Here you can find CAE Use of English (C1) practice exercises - you can do them online or save in PDF. There is also a detailed explanation for each task.

The exercises are a great addition to your CAE preparation, and can also complement your general language practice. The exercises have answer keys as well as answer explanations to help you understand the language and the logic of the answers. Sample sentences are marked with a ✔ symbol. **Click on each part to see the exercises, like CAE Use of English Part 1 right below.**

CAE Use of English Part 1

This part has a text with eight gaps with a choice of four options for each gap. The texts are usually aimed at a reader of B2-C1 level, so more complex vocabulary and structures are to be expected. Overall, there are **seven** different types of tasks here:

1. Preposition-dependent choice. This is when the choice of the word in the gap depends on the preposition that comes before (or after) the gap:
✔ *Chris _____ us against buying this car - it seemed like it was overdue for service a long time ago.*

A proposed	**B** voted	**C** suggested	**D** advised

We do not actually know that preposition is the key here until we start matching the answers with the context. **A - proposed** is not good, as it normally comes with 'that', e.g. *'Chris proposed <u>that we do not buy</u> this car'*. **B - voted** doesn't work grammatically, sound too formal for the settings, and it implies that there are several people involved in this. **C - suggested** is similar to the first answer here - doesn't work 'us'. So we end up with the last option: *'Chris advised us against buying the car'*. As short as they are, prepositions are a big part of grammar.

There are also cases when a preposition is absent and the idea is to pick the option that doesn't need it:
✔ *The real estate agent recommended taking our time and _____ the mortgage documents.*

A peruse	**B** look	**C** observe	**D** glance

The word 'peruse' looks a bit weird, so we skip it for now. **B - look** would need a preposition, e.g. *'to look <u>at</u> something'*. To observe something needs no preposition and means to look at something from a distance, without getting involved - not the option we are looking for. To glance means to have a quick look, and it also needs a preposition 'at', so it doesn't fit here for several reasons. Now we go back to the original word - we might just choose it because we know the rest don't fit. To peruse something means to look at or to read something carefully - exactly the thing we were looking for.

2. Phrasal verbs. Normally, each option is a real phrasal verb, but only one works in the given context:

✔ *I tend to _____ difficult tasks until much later.*

A put out	**B** put away	**C** put aside	**D** put off

Note that each of these phrasal verbs makes sense in their own context. **A - put out** can mean 'to extinguish something like a fire'. **B - put away** means 'to put something to the side' or 'to save something for later in case you need it, e.g. money'. **C - put aside** works like the previous one. Finally, if you put something off, you move it to a later date - so this is what we are going for. It is a phrasal alternative to the verb 'to postpone'.

3. Collocations. Knowing and using connotations correctly is a big part of using and understanding English:

✔ *Eric managed to blow through the money his family has _____ over generations.*

A acquired	**B** received	**C** gathered	**D** accumulated

A - acquired looks good, but we might want to consider other options right now. **B - received** doesn't seem to be a decent collocation, whereas answer **C** doesn't work at all. Now we look at **D - accumulated** - it gives us the idea of gradual increase, exactly the kind of meaning we need, as the context says that the process took generations.

4. Idioms, set expressions and sayings. Possible answers will usually contain a part of the expression. This also includes so-called 'binomials', e.g. 'flesh and blood', 'tooth and nail' and so on:

✔ *Most working adults nowadays fail to _____ a balance between career and family life.*

A reach	**B** strike	**C** achieve	**D** get

This is where your language knowledge will really stand you in good stead (an idiom as well!). Unfortunately, there is no real way of making the right guess in most of such tasks, as you simply have to know how the phrase goes. Here the phrase is 'to strike a balance'.

5. Adverbs. The right choice of adverb can sometimes make or break the sentence - this type of task checks your understand of context:

✔ *You should see Joe - he might have _____ the job you are looking for.*

A exactly	**B** even	**C** just	**D** right

A - exactly doesn't work here here as we would need alteration to change the sentence a little bit for it to work: *"he might have exactly <u>the kind of job</u> you are looking for"*. Another change would be needed for B - even, this time moving the words around: *"he might <u>even</u> have the job..."*. D - right needs the words moved around in a similar manner. We are therefore left with answer **C**: *"he might have <u>just</u> the job"* - meaning exactly the kind of job you need.

