

CAE Reading and Use of English

Reading and Use of English will be the first section of your written CAE exam. It lasts for 90 minutes, consists of 8 different types of tasks, and has a total of 56 questions. This page will cover all of the task types by providing short examples with answers and explanations.

Go straight to the CAE Reading and Use of English [practice tests](#) if you are already familiar with the exam structure.

You can use the list below for navigation or simply scroll down to see exam tasks in order of their appearance in the exam.

[Task 1. Multiple Choice Cloze](#) (8 questions)

[Task 2. Open Cloze](#) (8 questions)

[Task 3. Word Formation](#) (8 questions)

[Task 4. Key Word Transformation](#) (6 questions)

1. Use of English. Multiple Choice Cloze

You are given a short text with eight gaps. For each gap, you should choose one word out of four (A, B, C, D).

Example:

[...] Having spent four long months preparing for this exam, I was very nervous. So you can imagine that I was really happy to learn that I **(1)** ... to get enough points for my scholarship. I was so **(2)** ... of myself that I decided to ring my parents' place **(3)** ... to share the news. Unfortunately, I had no **(4)** ... change for a call. The surprise had to be **(5)** ... until tomorrow.

1	A. succeeded	B. managed	C. failed	D. accomplished
2	A. happy	B. eager	C. proud	D. pleased
3	A. on	B. up	C. down	D. off
4	A. extra	B. loose	C. free	D. spare
5	A. cancelled	B. postponed	C. rescheduled	D. moved

This task checks your knowledge of collocations, prepositions, and set phrases. Many of the suggested answers are correct grammatically. The right answer also has to be semantically right — it has to make sense and fit the context of the whole text. It will now be illustrated by analysing the questions:

1. **Managed.** *Manage to do something* is a strong collocation.

Succeeded in doing something is another collocation, but that does not fit here because of no preposition. *Failed* fits grammatically, but it makes no sense in the context of the sentence (*I was really happy ...*)

2. **Proud.** It is the only adjective that collocates with the "of" preposition. *Pleased with* would be another good option, but there is no preposition.

3. **Up.** Preposition refers to the verb "ring". To ring up means "to contact by telephone". To *ring off* is to "finish a telephone conversation", which doesn't make sense in this context, even though it is correct grammatically.

4. **Spare.** Spare change is a strong collocation, meaning a small amount of money in coins that you can spend on something.

5. **Postponed.** Postpone till/until is again a collocation that is very common.

Ultimately, it all comes down to this:

- Correct grammar/[collocation](#) (Questions 2, 4, 5)

CAE Reading and Use of English

- The resulting combination fitting the sentence meaning. (Questions 1, 3)

Having finished the task, you should read it once again with all the missing words in place. If something sounds or feels wrong, it will probably become noticeable after you read through the text.

Scoring: 1 mark for each correct answer for a maximum of 8.

2. Use of English. Open Cloze

You are presented with a short text that has eight gaps. You should write one word in each gap. Example:

Concorde was the first supersonic passenger plane. It was in service (1) ... 2003, when the last aircraft was finally retired. The plane was able to (2) ... the speed of almost 2,200 km/h. People (3) ... were lucky to see one in person, were reported as being fascinated (4) ... the elegant design of its body and the sheer size of the thing.

In (5) ... of the technological superiority and stunning looks the plane hadn't been particularly successful. Its main downside was operational costs that (6) ... the possible profits by a huge margin. Unfortunately, we are not likely to see that magnificent plane in the skies ever again.

1. **Until.** The preposition is hinted at by the second part of the sentence coming after a comma.
2. **Reach.** "To" indicates that we have to use a verb. *Reach* is one of the verbs that collocates with *speed*. *To hit the speed* is also possible, but it's more informal, so *reach* is the recommended answer.
3. **Who/that.** The word *people* clearly needs a pronoun after it. Both words are acceptable here.
4. **With.** *Fascinated with* and *fascinated by* are a bit different. The first is used with tangible objects - something you can see, feel, touch. The second is usually for something that does not physically exist, e.g. "I am fascinated by classical music".
5. **Spite.** As it can be seen from the second part of the sentence, there is a contrast between it and the first part. *In spite of/despite* have the same meaning, but only the first one can be used with the preposition "in" before it and "of" after.
6. **Exceeded.** As seen from the context, we need a word that has the meaning "to be bigger or higher than something" and is followed by a preposition "by". The verb has to be in Past Simple to fit the sentence tense choice.

The recommendations are the same: be aware of the context in which the word is used, know the collocations, and pay attention to prepositions before and after the gap.

