CAEL 201: Speaking and Test Format

Independent Speaking Strategies

Independent Speaking, Type A

- **Quickly decide what you will talk about.** Don't spend too much of your prep time trying to come up with a "perfect" story.
- **Start with a brief statement introducing the topic.** Don't spend too much time introducing what you will talk about—get right into talking about it.
- **Include specific details**, such as the name of your school, country, class, etc., how you felt and why, personality traits, key events, etc.
- **Personalize your response.** Because this will be a question about your own experiences, it's absolutely fine—in fact, it's necessary—to speak in the first person (use "I") for this question.

Independent Speaking, Type B

- **Open with a firm statement of opinion** that also introduces the topic.
- **Provide about three main ideas** to support your view. It is not necessary for the response to include exactly three main ideas, but this is a good number to aim for.
- **Use transitions** to introduce main ideas.
- **Include some unbiased information that extends beyond your own experiences.** As this will be a bigger-picture question than Type A, it is necessary to consider the wider context, not just your own experiences and feelings.
- It's fine to speak in the first person. If you like, you can **include some relevant personal details**.
- **End with a short wrap-up statement.**

Speaking on a Visual

- **Use your prep time to note key information in the graph.** Keep in mind that the graph will remain on screen as you speak, so you don't need to memorize it or sketch it.
- **Start by describing what the graph depicts and its key features** (topic, horizontal and vertical axes, legend/key, etc.).
- **Include some broad trends and some specific details.** Describe connections and make comparisons between different pieces of information.
- **Try to use specialized vocabulary** (e.g., *stabilize*, *fluctuation*, *marginal*, etc.).
- **If possible, include your own thoughts** about what the diagram tells you.
- **Don't forget to offer conclusions at the end.** This is part of completing the task. These can be predictions, explanations, or other relevant commentary on what the graph shows.

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Speaking Checklist: CAEL Part 1

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

Speaking on a Visual	
1. Does the speaker describe and/or explain the graph accurately?	Yes | No
2. Does the speaker identify general trends?	Yes | Sometimes | No
3. Does the speaker draw conclusions that are realistic and based on graph data?	Yes | Sometimes | No

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NOTE: The **sample response audio files** are posted as a separate download at the **same location on the CAEL website** where you accessed these Study Notes.

Sample Response: Independent Speaking, Type A

Question

What do you want to study at university and why?

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

I want to study at university because I believe it's important for students who have...passions to take themselves into a place where they can develop it academically by meeting professors who are well-versed in the field and also meeting other students of the same age who are also passionate about the same things as you are. Uh...I want to study in this kind of academic zone where...your passions and your...and your favourite topics and subjects in high school can be really examined and pinpointed. So you can find out how you can develop and find, and discover more about yourself. ...Um, also professionally I believe that university is a great place for you to go develop your skills into relevant job skills as well. So your talents and your interests can also be relevant...outside of class.

Sample Response: Independent Speaking, Type B

Question

In your opinion, what are some of the strengths of high school education in your home country?

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

I think some of the strengths of high school education in Canada is that...we, um emphasize history in Canada in a way that does not diminish other countries outside of Canada. Unlike other countries we do focus on a more global scale of learning where all parts of history is encouraged to be examined. And also I feel like high school education in Canada also focuses on...the importance of mental health and...basically there's a lot of support and counselling which really helps students especially in high school level students where they are particularly more fragile mentally. And uh I think clubs are encouraged is, the fact that clubs are encouraged is also a great thing about um the Canadian high school system because it really encourages them to...develop and reflect on their interests and work towards something that...uh work towards something they can be proud of and passionate about. Uh, another thing that I feel like is really important is, uh...important and good about the Canadian high school system is, uh, the fact that scholarships are given out to reward hard work. And also that field trips are encouraged for educational purposes which really offers just an incentive and also a new perspective in which to consider education under respectively. And I think those are all just like great points about the education system.

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Sample Response: Speaking on a Visual

Question

Answer the question by speaking into the microphone.

This chart shows non-resident travellers to Canada.

Describe and explain the information you see depicted in the graph.

What conclusions can you draw?

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

Okay so on this chart it goes over the non-resident travellers to Canada and it's from the date range of 2013 to 2016 and it considers 3 factors, land, air and sea. And on the left side of the axis it considers the trav—the number of travellers starting from the bottom at zero up to 5 million. And just by looking at the information I can see that air travel is the hi- most popular way for non-resident travellers to come to Canada. And...um, followed by that is land and the bottom is uh sea. And...air travel is by far the most popular way of travelling. It...never dips below 3.5 million travelers and at its peak right now at 2016 it's at 4.5 million travellers. And...land and, land and sea in comparison barely make it to 1 million around 2016. Um...this information is given by source [*slight laugh*], uh, source is Statistics Canada and I see, I can see that around 2014 there is a dip in air travel for some reason, where it goes down about half a m-, about 250 thousand travellers going down from around...3.7 million travellers in 2013 to just 3.5 million travellers in 2014 by air travel, so I'm not sure what happened there but it could be...it could be perhaps just a change in tourism or some other aspect that I am not aware of.

