

# CAEL Study Guide

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Learn about CAEL including format, length, scoring, and how to study for it.



## **DISCLAIMER**

In response to ongoing research and development, changes may occasionally be made to CAEL. There may be short periods of time when study materials do not exactly match the current official test format, and content may be updated to match changes to CAEL without prior notice. Check the CAEL website for any updates to CAEL: [cael.ca](http://cael.ca).

CAEL Study Guide

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Prometric Testing, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

First Edition: November 2020

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ISBN 978-1-988047-48-5

# CONTENTS

Introduction	IV
Format and Scoring	1
Skills and Question Types	4
Navigation	9
Test Components	11
Part 1: Speaking	29
Part 2: Integrated Reading	31
Part 3: Integrated Listening	33
Part 4: Academic Unit A	35
Part 5: Academic Unit B	37
Preparation Materials	39

# Introduction

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The CAEL (Canadian Academic English Language) Test is a 100% computer-delivered test that assesses academic English for entrance into Canadian post-secondary institutions. There are two versions of this test. 1) You may take CAEL at one of the many testing centres located throughout Canada and in select locations internationally. 2) You may take CAEL from the comfort of your own home, with CAEL Online. This home-based version has online proctoring to guarantee your test security, and it contains the exact same test format, content, and reporting scale as the CAEL which is delivered in test centres.

For more information about both versions of the test, please visit [cael.ca](http://cael.ca). You can access two free, full-length sample tests at [cael.ca/cael-ce-sample-test](http://cael.ca/cael-ce-sample-test).

One of the unique features of CAEL is that some of the activities are experienced in an integrated skills format. Test takers are presented with Reading and Listening passages that form the basis of Speaking and Writing tasks. The advantage of this approach is that it assesses an individual's ability to synthesize information from a variety of sources, just as a student would in a post-secondary educational setting. When writing in college or university, students are often required to bring together information from a variety of sources such as lectures, online material, books, and journals. When participating in class discussion, students are expected to be able to talk about what they have heard in a lecture or what they have read in an academic text. By preparing for the test and practicing these skills, you will be readying yourself for the types of activities you will do in a real classroom.

This study guide for CAEL features a description of the five parts of the test, in-depth explanations for each part, guidelines for optimizing your performance, and study tips to help you prepare.

# Format and Scoring

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## CAEL Format

### Part 1: Speaking

Total time: 7–10 minutes



Task	Description
Independent Speaking, Type A	Respond to a question from a professor.
Independent Speaking, Type B	Respond to a question from a professor.
Speaking on a Visual	Describe and discuss a diagram.

### Part 2: Integrated Reading

Total time: 35–50 minutes



Task	Description
Short Reading	Read a passage and answer questions.
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Speaking on the Long Reading	Answer a question based on the Long Reading.

### Part 3: Integrated Listening

Total time: 25–35 minutes



Task	Description
Short Listening	Listen to a presentation and answer questions.
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Speaking on the Long Listening	Answer a question about the Long Listening.

## Part 4: Academic Unit A

Total time: 60–70 minutes



Task	Description
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Long Writing	Write a response to a question about ideas presented in the Long Reading and the Long Listening.

## Part 5: Academic Unit B

Total time: 40–45 minutes



Task	Description
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.
Short Writing	Write a short response to a question about ideas presented in the Long Reading or the Long Listening.

CAEL assesses your ability to use English in a Canadian academic context. In order to reflect the diversity of academic disciplines, the topics on the test are drawn from a variety of fields in Arts and Science. The following chart highlights some of the subjects you might experience on the test. Note that these areas of study contain far more subjects than are listed here; this chart is simply meant to provide you with a few standard examples.

Arts	Science
Economics	Architecture
English Literature	Astronomy
Philosophy	Engineering
Psychology	Forensics
World History	Geography

### Can I take any notes during CAEL?

Yes! You will be provided with notepaper and a pen while taking CAEL at a test centre, and you will be able to type notes via an onscreen window when taking CAEL Online. Regardless of how you take the test, it may be useful to take notes. In addition, you will have access to the entire Reading passage and some short notes on the lecture for each relevant Speaking and Writing task.

## CAEL Scoring

You will receive separate scores for each of the four components—Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing—as well as an overall score. These scores are reported on a scale from 10 to 90, and the overall score is an average taking equal weight from each of the component scores. **Scores for entrance requirements will vary among institutions.**

The Reading and Listening components are computer-scored. Your responses for the Speaking and Writing components are recorded on the computer and assessed by human raters at a later time. See Pages 13 and 26 for checklists for the Speaking and Writing components, respectively. Keeping these checklists in mind during your studies will help prepare you for what the raters are looking for in a good response.

CAEL may include unscored items used for research and development purposes. These can be found anywhere within the test and will have the same format as the scored items. You will not be able to tell scored items from unscored items, so apply your best effort to the entire test.

# Skills and Question Types

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## Reading and Listening Skills

The questions on the Reading and Listening components of CAEL are designed to test three skills: your ability to comprehend the general meaning of the passage; your ability to identify specific information in the passage; and your ability to make inferences based on information in the passage.

**General meaning** questions focus on the broad ideas in the passage that cannot be determined from a single sentence. For example, you may be asked to identify the topic, theme, or main idea in a passage.

**Specific information** questions focus on understanding specific details in a passage. You may be asked to identify key information, supporting details, opinions, or examples.

**Inference** questions focus on drawing conclusions and making assumptions based on information in the passage. You may be asked to identify implicit information.

Note that there is no connection between the following question types, and the skill that is being assessed. Any question type can be used to assess any of the three skills.

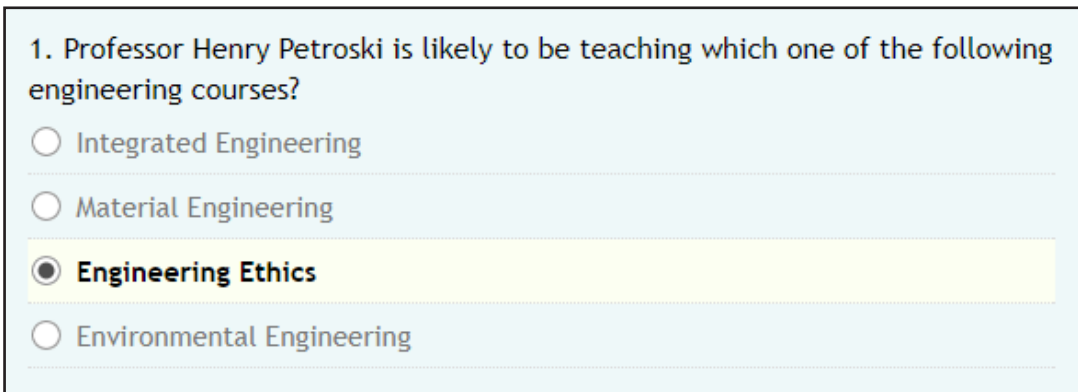
## Reading and Listening Question Types

There is a variety of question types in the Reading and Listening sections of CAEL, and you may improve your performance if you get familiar with each of them prior to taking the test. You may not see every question type in any one Listening or Reading section.



## Multiple-Choice

In standard multiple-choice questions, only one answer is correct. The options here will always have circular selection areas.



