

English Proficiency Assessment Sample Test and Essay Questions

Institutional CanTEST Sample Test Questions

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Sheridan Writing Assessment

Sample Essay Questions

Institutional CanTEST Sample Test Questions

Sample: Listening Test Dialogue

Below is an example of the kind of dialogue you might hear on the listening test. For this part of the test, the dialogue and the questions are recorded; they are NOT printed in your test booklet. Only the test answer choices will be printed in your test booklet.

- Man: Hey, Margaret, do you know where Don is? I haven't seen him all day and he has some lab reports I need in a big hurry.
- Woman: Oh, hi Jack. Didn't you hear? Don is off sick. I was hoping to see him myself, as a matter of fact, to talk about that new project we're both working on.
- Man: Well I don't know what to do. He must have those reports at home. I wonder if I should drive over to his house and get them. What do you think?
- Woman: Oh, I don't think that's such a good idea. If he's sick, he shouldn't be disturbed. Can't you wait at least one more day?
- Man: I suppose you're right. But, if we haven't heard anything by tomorrow, at lunch time, I'm going to give him a call, at least.
- Woman: Look, Don's a pretty responsible person. I'm sure he'll find a way to get those reports to you on time. Don't worry.
- Man: Okay, okay. Talk to you later.

Now here are the questions:

1. Why does the man want to see Don?
2. The man wants to know if the woman thinks he should ...
3. What does the woman say about Don?
4. What does the man decide in the end?

Listening Test Dialogue Questions

In your test booklet, you will find the following answer choices. You will mark your answers on a separate answer sheet. Sometimes you will also have to write a short answer.

1. a) To find out how sick he is.
 b) To obtain some lab reports.
 c) To start work on a new project

2. a) go over to Don's house.
 b) telephone don right away.
 c) complete Don's reports.

3. a) He doesn't have the reports.
 b) He has sent in the reports.
 c) He shouldn't be disturbed.

4. a) To wait until the next day.
 b) To call Don before lunch.
 c) To visit Don after lunch.

Sample: Listening Test Lecture

On the test you will also hear a lecture or an interview similar to the one below. These passages are followed by 6 to 10 questions. Most questions are multiple-choice; there are sometimes short answer questions, too. For these longer passages, both the questions and the answer choices will be printed in your test booklet.

Vitamin C is the word for today and a popular subject of discussion everywhere. Of course we have to start with the word vitamin. Biochemists gradually realized that some diseases weren't caused by germs or microorganisms but were caused because there was something missing in the diet. They found that if you didn't include certain foods in the diet, you would get diseases like scurvy or beri-beri, and if you included the foods, the disease would disappear. It was as though there were some substances which the body couldn't make for itself, but for which it had to depend on a food supply, and it needed those substances only in traces. This was first actually stated just about the time of nineteen hundred and one or thereabouts. A Polish-born American, biochemist Casimir Funk, suggested that these substances, required in very small quantities, be called vitamines because the first substances located looked as though they had a certain group in the molecule, called the amine group. And "vita" is from the Latin word for "life", so they became lifeamines. Well, then, this was all very well except that as researchers learned more and more about these vitamines, it turned out that in some of them, there was no amine group, so they dropped the "e" and it became "vitamins." A vitamin is a substance, needed by the body for life, – in small quantities – which the body cannot make for itself.

Well, as we discovered the various vitamins, we had to name each one, and first we couldn't name them because we didn't know what they were chemically, so we didn't commit ourselves. We spoke about vitamin A, vitamin B, vitamin C, and so on. It was much later before the term "ascorbic acid" was introduced. Vitamin C itself turned out to be the vitamin that prevented scurvy. If vitamin C were absent from the diet, you got scurvy. If you restored it to the diet, you cured scurvy. Scurvy takes place only when you're on a very monotonous diet that doesn't include fruits, vegetables, things like that. If you eat nothing but dried biscuits and dried beef you'll eventually get scurvy because these foods don't contain vitamin C.