Scoring: 1 mark for each correct answer for the maximum of 8

3. Use of English. Word Formation

A text with eight gaps is given to you. Each gap should be filled with one word. That word should be formed from the word that is on the same line. Example:

Tobacco is among the most (1) ... used substances that are present on the market today. 1. WIDE
Despite of public's universal (2) ... for smokers, this pastime doesn't seem to suffer from 2. LIKE
dwindling (3) 3. POPULAR
Almost 55 years ago, it was scientifically (4) ... that extended periods of tobacco (5) ... are 4. PROVE
extremely harmful for both the user and those around them. Even though public (6) ... of

CAE Reading and Use of English

second-hand smoke harm is (7) ... higher than it was a decade ago, most people are still reluctant to get in an open (8) ... with the smokers.

5. CONSUME

6. AWARE

7. SIGNIFY

8. CONFRONT

The main challenge of this task is to understand what part of speech your word should be. English language allows for the transformation of a word into many forms, even various parts of speech.

Wide: *to widen* (verb), *wide* (adjective), *widely* (adverb), *width* (noun), *widening* (gerund);

This is easily understood from the context and looking at word order in the sentence. After you have established the part of speech you need, you have to consider the possible word transformations:

- Adjectives can have comparative and superlative forms: *wide* — *wider/more wide* — *widest/the most wide*; *easy* — *easier* — *the easiest*.
- The word can also be altered with prefixes and suffixes:
Obey: *to disobey*, *disobedient*, *disobedience*; **Help:** *helpless*, *helplessness*, *unhelpful*
- Verbs can be under in past tenses. Irregular verbs will then have different spelling:
To buy — *bought*; *to seek* — *sought*; *to grind* — *ground*;

If you have established what part of speech you need but do not know how to form it, then try guessing the word form by using the basic suffixes.

Word-formation suffixes

Part of speech	Suffixes	Examples
Noun	-ing, -ness, -ity, -iety, -ment, -ion	meeting, kindness, levity, society, arrangement, emotion
Adjective	-ful, -less, -ous, -ing, -able, -al	Colourful, joyless, glorious, boring, changeable, traditional
Verb	-en, -fy, -ise/-ize	to lengthen, to glorify, to emphasise,
Adverb	-ly	Angrily

We will now analyse the answers:

1. **Widely** (adverb). Because this word refers to the verb "*used*", we have to use an adverb. Adverb + adjective is a very common collocation too.
2. **Dislike** (noun). Noun + *for something* is a set phrase. For example, *She has a sincere fondness for animals*.
3. **Popularity** (noun). *To suffer from* + noun.
4. **Proven** (verb, past participle). Present Perfect construction means using 3rd form of verb "*to prove*".
5. **Consumption** (noun). Note that there is no such noun as "*consuming*" in English.
6. **Awareness** (noun). The word "*public*" here is an adjective.
7. **Significantly** (adverb). We use an adverb to intensify the comparative adjective "*higher*".
8. **Confrontation** (noun). A synonym to "*conflict*".

Scoring: 1 mark for each correct answer for a maximum of 8

4. Use of English. Key Word Transformation

You are given six incomplete sentences and one word for each that you have to use. The task is to complete the sentences using three to six words, including the word given to you. The given word **should not** be changed.

1. He didn't know anything about the upcoming events.

LITTLE

... about the upcoming events.

2. You are not allowed to leave the building.

CIRCUMSTANCE

... you leave the building.

3. She asked me if that was my car.

BELONGED

She asked me if

4. Her husband said he doesn't know that woman.

HAVING

Her husband ... that woman.

5. He can't finish his task himself.

UNABLE

He ... on his own.

Normally, there are only two types of transformation that you need to do:

- Changing voice (active to passive or vice versa). It is a fairly easy transformation; just don't change the tense and pay attention to your subject-verb relationship:
I have done it - It has been done by me;
I need to iron my t-shirts - My t-shirts need ironing/need to be ironed;
He used to help her all the time - She used to be helped by him all the time.
- Using [synonyms and paraphrasing](#). This includes various changes to word form. Below are some basic examples. Note that all of these changes can happen both directions:
Verb to phrasal verb: *go on - continue; rule out - exclude; pick out - distinguish;*
Informal to formal register: *to think about - to consider/take into consideration;*

Let's have a look at the answers now:

1. **Little did he know** about the upcoming events.
2. **Under no circumstance must/should** you leave the building.
3. She asked me if **that car belonged to me**.
4. Her husband **denied having known** that woman.
5. He is **unable to finish his task** on his own.

Scoring: 0, 1 or 2 points for each correct answer. for a maximum of 16. You get only one point if you change the original meaning somehow.