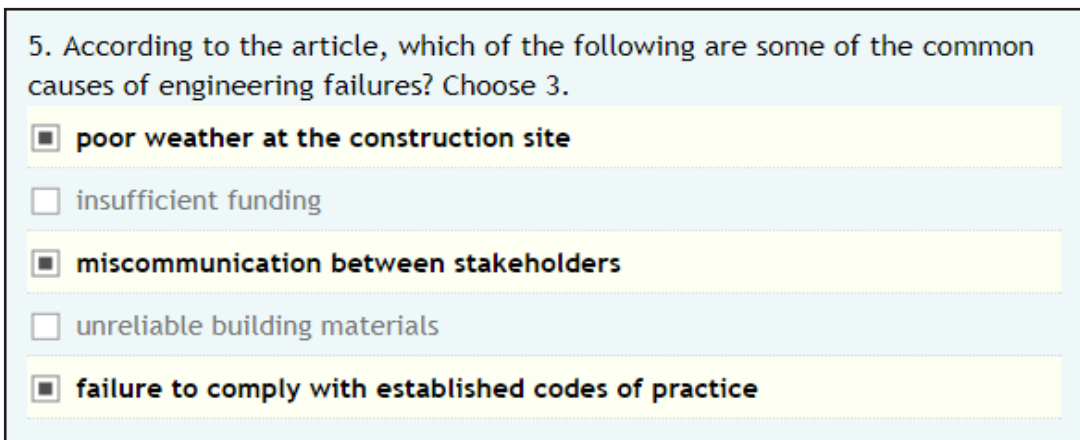
1. Professor Henry Petroski is likely to be teaching which one of the following engineering courses?

- Integrated Engineering
- Material Engineering
- Engineering Ethics**
- Environmental Engineering

Figure 1: Multiple-choice question with correct answer selected.

## Multiple-Choice Multiple-Answer

In some multiple-choice questions, you must select two or more correct answers. The individual question will tell you how many choices you must select. The options here will always have square selection areas.



5. According to the article, which of the following are some of the common causes of engineering failures? Choose 3.

- poor weather at the construction site**
- insufficient funding
- miscommunication between stakeholders**
- unreliable building materials
- failure to comply with established codes of practice**

Figure 2: Multiple-choice question with three answers selected.

## Fill-in-the-Blank

For fill-in-the-blank questions, you must type a short word or phrase in response to the question. There is no spell check in CAEL, so be sure to double-check your answer here.

7. Fill in the blank with one number from the passage.

In George Sowers' study,  |  % of engineering failures were found to be caused by human error.

Figure 3: Empty fill-in-the-blank question.

## Drop-down

In drop-down questions, you must complete a piece of text by selecting one of the four options presented in the drop-down menu.

5. Compared with retail stores, outlet stores may provide lower prices at the cost of .

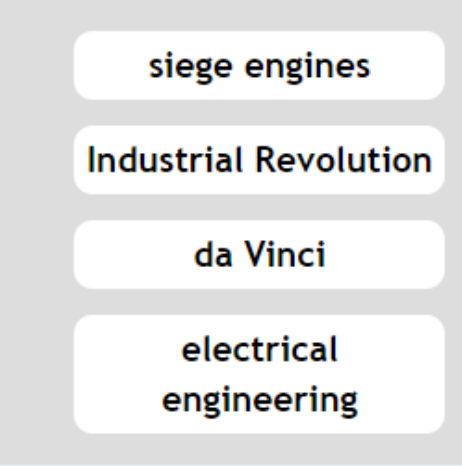
- service types
- product quality
- package appearance
- product diversity

Figure 4: Drop-down question with the four options displayed.

## Ordering

In ordering, you must click and drag each option so that it is in the correct sequence.

7. Click and drag to put the following chronology in order from top (oldest) to bottom (most recent).



The image shows a digital interface for an ordering question. It features a light blue background with a central grey rectangular area containing four white rounded rectangular buttons. The buttons are stacked vertically and contain the following text from top to bottom: 'siege engines', 'Industrial Revolution', 'da Vinci', and 'electrical engineering'. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

Figure 5: Ordering question whose options must be arranged in the correct order.

## Matching

In this type of question, you must click on each answer and drag it into the correct box.

1. Match the following animals with the periods in which they were domesticated.

Dogs   Cats   Pigs   Oxen

12,000 years ago	4000 BC
3000 BC	9000 - 7000 BC

Figure 6: Matching question with no answers selected.

1. Match the following animals with the periods in which they were domesticated.

12,000 years ago	4000 BC
3000 BC	9000 - 7000 BC

Dogs   Oxen

Cats   Pigs

Figure 7: Matching question with answers dropped into appropriate boxes.

# Navigation

Questions in the Reading and Listening parts of the test appear on a series of screens that can be accessed by clicking on the arrows or numbered tabs at the top. Once all the questions on a particular screen have been answered, the corresponding tab will turn green. Note that this doesn't necessarily mean the answers are correct; it simply means that an answer has been given for each question.

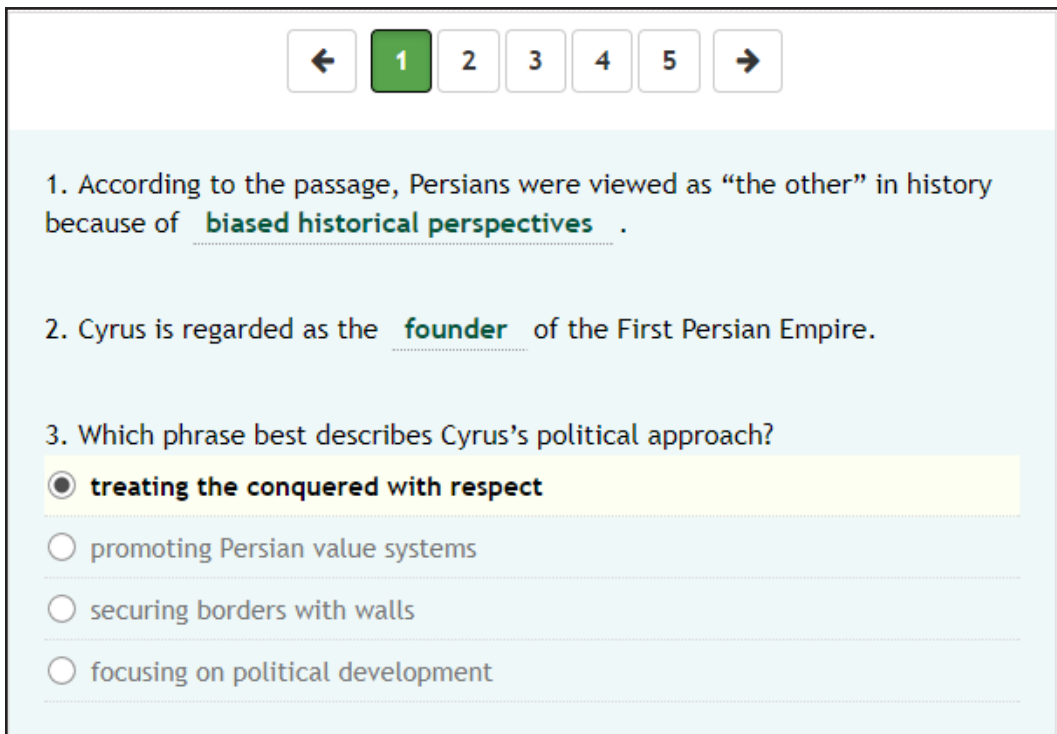


Figure 8: The first of five question pages has been completed here.

