

Last minute tips for CPE proficiency Use of English

For those doing the exam this week, it can be difficult to know quite what to focus on in the Use of English paper. Certainly, it is now too late to learn pages of vocabulary which may not come up anyway. However, there is good news:

- **The real Use of English exam** at this level has **tended to be easier** than those in the practice test books published for the 2015 exam changes. Why? Maybe because there was such a rush to make these books available when the exam changed.
- You can ensure that you are as **effective as possible** when dealing with the four different exercises

Here are some suggested tips and observations.

Generic consideration

- **Do the easier ones first.** Don't get stuck on a single question for long. Come back to it later or guess. There will be things in the exam which you simply won't know, which is not easy when most CPE candidates have reached this level by being perfectionists.

Part 1 Multiple choice cloze – testing accuracy of vocabulary

Focus language – phrasal verbs, idioms/fixed phrases, words with similar meanings, preposition collocations.

Part 2 Open Cloze – Testing accuracy with grammar and some vocabulary

Focus Language – All grammar including such things as pronouns, auxiliaries, articles and linking expressions. Alongside this, vocabulary like phrasal verbs and collocations/set phrases.

Part 3 Word Formation – Testing accuracy with vocabulary

Focus language – Different forms of words including compound ones and use of prefixes and suffixes.

Suggested tips for parts 1,2,3

- Context, context, context! Read the whole text first and then study the words around the gaps. Don't rush things. Make haste slowly but do not get stuck or you will not finish the reading.

Part 4 Key word transformations – Testing grammatical and vocabulary accuracy

Focus Language – collocations, phrasal verbs, idiomatic phrases/fixed expressions. Grammatical structures such as inversions, changing word forms (expect/expectations), conditional sentences, cleft sentences (What they do is...../It is Peter who), gerunds/infinitives.

Suggested tips

- **Grammar tends to be no more difficult than at CAE level** – The test books include very few grammar-related exercises but the exam does. Focus on the grammar areas indicated above.
- **The vocabulary will not be as obscure** as in the test books. Yes, you may find something you don't know, but the exam exercises tend to be a bit easier, using higher frequency language, so don't despair!
- Make sure that you **reproduce sentences with exactly the same meanings**. E.g. consider verb tense, adverbs, articles, verb conjugation

