.
- [ ] The ending is satisfying or surprising.
- [ ] I checked the word count.

11 Now you try

Ahora te toca a ti

B1 Your story must begin with this sentence: "The phone rang in the middle of the night."

Opening

Build-up

Climax

Ending

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