If all the numbered tabs have turned green, you know that all the questions in that part of the test have been answered. If any of the numbered tabs are still white, return to that section and answer any remaining questions before moving to the next part of the test.

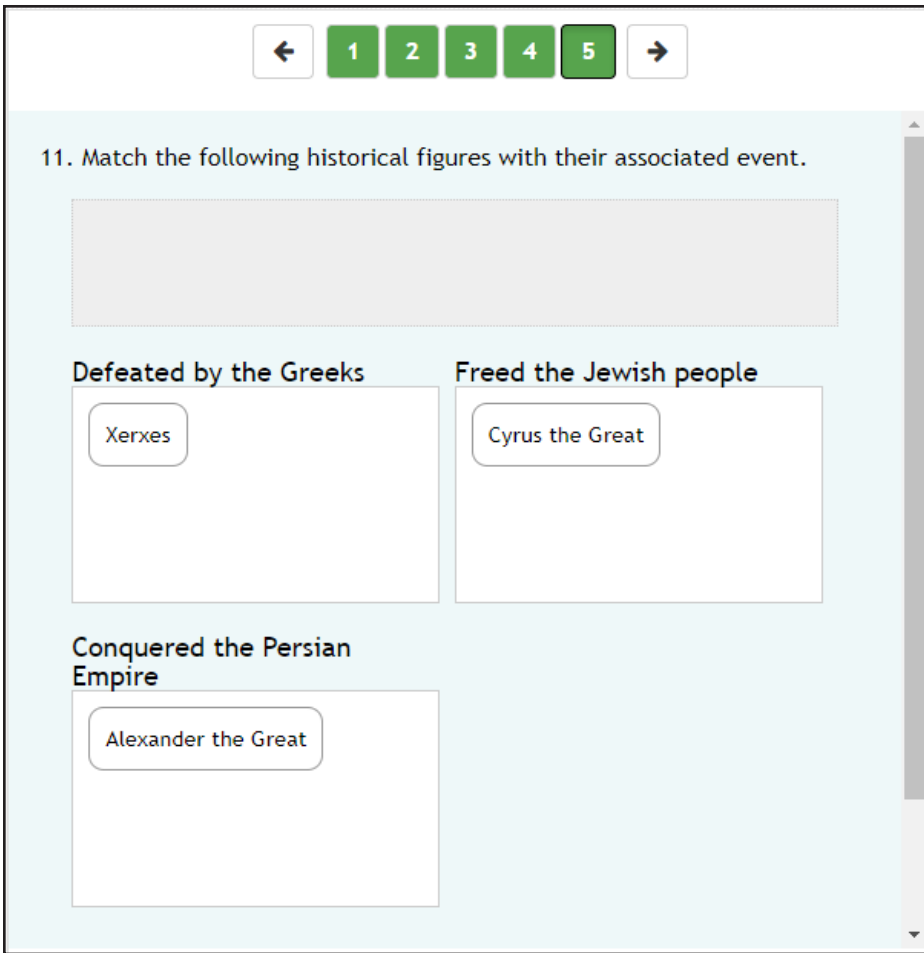


Figure 9: All five question pages have been completed here.

Once you select **Next** on any screen of the test, you will **not** be able to return to that part. Moreover, if you finish one section early and proceed to the next part, you will not be able to roll over this extra time to use in subsequent sections. Therefore, it may be best if you spend the maximum amount of time in each section, using any time you have left over to check over your answers.

# Test Components

## Speaking

You will perform a range of Speaking tasks throughout CAEL. In Part 1, there are three Speaking tasks. In the first two, you will discuss various aspects of your educational plans or experiences, or other topics applicable to academic study. In the third task, you will describe and draw conclusions about an information graphic.

Parts 2 and 3 present Speaking tasks relating directly to a Reading passage and a lecture, respectively. Your response in each case will demonstrate your understanding of the passage or lecture.

Regardless of the context, you may find it useful to keep the following points in mind while you're speaking (for a more complete discussion of these points, see the Speaking Checklist on Page 13).

- Speak at a good volume, with a steady pace.
- Provide examples and reasons.
- Use appropriate tenses.
- Use a level of formality appropriate to the task.
- Don't worry if you stumble now and then in your speech (everyone makes mistakes!)—focus mainly on conveying your message to the listener.
- Make sure your response is structurally and logically complete.
- Use connectors and transition words to help the listener follow the flow of your ideas.
- For the Speaking tasks in Parts 2 and 3, use ideas from the Reading and Listening passages, respectively, to back up points in your response.
  - However, do not copy information directly, but rather, paraphrase ideas (put them in your own words). Paraphrasing will also allow you to demonstrate your range of vocabulary.

**I'm worried that my voice isn't being recorded. What can I do?**

As you are speaking, you will see a grey bar move vertically along the microphone icon. This indicates that your response is being recorded.



For each Speaking task, you will have a Preparation Time and a Recording Time. During the Preparation Time, you should fully read the question and try to brainstorm a few ideas if you've got any time left. You will speak during the Recording Time. Note that these times will vary from task to task.

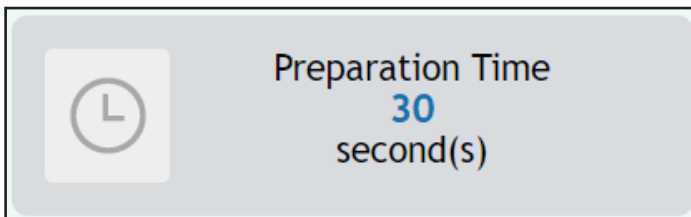


Figure 10: Preparation Time.

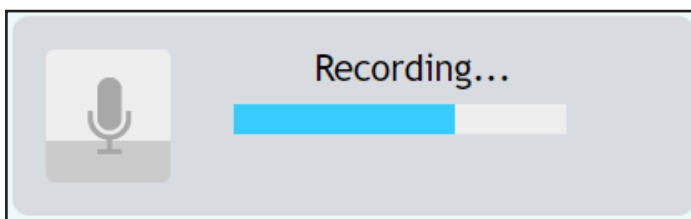


Figure 11: Recording Time.

You will also see a static display of times in the top right corner of the Speaking screen.

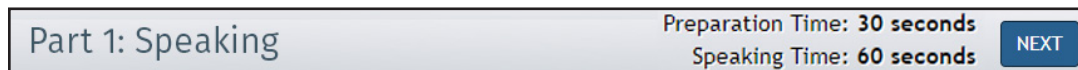


Figure 12: The times in the top right corner will not count down. Compare these with your progress bar to gauge how much time you have left when you are speaking.



## Speaking Checklist

This checklist outlines the key things to keep in mind while doing your Speaking responses. You may wish to record your responses as you practice, then play them back and compare them against this checklist to help you determine your strengths and weaknesses.