And that means on long voyages, you're risking scurvy. To go back a little in history, scurvy was a serious thing in the late 1700's. Great Britain depended on its navy and its navy was constantly being knocked out of action by scurvy. There was a Doctor Lindt who found out that certain foods would prevent scurvy and by experimentation he just discovered that limes were a good way of preventing scurvy, and he persuaded the navy to make use of them. It took years and years and years – in fact it was only when the navy was up against Napoleon, where victory was really important, that they decided to try out these limes and all the British sailors were forced to have lime juice every day. The limes cured scurvy. And, as I said, eventually scientists discovered exactly what the chemical was and discovered its structure, and they named it "ascorbic acid." "Ascorbic" is from the Latin word for scurvy, scorbutus, and the "a" at the beginning is the Greek negative, so ascorbic acid means "no scurvy."

Listening Test Lecture Questions

1. Around the year 1900, biochemists began to realize that some diseases were caused by
 - a) certain foods in the diet.
 - b) certain substances in food.
 - c) micro-organisms found in food.
 - d) something missing in the diet.

2. Why was the “e” dropped from the original word “vitamines”?
 - a) The word “vitamin” is easier to pronounce.
 - b) Not all vitamins have the amine group.
 - c) People had forgotten the origin of the term.
 - d) Scientists had located more real vitamins.

3. The vitamins were named “A,” “B,” “C,” etc., because
 - a) they were discovered one at a time.
 - b) they were very elementary substances.
 - c) their chemical composition was not known.
 - d) their function was not fully determined.

4. What did Dr. Lindt discover?
 - a) The foundations of modern vitamin theory.
 - b) The chemical structure of vitamin C.
 - c) Foods which would prevent scurvy.
 - d) That long voyages caused scurvy.

5. The British navy started to use limes
 - a) as soon as sailors got sick
 - b) during the war against Napoleon.
 - c) as soon as their effect was discovered.
 - d) long before the late 1700's.

6. What is the main topic of this passage?
 - a) The history of vitamin C.
 - b) The treatment of scurvy.
 - c) The different uses of vitamins.
 - d) The origin of modern nutrition.

Sample: Skimming and Scanning Questions

Below is an example from the Skimming and Scanning section of the reading test. In this section, the questions are quite easy but you have to find the answer very quickly. Rather than read through the passage, it is better to read the questions first and then try to find the answers in the passage. On the official test you will have 10 minutes to find the answers to two passages.

The questions below refer to the newspaper article which is printed on the next page.

1. What is this article about?
 - a) The number of foreign students studying in Canada
 - b) The Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada
 - c) University student enrolment across Canada.
2. Approximately how many full-time students attended university in the 1989-90 academic year?
- 3-4. Name two provinces which showed a decline in enrolment in 1988-89.
5. True or False: There was an increase in the number of foreign students enrolled in full-time undergraduate programs.
6. What was the % of increase in enrolment for full-time students in 1989-90?
7. What is one reason stated in the text for last year's declines?
8. How many institutions are members of AUCC?

Skimming and Scanning Text

University student enrolment passes half-million mark

FOR THE FIRST TIME in history, the number of full-time students at Canadian universities has passed the half-million mark, reports the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

This survey, just completed, of fall enrolments for the 1989-90 academic year was conducted by the AUCC in cooperation with the Association of Atlantic Universities (AAU) and the Council of Ontario Universities (COU).

Preliminary figures show an increase in the total number of full-time students of 3.2% over the same period last year, making 1989-90 the tenth straight record year for full-time enrolments. Ironically, the 1980s were widely expected to be a period of declining enrolments.

As in years past, most of this projected increase is due to substantial growth in full-time undergraduate enrolments. Unlike 1988-89, however, all provinces share in the growth: the two provinces that recorded declines in last year's survey, Saskatchewan (-2.4%) and Alberta (-1.5%), report increases of 1.8% and 3.2% respectively. Enrolment quotas, limited growth policies and higher admission standards at several of these provinces' largest universities led to last year's declines. These measures are still in place but with some changes in enrolment ceilings and procedures for applying quotas.

Similarly, the numbers of first year full-time undergraduates are higher in all provinces than they were at the same time last year. In this category also, Alberta and Saskatchewan report significant increases in this year's survey, compared to a decrease last year.

