



English Proficiency Assessment (CanTEST)

Information for Test Candidates
Applying to the College of the North Atlantic

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Additional information regarding the CanTEST:

Consult the University of Ottawa's website: www.cantest.uOttawa.ca

or e-mail us at cantest@uOttawa.ca

or write to:

Language Testing Services
Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute
600 King Edward Avenue
University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5
CANADA

Note. Information in this booklet was adapted in part from “[CanTEST: Information for Test Candidates](#)” by the University of Ottawa.

What is the CanTEST?

The CanTEST is a standardized English proficiency assessment used at the College of the North Atlantic to evaluate the English language proficiency of applicants, whose English is not their first language and have applied for admission to College of the North Atlantic's programs. There is no fee for this assessment.

The results of the Institutional CanTEST are non-transferrable and will be used only for the purpose of admission to the College of the North Atlantic. These results cannot be forwarded to another institution.

What English language skills does the Institutional CanTEST measure?

The Institutional CanTEST is used to measure three skills: Listening, Reading, and Writing. Each test section is described briefly below.

Listening: The Listening test contains three short dialogues and three longer passages.

- Time limit - 50 minutes
- Format - 40 questions, mostly multiple choice and some short answer

Reading: This section consists of two tests.

- 1) Skimming and Scanning test. On this test, you read quickly to find specific information in authentic texts such as newspapers, university calendars, web pages, and bibliographies.
 - Time limit- 10 minutes
 - Format -15 questions, mostly multiple choice and some short answer
- 2) Reading Comprehension test. On this test, you will read passages of 400-700 words answer questions about them. You will also complete cloze test, in which words are deleted from a passage.
 - Time limit - 50 minutes
 - Format - Passage section has 20 questions, mostly multiple choice and some short answer. Cloze test has 25 multiple choice.

Writing: The Writing test consists of writing a composition on a topic which will be assigned to you.

- Time limit - 45 minutes

What sort of topics appear on the Institutional CanTEST?

All test material is taken from real documents such as newspapers, magazines, textbooks, and radio broadcasts. Topic areas of the material include: agriculture, medicine, engineering, history, and education. All the texts are intended for the general reader. You do not have to be a specialist in any of these fields to answer the questions.

How can I prepare for the test?

You can practice for the test by completing the sample questions in this booklet. Additional practice material, including a sample listening test recording, is available upon request from a student services representative such as the International Student Coordinator or Guidance Counsellor at one of the campuses. Completing a course in academic English would also be good preparation.

How is the test scored?

The Reading, Listening and Writing Scores, called Bands, can range for level 1 to 5.

What do the band levels mean?

(5) VERY GOOD USER Very good command of the language, even in demanding contexts. High degree of comprehension. Only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies in communication, which very rarely impede communication. Level of proficiency is acceptable for full time academic study.

(4) COMPETENT USER Generally effective command of the language in fairly demanding contexts, with a satisfactory level of comprehension. Some inaccuracy and misunderstanding in less familiar contexts with more complex language. Weaknesses exist which sometimes impede communication, and could affect performance in an academic program. Additional language training would be helpful to improve accuracy, speed, and overall proficiency.

(3) LIMITED USER Fair command of the language only in familiar language contexts or in interactions with a sympathetic speaker. Limited comprehension. Markedly reduced effectiveness in demanding or unfamiliar situations. Systematic inaccuracies and misunderstandings significantly impede communication and comprehension. Requires additional language training before being considered for academic placement.

(2) VERY BASIC USER Some ability to function in highly contextualized, familiar situations, but no real command of the language. Frequent breakdowns in communication.

(1) NOVICE Extremely limited command of the language. Half-bands (e.g. 3.5) are awarded where a candidate's performance exceeds that described in one band but does not fully meet the next higher level.

What scores do I need to pass?

At College of the North Atlantic, generally a Band of 4.5 is required in Listening and Reading sections and 4.0 in the Writing section.

How will I know what my scores are?

You will be contacted by the College of the North Atlantic personnel, usually the Guidance Counsellor. He/she will discuss your scores and recommendations before sending them to the appropriate Admissions Office within the College of the North Atlantic.

What if I do not pass?

You can rewrite a different version of the test in three months. Also you may be required to complete English as a Second Language program prior to program entry. A Guidance Counsellor will discuss what options are available to you.

For more information, please see: <http://www.cna.nl.ca/Admissions/International-Students.aspx> or contact:

International Student Coordinator

Student Services Division
College of the North Atlantic
1 Prince Philip Drive
P. O. Box 1693
St. John's, NL
Canada A1C 5P7

For more information please call or email

Tel: 00 + 1 + 709 758 7290

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Sample CanTEST Test Questions

Example: 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.

On the test you will also hear a lecture or an interview similar to the one on the next page. 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.

Example: Listening Test Lecture

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 micro-organisms 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. When did 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.

Example: 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 opposite page.

1. What is this article about?
 - a) The number of foreign students studying in Canada
 - b) The Association of Universities and Colleges of 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 percent 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.

Example: Reading 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 climatically 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 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 from 10 to 400 hectares?
 - 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 problems 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.

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

Answer Key

Dialogue

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

Lecture

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

Skim Scan Test

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

Reading

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

Cloze

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

Example Writing Topics

On the writing test, you will be asked to write about 300 words in 45 minutes, on a topic assigned to you. Below are two sample topics.

In countries throughout the world, students are required to study history in school. Why is history considered an important school subject? Provide two or three reasons and support your ideas with examples.

Technology has been viewed as a two-edged sword. Some people feel it improves the quality of life while others feel it creates new problems that threaten the quality of life. Discuss these two positions using examples. Then state which position you agree with and why.