General			
1. Does the speaker speak at a good volume (not too softly, not too loudly)?	Yes	No	Sometimes
2. Does the speaker speak clearly with minimal pausing and hesitations?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Does the speaker speak at a good speed (not too fast, not too slow)?	Yes	No	Sometimes
4. Does the speaker use appropriate rhythm, pronunciation, and intonation patterns?	Yes	No	Sometimes
5. Does the speaker use a variety of words and phrases?	Yes	No	Sometimes
6. Does the speaker use vocabulary that is suitable and precise?	Yes	No	Sometimes
7. Does the speaker speak in complete sentences?	Yes	No	Sometimes
8. Does the speaker use a variety of sentence structures?	Yes	No	
9. Does the speaker clearly state his or her main idea?	Yes	No	
10. Does the speaker provide specific details and examples to support their response?	Yes	No	Sometimes
11. Does the speaker remain on topic?	Yes	No	Sometimes
12. Is the speaker's tone appropriate for the social context of the task?	Yes	No	Sometimes
13. Is the response well organized and easy to follow?	Yes	No	
14. Does the speaker use appropriate linking words and phrases?	Yes	No	Sometimes
15. Does the speaker avoid repeating ideas?	Yes	No	
16. Does the speaker conclude with an appropriate closing remark?	Yes	No	
17. Does the speaker speak for the entire time?	Yes	No	
18. Does the speaker's response fully answer the question?	Yes	No	

<b>Speaking on a Visual</b>			
1. Does the speaker describe and/or explain the graph accurately?	Yes	No	
2. Does the speaker identify general trends?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Does the speaker draw conclusions that are realistic and based on graph data?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<b>Speaking on the Long Reading</b>			
1. Does the speaker use information from the Reading passage to support and develop their ideas?	Yes	No	
2. Does the speaker use information from the Reading passage that is relevant to the Speaking question?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is the speaker able to paraphrase information rather than repeat words or phrases from the Reading passage?	Yes	No	Sometimes
<b>Speaking on the Long Listening</b>			
1. Does the speaker use information from the Listening passage to support and develop their ideas?	Yes	No	
2. Does the speaker use information from the Listening passage that is relevant to the Speaking question?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is the speaker able to paraphrase information rather than repeat words or phrases from the Listening passage?	Yes	No	Sometimes

 **Study Tip**

There are various ways to prepare for the Speaking component of CAEL. First and foremost, practice speaking English as much as you can on a daily basis. Join clubs or activities you are interested in; converse with friends, classmates, or co-workers in English; or even practice reading aloud from news or journal articles. These can all help you become more confident and natural in your speech.

Watching English television programs and films, and listening to the news and podcasts, can also help increase your range of vocabulary and familiarize you with the different levels of formality in spoken English. In particular, listen to the news daily and pay attention to how people express their opinions as well as how they summarize trends.

**How do I know if I'm improving my speaking if I don't have anyone to practice with?**

You may wish to use a phone or other recording device to record yourself while you speak, then play it back afterwards, using the Speaking Checklist to help you determine your strengths and weaknesses. You could also write down what you said as you play back your response; this act of transcription can help you spot weaknesses in your sentence structure and word choice.

## Reading

The Reading passages in CAEL come in two types: short and long. The Short Reading passage, found in Part 2, covers a typical situation you might find in your first year of post-secondary studies. For example, it might detail a lab orientation, guidelines for a report, or rules for a presentation. This is typically only a few paragraphs in length. The longer passages, in Parts 2, 4, and 5, are academic texts about specific topics. These passages are usually longer, and proportionally you will have much more time to complete them.

Remember that you can navigate between questions (via the arrows or numbered tabs at the top of the screen) at any time! Don't get stuck on a question you can't find the answer to, but rather move on to the next question. You can come back to check your answers afterwards.

For each Reading task, you will have an instructions screen before it starts, detailing the time you will have to complete the section.



**Read the following passage and answer 11 questions. You have 20 minutes to complete this task.**

Figure 13: Example of Reading instructions. Note that instructions will vary from task to task.

Once you have started the section, you will see a countdown timer in the top right corner of the test screen. Be sure to keep an eye on this as you proceed; the timer will turn red when you near the time limit of each section. **Note that these times will vary from task to task.**




Part 2: Integrated Reading

Time Remaining: 10 minutes

NEXT

Figure 14: The countdown timer for Reading tasks is located in the top right corner of the screen.



Part 2: Integrated Reading

Time Remaining: 54 seconds

NEXT

Figure 15: The countdown timer for Reading tasks turns red when it approaches the end of the task time.

The strategies on the following page will help improve your performance on the test.

### **Can I access the Reading passage and questions later in the test?**

You will be able to access the Long Reading passage while completing the Speaking or Writing task that is integrated with this passage. However, you will not be able to access the questions or answers after you finish this part.

## **Previewing**

Even before starting to read a passage, it can be helpful to consider the overall format of the reading, its length, its headings (if there are any), and how much time is available to read it. By making a few quick observations like this, you can be more strongly prepared before starting to read the passage.

## **Skimming**

Skimming is the ability to read over a text quickly to get a general understanding of the topic, a few of the main ideas, and the overall structure of the passage. After previewing, it should be the next thing a reader does when confronted with an academic text. This is especially important on a reading test when time constraints often do not allow you to carefully read every word in a reading passage. It can be helpful to read the first sentence of each paragraph.

## **Scanning**

Scanning is the ability to quickly locate relevant specific details within a text. Generally, scanning follows skimming; once you have a general understanding of a text's topic and structure, you should read a question and attempt to scan for the answer. Skimming should have given you a general idea of where the answer is located. Scanning will allow you to pinpoint information needed to answer the question. The order of questions generally matches the order in which information is presented in the Reading passage. Keep this in mind while scanning for information in the passage.

## **Deriving Meaning from Context**

It is likely that you will encounter words on the test that you do not know. Sometimes such words may seem challenging, impairing your performance on the test. However, it is not necessary to know the meaning of every word in a reading passage or in a question in order to complete the questions and achieve the score you need. It is possible in some cases to determine the meaning of a word based on its context—i.e., by considering the words that surround the new word. This is also the way we learn new words and enter into new disciplines.



## Study Tip

There are many ways to improve your reading skills in preparation for CAEL. Remember that CAEL assesses your academic English, so try to focus on reading texts of a more academic nature in your spare time. For example, you could read print or online news articles, magazines, or even articles from academic journals about the subject you plan to study. Reading for just a few minutes a day can help expand your vocabulary and improve both your reading speed and comprehension. Regardless of the medium, the most important thing is to read about subjects you are interested in. Not only will your reading experience be more enjoyable, but you will likely retain information better as well.

To make the most of your reading practice, try to keep track of new vocabulary in a notebook or on index cards that you can use to review what words you have learned. Building your vocabulary is one of the best ways to improve your reading skills.

## Listening

Just as with Reading, there are also two types of Listening passages in CAEL: short and long. The Short Listening passage, found in Part 3, covers a typical situation you might find in your first year of post-secondary studies. For example, it might discuss a course syllabus or guidelines for a project. This passage is usually only a few minutes in length. The longer passages, in Parts 3, 4, and 5, are academic lectures about specific topics. The audio for these longer parts may be up to 5 minutes, and so you will have proportionally longer to complete all the questions.

The questions in the Listening parts are generally sequential. Knowing this can really help if you lose your place while listening to the audio. If you've missed the answer to one question, move to the next one, as this will likely soon be discussed. You will hear the audio only **once**.

For each Listening task, you will have an instructions screen before it starts, detailing the time you will have to complete the section.

