

CAEL 302: Writing



Long Writing Strategies

Prewriting (about 4-5 minutes)

- **Read the question carefully.** What is the topic? Is there more than one part to the question?
- **Brainstorm ideas.** What do you remember from the reading and lecture? Are there any relevant ideas you could use in your response?
- **Review the passage and lecture notes.** Skim the reading for sections that are especially related to the question topic. Read through the lecture notes and look for relevant points.
- **Create an outline.** Using point form, abbreviations, etc., list your main ideas and supporting details in the order you want to include them. You might also include the idea(s) you will use for your introductory statement and conclusion.

Writing (about 25-27 minutes)

- **Begin with an introductory statement.** Introduce the response topic with an interesting idea or fact. This can be one or two sentences.
- **State your opinion.** Write one sentence that includes the topic and clearly expresses your view on it. Optionally, you can also list the reasons for your position—the main ideas of the paragraphs to follow.
- **Include 2-3 body paragraphs.** Each body paragraph should focus on one main idea and include support from at least one source. Aim for about 4-5 sentences in each paragraph.
- **Use transitions to connect ideas.** Transitions signal connections within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs. Choose transitions that add meaning as precisely as possible.
- **Use information from both sources.** While it is not necessary to use exactly the same number of points from each source, it is important to maintain a rough balance and avoid overusing or underusing them.
- **Write in your own words.** Avoid quoting from the sources and don't copy from either source. Paraphrase ideas to demonstrate your understanding of the sources and ability to use language.
- **Maintain an appropriate tone.** Avoid casual and vague language (e.g., *really good*, *awesome*, *a big deal*, *kind of hard*, etc.).
- **End with a short conclusion.** There is no need to repeat any ideas, including your opinion statement. Instead, sum up the response with a thought or two that relate to the topic. These can be predictions, suggestions, or any ideas that connect to what you have discussed.
- **Write at least 250 words.** You can write more if you wish to and have time.

Review (about 4-5 minutes)

- **Read through the whole response carefully at least once.** It's even better if you can read through it more than once and focus on different elements of the response each time.
- **Fix mechanical and formatting errors.** Check grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Ensure that capital letters are used correctly and the response is formatted appropriately (paragraph breaks, spacing, etc.).
- **Make sure there is no unnecessary repetition of words or phrases.** Try to express ideas in different ways if they need to be repeated.
- **Ensure that language use is concise and sentence structures are strong.** For example, if you have written several consecutive short sentences, consider whether they could be combined. If there are words or phrases that don't add any meaning to the sentence, remove them (e.g., *in my own personal opinion; a very challenging and difficult situation*).



Long Writing Checklist: CAEL Part 4

| Content | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. Does the writer remain on topic? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 2. Does the writer use specific details and examples to support ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 3. Is the writer's viewpoint clearly expressed? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 4. Does the writer fully answer the question(s)? | Yes No |
| 5. Is the length sufficient to provide a fully developed response? | Yes No |
| 6. Does the writer avoid repeating ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 7. Does the writer use information from the Reading section to support and develop ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 8. Does the writer use information from the Listening section to support and develop ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 9. Does the writer use information from the Reading and Listening sections in a balanced way? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 10. Is the writer able to restate ideas in his or her own words? | Yes Sometimes No |
| Organization | |
| 11. Does the response have an introductory statement? | Yes No |
| 12. Are logical transitions (furthermore, in addition, etc.) used to link ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 13. Is the response well organized and easy to follow? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 14. Does the response have appropriate paragraphing? | Yes No |
| Language Use | |
| 15. Do errors in spelling and usage impede comprehension? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 16. Do grammatical structures (verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, etc.) support meaning? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 17. Is a variety of sentence types used? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 18. Does the writer avoid repetition by using a range of vocabulary? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 19. Is vocabulary and tone suitable for an academic context? | Yes Sometimes No |



Sample Responses: Long Writing

Question

Should scientists go back and reanalyze established conclusions and facts? Should we spend time on new questions and new research instead? Explain your position, build an argument, and provide support.

Original Version (created for instructional purposes; includes many weaknesses)

Scientists who rely on conventional interpretations of past events may be getting a wrong idea. We should avoid maintaining these wrong ideas. They are so basic to our understanding of the world. We should reassess traditionally accepted facts. This is why.

The reading passage shows why history should not be seen as fully objective. When historians recount conflicts between people from different nations, religions, or political groups, their own beliefs and alliances affect how they see things. This makes it challenging for them to provide an objective account—especially if they are unaware of these influences. The passage shows how Greek historians portrayed Persians in an undesirable light throughout history, overlooking the valuable cultural & artistic contributions they made to humanity.

It is the same for other areas. We can use facts and analysis to disprove those theories, clearing up how mankind set out to live with animals and demonstrating how this took a very long time, which is why it does not provide great benefits in the first generations. There must be a million other examples! This is especially essential for issues that are vital to our current situation. Looking backwards may actually help give us clarity as we move forward with more purpose and direction. *(207 words)*

Revised Version (created for instructional purposes; much stronger than the original)

Is everything in our history books accurate, factual, and true? When we consider the facts around how mankind recorded early history—such as who was writing it down and why they were doing so—this assumption becomes questionable. Scientists who rely on conventional interpretations of past events may be getting a flawed perception. To avoid maintaining these false assumptions—many of which may be fundamental to our understanding of the world—we would be wise to reassess traditionally accepted facts. The following examples illustrate why this is true.

The reading passage convincingly shows why historical accounts are often biased. When historians recount conflicts between people from different nations, religions, or political groups, their own beliefs and alliances affect how they see things. This makes it challenging for them to provide an objective account—especially if they are unaware of these influences. In particular, the passage shows how Greek historians portrayed Persians in an undesirable light throughout history, overlooking the valuable cultural and artistic contributions they made to humanity.

Similar thinking applies to our understanding of domestication. The lecture explains how a handful of insubstantial theories were shared in the 1800s and 1900s. Looking back now, we can use facts and analysis to disprove those theories, clearing up how mankind set out to live with animals and demonstrating how this took a very long time, which is why the first few generations barely noticed any advantages.

There are undoubtedly many more examples which illustrate how critical it is to challenge established judgements. This is especially essential for issues that are vital to our current situation. With this in mind, looking backwards may actually help give us clarity as we move forward with more purpose and direction. *(287 words)*

Question

What factor do you think influences us the most when determining how and what we eat?

Response (created for instructional purposes; demonstrates strong writing skills)

Prehistoric humans likely wouldn't recognize much in the modern world, but archaeological findings show that their methods of obtaining and preparing food are still with us today. Of the wide variety of factors that influence modern eating choices and habits, agriculture is the most significant.

Firstly, almost everything we eat is produced through agriculture. According to the reading passage, our distant ancestors domesticated animals like cows, sheep, and chickens: the same animals we use for meat and eggs today. The crops they grew, including rice and wheat, are still the most common grains worldwide. Furthermore, as they had more food than they could eat immediately, it was necessary to create various storage containers to keep it fresh, like ceramic jars for small quantities and granaries for large ones. Modern societies use the same methods to ensure steady access to agricultural products, even in seasons when those items can't be produced.

Secondly, agriculture is strongly connected to rituals, as the lecturer explained. Some ancient rituals arose as a direct result of farming, such as the Inca sacrificing animals to their gods in exchange for bountiful crops. Other rituals featured specific agricultural products, such as the tamales eaten at feasts that the Maya held after defeating an enemy or choosing a king. Agricultural products are prominent in modern rituals as well. For example, a typical Christmas dinner in Canada includes a farm-raised turkey as well as grain and vegetable side dishes. Birthdays are celebrated with cake, whose ingredients include flour, sugar, eggs, and milk.

Ultimately, ancient farmers are responsible not only for most of the items on our grocery lists, but also for a long list of technological developments and social rituals that will no doubt continue through future generations.

(288 words)



Short Writing Strategies

Prewriting (about 30 seconds – 1 minute)

- **Read the question carefully.** What is the topic? Which source should you use?
- **Review the source.** Skim the reading or lecture notes for sections that are especially related to the question topic.
- **Create a basic outline (optional).** Using point form, abbreviations, etc., list your details in the order you want to include them.

