



ALL YOU NEED FOR THE
CELPIP

A comprehensive overview of the
CELPIP-Canada's leading language test

Annabelle Caruana

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Chapter Overview

Chapter 1- Listening

In chapter 1, I go over what you can expect in the listening test. I provide a sample question, a breakdown of each of the 6 tasks, preparation strategies as well as techniques to use during the test itself. I also outline ways to improve your test performance by staying focused and calm.

Chapter 2- Reading

In chapter 2, I give a thorough view of different reading skills as well as strategies to utilize to achieve optimal grades. I outline ways to prepare and describe how to complete each task in the most efficient and effective manner.

Chapter 3- Writing

In chapter 3, I cover time management, preparation strategies, and provide 2 sample prompts. I provide details about completing each task and the grading criteria.

Chapter 4- Speaking

In this chapter, I talk about the automated recording system, and then outline each task and provide a sample prompt for each. I provide details of what the test graders are looking for in each task and what is required for each answer. Preparation strategies and grading criteria are also outlined.

Introduction

I've written this short book to provide a complete overview of the CELPIP test, this will enable students to prepare in an effective and efficient manner. The CELPIP- the Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program- is fastly becoming more popular for permanent residency as well as academic applications. The need for more study materials for this test came from my student themselves, when I first began teaching English.

Throughout this guide, you will be walked through each part of the exam. I have covered what you can expect, from the format of the test to sample questions, and provide both study strategies and test performance strategies. This book is meant to give a broad overview of the entire test, without focusing on great detail about grammar points or theory. After assessing your own English level and taking a sample test, you will study independently, or with a teacher who will help you break down different theory and give you valuable feedback.

I really like to teach CELPIP preparation because, unlike the IELTS, it is a uniquely Canadian English exam. I comes from my own alma mater, the University of British Columbia, and the topics are based in and around Canadian culture. I'm very pleased to offer this book to anybody looking to achieve a great score on the CELPIP. Remember, studying is a chance to improve your overall English ability, so as opposed to viewing it as just studying for the test, I have found it useful to study from the point of view of enriching your language capabilities for life overall. The key to a good mark, particularly with the active skills of speaking and writing, is becoming comfortable with the formula and learning different lexical bundles so that during the test you are prepared and can focus on the content of the question. I know that this test is important to the futures of my students, so I wish you good luck and happy studying!

Chapter 1

Listening Test

The listening test is about 50 minutes long and contains 6 parts. For each part, you have about 6 minutes to listen to the audio and answer the questions. Each passage only gets played once. As with all of the test, it starts off with a practice question, which doesn't count for points but is intended to get you used to the format.

Now for example, the first audio says, "Unfortunately, I didn't go the party last night." Next, you'll have to pick the best answer between 4 options. The example options are,

I want to go to the party again.

I missed the party.

The party was cancelled.

The party wasn't good.

The correct answer is "I missed the party." There was no mention of the party not being good or it being canceled, or wanting to go to the party again. This is a very important point, not just for the listening part but also the reading: just because a statement is correct, does not mean it's the correct answer. The correct answer will be true and be the best option in relation to the question.

Another difficult thing about the listening test is that my students have found it to be quite stressful. This is partially due to the fact that you can only listen to the audio one time, and have to pay close attention. Another reason is that it's the first part of the test, and people haven't quite settled in and calmed themselves down yet. Taking standardized tests can always be a stressful experience, but we can mediate this by breathing deeply, preparing as best we can, and recognizing that all we can do is our best. The great thing here with is the accents will all be Canadian, unlike the IELTS exam.

Test Format

Listening Part 1: Listening to Problem Solving

The scenario will be explained, and two people attempt to solve some issue. For this task, it's important to note who says what, and to understand what each person is saying, because oftentimes in the answers are paraphrased versions of what was said in the original audio.

Listening Part 2: Listening to a Daily Life Conversation

The scenario is described, and you will hear two people speak. For this task, it's important to understand what is said, as well as what is going on; why are they saying what they are saying.

Listening Part 3: Listening for Information

The discussion will be about some topic. Information will be stated in a question-answer format between two people. Pay attention to what is being said about the particular topic.

