

CAE Listening will be the last of four written sections of your CAE exam. It consists of four parts, 30 questions in total, and it lasts for about 40 minutes. We will take a look at each type of task in detail with examples. Know the CAE Listening structure already? Go ahead and try some free [CAE Listening Practice Tests!](#)

### [CAE Listening General Information](#)

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## CAE Listening General Information

The main peculiarity of CAE Listening is that you get to listen to each track two times. This provides you with a number of approaches to dealing with the tasks and allows you to listen closely to the parts you've had difficulties with before.

The listening segments present a number of different characters, situations and accents. The latter is especially important, as some accents tend to be more challenging to get used to — Australian pronunciation seems to be especially challenging.

**NB:** The example parts you will see below are shortened, except for Part 4!

### Part 1. Multiple Choice I

You will listen to three short independent extracts. There are two questions for each extract for a total of six questions. You have to choose the right answer out of three given options. Example:

You are going to hear two people on a music programme talking about the singer Nancy Graham

1 What is the man's opinion of Nancy's second album?

- A He thinks it is very experimental.
- B He appreciates the continuity of style.
- C He wonders if she is lacking inspiration.

2 What do the two speakers agree about?

- A the freshness of the music
- B the lack of real emotion in the music
- C the calming effect of the music on the listener

### Part 1 tapescript and explanation

*John: I bought Nancy Graham's first album. I loved it and thought it was a really new sound and a different way to sing the old jazz and blues songs. This one, however, seems in a way more of the same and, although there's been an injection of country music to vary that jazz sound, I did think she was slightly running out of steam and maybe she's released this album too soon.*

*Meg: I think there's a lot of great stuff on it – the late night jazz numbers in particular. It just gets a bit bland at times for me. When the true 'country' stars sing of pain and anguish you believe them, which I can't say I do here.*

**John:** *Maybe it's just that she's just not quite mature enough yet to have had the necessary experience to inject into the songs, and that's why?*

**Meg:** *I have to say I did find it wonderfully soothing. I actually fell asleep listening to it but when I woke up I couldn't tell the difference between the track I'd started listening to and the one I was listening to then.*

Your first and most powerful tool in CAE Listening is [keywords](#). **Question 1** keywords are "man's opinion" and "second album".

The man begins his speech by talking about the first album. He says that he liked it very much. But we must remember that we need his opinion on the second album. He says that the second album is released too soon and the author might be "running out of steam" — this all means the author didn't put enough effort into it and it came out worse than the first one. So the only answer that fits here is **C**.

The second question keywords are "two speakers agree". This question is more difficult. You may want to exclude the options that do not fit — you will have enough time to do that as you will be listening to the recording twice. Answer **A** doesn't fit — Meg says nothing about the freshness of the music. **C** doesn't work either — only Meg mentions the calming effect of the music. **B** seems to be better — Meg mentions how the music is "bland" and John doesn't say anything against this opinion — he agrees with Meg.

## Part 2. Sentence Completion

You will listen to one long extract — a monologue. You should fill the gaps with the right word from the recording. A gap may contain up to two words. Note that you shouldn't change the words you hear. See below for clarification.

The sample recording below is shortened down to four questions. Normally you have to answer **eight** questions. I have shortened the preparatory time accordingly (from 40 to 15 seconds)

You will hear a marine wildlife photographer called Bruce Hind talking about his work. For questions **3** — **6**, complete the sentences.

Bruce says that **3** ... is the most important aspect of his work.

Before going on a trip, Bruce makes **4** ... of the photographs he hopes to take.

Knowing the type of photographs he wants to take helps Bruce to choose the right **5** ... .

Bruce disagrees with people who say his way of taking photographs is not **6** ... .

## Part 2 tapescript and explanation

*Well, the first thing to say about marine photography is that it's not as easy as it might look. Actually taking photos is only a part of it. Because you have to organise a boat and crew and everything, forward planning is actually the key to my work, and without that I'd never pick up a camera, because I wouldn't know what I was aiming for. Another important aspect is doing drawings which show roughly what the photograph will contain – if I do that first, it means I'm more likely to capture it on film. And because I've decided beforehand what pictures I want, I'm in a position to select the appropriate equipment... it's all part of the process.*

*I mean, not everybody goes about it as I do, I know, and some people say that I'm ruling out the creative side of photography by working in this way. But in fact the opposite is true. Because my aim is for every photo to depict something new, I need to think about how I'm going to achieve that, otherwise I'd just go home with the same photos every time.*

Just like in the previous task, a good idea would be to underline the keywords. However, this time you should concentrate on understanding what part of speech the missing word or words belong to. Look at **gap 3** — the context hints at a noun (\*something\* is the most important). It is crucial to keep that in mind when looking for the right word (or words!) in the recording. Anyway, the keyphrase here is "most important aspect". In the recording the speaker says: "Forward planning is actually the key to my work". **Forward planning** then is the answer. This is what you write in the gap. The next gap is pretty similar, with **drawings** being the answer.