**i** Listen to the following lecture and answer 11 questions. You have 2 minutes and 30 seconds to preview the questions, and then the lecture will begin automatically.

You may answer the questions as you listen. At the end of the lecture, you will be given 3 minutes to complete the questions.

Figure 16: Example of Listening instructions. Note that instructions will vary from task to task.

Once you have started the section, you will see a countdown timer in the top right corner of the test screen. Be sure to keep an eye on this as you proceed; the timer will turn red when you near the time limit of each section. **Note that these times will vary from task to task.**

### What can I do if I find it difficult to follow the audio and answer questions at the same time?

Remember that you will have some review time after the audio ends in each Listening task. Try to answer as many questions as you can while you're listening to the audio, and use this additional time to review your answers and finish any questions you have missed.

Try practicing with the CAEL sample and practice tests to become better at gauging your time here.

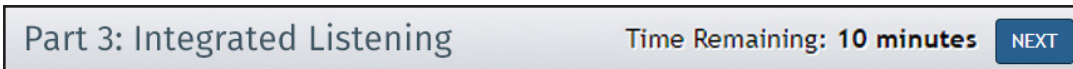


Figure 17: The countdown timer for Listening tasks is located in the top right corner of the screen.



Figure 18: The countdown timer for Listening tasks turns red when it approaches the end of the task time.

The following strategies may help you during your test preparation:

## Previewing

In each Listening task, you will have some time before the audio starts. Try to use this time to read over the questions and familiarize yourself with the question types in that section. Note that the amount of preview time will vary from task to task.

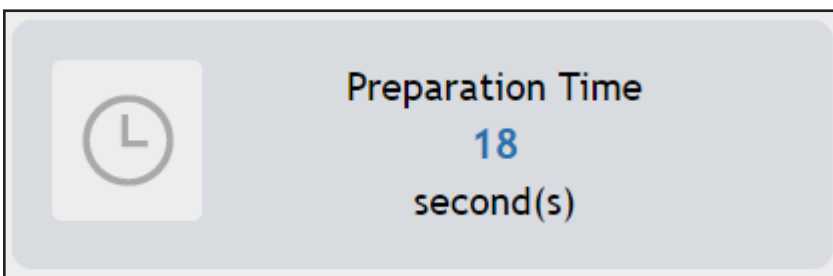


Figure 19: In addition to the timer in the top right corner, test takers will see a separate timer for Preparation Time.

## Identifying Key Words

In both the Reading and Listening components, it is useful to identify key words in the question that will help locate the answer in the passage. However, this is more important in Listening tasks, as you will only be exposed to the audio passage once and will not be able to skim or scan for the answer as you would in a Reading passage.

Key words are words in the question that can help locate information in the audio passage. In some cases, these will be an exact match of words in the passage, as in the case of a name of a person or a number—but not always. There may be instances in which none of the words in the question will help locate the specific location of the answer. For example, a question like, “What is the main purpose of this lecture?” does not provide any key words that the you can listen for.

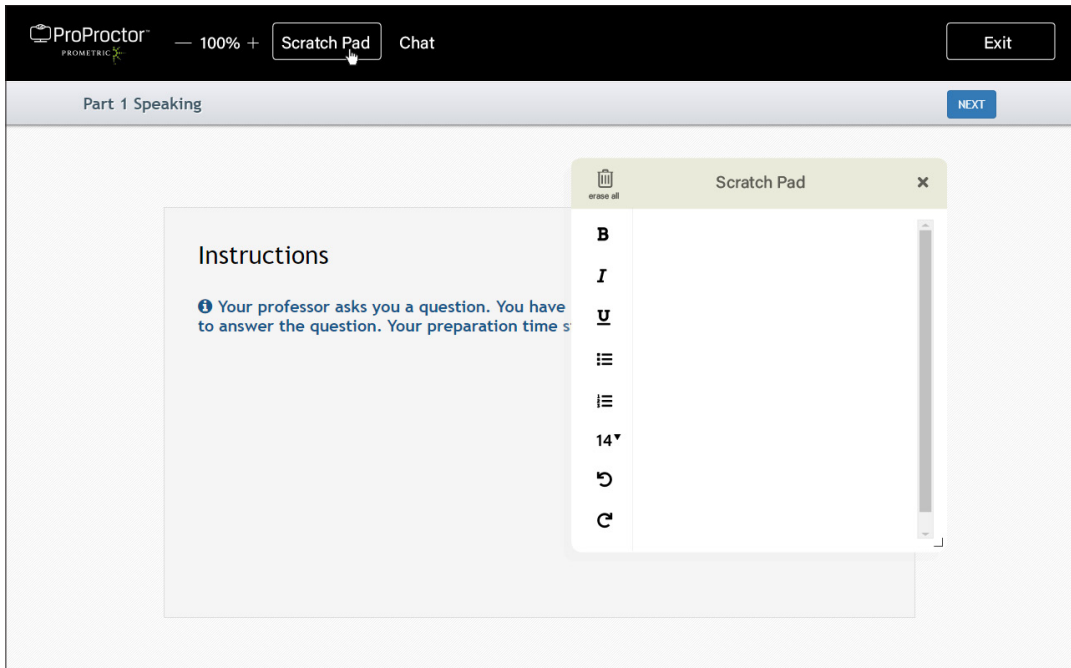


## Reviewing

After the audio passage has come to an end, you will have additional time to answer the questions. This is an opportunity for you to check your answers and ensure you have not left any questions unanswered.

## Note-Taking

You will be provided with notepaper and a pen when taking CAEL at a test centre. If you take CAEL Online, you will not be allowed to take notes on paper. However, you will be able to write via the onscreen Scratch Pad. This moveable window allows you to type notes and format them however you like. Use the same note-taking strategies here as you would use on paper.



Regardless of where you take the test, it may be helpful to take some very brief notes on main ideas and key details in the lecture. However, it would be a mistake to try to write out entire sentences as this may result in you falling behind during the audio passage.

Ultimately, your main focus should be on answering the questions, many of which will follow the order in which information is presented in the audio passage—thus you may not

wish to take any notes. In addition, some brief lecture notes of the Long Listening will be provided during the Speaking task for this part. You should only attempt to take notes if you feel comfortable doing so under the time constraints of the test.

## Deriving Meaning from Context

As with the Reading component, although you may not understand all the words in a Listening passage, this doesn't mean you will not be able to achieve the score you need. It is not necessary to understand each word to answer the questions correctly, and it is better if you do not to focus too long on words you don't know.

It is sometimes possible to identify the meaning of a word based on the words around it. This is more easily done in a Reading passage, but the same principle can be applied to a Listening passage.



### Study Tip

CAEL focuses on listening in academic contexts, so you should prepare by listening to news broadcasts, documentaries, audiobooks, and podcasts dealing with various areas of study. These types of audio can help build your knowledge of the type of formal and academic language you will hear on the test. Try to listen to subjects that you are interested in; this will make things more enjoyable, and you will likely find it easier to follow along and learn new vocabulary and expressions.

## Writing

There are two Writing tasks in CAEL. The first is a longer response to a question about the preceding Reading passage and the lecture. For this task, you should write a minimum of 250 words. The second task is a shorter question which requires you to draw on information from the Reading or the lecture. For this task, you should write a minimum of 100 words.

Each Writing screen displays onscreen buttons for **Bold**, *Italics*, Underline, Cut, Paste, and Copy. In addition to these buttons, you can also use the keyboard shortcuts below (note that these are for Windows; they will be different for Macs). If you feel comfortable with these shortcuts, they could save you time as you write!

- CTRL + x = cut text
- CTRL + c = copy text
- CTRL + v = paste text
- CTRL + z = undo a change
- CTRL + y = redo a change
- CTRL + u = underline
- CTRL + i = italicize
- CTRL + b = bold

### How should I separate my paragraphs?

If you write a response that contains multiple paragraphs, you should separate them by either indenting the first line of each paragraph or adding a space between each.

Note that CAEL does not include spell check. That being said, it is still a good idea to ensure that your spelling is clear enough that none of the words could be mistaken for something else, and hinder the meaning of your text.

For each Writing task, you will have an instructions screen before it starts, detailing the time you will have to complete the section.

**i Your professor asks you a question. You will write an answer on the next page. Use the information from the reading and lecture.**

**Answer the question in your own words. Write at least 250 words. You have 35 minutes to complete this task.**

Figure 20: Example of Writing instructions. Note that instructions will vary from task to task.

Once you have started the section, you will see a countdown timer in the top right corner of the test screen. Keep an eye on this as you proceed; the timer will turn red when you near the time limit of each section. **Note that these times will vary from task to task.**

Part 4: Academic Unit A Time Remaining: 34 minutes NEXT

Figure 21: The countdown timer for Writing tasks is located in the top right corner of the screen.

Part 4: Academic Unit A Time Remaining: 54 seconds NEXT

Figure 22: The countdown timer for Writing tasks turns red when it approaches the end of the task time.

As seen in the following image, the Writing screen is presented across two panels. On the left panel, you will have access to the entire Reading passage, as well as lecture notes from the Listening passage. You can access these at any time during the Writing component. You will write your response on the right panel. Your word count is recorded just above the writing area here.

The screenshot shows the Writing task interface. At the top, it says "Part 4: Academic Unit A" and "Time Remaining: 34 minutes" with a "NEXT" button. Below this, there are three tabs: "Question", "Reading", and "Lecture Notes". The "Reading" tab is selected. The main content area contains a question: "Should scientists go back and reanalyze established conclusions and facts? Should we spend time on new questions and new research instead? Explain your position, build an argument, and provide support." Below the question are three bullet points: "You may refer to the lecture notes and reading passage by using the tabs above.", "Use the source information but do not copy directly.", and "You will be evaluated on the content and structure of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your use of the source material." To the right of the question is a text input area with a toolbar containing icons for Bold (B), Italic (I), Underline (U), Bulleted List, Numbered List, Indent, Undo, and Redo. A "Word Count: 4" indicator is shown in a red box above the input area. The input area contains the text "Type your response here.|" and a vertical scrollbar on the right.

Figure 23: Both Writing tasks will have this layout.

Keep the following points in mind while initially planning and composing your response.

- If you wish, you can use your notepaper (or onscreen Scratch Pad if taking CAEL Online) to make an outline, which can help organize your response. Good organization is an important part of a high-scoring Writing response.
- For the Long Writing, you will have 35 minutes to write a minimum of 250 words. You can afford at least a few minutes to plan your response at the beginning.
- Your outline should be short and written in point form. It should include a few main ideas and list some of the details you plan to use from the Reading and Listening passages.
- Use ideas from the Reading and Listening passages to back up points in your response. However, do not copy information directly, but rather, paraphrase ideas (put them in your own words). Paraphrasing will also allow you to demonstrate your range of vocabulary.
- Try to give yourself a few minutes at the end to check over your work. You are likely to catch some careless errors, thereby improving the overall quality of your response.

## Writing Checklists

The following checklists for the Long and Short Writing outline the key things to keep in mind while composing your Writing responses. During your test preparation, you may wish to review your responses after you have completed them, comparing them against these checklists to help you determine your strengths and weaknesses.

## Long Writing

Content			
1. Does the writer remain on topic?	Yes	No	Sometimes
2. Does the writer use specific details and examples to support ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is the writer's viewpoint clearly expressed?	Yes	No	Sometimes
4. Does the writer fully answer the question(s)?	Yes	No	
5. Is the length sufficient to provide a fully developed response?	Yes	No	
6. Does the writer avoid repeating ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
7. Does the writer use information from the Reading section to support and develop ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
8. Does the writer use information from the Listening section to support and develop ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
9. Does the writer use information from the Reading and Listening sections in a balanced way?	Yes	No	Sometimes
10. Is the writer able to restate ideas in his or her own words?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Structure			
1. Does the response have an introductory statement?	Yes	No	
2. Are logical transitions (furthermore, in addition, etc.) used to link ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is the response well organized and easy to follow?	Yes	No	Sometimes
4. Does the response have appropriate paragraphing?	Yes	No	
Language Use			
1. Do errors in spelling and usage impede comprehension?	Yes	No	Sometimes
2. Do grammatical structures (verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, etc.) support meaning?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is a variety of sentence types used?	Yes	No	Sometimes
4. Does the writer avoid repetition by using a range of vocabulary?	Yes	No	Sometimes
5. Are vocabulary and tone suitable for an academic context?	Yes	No	Sometimes

## Short Writing

Content			
1. Does the writer remain on topic?	Yes	No	Sometimes
2. Does the writer use specific details and examples to support ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Does the writer fully answer the question(s)?	Yes	No	
4. Is the passage an appropriate length required by the task?	Yes	No	
5. Does the writer use information from the Reading section or the Listening section to support ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
6. Is the writer able to restate ideas in his or her own words?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Structure			
1. Does the passage have an opening statement?	Yes	No	
2. Are appropriate transitions used to link ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is there a logical flow of ideas?	Yes	No	Sometimes
Language Use			
1. Do spelling mistakes impede comprehension?	Yes	No	Sometimes
2. Do grammatical structures (verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, etc.) support meaning?	Yes	No	Sometimes
3. Is a variety of sentence types used?	Yes	No	Sometimes
4. Does the writer avoid repetition by using a range of vocabulary?	Yes	No	Sometimes
5. Are vocabulary and tone suitable for an academic context?	Yes	No	Sometimes

### What if I'm a slow typist?

If you're not confident in your typing abilities, you may wish to practice typing for 20–30 minutes each day. Use a typing program, a word processor, or even the writing component of the CAEL free online sample test.



### Study Tip

The most valuable way to improve your writing skills for CAEL is to write as often as you can, even for just a few minutes each day. The more you do so, the more comfortable you will become writing texts of various lengths and formats. You could write in a variety of formats, including emails to friends, family, or co-workers; journals; online forums; or blogs. Remember that you can always use the Writing Checklists to assess your written expression. If possible, try to find a study partner who could give you feedback. In addition, try to read as much as you can, especially in more academic contexts such as journals or textbooks. As you read, pay attention to how the author uses different language structures (topic sentences, paragraphs, transitions, etc.), and compare this to your own writing. Also, try to keep a list of any new English words and phrases that you've learned, especially if you see them in more formal or academic texts. Review these terms and try to use them in your own writing as this can help improve the range of your vocabulary.



# Part 1: Speaking

Task	Description	Time
Independent Speaking, Type A	Respond to a question from a professor.	<b>Preparation Time:</b> 30 seconds <b>Recording Time:</b> 60 seconds
Independent Speaking, Type B	Respond to a question from a professor.	<b>Preparation Time:</b> 60 seconds <b>Recording Time:</b> 90 seconds
Speaking on a Visual	Describe and discuss a diagram.	<b>Preparation Time:</b> 60 seconds <b>Recording Time:</b> 120 seconds

## Guidelines

In Part 1, there are three Speaking tasks, each on a different topic. For the first task, you will be asked to speak about your own general experience with something—this often relates to your educational background in some way. For example, you may be asked “What do you want to study at university and why?”

For the second task, you will give your opinion about an issue—again, this is typically in an academic context. For example, you may be asked “In your opinion, what are some of the strengths of high school education in your home country?”

In Task 3, you will be required to discuss a diagram. In addition to giving a general description about what the diagram displays, you should also discuss any trends that you see. Based on your understanding of the diagram, what can you infer or predict about the information it presents?

## Speaking Evaluation

For Independent Speaking Types A and B, you’ll be evaluated on the content of your response and the accuracy of your language. For Speaking on a Visual, you’ll be evaluated on the content of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your ability to reference details in the image. Keep these in mind, as well as the points from the checklist, as you practice for the test.

### **What if I go blank and can't think of anything to say during the Independent Speaking tasks?**

Don't panic. For Independent Speaking Types A and B, the raters don't care whether your response is true or not. Feel free to make something up if you can't think of anything from personal experience!

For the rest of the Speaking tasks on CAEL, however, make sure to refer to the source material and answer as accurately as possible.

## **Key Strategies**

- Before taking the official test, you should be aware of how much time you've got for each Speaking task. This will help you use your time more effectively.
- Utilize the Preparation Time as much as you can. Try to at least read through the question during this time. Ideally, think of at least two points to talk about. Keep in mind your prior education experiences, and what predictions you have for what you may experience in post-secondary education; these may come in handy during the tasks.
- If you try to talk about too many ideas, you likely won't have time to offer much, if any, explanation and detail for each. Remember that you've only got between 1 to 2 minutes, depending on the task!



## Part 2: Integrated Reading

Task	Description	Time
Short Reading	Read a passage and answer questions.	5 minutes 30 seconds
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	20 minutes
Speaking on the Long Reading	Answer a question based on the Long Reading.	<b>Preparation Time:</b> 60 seconds <b>Recording Time:</b> 120 seconds

### Guidelines

In Part 2, there are two Reading passages, each followed by a set of comprehension questions. After that, there is a Speaking task in which you will be asked a single question about the second, longer Reading passage.

The first short Reading passage will typically resemble an aspect of a student's experience during their first year at a post-secondary institute. For instance, it may be a discussion of a syllabus or class assignment. This part is followed by about three questions.

The second, longer Reading passage discusses some area of an academic subject. As mentioned in the Overview, this could be from the fields of Arts or Science. Regardless of the subject, you'll have around 11 questions to answer for this passage.

For the final task in this part, you will be asked to speak about some aspect of the Long Reading that you just completed. Remember to support your answer to this question with details and examples from the Reading passage.

#### Can I quote from parts of the Reading passage in my response?

No. Everything you say should be in your own words, though you may paraphrase when you need to. Using your own words will most accurately demonstrate your range of vocabulary and academic English proficiency.

## Speaking Evaluation

You'll be evaluated on the content of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your use of the source material (i.e., the Reading passage). Keep these in mind, as well as the points from the checklist, as you practice for the test.

### Key Strategies

- For the Speaking task, you will be able to review the entire academic Reading passage both during your Preparation Time and your Speaking Time. Use this to remind yourself of ideas from the text, but do not just repeat what you read. The more you use your own words, the better you will be able to demonstrate your range of vocabulary.
- You may wish to take a few notes when you first answer the questions for this Reading passage. Note down any key terms, and perhaps the main idea of each paragraph. This could save you time and help organize your thoughts when you are speaking.



# Part 3: Integrated Listening

Task	Description	Time
Short Listening	Listen to a presentation and answer questions.	<b>Preview Time:</b> 30 seconds <b>Review Time:</b> 60 seconds
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	<b>Preview Time:</b> 2 minutes 30 seconds <b>Review Time:</b> 3 minutes
Speaking on the Long Listening	Answer a question about the Long Listening.	<b>Preparation Time:</b> 60 seconds <b>Recording Time:</b> 120 seconds

## Guidelines

The format for Part 3 is similar in structure to Part 2. In Part 3, there are two Listening passages, each followed by a set of comprehension questions. After that, there is a Speaking task in which you will be asked a single question about the second Listening passage, which is a lecture. For each Listening passage, you will be able to see the questions for the entire duration of the task.

In the Short Listening passage, the content will be related to some aspect of post-secondary studies. For example, it may be an overview of class material, or a class discussion. This passage is followed by about three questions.

**I lost track of where I was in the audio. Can I replay it on the official test?**

No. All audio will be played only once, which is why it's important to pay close attention while you listen. Try the CAEL sample or practice tests to familiarize yourself with this experience.

The Long Listening passage is in the form of an academic lecture. As discussed in the Overview, this could be from the fields of Arts or Science. Whatever the subject, you'll have around 11 questions to answer for this passage.

Lastly, you will be required to speak about an aspect of the lecture you just listened to. During this task, you will be able to read some brief notes on the lecture. These are the sort of brief notes you might take if you were actually in class—use them to jog your memory, but don't

rely on them specifically. Try to support your answer with as many details and examples as you can remember from the audio.

# Speaking Evaluation

You'll be evaluated on the content of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your use of the source material (i.e., the lecture). Keep these in mind, as well as the points from the checklist, as you practice for the test.

## Key Strategies

- Keep in mind that you will have a short time to preview all the questions in each Listening part, before the audio begins. Use this time to skim each question for key terms and ideas you can listen for during the audio (remember to use the arrows or numbered tabs at the top of the screen to navigate between question pages).
- If you lose your place while you're listening, don't panic! Remember that since you're able to answer questions while you listen, you can skip ahead to a question that hasn't been answered yet. Identify a term that hasn't been mentioned, and wait until you hear this phrase to reorient yourself. You'll also have a few minutes after the audio finishes in order to complete any questions that you missed.
- Even though you'll be able to review some lecture notes during the Speaking task, you shouldn't try to repeat these word-for-word in your response. The more you paraphrase ideas in your own words, the better you'll be able to demonstrate the range of your vocabulary.

Part 3: Integrated Listening

Preparation Time: 60 seconds  
Speaking Time: 120 seconds

Question Lecture Notes

**Economics**

economic model = simplified representation

availability of resources constricts needs of production

ways to group economic models:

- by manner of presentation: visual & mathematical
- by purpose: simulating & predicting

math/stats required for sophisticated models

limitations of economic models:

What are economic models and how do they help us understand the economy?

Preparation Time  
54  
second(s)

NEXT

Figure 24: Lecture notes will appear for the Speaking task in Part 3 as well as for both Writing tasks.