Listening Part 4: Listening to a News Item

This is news story about a news item, and is very similar to how news is formatted on TV and radio. The questions ask about what the news was about and some specific information that was stated about the news item.

Listening Part 5: Listening to a Discussion

This listening task is delivered in video format. Before the video starts, the scenario is described. As they will ask you who said what, it may be useful to take note that there are 3 separate people, and what they each say.

Listening Part 6: Listening for Viewpoints

In a short sentence, the topic is briefly described. One person speaks about the different opinions about the topic. The following questions ask about the story details as well as what certain people think.

Listening Test Strategies

Before the conversation, there's an explanation of who is talking, and what the situation is. A really great thing to do is to take notes while you are listening. Just a note, this strategy is not best for everyone. Some people are not able to fully concentrate and take notes, so I would suggest going through the sample test and seeing which method works best for you. You can keep track of who says what with short forms such as 'M' for man and 'W' for woman, and take bullet points of what the both say.

To start, I would recommend going through the free sample test and seeing your marks. Listening tends to be the part of the test that people score the highest, and if you do well then you may not have to concentrate so much on this modality. If you do need to practice more, you should spend time doing the other tests available for purchase, and employ the different techniques mentioned above. You can also improve your English listening by, you guessed it, listening to English. Listen to tv shows, movies (without subtitles), radio, podcasts, music and conversations.

Chapter 2

Reading Test

The reading test section of the CELPIP exam is about 55 minutes. As the tasks progress, the English used in the texts will become progressively more difficult. The best way to prepare for this section of the test is to read English, to do the sample tests, and to try different strategies for each section, and see which works best for you. After you click “next” in each section, you won’t be able to go back, so make sure you have completed all the questions and are happy with the answers before moving on. And the biggest challenge that my students have found is time management, because unlike day to day reading, this reading is done under a time pressure, so by preparing a strategy and practicing reading efficiently, one can optimize their marks.

Reading Strategies

Skimming

This is the skill of reading a text quickly and efficiently, without wasting time. As each reading task is under a time constraint, what my students always find the most daunting is having to read quickly. When we are skimming, we read the nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs, and get the main point of the text. Unlike reading for pleasure, this is reading with purpose, and to practice this skill, one can do the practice tests and also read a variety of English material, such as web pages, articles, and emails.

Scanning

Scanning is what you do when you’re looking for a friend’s name in your contact list, for example. When you’re looking for the answer to a question, you may need to go back to the text and scan for a certain word, name, or phrase. Practicing this skill by doing the practice tests and also reading in English is a great idea.

Inference

When there is a word that you do not know, don’t fret. Even for native speakers, sometimes we come across words we aren’t familiar with, but based on the context, the structure of the sentence, and any other clues, we can make an educated guess, or *inference*, as to what it means.

Understanding Cohesion and Logic

Understanding cohesion and logic involves several processes. Having a good grammar base, so you can understand the link between subjects, objects, pronouns, and sentence structure is key to effective reading. Having a thorough knowledge of cohesive devices, such as words like

'because', 'however', 'although', etc. is also quite essential to full reading comprehension. This skill is built off of English grammar skills and reading practice.

Process of Elimination

When you are choosing the correct answer to each part, there may be some you are quite unsure about. Instead of just picking one at random, it's key to utilize the *process of elimination*. This involves choosing which answers you know could not be true, and narrowing down the options. In other words, look for the answers you can eliminate because they are false to narrow down your options. When you have as few as 2 possible answers, from these two you can make the best possible guess. You may have to go back and forth between the question and the reading. This is quite time consuming, so this is best saved for the end of the tests, and for questions that you are quite unsure about. When making your way through the questions, you can leave the ones you are very unsure about and go to the next question, saving this process for the end.

Preparation Strategies

To prepare for the reading exam, you should do the sample tests, and see how well you do. Many people are not used to being timed, so reading English and timing yourself can help you become more accustomed to this. Practicing doing timed reading is a great way to become more accustomed to it and subsequently become more comfortable working under the time pressure of each task. This will also help you feel calmer during the actual exam.

