CELBAN

CANADIAN ENGLISH LANGUAGE
BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT FOR NURSES

Test-Taking Strategies

2nd Edition 2016

CELBAN Introduction

The Canadian English Language Benchmarks Assessment for Nurses (CELBAN) was designed and developed by the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) in collaboration with nursing regulators and language testing specialists. Test content and design continues to evolve over time with the input of language specialists, nursing professionals and psychometricians.
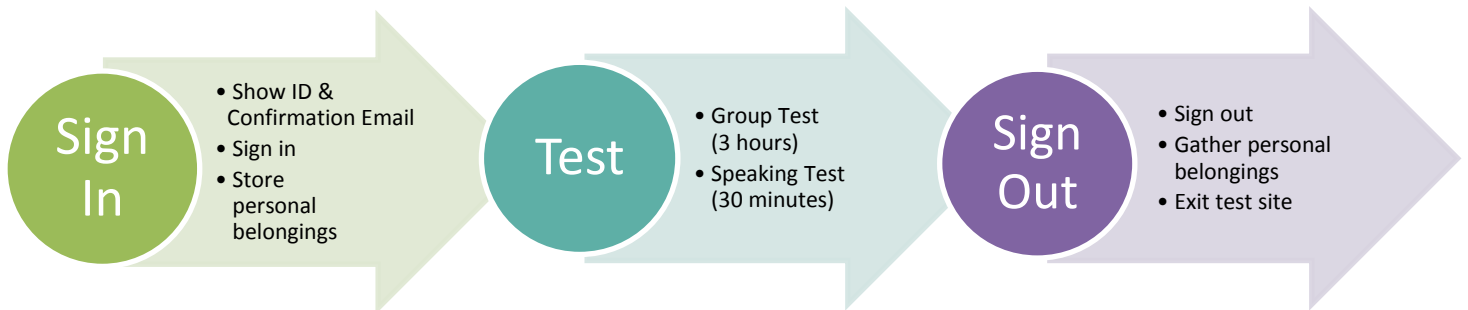
The CELBAN test assesses four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking. Test takers are asked to complete language tasks similar to tasks a nurse might face in real life.

The CELBAN Group Test comprises three sections: listening, writing and reading. The CELBAN Speaking Test comprises four different types of spoken interactions, which are conducted with two speaking assessors.

What to Expect on Test Day

Knowing what happens on test day will help you prepare for taking the CELBAN test. This document outlines important information about test day, test format, strategies and criteria for self-assessment so that you can prepare yourself in advance of the test. This may also help to minimize nervous feelings.

Test Day

Sign In
- Show ID & Confirmation Email
- Sign in
- Store personal belongings

Test
- Group Test (3 hours)
- Speaking Test (30 minutes)

Sign Out
- Sign out
- Gather personal belongings
- Exit test site

On test day, you will be expected to:

- Arrive 30 minutes prior to your scheduled test.
- Present two pieces of identification.
- Sign in and out of the test location.
- Leave all personal belongings in a dedicated area.

CELBAN Test Format

There are two parts to the CELBAN test: a group test (listening, reading and writing) and a speaking test.

Group Test (3 hours)	🔊	Listening
	📖	Reading
	✏️	Writing
Speaking Test (30 minutes)	💬	Speaking

Group Test

There are separate test booklets for each of the CELBAN Group Test components (listening, reading, and writing):

- Listening Comprehension Test Booklet
- Reading Comprehension Test Booklet
- Skimming and Scanning Test Booklet (Part of Reading)
- Writing Test Booklet

NEW IN OCTOBER 2016: *Before 2016, test takers used a test booklet and separate answer sheets. Test takers were advised to write only on the answer sheets. Test materials now have been integrated. Each test taker receives a test booklet which contains the questions and the answer sheets together. This simplified booklet allows test takers to easily mark their answers and make notes, as needed.*

You will be asked to complete tasks that require different types of answer formats. Read and listen to the instructions for each task carefully.

Speaking Test

For the CELBAN speaking test, you will experience two types of tasks: oral questions and role-play scenarios. The oral questions and the role play instructions will be provided orally, but there will also be some written instructions in the form of handouts for the role plays.

What are the Details of the CELBAN Test?