The AUCC survey also shows a small increase in the number of full-time undergraduate foreign students studying in Canada.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada has as its membership 88 universities and university-level colleges. It promotes cooperation among institutions of higher education and represents the university community to governments and to national and international bodies concerned with university education and research.

Sample: Reading Comprehension Text

The permanent conversion of farmland to urban and industrial development is a major concern today. Accurate data on the rate of such losses are not available, but estimates for the area of land absorbed for every increase of 1,000 in the urban population vary from about 10 to 400 hectares. The higher figure includes urban fringe land alienated from agriculture by land speculation and resulting high prices. If an average figure of 80 hectares of every increase of 1,000 in the urban population is used, the projected permanent conversion of land to urban development in Quebec and Ontario is 300,000 hectares and 500,000 hectares respectively. More than half of this land is good agricultural land in climactically favourable areas. Around Montreal, for instance, 8,700 hectares of the best agricultural land in Quebec is being lost to development each year. Equally serious may be the loss of farmland to low-density rural housing, but no firm data are available.

There is a similar trend in Western Canada. About 40,000 hectares of farmland were lost to urban development between 1962 and 1972. In Alberta, over 16,000 hectares of prime land were absorbed in the course of seven years by the cities of Edmonton and Calgary, and there is evidence that smaller towns on the Prairies are consuming farmland at up to twice the rate, per unit population, of the big cities. The areas mentioned may not seem impressive in relation to the total area of farmland in Canada, and it is true that few statistics are available on the rates of loss of farmland. However, the picture is clear enough to provide the basis for rational choices.

It must be remembered that only tiny areas of Canada, less than one per cent, have climates and soils suitable for the production of corn and soft fruits. Most of these valuable parcels of land are in the path of rapid urban and industrial growth. Productive farmland close to the city is basic insurance against future events such as food shortages and high prices that would result from: (a) a dramatic increase in the world's population; (b) a climatic shift such as a decrease of even a degree or two in the mean annual temperature; (c) a series of dry years; or (d) increasingly high transportation costs due to energy shortages.

Because of its "greenbelt" character, farmland is also of immeasurable aesthetic value. City dwellers will often drive for miles to experience an orchard in blossom and enjoy the rural scene. Wildlife ecologists have persuaded us of the value of preserving endangered species like the whooping crane and of the necessity of selecting pipeline routes that will not disturb migrating animals like the caribou. Surely it is not too much to expect that we recognize the necessity of preserving for agriculture the prime farmland close to cities such as Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver.

Reading Comprehension Text Questions

1. The main idea of this passage is that in Canada
 - a) urban and industrial growth should be slowed down.
 - b) losses of farmland constitute an important problem.
 - c) accurate statistics on farmland conversion are needed.
 - d) prime farmland is scarce in areas of good climate.
2. Why do estimates of the rate of farmland conversion vary?
 - a) There is no uniform definition of "farmland".
 - b) The urban population is growing at such a rapid rate.
 - c) Urban fringe land is not always included in the figures.
 - d) Experts have not devoted enough attention to the problem.
3. What would productive farmland near cities do?
 - a) Prevent possible food shortages.
 - b) Keep present food prices high.
 - c) Encourage even more urban growth.
 - d) Increase the value of urban fringe land.
4. In smaller towns on the Prairies, farmland is being consumed
 - a) in proportion to increased land speculation.
 - b) at the rate of 16,000 hectares every 7 years.
 - c) principally by low-density rural housing.
 - d) at a faster rate than in the big cities.
5. The amount of agricultural land lost does not seem "impressive" because
 - a) there is such a large amount of farmland in Canada.
 - b) the problem only affects Eastern Canada.
 - c) only crops such as corn and soft fruits are affected.
 - d) people do not know the real extent of the problem.
6. Maintaining urban fringe land for agricultural use will avoid problem associated with
 - a) a rise in the mean annual temperature.
 - b) soil unsuitable for production.
 - c) rising transportation costs.
 - d) an excessive amount of moisture.
7. The author concludes by asking readers
 - a) to propose solutions to the problem.
 - b) to learn to appreciate the aesthetic value of farmland.
 - c) to refrain from disturbing the animals when they visit farms.
 - d) to support the preservation of farmland near big cities.

Sample: Cloze Test Passage

In the text below, words have been replaced with blanks numbered from 1 to 25. First read through the text to get the general meaning. Next, re-read the text, choosing for each blank the word on the next page that best fits both the grammar and the meaning.

The Conversation Class

The majority of students learning English are primarily interested in speaking the language. Unfortunately, in most English courses, far more _____ (1) is paid to the skill of writing _____ (2) to speech. Yet, in the end, a _____ (3) knowledge of English will be judged _____ (4) the world at large not on his _____ (5) to write the language but _____ (6) speak it.

As far as the teacher _____ (7) concerned, part of the difficulty comes _____ (8) the fact that conversation lessons are _____ (9) at all easy to conduct. Each _____ (10) must be carefully prepared, otherwise the _____ (11) will obtain little or no response _____ (12) his class. No teacher would expect _____ (13) students to attempt written composition before _____ (14) had mastered a large number _____ (15) basic sentence patterns and learned _____ (16) write simple, compound and complex sentences. _____ (17), many teachers will try to start _____ (18) discussion with a group of students _____ (19) providing the students with any preparation _____ (20) all. During most classes of this _____ (21), the student has to struggle to _____ (22) complex ideas in English. The teacher may _____ (23) hesitant to correct him because this _____ (24) interrupt the flow of conversation. Even _____ (25) he does correct him, the student will learn very little. Sometimes the whole class breaks down and the teacher ends up doing all the talking.

Cloze Test Answer Choices

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1. a) attention
b) importance
c) interest
d) time | 8. a) after
b) by
c) from
d) with | 15. a) many
b) of
c) on
d) the | 22. a) express
b) have
c) learn
d) many |
| 2. a) instead
b) or
c) than
d) then | 9. a) also
b) becoming
c) most
d) not | 16. a) and
b) can
c) how
d) to | 23. a) be
b) not
c) often
d) to |
| 3. a) bilingual
b) overall
c) student
d) student's | 10. a) course
b) lesson
c) question
d) students | 17. a) Consequently
b) Not
c) Therefore
d) Still | 24. a) correction
b) have
c) might
d) student |
| 4. a) around
b) by
c) over
d) to | 11. a) conversation
b) result
c) student
d) teacher | 18. a) a
b) by
c) some
d) the | 25. a) if
b) that
c) then
d) time |
| 5. a) ability
b) method
c) skill
d) way | 12. a) about
b) for
c) from
d) in | 19. a) and
b) are
c) by
d) without | |
| 6. a) capacity
b) how
c) they
d) to | 13. a) every
b) from
c) his
d) their | 20. a) at
b) before
c) in
d) of | |
| 7. a) be
b) has
c) is
d) was | 14. a) have
b) having
c) be
d) they | 21. a) course
b) discussion
c) kind
d) session | |

Answer Key

Listening – Dialogue

1. b
2. a
3. c
4. a

Listening – Lecture

1. d
2. b
3. c
4. c
5. b
6. a

Skim and Scan

1. c
2. over ½ million
- 3-4. Alberta, Saskatchewan
5. True
6. 3.2%
7. Enrolment quotas, or limited growth policies, or high admission standards (any one)
8. 88

Reading

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. d
5. d
6. c
7. d

Cloze Test

1. a
2. c
3. d
4. b
5. a
6. d
7. c
8. c
9. d
10. b
11. d
12. c
13. c
14. d
15. b
16. d
17. d
18. a
19. d
20. a
21. c
22. a
23. a
24. c
25. a

Sheridan Writing Assessment Sample Essay Questions

1. People should not use animals for their own benefit unless the animals do not suffer in any way. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

In your essay, express your opinion and support it with arguments.

2. Damage to the environment is the result of worldwide improvements in the standard of living. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

In your essay, express your opinion and support it with arguments.

3. People will have serious problems in their careers and social life if they do not have any computer skills. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

In your essay, express your opinion and support it with arguments.

4. When people get old, they often go to live in a nursing home where there are nurses to look after them. Sometimes the government has to pay for this care. Who should be responsible for our old people?

In your essay, express your opinion and support it with arguments.

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