The more time you can spend reading in English, the more comfortable you will become with the tasks. This goes for any of the sections, practice makes perfect. If you are having a hard time with reading, I would suggest working with a teacher to work on some theory, such as understanding cohesion and logic, making inferences, or any of the other tools. There is also study material from the CELPIP company, Paragon Testing Enterprises, that I have found quite useful.

Reading Part 1: Reading Correspondence (10 minutes)

You'll be reading an email, then respond to 6 multiple choice questions about the email. Then the following 5 questions are in a response email from another person. The questions are multiple choice, there are 4 options for each one. The best way to go about this reading task is to read the first email, making sure to read who it is addressed to and who it is from. Then, you can fill out the first 6 questions. If you are unsure about an answer, you can go back to reading and scan for the information you're looking for, and skim those sentences. Then in the follow up email, choose the best answers. From the information in the first email, you will be able to deduce what the best answers are. As for all of the parts, be sure to scroll down to see all of the questions. Once you hit 'next', you will not be able to go back and revise your answers.

Reading Part 2: Reading to Apply a Diagram (8 minutes)

For the next part, you will read a diagram displaying some information, for example, it could be about an event, conference, modes of transportation, or something of that nature. Following this, there is an email with 5 multiple choice fill in the blank questions. The final 4 questions are regarding the subject matter of the diagram and email. Make sure to read the entire diagram, including the fine print. After this, read the email, making sure to read the very top subject line, and 'to' and 'from', and choose the correct answers. Some answers will be much more apparent than others. If an answer is not clear to you, you can skim and scan to see if you can find the correct answer. Because time is of the essence, if after employing these techniques the answer is still not clear to you, you can leave that answer blank and move onto the next one. Once you've completed the questions, you can go back and use the process of elimination to choose the best answer.

Reading Part 3: Reading for Information (9 minutes)

As the readings progress, you may find the content becoming more advanced. In task 3, there are 4 paragraphs about a topic, always related to something Canadian. All four paragraphs are about the same broad topic, but each paragraph has a slightly different subtopic, which is generally outlined in the first sentence or first few sentences. There are 9 multiple choice questions on the right side. They are statements, and you will have to choose which paragraph the information comes from, A-D, with option E being 'not given'. Read the paragraphs, and then move onto the questions. Some students like to take some notes of the key words of each paragraph. Remember to use skimming and scanning techniques to verify your answers. Quite often, the answer is paraphrased, so make sure to take synonyms and paraphrasing into consideration when picking your answers.

Reading Part 4: Reading for Viewpoints (12 minutes)

The last part of the reading section is aimed to focus on the reader's ability to understand different individual's opinion about a certain topic. The first part is an article, and will include a topic, and 2-3 people's opinion on this topic. The following 5 multiple choice questions are about the article, and the last 5 questions are multiple choice fill in the blank questions in a reply by someone who read the article. Understanding cohesion and logic is key to success in this part, as well as being familiar with different works about viewpoints such as 'argues', 'explains', 'maintains', etc. To complete this section, first read the article and move onto the first 5 questions. Then answer the last paragraph. As this is the last task, the vocabulary may be challenging, so you may have to infer the meaning of certain words.

Chapter 3

Writing Test

The writing test contains two parts and lasts about 55 minutes. By following a certain formula, you can be assured that you are giving the test scorers the content and style that they are looking for. As with all of the test, you won't know the actual prompt (prompt is what they call the question) until the day of your test, but you can get ready by practising with other prompts, as they always are the same sort of idea. In terms of time management, it is recommended to spend about 2-5 minutes preparing your answer. This can include reading the prompt, choosing your content, and writing some point form notes. Then 15 minutes can be spent writing your response. And the last 2-5 minutes can be spent editing, and checking for grammar and spelling mistakes.

To prepare for this portion of the exam, it's a great idea to practice writing both surveys and emails. There are a number of sample prompts available on the internet. You can find them for free on google, and there is a sample one on the Paragon website, as well as many more for purchase there as well. Here in this section I have included a sample prompt for each task. Each one will always follow a certain formula, so by practicing that and perfecting them, you can become comfortable with substituting in the responses to different prompts. When you are writing, make sure not to mention anything not mentioned in the prompt. Stay on task and make sure every sentence has a purpose.