6. Conjunctions, introductory words and phrases. These are usually at the beginning of the sentence and work as a way to contrast, add or stress an idea:
✔*My sister wasn't the most diligent of students. _____, it didn't stand in the way of her becoming a successful business owner.*

A Although	**B** Though	**C** Albeit	**D** However

In this case we are looking to contrast the two ideas - poor performance at school ('diligent' means hardworking) and becoming a successful business owner. **A - although** doesn't work as it needs to be at the beginning of the first point: *"Although my sister wasn't the most diligent of students, it didn't stand..."*. We cannot use **B - though** at the beginning of the sentence. **C - albeit** works the same way as 'although'. We are therefore left with **D - however,** which works good both at the beginning or in the middle of the sentence and contrasts it with the other argument.

7. Antonyms. A task with one word and the context calling for another word with the opposite meaning. Note that antonym forms with negative prefix can't be chosen - naturally, that would be too easy.
✔*When on holidays, most people choose to indulge themselves, whereas Peter always _____ from drinking or eating too much.*

A resists	**B** stops	**C** contains	**D** abstains

'Whereas' at the beginning suggests using an opposite to 'indulge' - a word that means to let yourself have something that you want, especially more than would be reasonable or good for you. **A - resists** could work if we didn't have the preposition 'from'. **B - stops** needs an object, e.g. '*stop himself from drinking or eating too much*'. **C - contains** doesn't fit contextually. Therefore, it is the last one. If you abstain from something (or doing something), you choose not to do it, especially if it is tempting and you know it won't be good for you.

CAE Use of English Part 2

This part is similar to the previous one. Once again, you deal with a short text that has eight gaps. This time, however, you get a word that you don't get a choice of four words - instead, you have to come up with the word yourself. There is often a bit of leeway with the choice, meaning that there isn't just one word that fits the gap. However, the gap can contain only one word, i.e. no more than one word should be in the gap.

While there is a wide array of possible words to fill the gap in this task, they can be categorized. Examples in brackets are the few of the many possible options.

1. Determiners. Determiners are words that add cohesion - they help us connect ideas together. Common cases include determiners to show possession ('their', 'ours'), relation or connection ('which' and 'that'), quantifiers ('few', 'any'), distributive determiners ('neither', 'either', 'each', 'all' and others). Note that even though articles ('a', 'the') are determiners, you will generally not need them to fill gaps in CAE Use of English Part 2.
✔*Jill and Jane both applied for the position. However, __ of them got the job.*
Context is of big help to us here - it points at the fact that nobody was hired - we know this because of 'however' at the beginning introduces contrast. The possible choice seems to be between 'neither' and 'none'. The latter can only be used when more than two options are available - so we stick with '**neither**'.

2. Passive voice structures. Passive (as opposed to active) structures are easy to spot in the text, but it gets trickier when some parts of the text are missing and you have to fill those missing elements.
✔ *We were supposed to __ paid before the end of the month.*
A passive structure that offers us a bit of freedom with the missing word. Both '**be** paid' and '**get** paid' work here with virtually no change to the meaning.

3. Idiomatic phrases, set phrases. 'To take part', 'to get out of hand', 'under the weather' and many others - phrases and expressions that have figurative, not literal meaning. 'Goes without saying', 'not to mention', 'all things considered' are just a few examples of set phrases that you might need to complete in this task. These are somewhat similar to idioms, but the meaning is usually easier to figure out.
✔ *In order to fix the TV, John had to take it __ and then reassemble it.*
The word 'reassemble' means 'to put back together' - it helps us understand the meaning of the phrase that we have to complete. The opposite of 'reassemble' that fits the context here is 'to take **apart**'.

4. Conjunctions. These can be used to connect ideas ('and', 'or', 'therefore'), to introduce contrast ('although', 'however'), to show several options ('either ... or ...', 'both ... and ...') and so on. The complex ones (consisting of more than one word) will naturally only have one element missing that you have to fill in.
✔ *In __ of his numerous failures, Mick went on to become the most successful amateur boxer in his region.*
We are contrasting failures with success here. We cannot use 'despite' as it is used without any prepositions. Therefore, we are left with the only option - 'in **spite** of'.

5. Prepositions. This is another big one that you will see in virtually every C1 Use of English test. These include both one-word ('in', 'at', 'away') and complex ('other than', 'instead of') prepositions. With the complex ones, you only have to use one of the missing words, e.g. '**along** with'. They can come either before or after the word they refer to:
✔ *All the music on this website can be listened __ free.*
The natural impulse would be to use 'to' with 'listen'. However, here the preposition works with the adjective 'free', forming a common phrase '**for** free', which means 'without any payment'.