The group test is a paper-and-pencil test that evaluates your ability to read, write and listen. Several different test items are used in the group test: multiple choice questions where you must choose the best answer, fill-in-the-blanks with the correct word, short answer questions, and report writing. The speaking test is a face-to-face assessment which includes role-plays. The chart below shows the details of the test:

	Group Test			Speaking Test
Administration Conditions	The Group Test is a written exam administered to a group. There are audio-visual segments for the listening, projected to the group, and reading passages in a test booklet. Each test taker receives a test booklet which will be collected at the end of the exam.			The Speaking Test is conducted by two trained CELBAN speaking assessors.
Language Skill	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Task Types	There are five video scenarios (in various settings including hospital, home, clinic, and medical office) and four audio scenarios (phone calls and shift-to-shift reports). Scenarios include interactions between nurses and patients, family members, and other professionals.	The reading test includes a skimming and scanning section (10 minutes) and a reading comprehension (40 minutes) section. Text includes various formats such as charts, patient notes, manuals, and information texts related to health issues.	The writing test includes a form that must be completed and a short written report.	Test takers will be asked to answer questions to demonstrate ability to narrate, describe, summarize, synthesize, state and support opinion, and advise. In the role plays the test taker is asked to interact with one of the assessors who acts as a standardized patient. Test takers must ask questions to obtain information, give instructions, and offer explanations.
Question Format	multiple choice questions (some in chart format)	short answer questions (skimming and scanning) multiple choice questions (reading comprehension), including a cloze exercise	form-filling (10 minutes) report writing (20 minutes)	oral questions and role plays
Length	45 minutes	50 minutes	30 minutes	20 to 30 minutes

See the following page for details on the rating process for each of these test sections.

Language Skill	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Rating Process	Multiple choice questions are rated using a validated score key and automated conversion calculation.	Multiple choice and short answer questions are rated using a validated score key and automated conversion calculation.	The Writing test is marked by a single rater using a validated rubric. For quality assurance purposes, spot checks are regularly performed.	Speaking test is conducted and scored by two raters and recorded for future reference if needed by assessors to verify score. In the case of a discrepancy a third rater will review the results.

Listening Comprehension

Listening Comprehension Test Format

During the CELBAN listening section, you will answer multiple choice questions, also referred to as MCQs. MCQs appear in two formats:

- Questions with multiple options following a text.

- An entry in a form or chart with multiple options.

All of the questions will appear in your test booklet. You will be asked to circle the best option as an answer to a question or information required in a chart or form.

For example:

TYPICAL MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTION	**CHART-BASED MULTIPLE CHOICE**

The colour of the sky is usually:
a) Blue, grey and white
b) Red, blue and green
c) Blue, pink and purple
d) Black and white
	Patient name: a) Andrea
	                           b) Stephanie
	                           c) Lisa
	                           d) Gisele

Listening Comprehension Strategies

Listening scenarios are played only once.

Pre-read questions.	You will have time before viewing/listening to the scenarios to pre-read the questions. Use this time to pre-read questions.
Do not wait until the scenario ends to mark your answers.	Mark answers in the test booklet as soon as you hear the information you need. You will view the video, read the questions and select your answers at the same time. If you think it may be difficult to watch the video, concentrate on the questions and answers at the same time; then, listen to the video and occasionally look at the video, but focus more on reading and answering the questions. Practise before the test to find out what strategies work for you.
At the end of each scenario you will have time to check your answers.	Use this dedicated time to check your answers. Finish checking your answers at the end of each scenario when the time is up. Do not use the time allotted for pre-reading the next task's questions.

Writing

Writing Test Format

During the CELBAN writing section, you will be asked to complete two writing tasks in two different ways.

- **Task A:** Fill out a form. Record information in point form in a chart format.

- **Task B:** Write a descriptive piece of writing. You will use complete sentences in paragraph form.

Writing Strategies

- ✓ Be sure that your handwriting is easy to read (legible).

- ✓ Follow the instructions carefully regarding the format of your answers.

- ✓ Remember, Task A and Task B require different formats.

- ✓ Practise for Task A by filling out forms, and for Task B, by writing descriptive paragraphs.

- ✓ Time yourself.

Writing Rating Criteria

The criteria listed below are used to rate your writing. You can use these criteria to self-assess your writing.

Criteria for Self-Assessment – Task A: Fill out a Form

Spelling	Do spelling problems make it difficult for others to understand your writing?
Legibility	Is your handwriting neat and easy to read? Or, does it make it difficult to understand your writing?
Point form	Do you use point form effectively? Do you omit unnecessary words and include necessary words to convey information clearly?
Main points	Do you include the important main points when you fill in forms?
Supporting details	Do you include important supporting details when you fill in forms?

Criteria for Self-Assessment – Task B: Descriptive Writing

Effectiveness	Is key information accurate and clear?
Grammar	Is the language you use generally correct grammatically? Are you able to use complex structures correctly?
Fluency	Are ideas organized well? Have you used language appropriately to connect ideas?
Vocabulary	Have you used vocabulary that is appropriate and relevant? Have you used word forms correctly?
Content	Have you included main ideas and supporting details?

Reading

Reading Test Format

There are two parts to the reading test: Skimming and Scanning, and Reading Comprehension. These are both explained on this and the next pages.

Skimming and Scanning Test Format

What is skimming? Skimming is reading quickly to determine the main idea of a text.

What is scanning? Scanning is reading quickly to find specific details in a text.