By practicing writing, you can best work on any weaknesses and greatly improve your writing skills. When going into the exam, you'll feel more prepared, and therefore have greater clarity of mind while writing. Make sure to thoroughly read the prompt and do your prewriting, and leave time and the end so you are not stressed for time.

Writing Task 1: Writing an Email (27 minutes)

In the first writing task, you will be writing an email. You need a greeting, such as 'To whom it May Concern,' which is tailored to the formality of the situation. After this, a space is added and then there's an opener, which is an opening line that describes why you are writing the email. This is followed by the body, which, in 2-3 paragraphs, completes all 3 of the bullet points provided in the prompt. The very first sentence after your opener should be describing the first bullet points, and be followed by some supporting sentences containing details after that. Once completing the first bullet, move to the second and third, which are all explained and expanded upon with supporting details. You will be graded on your coherence, and coherence refers to the quality of the linking between bullets. Then there needs to be a closing line, that is forward looking, positive, and diplomatic, and after a few spaces, a sign off, such as 'Regards,' and another space and either your name or a made up name.

Remember, this exam is not an academic test, but rather a test that allows one to demonstrate their comfort with English. So don't feel the need to try to use big, fancy words, but rather words

that you are comfortable using. That said, the more specific you can be, the better. For example, instead of saying 'blue', say 'crystal clear turquoise blue'. The email is always describing a process, and the richer your vocabulary the higher grade you will be able to achieve.

In the email, it's very key to judge how formal the email should be based on who you are writing to. When you read the prompt, you need to decide whether the email should be formal, semi formal, or informal. This is called *tone*. For informal writing, for example to a friend, contractions should be used as well as day to day, colloquial language. In more formal writing, perhaps to a boss or manager, less contractions should be used (although one or two are okay) as well as language in the conditional form (i.e. I *would like* to bring to your attention an issue..., *could*). Make sure to watch for your grammar and spelling. You can write about 3 paragraphs.

Sample Prompt

You recently went for coffee at a very new and trendy cafe in your neighbourhood. However, the coffee and customer service were horrible. The owner was not in the cafe to address your concern, so you weren't able to solve your problem.

Write an email to the cafe's owner in about 150-200 words. Your email should do the following things:

- Outline the issues with the coffee you ordered.
- State the issues with the customer service.
- Explain how you would like this matter to be cleared up.

Writing Task 2: Responding to Survey Questions (26 minutes)

In the survey, you will be choosing one of two options and defending that option with advantages of your chosen option and a disadvantage of the other option. The focus here is in having quality reasons and supporting details.

Much like the email, it's a good idea to address who the survey is meant for, but this is optional. It may look like 'Dear _____'. Then after a few spaces, you need an opening statement in which you clearly express your opinion. Good phrases to use are 'In my opinion', or 'From my perspective'. In the body of the response, you should provide 2-3 reasons why this is your choice, and why. To make the response very coherent and readable, it's a great idea to order your ideas with such words as 'firstly', 'secondly', 'furthermore'. Also, it's good to contrast the two options to show a balanced perspective, so you could list a benefit of the other option, or a drawback of your chosen option, but maintain that your option is still the way to go. And the last

thing this survey response needs is a concluding sentence, which should be positive, gracious and forward looking. Then, like the email, you can sign off with something like 'Regards,' and your name after 2 spaces.

Sample Prompt

City Development Survey

You live in a neighbourhood with 15,000 people. A large parking lot in the centre of the main street is undeveloped. The neighbourhood's councillor sent out an opinion survey to discover which option for a new development people want.

Choose the option that you prefer. Why do you prefer your choice? Explain the reasons for your choice. Write about 150-200 words.

Option A: Condominium: This building would include 15 floors, retail and office spaces, and a small courtyard.

Option B: Art Studio: This would include homes and studios for artists, a garden, and a volleyball sandpit.

The first step is to clearly state your opinion in a single sentence. The next sentence should state your first reason, and then supporting details. In a new paragraph, you can then write a second reason and supporting details. Your last and final reason should be contrasting the option you did not choose and talk about its disadvantages.

When writing your survey response, use the prompt to formulate your answer by paraphrasing the words and information used in the prompt. Make sure to paraphrase carefully as to not diverge from the intended meaning.