**Gap 5** is a bit more difficult. Note how there is an adjective "right" before the gap. The word that you should use as the answer has another adjective before it. Do not use the adjective from the recording as you already have one. So, the answer you should end up with is **equipment**.

**Gap 6** becomes easier once you realise that you need an adjective here. 'Not' before the gap should give you an idea of something negative - Bruce uses a rather confusing phrasing here: '... some people say that I'm ruling out the creative side...'. To rule out means to exclude something. In any case, the word we arrive at is **creative**.

### Part 3. Multiple Choice II

**CAE Listening Part 3** is slightly different from Part 1, as this time you listen to one long recording instead of three short ones. The recording is a conversation of two or more people.

As with the previous task, this sample recording is reduced to three questions. Normally you would answer **six** questions. The preparation time is shortened as well (15 seconds from the usual 40)

You will hear part of a radio interview in which the comedian and writer Jane Clarkson is talking about her work. For questions **7 — 9**, choose the answer (**A, B, C** or **D**) which fits best according to what you hear.

**7** What did Jane find difficult about writing a book?

- A** She couldn't travel around the country.
- B** She didn't get any instant reaction to her work.
- C** She had to spend time looking after her daughter.
- D** She found the process itself very challenging.

**8** According to Jane, why did some critics dislike her novel?

- A** They didn't think the book was funny.
- B** They were dismissive of her initial success.
- C** They thought her male colleagues were better writers.
- D** They thought she should stick to being a comedian.

**9** Which aspect of Jane's work as a comedian helped her to write?

- A** her patience
- B** her ability to listen
- C** her habit of watching people
- D** her rational way of thinking

### Part 3 tapescript and explanation

***Interviewer:** Today I'm with the much-loved comedian and writer Jane Clarkson. Obviously Jane, this year has been quite a turning point for you...*

**Jane:** Well, I'll never stop doing comedy, but there were practical reasons for wanting to take some time off and write a book. I felt my daughter had been neglected. She was just about to make the tricky transition from primary to secondary school and I thought she needed her mum around. I seem to have spent most of her life in a van touring from venue to venue for my comedy act. And I did enjoy being at home for a bit, although I missed the applause and the laughter. When I finished writing in the evening, I'd turn the computer off and there'd be nothing, which was hard to get used to.

**Interviewer:** How was your novel received?

**Jane:** Well, a lot of male comedians had written books, so there was a bit of a bandwagon waiting to be jumped on, but with my impeccable timing I jumped slightly late, when everyone was starting to get heartily sick of comedians' books. Also there's a kind of fury coming from some journalists about comics writing books. They're absolutely livid, as if they see your book in a bookshop and they jump up and down, shouting, 'It's not fair! Why should she make money out of writing as well as performing?'

**Interviewer:** Was it a difficult transition?

**Jane:** Well, if you think logically, writing is the obvious step. I've spent years trying to make people listen to my anecdotes, so that must count for something! Also, if you've been an observational comedian, which I am, it's not a great leap to use those skills you've developed, like observing odd mannerisms to use for jokes, and turn them into a book.

You start by underlining keywords. For **Question 7** they are "difficult", "writing" and "book". The recording mentions three of four answers in one way or another, all of them related to the question but the only right answer is **B**. Answer **A** is the reason she started writing — she wanted to spend more time with her daughter. **C** has the same reason as **A**. Answer **D** is not mentioned. **B** fits because the author mentions "missing the applause and the laughter" — the immediate response as opposed to writing a book and having to wait for the book to be judged by the public.

**Question 8** keywords are "why", "critics", "disliked" and "novel" - sometimes you will have to do a lot of underlining! Answer **A** isn't mentioned in the recording — the critics do not say whether the book was funny or not. **B** is wrong too — nothing was said of the success of the book or journalists' opinions about it. **C** doesn't fit — even though male comedians' books are mentioned the critics do not compare them in any way. The right answer is **D** — it is in the last sentence, expressing their dissatisfaction with taking up two activities — writing and performing.

Now try and answer question 9 without any guidance!

## Part 4. Multiple Matching

CAE Listening Part 4 is by far the most difficult of all. You have to listen to five short monologues and answer 10 questions. You have to select ten correct options out of the available sixteen.