- Skim and Scan: text, questions and space for marking your answers are provided in the test booklet. Skim and scan the text for specific information required to answer the questions.

Skimming and Scanning Strategies

✓ There is a short amount of time, so plan your time well.

✓ Look at the text quickly (skimming) and determine the purpose.

✓ Read each question and try to find the information required quickly (scanning).

✓ Difficulty answering a question? Go to the next question. You can always go back to the unanswered question later if time allows.

✓ Be careful when copying information from the text. If information is copied incorrectly, it will be marked wrong.

✓ Make sure that you use correct spelling. Copy accurately from the text when appropriate.

✓ Make sure that you include the full name if the text gives the full name. (e.g., If the text refers to "John Doe," and the answer requests name, your answer should be "John Doe," not just "John" or "Doe.")

✓ Do not include extra information in your answer. (e.g., If the question only asks for the street address, do not include the city.) Extra information will be marked wrong.

✓ Make sure you include the full information in your answer. (e.g., If the question only asks for the birth date, make sure you include month, date and year; do not omit one of these.)

✓ Make sure that your handwriting is legible (easy to read).

Reading

Reading Comprehension Test Format

There are four reading comprehension tasks. You will need to demonstrate a range of comprehension skills. These may include finding main ideas, finding supporting details and making inferences. In order to answer the questions, you will need to read the texts thoroughly, not just skim and scan.

The last task is a cloze exercise (fill-in-the-blanks). Read the entire passage once through quickly, ignoring the blanks to get the gist (the general content of the text). Then read again for meaning, line by line to select the best option from the multiple choices provided to fill in the blanks.

- MCQ (three tasks) – choose the best multiple choice option for each item in the test booklet.

- Fill-in-the-blanks (one task) – you will be provided with a text that has fill-in-the-blank options. Choose the best option out of four and mark it in the test booklet.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

✓ Choose an answer, even if you have to guess. The item will be marked wrong if left unanswered.

✓ Do not choose two answers. If two answers are indicated, the item will be marked wrong.

✓ If you change your mind about an answer, make sure that you fully erase the first answer.

✓ If you think your original answer is incorrect, but you are not sure whether or not to change it – leave the original answer.

Speaking

Speaking Test Format

During the speaking test, you will interact in person with two trained CELBAN speaking assessors. It will take about 30 minutes. The assessment will be recorded in case there is a need to review the scoring.

The speaking test has four different types of spoken interactions:

- Opening and introductory questions about familiar, every day topics
- Role plays with nursing scenarios and/or nursing-related topics
- Discussion questions about concepts, ideas opinions
- Conclusion

During the question portions of the test, one assessor will be conversing with you while the other will be taking notes. During the role play, one of the assessors will take on the role of a patient or a nurse, and test takers will assume a nurse role.

Remember that throughout the speaking test, including the role plays, we are assessing your language skills, not your clinical skills. Focus on communicating your intent and meaning clearly and purposefully.

Speaking Strategies

- ✓ Speak in your normal voice, but be sure that your volume is loud enough to be easily heard by the assessors.

- ✓ Take your time. Listen carefully to the questions and answer the specific questions being asked, and organize the information you use in the answer so that the assessors can follow your meaning.

- ✓ Be sure to listen to directions and follow them closely. Also read the role play cards carefully. In an assessment you must address the topic and the situation provided to you or you will lose points on "topic relevance".

- ✓ Do not worry about making mistakes in medical knowledge. In this interview, your language proficiency is being assessed, not your medical knowledge. However, correct and accurate non-technical, nursing-related vocabulary is required to get a strong score.

- ✓ If you normally use reading glasses, bring them to the CELBAN speaking test, since there will be some written instructions for you to read during the interview.

CELBAN Speaking Tasks

The speaking tasks on the CELBAN speaking test represent authentic tasks based on an in-depth analysis of the language demands of the nursing profession across Canada.

During the CELBAN speaking test, you might be asked to carry out any of the following speaking tasks. The best way to prepare is to practice the speaking tasks listed below:

- Tell a story.
- Report an incident.
- Provide a description.
- Present a comparison.
- Ask for or gather information (i.e. from a client/patient).
- Give instructions or educate (i.e. from a client/patient).
- Encourage, motivate and persuade.
- Discuss an issue and give/ support an opinion.
- Explain a problem and propose or hypothesize about possible solutions.

Speaking Rating Criteria

The criteria listed below are used to rate your speaking. Consider these criteria when practicing for the test.