Test graders will be looking for coherence, and there are several ways to achieve a coherent, well written survey response. When you move from one paragraph to the next, make sure the following points are building on previous points, and link to it. Your ideas should be reinforcing each other. The survey response can be up to 4 paragraphs but should not exceed that. Focus on incorporating cohesive devices (i.e. moreover, additionally, firstly etc.) and contrasting words (i.e. although, if etc.). Keep words and topic on target, for example, if you use a word such as 'cost' in your reason, use words such as 'costly and cheaper' in your supporting details.

Grading Criteria

The two writing tasks are graded under the following for criteria. The first one is *task completion*. This means how well your piece of writing answered the prompt, and included deeper levels of

meaning. Your writing should cover each part of the prompt and fulfill the task. The second one is *readability*. This is how easy it is to read and understand the writing. Your writing should be coherent, well edited, and include cohesive devices to add to the flow. The third criteria is *lexical range*, which refers to the writer's ability to use a variety of words with accuracy. And the final criteria is *grammar and spelling*, which refers to the quality of the English grammatically as well as your spelling. If you keep these criteria in mind when you are writing you can make sure to deliver quality answers.

Chapter 4

Speaking Test

There are 8 parts of the speaking test. 2 of them will be 90 seconds and the rest 60, but they are randomly assigned times. The entire speaking section will take 20 minutes. These are example prompts and sample pictures, and are similar to what you can expect. They go as follows.

Read the question. You have 30 seconds of preparation time. When the preparation time ends your speaking time begins. The blue bar shows you how much time has past. When the blue bar reaches the end, your time is up. Speak at a natural pace, and have confidence in your tone. For each prompt, make sure you read it carefully and fully understand what is being asked of you, and address each part of the prompt, fully responding to each detail. During the preparation time, some people find it useful to make some point form notes, particularly for the longer ones where you will be providing reasons for an opinion. This can help guide your answer, and is best to be practiced beforehand to see what works for you. Avoid thinking noises such as 'um', and if you forget what you want to say next, take a deep breath, look at the prompt and any of your point form notes and begin again.

Each task requires you to expand your answer. If you happen to finish your response and there is still time left, speak until the very end. Depending on the task, you could conclude what you have already stated, sign off with the person to whom you're speaking to, or add supporting details. If you end what you have to say early, you can use the magic word 'anyway' and say, depending on which prompt you are on, say some concluding thoughts. For example, for the first one, you could say, 'best of luck with your computer hunt and let me know if you need any more help.' Making sure you provide a complete, detailed, and clear response will ensure that you optimize your score.

Sometimes people can feel quite nervous during this section of the test. If you lose your train of thought while thinking, just take a deep breath and start over or from where you left off. Practice beforehand and review grammar points and vocabulary you will need for each section. Make sure to read the prompts carefully and remember that it is just one test-the very worst thing that could happen in having to take it again. Always speaking confidently and do not show any signs of being hesitant-fake it 'til you make it!

Practice Question

Talk about one of your best friends. (30 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)

This task isn't graded and is intended for the test taker to become accustomed to the speaking task and familiarize themselves with reading a prompt, following the preparation time clock, speaking while the blue bar moves, and speaking into the microphone. As a general rule for all of the test, it's good practice to always keep time in mind, periodically glancing at the time as you are speaking.

Task 1: Giving Advice

A friend is looking for a store to buy a new computer. Advise him about different places he can buy one. (30 seconds preparation time /90 seconds speaking time)

This prompt needs a greeting, opener, closer and sign off. The grammar point is modal verbs, such as 'you should', 'if I were you, I would', or 'I think it's a good idea to...'. You should provide examples and back up your suggestions with reasons why they are good ideas. Another way to expand on your answer is to explain cause and effect, such as if you do this, this will happen.

