

CAEL 203: Listening and Speaking



Listening Question Types

The table below describes the types of questions you will encounter in CAEL Listening (and Reading) tasks. Each question is one of these three types. Below the table are strategies for identifying and approaching each question type.

1. General meaning	General meaning questions focus on broad ideas , not a single detail. Choosing the correct answer requires putting together information from multiple sentences, multiple sections, or the full audio clip.
2. Specific information	Specific information questions require listening for one key detail provided in one specific place in the audio.
3. Inference	Inference questions require you to draw a conclusion about something based on information provided in the audio. The answer is not provided directly in the passage, but there is information that points toward which answer choice is best.

General Meaning Questions

These questions often (though not always) refer to the entire listening passage; for example, *What is the purpose of the lecture?* Words and phrases such as *main idea*, *topic*, and *purpose* tend to signal general meaning questions, as they usually refer to the whole clip or a large section of it. A suggested strategy for approaching these questions is:

- Identify the topic the question is about. (If the question is asking about the entire passage, skip this step and the following step. Instead, listen for main ideas and important details and put them together to point you to the correct answer.)
- Listen for key words and paraphrased ideas from the question to identify the section of the audio that includes words, phrases, and ideas related to that topic.
- Pay careful attention to the section(s) related to the question topic, taking note of relevant details.
- Eliminate incorrect answers, then select the best answer choice.

Specific Information Questions

These questions may ask for a number, a name, a term, a fact, or any other detail that is provided in one specific place in the audio clip. The answer can often be expressed in a single word or short phrase. A suggested strategy for approaching these questions is:

- Determine what kind of information you need to locate.
- Listen for key words and paraphrased ideas from the question to identify the section where your information should be.
- Listen carefully for the phrase with the specific detail you need.
- Use that information to select the best answer choice.

Inference Questions

These questions usually include a word or phrase that signals something probable or hypothetical; for example, *likely*, *probably*, or *would*. A suggested strategy for approaching these questions is:

- Look for clues in the question that tell you the answer isn't clearly stated in the lecture.
- Use key words and paraphrased ideas from the question to identify the section with content related to the question topic.
- Consider what the speaker says about the topic and how it relates to the question.
- Draw a logical conclusion based on what you know and what you are being asked.
- Eliminate incorrect answers, then select the best answer.

Note that it is not always possible to determine a question's type from its wording, and choosing the right answer does not depend on identifying the question type. However, it is helpful to be aware that these are the three kinds of questions you will encounter on the test, and that it is sometimes possible to identify a question's type from its wording or content and find the answer using the strategy indicated above.



Long and Short Listening Strategies

- **Preview the questions.** Read the questions and answer choices to get a sense of the order that information will be presented and the topic of the upcoming audio clip.
- **Identify key words and question types.** Take note of words and phrases in the questions that you can listen for to help you identify answers or key information in the audio passage. It can also be helpful to try to identify question types (general meaning, specific information, or inference). Remember that the questions are as chronological as possible: the questions are listed in roughly the same order that the answers will be heard in the audio.
- **Answer questions as you listen. Be cautious about note-taking.** Answer as many questions as you can while listening, and take notes only if you know you will be able to do so without losing focus on the audio. The review time after the passage finishes is not intended to be enough time to answer all of the questions.
- **Use the review time to check your answers.** Ensure that you have not left any questions unanswered and that you are satisfied with your answer choices.



Listening Time Management

Preview Time	While Listening	Review Time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read the questions. • Identify key words. • Identify question types. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen for key words. • Identify key ideas and information. • Focus on what you understand. • Answer questions as you listen. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that all questions are answered. • Review answers. • Guess if you have to!



Speaking on the Long Listening 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 lecture.** Don't worry about spelling and grammar.
- **Skim the Lecture Notes** to find additional ideas to use in your response. Keep in mind that not every point from the 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 Lecture Notes 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 Long Listening, 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 Lecture Notes while speaking.** They 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.



Speaking Checklist: CAEL Part 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?	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 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



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



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)

So what are economic models and how do they help us understand the economy? So, economic models simply put are representations of the real world economy so it's important to note that that means they are simplified representations in that they are pretty much theoretical. So while they have a greater truth in them they cannot really account for like a perfect real life scenario. And the reason for this is because math and statistics place such a massive role in...than the economic model and, uh, they cannot account for everything so even, even the most sophisticated economic model would not be able to account for all the tiny nuances of a real life situation. And uh...economic models help us understand the economy through visual and mathematical represent, uh presentation. Uh, we are able to um, help us understand and maybe even predict the economy by uh, hav-having the economic model answer some what if questions. For example, what if a certain resource or product is created, how will that affect the products, other products and resources and vice versa. So, um, by understanding the nuances of...the relationship between resources and products economic models can help the businessmen, or businesses to make really important decisions on how to direct their future investments.



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.

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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