✔ *When in the woods, campers are encouraged to look __, as they are likely to see many wild animals.*
Another case where the common preposition is 'for', but it requires an object, e.g. 'to look <u>for</u> something'. Similarly, 'to look out' needs an object and means 'to be aware of something that might happen'. In this case, the answer is '**around**'.

✔ *__ from Jenny, nobody passed the driving test on that day.*
The context clearly suggests that Jenny was the only one who succeeded in passing the test. Here we are dealing with a prepositional structure consisting of two words. Remember that it is '<u>except</u> for', so what we need here is '**apart** from'.

CAE Use of English Part 3

In this part, you fill gaps in the text with a fitting form of a given word. You often have to change the part of speech of the original word and modify it using prefixes or suffixes. Knowing these is essential to your success in this part. Unlike in Part 2, there is usually only one correct answer. Let's try and group them by the type of transformation.

1. Adjective to noun

✔While some may argue that these small _____ might make the vase less valuable, I think they actually give it certain character.	**PERFECT**

'These' points at the fact that the word in the gap is a plural noun. 'Less valuable' hints that we need a negative prefix. This is how we arrive at the word **IMPERFECTIONS**. This is a good example of how negative prefixes can sometimes be difficult to get right. Just keep in mind that it is not always 'un-' - in fact, more often than not it is something different.

✔After the piano music died down, there was _____ for a second, and then the hall drowned in enthusiastic applause.	**STILL**

Context here clearly signals that we need a noun. After that, it all comes down to finding the right noun-forming suffix. In this case, the answer is **STILLNESS** - absence of any sound or movement.

2. Verb to adjective

✔ What she enjoyed the most about working at the university is student's _____ desire for knowledge.	**SATIATE**

We need a word to modify 'desire' here, and as context suggests that the person enjoyed the experience, it has to be something good. **INSATIABLE** desire - a desire that cannot be fulfilled or satisfied. This is also a great example where the negative prefix makes the meaning of the word positive.

✔ There are going to be two _____ football matches tomorrow, so you won't be able to attend both of them.	**CONCUR**

The implication here is that it will be impossible to be at both matches - so we need an adjective to show that. One thing of interest is that the meaning of the word changes as well. To concur means to agree, whereas **CONCURRENT** means happening at the same time, so there is no immediate logical connection between the original and the changed words.

3. Verb to noun

✔ Teaching is a profession where dedication and _____ can be more important than experience - there are many cases when, after years of working, teachers would become less involved in the process.	**COMMIT**

A common mistake in a transformation like that is trying to make a gerund - in other words, to form the word just by adding an '-ing' suffix. I discourage students from doing that, as there is almost always a more 'proper' form of the word that works. In this case, 'committing' is wrong. **COMMITMENT** is the answer we are looking for.

✔ To have unreasonably high expectations can often lead to _____. The opposite is true as well - not expecting much can lead to a pleasant surprise!	**APPOINT**

Sometimes you will have to add both a prefix and a suffix. To make things even more difficult, this particular case doesn't have a very obvious transformation - **DISAPPOINMENT**. One might not expect the original word to be in any way connected to the answer - a case that is quite common in Use of English Part 3.

4. Noun to adjective

✔ The brain is responsible for controlling virtually everything - from judgement and abstract thinking to _____ functions.	**BODY**

As we can see here, we could use an adjective to modify the noun 'functions'. The adjective we look for is **BODILY**. Note the change in vowel as we transform the original word. Side note: bodily functions are, simply put, going to the toilet. A certain contrast is introduced, comparing it to something as complex as abstract thinking.

✔ Sally had a very _____ expression on her face - you could really tell a lot was going on in her mind at that moment.	**THINK**

You will inevitably consider putting 'thinking' as the answer - once again, I recommend not to use -ing forms of words in Use of English Part 3. In this case it doesn't even make a proper collocation - no such thing as 'a thinking expression' exists. The answer here is **THOUGHTFUL**.

5. No part of speech change

✔ It is not _____ for people to fail their driving test several times. In fact, some just give up on the idea after having to retake it for the umpteenth time.	**USUAL**

The context here points out that we need a positive meaning - people often fail their driving tests and have to do them again. As a result, the answer is **UNUSUAL**. Combined with 'not' it forms a double negative structure, and we end up with the meaning 'usual'. It is worth reminding you that the original word always has to change - even though this time the part of speech and the form stayed the same.