Criteria for Self-Assessment – Speaking

Communication	Are you able to communicate effectively in carrying out the tasks required of you?
	Are you able to take initiative for an interaction with some confidence?
Intelligibility	Is your pronunciation clear? How about the stress and intonation of your sentences?
	Do other people usually understand your speech without much effort?
Grammar	Is the language you use generally correct grammatically?
	Are your sentences short and simple, but accurate, or long and complex and accurate?
Vocabulary	Do you use appropriate and accurate vocabulary to discuss different topics?
	Is your vocabulary basic (you can talk about everyday, familiar topics) or more advanced (you can talk about concepts, ideas and other abstract topics)?
Fluency	How much do you hesitate and pause when you are speaking?
	Is the tempo of your speech fairly even?
Organization	Do you present main ideas and clearly support them with a rationale and/or evidence?
Connecting Ideas	Do you introduce and conclude topics appropriately, and use connecting words and phrases to connect ideas?
Initiative	Do you have the language skills to help you take initiative and engage confidently?
Strategies	Do you apply communication strategies to help you communicate effectivelly?

CELBAN Role Plays

The idea of taking part in a role play can be intimidating if you have not done a role play before. You can practice by conducting a mock interview with a family member or a friend. Use the list of tasks on the previous page to guide you.

To prepare for a successful interaction, get in the habit of practising the communication strategies listed below:

Role Play Strategies

✓ Establish rapport and engage the role player.

✓ Use appropriate tone, level of formality and vocabulary for the situation.

✓ Ask for clarification (ask further questions) to make sure you understand.

✓ Explain the reasons for your questions and instructions.

✓ Support any suggestions or directions with a rationale.

✓ Don't be afraid to correct yourself.

✓ Be empatheric but firm.

✓ Affirm the person to whom you are speaking.

CELBAN Test Preparation

How to Prepare for CELBAN

CELBAN is a made-in-Canada test. It is referenced to the Canadian Language Benchmarks and reflects nursing practice in Canada. Canadian health care is patient-centred and team-oriented and thus requires strong communication competencies.

CELBAN is a task-based assessment. We are interested in your communicative ability, so we evaluate how you perform a task using the English language. The best way to prepare for a test like CELBAN is to develop the language skills that we describe in this Test Taking Strategies guide. These language skills will help you become a clear and more confident communicator, so think about preparing for CELBAN as professional development.

In Canada, the culture of learning relies on self-direction. This means adults, and even children, are expected to be engaged and take responsibility for their own learning. To this end, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks and the CELBAN Centre have prepared a number of resources to which you can refer when preparing to take CELBAN.

The following resources are available to help you prepare for CELBAN:

CELBAN Tip Sheets

The CELBAN Centre website has information that can help you prepare for test day. CELBAN Tip Sheets describe some strategies to improve test performance. Each one-page tip sheet focuses on one skill area or general studying or test-taking strategy. Sample questions feature tasks that you will have to complete as part of the CELBAN test and in your nursing practice. Visit www.celbancentre.ca.

Online Self-Assessment

The CCLB has developed an Online Self-Assessment to help you gauge if you are ready to take CELBAN. Visit www.celbancentre.ca to access this resource.

English as a Second Language (ESL) language Training Programs

The best way to gain accuracy in language use is to get some professional help. An ESL program, a private tutor, or online self-directed learning programs are all good options. Focus on your spelling accuracy (especially of medical terms), your sentence structure (your speaking and writing must be clear, one of the easiest way to be clear is to use correct grammar!), and organization (use an organizing principle to guide you when communicating, for example: introduce, support, conclude, or choose three main points and keep your communication focused on those, or use a technique like SBAR – situation, background, assessment and recommendation).

Working in a Health-Related English-Speaking Environment

Being immersed in English will help your fluency and confidence. Listen and learn from professionals around you. Be active and ask questions.

Nursing Bridging Education

Canadian nursing practice can be quite different from nursing practice in other countries. This might include the scope of practice (what a nurse is allowed to do and expected to do with and for patients) and standards for communication. Canada has a patient-centred approach to care. Language and communication skills are therefore a core competency.

A patient-centered care approach requires nurses to understand patients' needs and desires for their health care and wellbeing, as well as to communicate with patients and their families about shared health care goals and priorities. Good communication underlies effective teamwork and enables efficient delivery of health care services. But most importantly, sound communication skills help health practitioners meet legal and ethical requirements related to documenting patient interviews, assessments, care plans, and treatment outcomes.

Nurses need to be proficient at communicating effectively and flexibly, in a variety of media and contexts. Nurses must practice safely, with integrity and professionalism, communicating across language, cultural, generational, and situational barriers.

There are programs available across Canada that provide orientation and language & communication training to internationally educated nurses. If you have the opportunity to join one of these programs, this is recommended. Participation in such a program is great practice for CELBAN, especially when the program offers the Institutional CELBAN.

Test Preparation Programs

Although there are some test preparation courses available at school boards, colleges, and through private providers we do not endorse any test preparation programs. If you decide to invest in such a program make sure that the program is reputable and that you get good references.

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This Test Taking Strategies Booklet was prepared by: