

Transcript

CPE Test A

This is the Cambridge English Proficiency Test A. I'm going to give you the instructions for this test. I'll introduce each part of the test and give you time to look at the questions. At the start of each piece, you will hear this sound. (X). You'll hear each piece twice. Turn to Part 1.

You will hear three different extracts. For questions 1 – 6, choose the answer A, B or C which fits best according to what you hear. There are two questions for each extract.

Extract 1

You are listening to a podcast about unexplained phenomena.

Presenter: Startling news coming out of New Mexico this evening, with reports that suspicious fragments have been discovered upon the shores of Lake Heather, an underground water feature that no one had been able to reach since the great landslide of 1876 cut off access, until oil prospectors tunnelled through to it last year. These scraps, apparently only mere inches in length, are apparently of a substance that corresponds to nothing on the periodic table. This constitutes nothing less than physical corroboration of unearthly visitation. And let's not forget, this one state has received reports of dozens of sightings of unexplained flying craft in the last twelve months alone. This is no mere coincidence. But don't expect to hear about it. I'll wager our beloved leaders will crack down even further on any and all dissemination of these historic tidings. No doubt they're trying to avoid a panic. But have they given thought to the effect a visit from the stars would have on an entirely unsuspecting public?

Extract 2

You hear a woman talking with a friend about a journey she undertook.

A: I'd had rather forlorn hopes of being able to enjoy a coffee at the station while I waited for my connection, but considering where I was travelling, I knew I was being a bit naïve. And indeed, when I got there, not only was there no coffee, there wasn't a soul in evidence.

B: How awful! Did you have long to wait?

A: Well, that's just it. I had a good two hours to kill, which normally would have felt like an eternity, but, although I'd never have believed it, I found the whole experience bizarrely uplifting. I just sat in the quiet drinking it all in, reflecting on a rusty old carriage that had been left to rot in some sidings. It was like a picture postcard, and I wouldn't have bet on it but that long wait is in the running for the highlight of the trip.

B: There's a lesson there, you know.

A: Is there?

B: Well, yes. We all live such frenetic and regimented lives, but if you hadn't thrown caution to the wind for once and spontaneously gone for that later train, you'd have missed out on the experience altogether.

A: Yes. I suppose you're right.

Extract 3

You hear a man making an enquiry at a museum.

Man: I thought that finding it would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. I suspect you have all manner of such things in your archives.

Assistant: Not as much as you'd think, to be honest. Families tend not to lend us such items as they generally don't think they'll be of much interest to the public. They're mistaken of course. A personal testimonial, especially one submitted as evidence at a military tribunal, gives us a fascinating snapshot of your father's wartime experiences.

Man: We're finally learning more about his life. He never really spoke about the war, which I always found strange, given how highly decorated he was.

Assistant: Well, you're sure to learn a fair bit about him when you visit the archive. We're so glad you've come. How did you hear about us? We're somewhat off the beaten track.

Man: My brother-in-law spotted mention of your collection in a biography he was reading and tipped me off. I'm sent all over the country for work, so as soon as they sent me round to your neck of the woods, I made sure to call in.

That is the end of Part 1.

Now turn to Part 2.

You will hear a man called Frank McCoy talking about his takeaway food business. For questions **7-15**, complete the sentences with a word or short phrase.

It all started late one rainy November evening after a night out at my local. We normally go for a curry after closing but that particular night we all went back to mine to try our hand at a new videogame I had just downloaded. We were little more than an hour in before we all started getting a bit peckish, so I went off into the kitchen to see what I could rustle up. Well, I had nothing to offer besides a few slices of bread, so we had no choice but to order in; which turned out to be very expensive, and which involved a wait of nearly an hour.

It got me to thinking that maybe I could do things better. There was certainly demand for quick and affordable late night food delivery in my neighbourhood. Maybe it was time I set up my own enterprise and gave it a go. I wasn't particularly happy working at the local bookmakers, so I handed in my notice and set up "Captain Bacon: The Hero who Fills a Hole". Yeah, maybe the motto left a bit to be desired, but the idea was a popular one.

I rented some kitchen space off the pizza restaurant downstairs. That way, I could save time on meeting hygiene laws as the facilities were already in place and meeting the requirements. I brought my brother in as our first delivery driver. He also helped me with the website, through which most of our orders came.