✔ A ramp was installed at the entrance to make access to the building easier for the _____ and visitors with child trolleys.	**ABLE**

As always, context is the best way to understand the general meaning of the sentence. A structure like 'the + adjective' forms a noun, e.g. the poor, the privileged, and so on. The answer is the **DISABLED**, in this case meaning people in wheelchairs - both them and people with child trolleys cannot use the stairs and rely on having a ramp.

CAE Use of English Part 4

In this task, you have to rephrase the original using a given word and using three to six words in the gap. The idea is to make as few changes to the original changes as possible.

This part is admittedly the most difficult as it takes more input than any other Use of English task. The key to success in this part is familiarity with common B2-C1 structures like distancing, cleft sentences, passive forms, and various set expressions. As always, we will try to group them by the nature of transformation the original sentence has to undergo.

1. Rephrasing

This is the biggest change that you will see in the vast majority of the sentences. Mostly you will need to use set phrases instead of more common expressions. For example, 'to be different' in the original sentence changes to 'to have little/nothing in common' in the second. Let's take a look at some examples:

✔Everybody is convinced that Tim is going to win the competition.
DOUBT
Nobody _____ that Tim is going to win the competition.
The first thing to note here is that the sentence uses the negative phrasing ('nobody' instead of 'everybody' in the original) - this means that we have to add 'any' to keep the original meaning. The resulting answer is **'Nobody has any doubt that Tim is going to win the competition'**.

✔Never admitting defeat was the motto that brought her success.
DOWN
Never _____ what brought her success.
One thing we see is 'that' changes to 'what' in the second sentence. You will often have to use phrasal verbs in the gap - and this sentence is one of such cases. **Never backing down was what brought her success**. To back down means to accept your loss, to admit defeat. 'Was' is needed here because of 'what' - this is a case of a cleft sentence - something we will discuss in the next type of transformation.

2. Word order structures.
A big part of this transformation is going to involve the usage of cleft sentences and inversion. We'll take a closer look at each to know how to approach these.

✔As soon as I went to bed the phone started ringing.
SOONER
No _____ than the phone started ringing.
This is a case of an inverted sentence. Simply put, inversion is an emphatic structure - that is, a structure that stresses a particular aspect of the sentence to show its importance. The part that gets highlighted is normally placed at the beginning of the sentence. This particular structure needs us to use the Past Perfect - remember that the earlier action uses it, and the later one has to take the Past Simple. And the answer: **No sooner had I gone to bed than the phone started ringing**.

✔This revolutionary method of shipping was proposed by a junior employee.
WHO
It _____ This revolutionary method of shipping.
A structure called 'cleft sentence' is used here - basically, we put the 'when' or 'who' components preceded by 'it' or 'what' at the beginning of the sentence. The reason for this word order is the same as in the previous case - drawing attention to who did it or when it took place. The correct answer: **It <u>was a junior employee who proposed</u> this revolutionary method of shipping**.

3. Reported speech

Be ready to see cases of both direct and indirect speech. Keep in mind that reported speech often needs to have the tenses changed. Change to reported speech on its own is rarely the case in this exercise, and you will often need to make other alterations to the original sentence.

✔'You don't have to come to the party if you don't want to' - said Maria.
NEED
Maria said that there _____ to come to the party if I don't want to.
Note that at the end we still use the Present Simple ('if I don't want to'). This means that the tense in the gap has to be the same. Keep in mind that tense change in reported speech is not always required - use your best judgment here. The answer: **Maria said there <u>is no need for me</u> to come to the party if I don't want to**.

4. Conditional sentences
These also include inverted conditional sentences: 'should you find yourself lost, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us'.

✔I managed to fix the car in time thanks to your help.
WAS
If _____, I wouldn't have fixed the car in time.
The 'if' at the beginning clearly points in the direction of a conditional structure. The second part suggests the second conditional. The answer: **If <u>it was not for your help</u>, I would not have fixed the car in time**. I normally discourage my students from using contractions in Use of English Part 4.

5. Impersonal structures
When we don't mention the person who does the action, the structure becomes impersonal. The reasons for that can be many: we might not know who has done the action, it might not be important, or we do that to shift the focus from the action rather than the actor:

✔Yesterday, somebody broke into their apartment and thrashed it.
WAS
Their _____ yesterday.
As you can see, even the original sentence does not know who the perpetrator was. In a case like that, it only makes sense to avoid mentioning the agent altogether. The answer: **Their <u>apartment was broken into and thrashed yesterday</u>**.