Writing (about 8-9 minutes)

- **Begin with an introductory sentence.** Introduce the response topic and the aspects you will discuss. Don't express an opinion (it won't be an opinion question) and don't include a "hook" or introductory statement that leads into the topic.
- **Summarize the source information in an organized way.** For example, if you are describing the characteristics of something, introduce them one at a time. If you are comparing two things, discuss one first and then the next, or compare first and then contrast.
- **Use transitions to connect ideas.** Transitions signal connections within and between sentences. Choose transitions that add meaning as precisely as possible.
- **Express ideas in your own words.** Avoid quoting or copying from the source. Paraphrase ideas to demonstrate your understanding of the source and ability to use language.
- **Maintain an appropriate tone.** Avoid casual and vague language (e.g., *really good*, *awesome*, *a big deal*, *kind of hard*, etc.).
- **Optionally, you can end with a concluding sentence.** However, this is not necessary.
- **Write at least 100 words.** You can write more if you wish to and have time. Most likely, your response will be one single paragraph.

Review (about 30 seconds – 1 minute)

- **Correct errors and tighten language** in the same ways that you do for the Long Writing.



Short Writing Checklist: CAEL Part 5

| Content | |
|--|----------------------|
| 1. Does the writer remain on topic? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 2. Does the writer use specific details and examples to support ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 3. Does the writer fully answer the question(s)? | Yes No |
| 4. Is the passage an appropriate length required by the task? | Yes No |
| 5. Does the writer use information from the reading section or the listening section to support ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 6. Is the writer able to restate ideas in his or her own words? | Yes Sometimes No |
| Organization | |
| 7. Does the passage have an opening statement? | Yes No |
| 8. Are appropriate transitions used to link ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 9. Is there a logical flow of ideas? | Yes Sometimes No |
| Language Use | |
| 10. Do spelling mistakes impede comprehension? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 11. Do grammatical structures (verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, etc.) support meaning? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 12. Is a variety of sentence types used? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 13. Does the writer avoid repetition by using a range of vocabulary? | Yes Sometimes No |
| 14. Is vocabulary and tone suitable for an academic context? | Yes Sometimes No |



Sample Responses: Short Writing

Question

Based on the Reading passage, what are some features and characteristics that distinguish different planets?

Response (created for instructional purposes; demonstrates strong writing skills)

Planets are differentiated according to a number of features, but scientists tend to focus primarily on their make-up, location, size, and number of satellites. In our solar system, planets can be divided into two categories: inner and outer planets. The four inner or terrestrial planets—Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars—are closest to the sun. These planets are made up primarily of rock and metal, have only a few satellites, and are noted for being small and solid. The four outer or Jovian planets—Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune—are farthest from the sun. These bigger planets, which are made predominantly of hydrogen and helium gas, spin at a faster rate and may feature rings and numerous satellites.

(118 words)

Question

Based on the reading passage, what are the categories of joints in the human body? Give an example of each.

Response (created for instructional purposes; demonstrates strong writing skills)

Joints form connections between bones, and in the human body they are classified into three types. Fibrous joints are composed of dense connective tissue that prevents any movement between the connected bones. The skull consists of multiple bones held firmly in place by this substance. Cartilaginous joints connect bones with cartilage, which is less tough than dense connective tissue. The cartilaginous joints between our vertebrae provide a limited amount of flexibility so that some motion, such as bending, can take place. Finally, synovial joints are diarthrotic, meaning they facilitate the greatest degree of movement. Hip joints, for example, allow our legs to move both backward and forward.

(107 words)



Academic Writing Study Tips

- Improve your level of academic English by **reading small sections or chapters of academic texts** on **a variety of academic topics**. Ideally, read recent texts published in North America to get a good sense of the characteristics of modern Canadian academic writing.
- **Read opinion pieces** in the news; notice how writers express and support their views. Where applicable, observe how writers support their ideas with information from other sources.
- **Listen to formal monologues on academic topics**, such as TED talks, podcast episode excerpts, and YouTube videos by experts in a variety of fields.
- **Keep a vocabulary journal** and note down the meaning, pronunciation, and usage of new words. Familiarize yourself with the most common words in 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**.
- **Learn a range of transition words and phrases**; attempt to develop your transition usage past the standard *Firstly, Secondly, Lastly, In conclusion*. There are dozens of transitions that can be used within and between sentences to add meaning to the ideas.
- **Practice summarizing and paraphrasing ideas**. This can be done using any academic text or audio clip. It can be done with longer and shorter passages, with or without a time limit.
- **Do timed writing practice: long responses with a 35-minute time limit and short responses within 10 minutes**. There are lots of general academic writing questions online that require expressing an opinion (like the Long Writing), and any text or lecture can be summarized (like the Short Writing). The sources don't have to be official CAEL resources to be useful for practice. Get a sense of how much time you benefit from spending on prewriting, writing, and reviewing.

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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