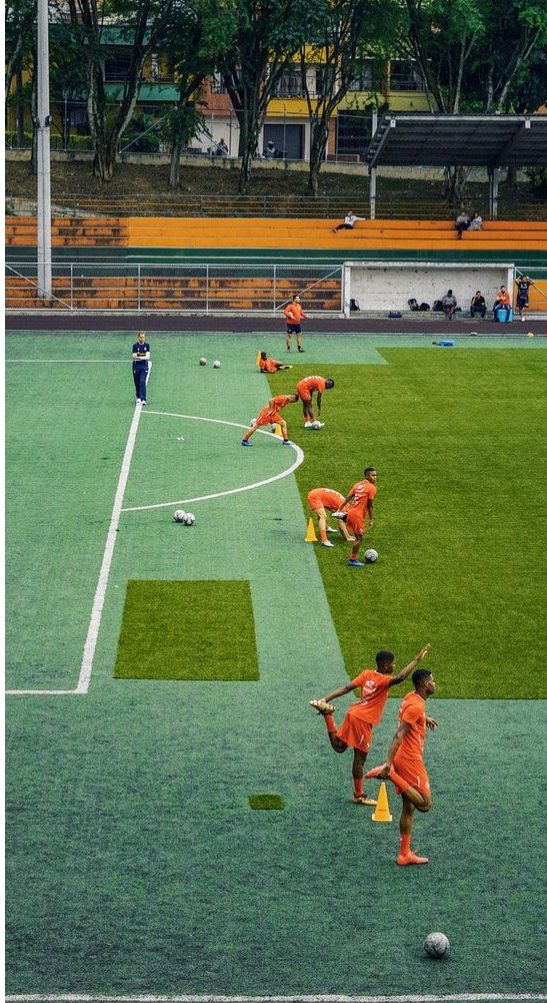
Task 2: Talking about a Personal Experience

Talk about a time you helped a colleague or peer. Maybe you can talk about helping them with a project, something you did together at school, a time you solved a problem, or anything else you can remember. What happened and what was the resolution? (30 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)

This prompt asks you tell an anecdote, using different forms the grammar in the past, such as the simple past, past progressive, etc. Make sure to answer who, what, where, why, when and how. The first line of the prompt outlines the general idea, the second one outlines some examples, and the last line gives you a checklist of what to cover in your answer.

Task 3: Describing a Scene

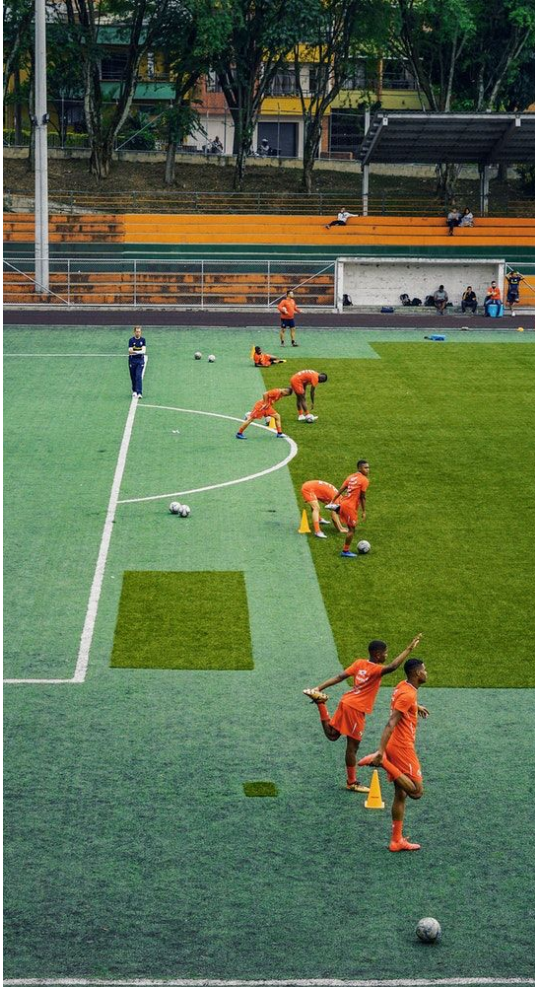
Describe some things that are happening in the picture below as well as you can. The person with whom you are speaking cannot see the picture. (30 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)



This prompt requires the test taker to use the present progressive tense quite often, like ‘they are standing’. The first step is to set the scene, then choose a few people or details and describe them fully, being very specific. You should move in an order, maybe left to right, or foreground to background, etc, instead of randomly describing things. Make sure to use adverbs of location, such as ‘on the top right of the picture’, ‘in the centre’, etc. Use the most specific vocabulary you know, so for example, instead of saying ‘man’, you could say ‘young athletic man’. When discussing people, discuss them in relation to each other, such as ‘his teammate’.

Task 4: Making Predictions

In this picture, what do you think will most probably happen next? (30 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)



You make up a little anecdote about what will happen next, giving reasons why you think they will happen. You'll be using the future and conditional tenses. Using adverbs (such as suddenly) and describing a process will enrich your answer. Provide detail and add time sequencers such as 'the first thing that will happen', 'then', and also you can start your sentences with 'I think...'. Giving a clear, descriptive and coherent answer will ensure you get full points.

Task 5: Comparing and Persuading

Part A

Your family is going for summer vacation, and you are looking for a summer home to stay at for one week. You found two suitable options. Using the pictures and information below, choose the option that you prefer. In the next section, you will need to persuade a family member that your choice is the better choice.

If you do not choose an option, the computer will choose one for you. You do not need to speak for this part. (60 seconds preparation time)

Quaint Cottage in Valley



- \$1450/weekly
- 3 bedrooms and 1 bathroom
- 1,300 square feet
- 3 hours from city; 30 minutes from shops

Spacious Villa with Pool



- \$2500/weekly
- 3 bedrooms and 3 bathrooms
- 4,800 square feet
- 1 hour from downtown; 10 minutes from shops

For this part, you will simply have to read the entire prompt and the two options, and pick which one you think is best. It's a good idea to choose an option you actually think is better because you will be able to prepare better arguments.

Part B

Your family is suggesting another house. Persuade your family member that what you chose is more suitable by comparing the two. (60 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)

Your family's choice

Charming Greek Style Home in the Country



- \$3,000/weekly
- 1 big open concept bedroom and 1 bathroom
- 2,8000 square feet
- 2 hours from city; 45 minutes from shops

You will now have to compare your option from part a with this new option. This prompt is aiming for you to use comparative adjectives and gets you to persuade the person with whom you are speaking that your option is more suitable using the details provided. You will be speaking directly to another person and will start of with a greeting followed by a clear opinion statement. Then outline 2-3 supporting arguments and expand on those with details. Make sure you go back and forth between both options, and don't only say that your option is better, but *why* it's better. You can make up details about your family, such as everyone loves to swim so a pool would be great.

Task 6 Dealing with a Difficult Situation

A close friend wants to come to a concert with you but you're already going with your sister. Your friend tells you that it's her favourite band and wants to spend some time with you. Your sister likes the band but it's not her favourite. (60 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)

Choose ONE:

EITHER

Talk to your close friend. Explain why she cannot come with you.

OR

Talk to your sister. Explain why you have chosen to bring your friend instead of your sister.

This response requires a greeting which will depend on the person you're talking to. Clearly state the problem and the difficulty of the situation, and explain your reasoning. Offer an apology and, time permitting, you can offer an alternative solution to help compensate for the problem.

Task 7 Expressing Opinions

Question: Do you think that smoking cigarettes should be banned in public places such as city parks? Explain your reasons. (30 seconds preparation time/90 seconds speaking time)

Very much like writing task 2, this prompt requires you to clearly state an opinion and explain your reasoning. Make sure to include 2-3 reasons and expand on these reasons with supporting details. For greater clarity and coherence, cohesive devices, such as 'firstly', 'additionally', etc. should be employed when stating your reasons. Make sure to include supporting details to your reasons, and conclude with a restated opinion statement.

Task 8 Describing an Unusual Situation



You are staying at a friend's house and have gotten lost. Phone your friend . Provide a full and clear description of your location and ask for directions back to their home. (30 seconds preparation time/60 seconds speaking time)

This prompt requires you to use the language to describe things that may not be the most straightforward to describe. Imagine it is a phone conversation, and you are speaking directly to whom is mentioned in the prompt. Make sure to be as descriptive and possible, and address the points in the question. Address the individual, provide a description, and close with the request. If you do not know the specific word for something, this is not a problem, simply use your vocabulary to do your best to describe it.