Probably the most important rule of Captain Bacon is that we keep it simple. Our menu focuses on the basics. Not only does it make the ordering nice and easy for our customers but it also streamlines food production. It's much better to have just a few products done well and efficiently than a wide range that might slow down your process and confuse your customers. So, at Captain Bacon, it's burgers, hot dogs or sandwiches. If you want anything else, you'll have to try your luck with our competitors.

Going into business for yourself is always something of a steep learning curve. You don't realise how much is involved in running a company, even a modest affair like Captain Bacon, until you do it yourself. I would never have guessed, for example, how important our brand design was. The smiling pig logo is quite famous now, but I would never have realised the positive impact it would have had on sales as soon as we started using it.

Of course, building the business has not been without its problems. Recently, we've been handed a high volume of fake banknotes which have made a real dent in our income. There's also the issue of the economic downturn, which always affects the catering industry particularly badly as ours are the first products that households will cut back on when trying to lower costs.

Another unexpected challenge has been the sudden diversification of the industry. During the lockdown, restaurants took to delivering what they called "meal kits", the idea being that people take delivery of the kit and follow the included recipe, bringing restaurant quality cuisine into the home. We started offering a similar service ourselves recently and it's met with surprising success.

We've been going for three years now, and business has never been better. Being my own boss has been really liberating for me and I find it very motivating to be providing my community with a simple service done well. I've been thinking about developing the business further. One idea is a breakfast delivery service. I haven't quite settled on a name yet. "Early Bird Brekkies" was one idea, but I'm not too sold on that one. My girlfriend suggests "Eggs on Legs", which is really beginning to grow on me.

As far as Captain Bacon is concerned, there's certainly room for growth. I'm currently looking at moving out of the pizza kitchen and setting up a made-to-measure production centre on an industrial estate not far from here. It's a bit of a risk as the initial costs will be high, but it should give us the opportunity for long-term growth. However that turns out, I've got big ideas for the business and hope to be able to bring our signature take outs to a town near you soon.

That is the end of Part 2

Now turn to Part 3

You will hear part of a podcast episode in which two engineering students are discussing their entry in the annual "Robot Battles", a competitive event in which radio-controlled robots fight each other. For questions 16 – 20, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which fits best according to what you hear.

Presenter: I'm here today with Ian Pearson and John McMillan, current favourites to win this year's Robot Battles contest, coming up next month. Thanks for taking the time to come in, guys. So, let's start off with the competition itself. I hear it's gone through some different guises over the years.

Ian: Yes, that's right. It all came about as a result of some rather magnificent accidents to tell you the truth. Robotics is a huge area now but forty years ago it didn't really exist as a discipline beyond the fevered minds of writers and film makers. But in 1995, a team of computer programmers based at Bristol University put together a contest which they called 'Fund your Theory'. The idea was that students could compete for funding by presenting their own inventions, whether that invention be a longer-lasting light bulb or a talking toaster. Part of the presentation involved a practical demonstration of the idea they were promoting. So, for example, they might simply put some new software through its paces before the panel. But sometimes, the knowledge of participants was so varied and so wide that you could expect to see some pretty incredible

demonstrations at work. It was at this humble event that one of the first electric car prototypes made an appearance.

John: Meanwhile, our robots were waiting in the wings.

Ian: That's right. Our own area had yet to take shape at this point. Subsequent years saw a few rudimentary offerings but it was at the 2002 edition of that particular competition that the famous Hecat 3 was introduced.

John: I should say here that Ian and I do not see eye to eye regarding the significance of the Hecat 3 project. I could cite various achievements in robotics that predate Hecat 3 that in my view were of much more value at their inception and indeed continue to represent a significant landmark in the evolution of robotics.

Ian: No. That's not right. Nothing like Hecat 3 had been seen before. The machine was able to balance and to use computational power in order to maintain that balance. This is an ability that so many dismiss as unimportant given that most designers simply bypassed this problem by giving their machines wheels or tracks and avoided the bipedal model altogether. It doesn't take away from the profound impact the Hecat technology had.

John: We see few bipedal models at Robot Battles.

Ian: For exactly the same reason that we see few bipedal tanks. Sometimes we are forced to put robotics to one side in order to obey basic physics. There's also the issue of the difficulty of reproducing such models, even 20 years on from the Hecat 3 project, which goes further to prove my point.

Presenter: So, what should we expect to see at Robot Battles?

John: In recent years, there has been a trend towards style over substance, which may sound like a criticism but is not meant to be. In fact, it's this tendency towards artistry that has really breathed new life into both the competition and the wider science community. Who wants to see a box on wheels repeatedly charging at a mobile trash can when you can see Pink Lady 5 or the Araknabot do battle?