## Part 4: Academic Unit A

Task	Description	Time
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	20 minutes
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	<b>Preview Time:</b> 2 minutes 30 seconds <b>Review Time:</b> 3 minutes
Long Writing	Write a response to a question about ideas presented in the Long Reading and the Long Listening.	35 minutes

### Guidelines

There are three sections in Part 4, each of which discusses some aspect of the same topic. This topic will be from the fields of Science or Arts—for example, it might be a discussion of the solar system or some facet of psychology. First, you will have a Reading passage then a Listening passage, each followed by a series of comprehension questions. After that, you will write a response to a question incorporating information from both these passages.

The Reading passage will be similar in length to the Long Reading in Part 2, and you'll have around 11 questions to answer here. The Listening passage will be similar in length to the Long Listening in Part 3, and you'll have around 11 questions to answer. Just as in prior Listening parts, you will be able to see the questions for the entire duration of the Listening task.

#### How many points will I lose if I write less than 250 words?

Instead of stressing about the word count, consider this: your response should fully answer the Writing prompt, giving as much detail and support as necessary. If you write less than 250 words, it is likely that your response does not respond to the prompt as well as it could. Instead of adding more words simply to achieve the word count, focus on adding more content that adequately fulfils the task requirements. The same applies to Short Writing.

Lastly, you must write a response to a question using the Reading and Listening passages to support your ideas. You will be able to view the entire Reading passage, as well as some brief lecture notes from the Listening passage. Keep in mind that the lecture notes here are just meant to refresh your memory—they may not necessarily contain everything you will need to discuss. Your response for this task must be a minimum of 250 words.

## Writing Evaluation

You'll be evaluated on the content and structure of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your use of source material. Keep these in mind, as well as the points from the checklist, as you practice for the test.

## Long Writing Strategies

Before you type anything, you may find it useful to take a few minutes to brainstorm some ideas and make a brief outline for your response. Even having a very rough outline can help with the organization of your response as well as speed up the writing process.

While writing, try to avoid repetition of phrases or ideas. Conciseness is important here, and the less you repeat words, the better you can demonstrate the range of your vocabulary. Remember, there is no autocorrect or spell check in CAEL. Therefore, try to give yourself a few minutes at the end to check over your work. During this time, double-check that you've included some transitions and connecting words between sentences—these can greatly improve the flow of ideas in your writing.





## Part 5: Academic Unit B

Task	Description	Time
Long Reading	Read a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	20 minutes
Long Listening	Listen to a passage about an academic topic and answer questions.	<b>Preview Time:</b> 2 minutes 30 seconds <b>Review Time:</b> 3 minutes
Short Writing	Write a short response to a question about ideas presented in the Long Reading or the Long Listening.	10 minutes

### Guidelines

Just as with Part 4, there are three sections in Part 5, each of which discusses some aspect of the same topic. This topic will be from the fields of Science or Arts. First, you will have a

#### **Do I need to include an introduction or conclusion for my Short Writing?**

No. Considering the brevity of this task, there is no need to include a proper introduction or conclusion. A brief opening statement will typically be enough.

Reading passage then a Listening passage, each followed by a series of comprehension questions. After that, you will write a short response to a question, using information from the Long Reading or the Long Listening.

The Reading passage will be similar in length to the long passage in Part 2, and you'll have around 11 questions to answer here. The Listening passage will be similar in length to the long lecture in Part 3, and you'll have around 11

questions to answer. Just as in prior Listening parts, you will be able to see the questions before and during the Listening passage.

Your final task will be to write a short response to a question. You must use information from the Listening or Reading passages in this part. You will be able to view the entire Reading passage, as well as some brief lecture notes from the Listening passage. Keep in mind that

the lecture notes here are just meant to refresh your memory—they may not necessarily contain everything you will need to discuss. Your response for this task must be a minimum of 100 words.

## Writing Evaluation

You'll be evaluated on the content and structure of your response, the accuracy of your language, and your use of source material. Keep these in mind, as well as the points from the checklist, as you practice for the test.

## Short Writing Strategies

Keep in mind the importance of being concise here; you will only have 10 minutes to answer this question. Because of this time limit and the lower word count requirement, it is very important in Short Writing to avoid repetition of phrases or ideas. Just as with the Long Writing, try to give yourself a few minutes at the end to check over your work. In particular, double-check your writing for typos and grammar errors, and ensure that you have answered all aspects of the task.

# Preparation Materials

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In addition to the two free [CAEL Sample Tests](#), the CAEL website provides a large selection of further materials, both free and paid, to help with your test preparation. The following is just a sample of what you can find; access the [online store](#) for the full selection.

## Paid Materials – Highlights

### CAEL Practice Tests

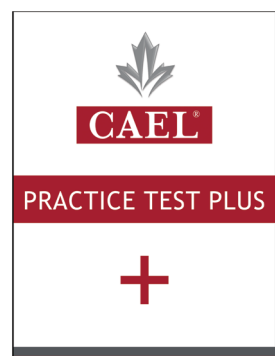
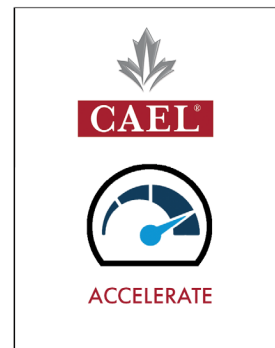
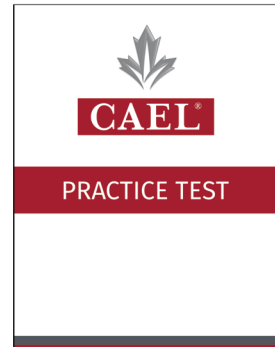
- Same format as the free Sample Test, but with new test content
- User can record/play back their Speaking responses
- Answer keys provided for Listening and Reading parts
- Listening transcripts included
- Currently 7 full tests

### CAEL Accelerate

- Self-directed online course with over 50 instructional videos
- Includes a variety of quizzes
- Numerous downloadable PDF study materials
- User can record/play back their Speaking responses
- Includes a full-length practice test

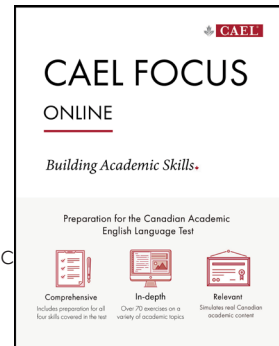
### CAEL Practice Test Plus

- Self-directed online course
- Extensive discussion of the key strategies for succeeding in CAEL, as well as academic success at large
- Exercises framed around one full practice test
- 30+ academic language-building exercises



## CAEL Focus – Building Academic Skills

- Self-directed online course
- 6 units discussing the 4 language skills, test practice, and overall academic language use
- Topics related to CAEL-specific skills (e.g., recognizing question types, making outlines in a limited time, and using preparation time wisely) as well as a variety of key academic English skills
- 70+ academic language-building exercises



## Webinars and Videos

### CAEL 200-Level Course

- 4 live online lessons
- Learn tips, strategies, and format for Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing
- Get your questions answered by a CAEL expert



### CAEL 300-Level Course

- 2 live online lessons
- 1 lesson focuses on Writing, 1 on Speaking
- Provides in-depth, valuable insight into each of these skills



### YouTube

- Includes recordings of the above webinars
- [CAEL Live](#) is an ongoing live video series led by CAEL experts, engaging test takers in all aspects of CAEL test preparation—and more!
- [CAEL Study Tips](#) series focuses on quick tips for each skill to help kick-start your preparation
- Subscribe to our channel for instant notifications as soon as new content is added!