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Academic Speaking Study Tips

- Improve your level of academic English by **reading small sections or chapters of academic texts** on **a variety of academic topics**.
- **Keep a vocabulary journal** and note down the meaning, pronunciation, and usage of new words. Familiarize yourself with the most common words on the **Academic Word List**. Incorporate new words into your daily practice as much as possible.
- Develop your sentence structure by learning to use **compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences**.
- Work with videos, audiobooks, or a native speaker tutor to reduce your accent by **improving your pronunciation, intonation, and word stress**.
- **Practice speaking for 1 minute, 1.5 minutes, and 2 minutes** to familiarize yourself with how long these times are and how much material you can cover during each.
- **Interact with native speakers** as much as possible. Try joining a study group or speaking club.
- **Listen to the news and podcasts.** Notice how speakers state facts, express opinions, describe experiences, and summarize trends.
- Become familiar with **different levels of formality** in spoken English.
- **Practice every day!**

Test Day Speaking Tips

- **Speak at your normal volume.** Don't yell or whisper, as this will negatively affect intonation and pronunciation. Do your best to speak with confidence and authority even if you're nervous. Imagine that you are speaking on the phone to a trusted classmate, instructor, or coworker.
- **If you're nervous, take a deep breath, hold it for a couple of seconds, and exhale slowly**. This can interrupt the physical effects of anxiety.
- **Avoid "up-speak"** (frequently using rising intonation at the end of a phrase or statement, as though you are asking a question). Use natural intonation.
- Start each response with a **statement that clearly introduces the topic, image, or situation**.
- **Use pauses and word stress** to draw attention to key points.
- If it is necessary to restate a key idea, do it in **different words**.
- **Use transitions and linking words** to signal new topics or ideas. Avoid overusing "and" and "so."
- **Fill as much of the time as you can.** Try to avoid lengthy silences—both in the middle and at the end.
- **Include a concluding statement** before your time is up.

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Independent Speaking Practice Questions

You may have practiced one or more of these questions during the CAEL 201 session. They can be used for timed or untimed speaking practice.

Independent Speaking, Type A

Preparation Time: 30 seconds **Speaking Time:** 60 seconds

Question

Do you have a career in mind for after you finish your studies? Have you done any research about what this career requires? Why or why not?

Independent Speaking, Type B

Preparation Time: 60 seconds **Speaking Time:** 90 seconds

Question

What are some good strategies to help everyone work together in a group project? Which do you think would be best for you and why?

Speaking on a Visual

Preparation Time: 60 seconds **Speaking Time:** 2 minutes

Question

Answer the question by speaking into the microphone.

This chart shows the languages spoken in Canada in 2011, and a projection for 2036.

Summarize the information for your professor.

What conclusions can you draw?

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CAEL Preparation Resources

CAEL Webinars

Webinar	Focus	Length
CAEL 101: **Get the Facts**	An overview of the features and format of the CAEL Test	90 minutes
CAEL 201: **Speaking and Test Format**	CAEL Part 1: Independent Speaking	90 minutes
CAEL 202: **Reading and Speaking**	CAEL Part 2: Integrated Reading	90 minutes
CAEL 203: **Listening and Speaking**	CAEL Part 3: Integrated Listening	90 minutes
CAEL 204: **Writing, Reading, and Listening**	CAEL Parts 4 + 5: Academic Units A + B	90 minutes
CAEL 301: **Speaking**	CAEL Speaking tasks	2 hours
CAEL 302: **Writing**	CAEL Writing tasks	90 minutes

- **Everyone is welcome to register for all CAEL webinars!** It is not necessary to attend them in sequence. Register here.
- You can participate and ask questions to the instructor in all sessions.
- After each session, you will receive an email that includes a link to **free study materials**: a PDF containing the most important content from the webinar, including checklists and strategies.
- You can attend the same session more than once, but please be aware that **the content will be the same**. We repeat these webinars frequently to help new test takers learn about the test!
- One recording of each webinar is posted on our **YouTube channel**.

Additional Resources

Free CAEL Practice Tests: access them here

CAEL Preparation Program: cael.ca/cael-prep-program

Online Store: cael.ca/prepare-for-cael/paid-study-materials

CAEL Live on YouTube: find playlist here

CAEL Prep with Brandi on YouTube: find playlist here

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