Ian: Absolutely! In fact, there are signs that this development has spawned a whole new variety of subcultures within other areas. We're seeing the emergence of what has been called "Androidism" which is said to be influencing big names in both the fashion and the art industries.

John: The competition has come a long way from its early days of nerds and craft beer. Nowadays it's a real event that attracts thousands of people. Last year, the event moved into the O2 arena and for the past three years we've been receiving coverage on national television.

Presenter: It's very impressive. What do you think is the attraction of the event for so many people?

John: There's certainly the gladiatorial element to the whole thing. While there's no blood, there's still the tension of two individuals battling it out for supremacy, which puts everyone on the edge of their seat, no matter who they are. Some of the robots get a proper mauling, which the audience loves. Patch-ups are a continuous chore throughout the day. Then there's the engineering. Much of the audience is drawn to the appliance of ground-breaking technology. Besides the fun, there's also a really educational side to it. Every year, the robots get more and more innovative and, although much of that innovation remains under the hood, the spectators really admire the ingenuity and technical know-how.

Presenters: And what do you think your chances are of defending your title this year?

Ian: Oh, pretty good, actually. We're both old hands at the tournament and we know the ropes better than most, which can't hurt. But we're not alone in that regard. What I'm really excited about is some clever little mechanical curveballs that we've managed to incorporate into our gladiator bot this year. That alone should give us a psychological edge over our opponents when the moment comes. We've managed to put in the hours too, so we're probably among the more skilled players at the event.

Presenter: Well, I wish you both the best of luck. Here's hoping you crush the competitors both figuratively and literally.

That is the end of Part 3.

Now turn to Part 4.

You will hear five short extracts in which different people are talking games they play as a hobby. For questions **21 – 25**, choose from the list (A – H) what first got them interested in the game. For questions **26 – 30**, choose from the list (A – H) the benefit that the game has had on the speaker's life. While you listen you must complete both tasks.

You now have 45 seconds to look at Part 4.

Speaker 1

It's certainly a huge part of my life now but it wasn't always like that. It was introduced to us by our tutor as part of an scheme by the local council to get more schoolchildren into the hobby. I played here and there with my friends, but I didn't really get hooked on it until a few years later. Twenty years and several international titles later, I really can't imagine living in a world without it. It has really broadened my horizons in so many ways, but perhaps its greatest boon is how it's demonstrated the value of being able put my thoughts in order, which in turn has had no small effect on my practical day-to-day existence. I look back now at the scatterbrained and stressed adolescent I used to be and can't quite believe how I've turned out.

Speaker 2

My friend Danny and I were off on our first trip together. It was basically our first foray away from home so we were really excited. We stayed at a place with the bizarre name of Hotel Kaleidoscope, a pretty little place overlooking the sea. Some weeks later, back on home turf, we were both amazed to stumble across its namesake just a few miles from our home town. We decided to pop in and have a look around. There was a games convention going on in the communal area so I stopped to have a look, and the rest is history. I'm very grateful both for that moment and for the hobby itself, which due to its widely held appeal worldwide, has turned me into something of a jet setter.

Speaker 3

Apart from anything else, it's done wonders for me from a networking perspective. I've certainly gone up in the world workwise thanks to the contacts I've made through the

hobby. It was my wife who found out about it. She was searching for a present for my thirtieth one evening and came across a forum dealing with games and hobbies. An announcement looking for players came up on a message board and knowing I was looking for something to do with my time, she suggested I give it a try. It's been a wonderful experience. The one downside is that it can be quite an expensive pastime, so I'm not sure I'd recommend it to friends unless they were able to commit to it.

Speaker 4

It's a game that dates back thousands of years and I would never have heard about it had it not been for an online course I was taking in ancient civilizations. I was fascinated in how such a complex game could have emerged from a time long before any real technology existed. As I understand it, the game first became popular among religious orders and originally formed part of a meditative process. I think this is why, apart from being exciting, it's also a game that settles my thoughts and helps to relieve me of any burdens that the day might have put on my shoulders.

Speaker 5

I must have been about six years old, I think. I opened up the package from my uncle to find what appeared at first to be three shapeless lumps of metal. I realized after a few moments that they were in fact little miniatures, designed to be used in a game that, many years later, has brought me endless hours of fun and introduced me to hundreds of people who I now consider friends. The game is set in the world made famous by a popular series of books and it's so inspiring being able to add to the universe further with the experiences that come about in the game.