Speaking Strategies

Although it may seem unnatural speaking to nobody in particular, a great way to prepare for this is to go through and actually complete each task. This way, you can become more comfortable with speaking for 60-90 seconds as well as with the content of each task. Additionally, in this way you can practice using the 30-60 seconds of preparation time to strategize your answer. If necessary it can be helpful to go through each prompt and work on the theory behind what they are testing. This includes reviewing the grammar points, writing out answers, and working on forming well thought out, quality responses.

Grading Criteria

The speaking tasks are graded under the following criteria. The first one is task completion, and similar to the writing criteria, this means how well your answer covered what was outlined in the prompt. Did you effectively and thoroughly fulfill the prompt and provide deeper levels of meaning. The second one is listenability, which is the quality of your spoken output and how comprehensible you are. This includes factors such as your accent and intonation, and if you make distracting pauses such as 'um' and 'uh' while thinking. The third criteria is lexical range, which is your range of vocabulary. As this is not an academic test, you do not necessarily have to use complicated words but should put an effort into using precise vocabulary. And finally, grammar is the last criteria, and this is the quality of the grammar in your spoken English. Keeping these criteria in mind, you can work towards providing quality answers that will yield the best possible grade.

Conclusion

Before studying for the CELPIP exam itself, for some students, especially if you have been in the professional sphere from some time, it may be a good idea to go back to do some ESL lessons. The amount and time that you have to do this depends on your current level of the 4 language modalities and how quickly you get up to speed. Once you decide whether either private or group ESL classes will be necessary for you, I would try the listening and the reading, and you can check your scores. If you do well, you can focus on preparing for speaking and writing. If not, you can prepare for all 4 parts. The speaking and writing, as they are active skills, I highly recommend having feedback from a teacher who is familiar with the exam, and they will be able to guide you and let you know where you are in terms of your level of preparation, strengths and weaknesses. Generally, people have more difficulty with the speaking and writing sections of the exam, but this is not true for every case.

In conclusion, this is an overview of the CELPIP exam. As with anything, each individual varies, so different study methods and test taking techniques work each person. It is vital that you do the practice test(s) so that you can see what works best for you, and also very importantly, can familiarize yourself with the format of the test. In doing this, you will not only be able to prepare more effectively, but when the test day arrives, you will be comfortable with the format and be able to put your full attention at the task at hand. I wish you the very best on your test and happy studying!

Additional Resources

Official CELPIP Website- secure.paragontesting.ca

Youtube- Mad English TV CELPIP TIPS

Application- CELPIP-TIP Youngsic Kim



Annabelle studied psychology with a minor in linguistics at the University of British Columbia and is a TESOL certified ESL instructor. She has lived abroad in Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Brazil and now lives in her hometown of Toronto.

All you need for the CELPIP

“Thorough and effective, Annabelle teaches in a way that makes this important exam a lot more accessible. She outlines indispensable information about each section, and guides you to form a template for your optimal English performance. She identifies key aspects of each section of the test, and has a robust knowledge of the grading criteria, bridging the gap between one’s current language skills and the skills necessary for a great grade. She is patient and caring, and shows students the ins and outs of an exam that is the door to their futures.

Carlos Costa, CEO, Rommanel Canada

“Annabelle is a competent teacher that knows how to adapt the lesson to your needs and skills. I started the lessons with Annabelle to prepare for the CELPIP exam, especially the reading and writing parts. She helped me understand the format of the exam while enjoying every moment of the process. She gave me excellent feedback to improve my grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Annabelle has lots of experience on this type of test which really helps you get ready for the exam, and she always takes time to answer any questions you may have. Studying with Annabelle was such a joy, her knowledge, professionalism, warmth, and beautiful personality inspired me and gave me the confidence and skills I needed for the CELPIP Test. She is an amazing teacher!

Katia Martins, CEO, KMA Design Group

“I was lost in CELPIP. I did the test 2 times before and got the same results, even though I had studied with materials from the internet. I met Annabelle and started to learn a lot about the test structure, what the test graders expected from me, how to use the correct verb tenses in each part of the test. She showed me materials that she wrote, she gave me tips and advice to help me during days leading up to the test. And today I am happy to say that I achieved the score that I need for immigration!

Rafael Terozi, Videographer, Foxcore Films

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