TASK ONE		TASK TWO	
For questions 21-25, choose from the list A-H the person who is speaking.		For questions 26-30, choose from the list A-H what each speaker is expressing or talking about	
A. a receptionist	Speaker 1 10 ___	A. a suspicion that people like to find excuses not to do work	Speaker 1 15 ___
B. an apprentice	Speaker 2 11 ___	B. the view that you should never ask for a pay rise	Speaker 2 16 ___
C. a temporary worker	Speaker 3 12 ___	C. the feeling that helping an understudy may go unappreciated	Speaker 3 17 ___
D. a manager	Speaker 4 13 ___	D. an intimate knowledge of other people's affairs that could be profitable	Speaker 4 18 ___
E. a caretaker	Speaker 5 14 ___	E. the view that you should never take work home with you	Speaker 5 19 ___
F. a secretary		F. a distrust of colleagues who are nice to you	
G. a courier		G. a feeling of having been taken advantage of on account of inexperience	
H. a pensioner		H. the wisdom of prioritising tasks	

## Part 4 tapescript and explanation

### Speaker 1

*If you put all the country's chief executives in one room, all they would produce would be a range of share options that would only benefit themselves and a load of corporate waffle and gossip. We are the people that actually organise and lay out coherently all the facts and figures. They wouldn't even remember half of what was said if we didn't record it for them. [10] You'd be surprised what we know about a business. Our internal knowledge should never be underestimated. I suppose I could earn a small fortune blackmailing the many bosses I've had over the years. [15]*

### Speaker 2

*One thing I've learned quickly is never offer to make coffee. In many businesses there is a ritual where everyone waits hours for the first person to say, "Who wants coffee?" That person then finds themselves in the kitchen for the rest of the day working as a junior catering manager. I should know, it happened to me when I first started here [16]. Being the new person leaves you vulnerable, especially as I'm kind of on the lowest rung on the ladder [11]. Once I'm qualified, I'm going to get someone else to make coffee for me! [16]*

### Speaker 3

*I run a tight ship and the secret is not to allow time wasting. [12] Half of every working day is spent in meetings, half of which are not worth having, half the time is wasted. Which means that nearly one third of office life is spent in small rooms with people you don't like, doing things that don't matter. The only reason people have so many meetings is that they are the one time you can get away from your work, your phone or your customers. [17] People say that the secret of a good meeting is preparation. But if people really prepared for meetings, the first thing they would realise is that most are unnecessary. In fact, a tightly run meeting is one of the most frightening things in office life. These are meetings for which you have to prepare, in which you have to work and after which you have to take action.*

**Speaker 4**

*I've always had a strong work ethic. I believe that the best way to approach work is to write a list at the end of each day of what has to be achieved the next day. Then, get the most important jobs done first. [13] Most people do the opposite and do the easy, trivial things first, but that difficult report is not going to go away. I still maintain a routine in my life, although, of course, the activities and jobs to be done have changed quite a lot. The working environment is so different from my day. I'm not exactly a technophobe, but I'm glad I haven't got to learn how to do everything by computer. I escaped the technological rat race just in time. [18]*

**Speaker 5**

*I have to deal with everyone in the company to some extent. Everyone knows me and I believe it's important to try to keep some harmony between my fellow workers. Being the first face they see, I try to be cheerful even if I'm not feeling on top form. [14] Think how easy it is to upset someone at home and then triple it: that's how easy it is to upset someone at work. Upsetting your boss is the easiest thing to do. All you have to do is turn up and you are in their bad books. Keeping on the right side of them is simply a matter of anticipating their every whim and laughing at their pathetic jokes. People at the bottom are also easily upset. Helping them do their job is only going to be appreciated if you are the undisputed master of what they are trying to do. [19]*

You have to answer two questions for each monologue. The task is to determine the speaker's profession (**Task 1**) and their expressed idea (**Task 2**). Note that there are extra options in each task so you won't use all of them.

The main challenge is that the speakers never clearly state their profession, you have to figure it out from the context — what they do, their responsibilities, what they like and what they don't. Let's take Speaker 1 as an example:

The person mentions being involved in organising information for their superiors. There are two options that have certain connection to the business world here: **A - receptionist** and **F - secretary**. However, the implied degree of involvement goes beyond the duties of meeting and greeting that a receptionist would normally do. Therefore we stick to option F.

Task 2 is harder — the options are not as obvious as in Task 1. I usually scan-read all of the options and keep them in my head while listening to the monologues. That way it is easier to match them to the context of each monologue and see if they fit. For Speaker 1 the answer is **D** — they have many secrets and could use them to their advantage.

**Part 4 Answer Keys:**

10 - F    15 - D  
 11 - B    16 - G  
 12 - D    17 - A  
 13 - H    18 - H  
 14 - A    19 - C