CAEL 301: Speaking

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.
- If you like, you can **include some relevant personal details** and speak in the first person when doing so.
- **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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Integrated Speaking: Strategies

Preparation Time

- **Carefully read the question** and determine exactly what you have to talk about.
- **Use point form to list any relevant points you remember from the source.** Don't worry about spelling and grammar.
- **Skim the source** to find additional ideas to use in your response. Keep in mind that not every point from the text or lecture notes will apply to the question.
- **Organize your notes.** For example, write numbers beside your main ideas and make it clear which details belong with which main ideas. It doesn't matter if it's messy, as long as you can read it and make sense of it for a short time.
- **Begin to consider how you might rephrase key ideas.** (Reading out content from the source will not benefit your score.)
- **Consider how you will introduce your response.**

Speaking Time

- **Begin with a statement that clearly introduces the topic.** It's better that this be in your own words; avoid simply reading out the question.
- **Use transitions** to introduce main ideas.
- Use information from the source, but **express the ideas in your own words**.
- **Use vocabulary specific to the topic.**
- **Aim for about three main ideas.** It is not necessary to include exactly three, but this is a good number to aim for.
- **If necessary, look at the source while speaking.** The text or lecture notes will remain on screen while you speak, so you can consult it if you need to.
- **Do your best to fill the full two-minute speaking time.** Keep in mind that pausing for a short time to take a breath and gather your thoughts is a better strategy than giving up before the time is up.

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Speaking Checklist: CAEL Parts 1, 2, and 3

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 patterns?	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

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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

Speaking on the Long Reading	
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 | Sometimes | No
3. Is the speaker able to paraphrase information rather than repeat words or phrases from the Reading passage?	Yes | Sometimes | No

Speaking on the Long Listening	
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 | Sometimes | No
3. Is the speaker able to paraphrase information rather than repeat words or phrases from the Listening passage?	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 70 overall)

I'm a fifth-year student in UBC majoring in Psychology and minoring in Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies. And so I guess in that way I've already decided what I want to study in university. The reason that I wanted to major in Psychology is because I've always been interested in the way that human...behaviour is shaped by the human mind...Everyone has different motivations and different personalities and that affects how our actions come. Uh... So I was very interested in learning about that, particularly also in language acquisition, um, the psychology behind language and how there's a certain point in our lives where we...are able to pick up language more easily. And also...just how the environment and our...genes...and all sorts of different factors affect our lives in ways that we don't even realize. And I also minored in Classical Studies.

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 70 overall)

I grew up in the Philippines and went to a very strict Chinese school before moving here to Canada. So there are definitely some stark differences between two educational systems that I noticed. One of the advantages of going to school in the Philippines is the discipline that was instilled in me since I was a little child. For example, we had homework practically every day and if the homework wasn't finished or handed in...we were simply given a zero. No extensions, no makeups, no extra credit, just a zero. And...that really shaped my study habits and still stay with me today. I...to this day I don't procrastinate, I'll make sure to hand in my work on time. I make sure to also plan in advance and manage my time wisely so that I'm able to do all the work that I have to do...at a reasonable amount of time without getting too stressed. Another advantage is the high standards of achievement that were set by schools in the Philippines. Most of the stuff that I learned when I moved here and went to high school in Canada I already learned when I went to elementary school. So there was definitely...um, a higher standard of achievement.

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Sample Responses: 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 70 overall)

Based on the graph, there are more and more travellers coming into Canada within the last three years...and most of them seem to taking the plane to come here. Interestingly, there's also a drop in travellers in the middle of 2014, but it seems to have picked up after that. It would be interesting to know why...there was a drop. Um...in land transportation it's pretty relatively stable. There is about close to a million and it's also been increasing recently. Air...travel is by far the most popular one and sea has just remained at...practically zero, less than 500,000.

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

The chart before us depicts the number of non-resident travellers to Canada between the years of 2013 to 2016...by travelling by land, sea, and air. The number of, uh, non-residents travellers to Canada is measured, and starts from 0, goes to 500,000 and increases in increments of 500,000 up to 5 million. We can see that air travel is the most popular methods, then land, then sea. However, uh, between the years of 2013 and 2014 the...number of non-resident travellers to Canada who came by air and land were on the decline. What we conclude from this is that between those years travel to Canada was a little less popular and so did not draw as many tourists or non-resident travellers. After that, however...um...travel by land and air increases in the, from the years 2014 to 2016. This we can conclude means that, uh, travel to Canada by any means was, uh, on the increase more popular and more desired. Uh, with even an increase, a greater increase between 2014 and 2015 than there is between 2015 and 2016 by air. Sea travel has, is, um, generally on the whole very steady and not increasing by much any year on this graph and so what we conclude is that, um, people prefer to go by land or by air if they are travelling to Canada.

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Sample Response: Speaking on the Long Reading

Question

Why do engineering disasters happen? What are the causes of errors?

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

Engineering disasters happen, uh, sometimes because of unforeseen weather...conditions such as natural disasters, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc. But also, according to Miroslav Matousek and Jorg Schneider, uh, two researchers who did a study, found that the main causes of engineering failure, uh, include cares—carelessness, negligence, and human unpreparedness. More recently, uh, George Show, Sowers, um...looked at 500 cases of engineering failures and identified that 88% of these cases were due to what he called human shortcomings, with ignorance and not using the appropriate technology being the most common factors. Um, in add— What causes these errors...um...is mostly a lack of communication. For example, in the walkway collapse in the Kansas City hotel, that was a...lack of communication between the designer and the engineer. Sometimes these errors are caused by admi— using the incorrect units, in the case of the Mars Climate Orbiter. And also what could cause, uh, errors such as these is not having, uh, correct supervision as is, was the case in the, um, error of the, uh, Quebec bridge. All of these cases are human errors, things that could have been avoided had the right precautions, uh...been used. These would apply to, uh, George Sowers 33% ignorance. Um...and also to a, mostly a lack of communication.

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Sample Response: Speaking on the Long Listening

Question

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

Response Transcript (Speaking Band 80 overall)

An economic model is a smaller-scale representation of a certain part of the economy. They use various, um, and f—a finite number of variables to show or predict, uh, one small part of a real-world economy. Um...for example, they show the very—the availability of resources, and what, sorry, and how that affects the production of certain products. Uh...economic models can be visual or they can be mathematical, they can be very simple or they can be very complex and require higher-level math or statistics to understand them. Um...there are some that...try to oversimplify the, um...the part of the economy that it's scrutinizing, and this is the problem with economic models is that it doesn't fully represent, um, a real-world economy. However, what they do help us to understand is smaller subsets of the economy and if we can um, have a baseline knowledge of a larger economy we can slowly and, but surely, um, be able to understand it in its variability and its ever-changing nature, uh...so that we can, um, better be able to participate in this economy. Uh...and these economic models help us do that by providing us with the entry-level knowledge that we need.

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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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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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