

CUET 2026 English May 21 Shift 2

Question Paper (Memory-Based) with Solutions

Conducted by National Testing Agency (NTA)



General Instructions

- (i) The examination will be conducted in Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode.
- (ii) Each question carries +5 marks for correct answer and -1 mark for wrong answer.
- (iii) The total number of questions are 50.
- (iv) Duration of the exam is 1 hour (60 minutes).

1. Identify the Metaphors.

- (A) Life is a journey.
- (B) He fought like a tiger.
- (C) The classroom was a zoo.
- (D) The stars danced in the sky.

Correct Answer: (A) Life is a journey. and (C) The classroom was a zoo.

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

The main objective of this question is to identify which of the given sentences utilize a metaphor as a figure of speech.

We need to distinguish metaphors from other literary devices like similes and personification.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Definition of a Metaphor:** A metaphor is a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two unrelated subjects by stating that one thing is another, without using comparison

words such as "like" or "as".

- **Analysis of Option (A):** "Life is a journey" directly equates "life" to a "journey" to suggest that life involves a path, destinations, trials, and progression. Since it contains a direct assertion of equivalence without using "like" or "as", it is a metaphor.
- **Analysis of Option (B):** "He fought like a tiger" compares a person's fighting style to a tiger using the comparative word "like". This makes the sentence a simile, not a metaphor.
- **Analysis of Option (C):** "The classroom was a zoo" directly compares the chaotic and noisy classroom environment to a zoo to emphasize disorder. Because this comparison is direct and does not use "like" or "as", it is also a metaphor.
- **Analysis of Option (D):** "The stars danced in the sky" attributes the human action of dancing to non-human entities (stars). This is an example of personification rather than a metaphor.

Step 3: Final Answer:

Thus, the correct metaphors are found in options (A) and (C).

Quick Tip: To quickly identify a metaphor, look for a direct comparison where one object "is" another (e.g., A is B).

If the sentence contains comparison words like "like" or "as" (e.g., A is like B), it is a simile and can be eliminated immediately.

2. "Beat a dead horse" means:

- (A) Continue useless effort
- (B) Repeat an already settled matter
- (C) Encourage someone
- (D) Waste time on something hopeless

Correct Answer: (D) Waste time on something hopeless

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

The question requires us to determine the correct idiomatic meaning of the common phrase "beat a dead horse".

We must select the option that best captures the figurative essence of the expression.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Literal Origin:** The phrase "beat a dead horse" (or "flog a dead horse") originates from the literal, futile act of beating a horse that is already dead to try to make it pull a load. Because a deceased animal cannot move, any effort spent beating it is entirely useless and a waste of physical energy.
- **Figurative Meaning:** In modern English usage, this idiom is used metaphorically to describe a situation where someone continues to expend time, energy, or resources on an issue that has already been resolved, cannot be changed, or is completely hopeless.
- **Evaluating Option (A):** "Continue useless effort" is a general description of the idiom but lacks the specific context of dealing with a completed or hopeless matter.
- **Evaluating Option (B):** "Repeat an already settled matter" represents one common scenario of this idiom, particularly when someone brings up an argument that has already been decided.
- **Evaluating Option (D):** "Waste time on something hopeless" is the most comprehensive definition of the idiom, as it captures both the futility and the complete lack of hope associated with the action.
- **Evaluating Option (C):** "Encourage someone" is entirely unrelated to the concept of uselessness or waste of effort and is therefore incorrect.

Step 3: Final Answer:

Therefore, the most accurate overall meaning is (D) Waste time on something hopeless.

Quick Tip: Visualize the literal scenario of the idiom to deduce its meaning.

Since beating a horse that is already dead can never produce any helpful result, the idiom naturally represents doing something completely hopeless and wasteful.

3. "On tenterhooks" means:

- (A) Nervous
- (B) Relaxed
- (C) Anxious
- (D) Excited with worry

Correct Answer: (C) Anxious

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

The objective is to find the correct lexical meaning of the idiomatic phrase "on tenterhooks". We need to analyze the emotional state described by this expression.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Origin of the Phrase:** Historically, a "tenter" was a wooden frame used in fabric manufacturing to stretch and dry newly woven woolen cloth. The cloth was held in place by sharp, hooked nails called "tenterhooks". The fabric was stretched very tightly to prevent shrinkage.
- **Figurative Application:** Being "on tenterhooks" metaphorically refers to a person being stretched tight with suspense, anticipation, or worry, mirroring the physical tension of the cloth on the frame.
- **Analyzing Option (A):** "Nervous" is a close feeling, but it is a general state of apprehension that does not fully capture the specific element of painful suspense.
- **Analyzing Option (B):** "Relaxed" is the exact antonym of this phrase, as it denotes a complete absence of tension or worry.
- **Analyzing Option (C):** "Anxious" is the most direct and accurate synonym because being on tenterhooks represents an intense, painful state of anxiety and suspense while waiting for an outcome.
- **Analyzing Option (D):** "Excited with worry" is an informal description of mixed feelings, but "anxious" is the standard, formal definition of the idiom.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The most precise definition of being "on tenterhooks" is (C) Anxious.

Quick Tip: Associate the word "hooks" in "tenterhooks" with being suspended in mid-air in an uncomfortable, tense state.

This vivid image of physical tension translates directly to the emotional state of being highly anxious or in suspense.

4. "Stand out" means:

- (A) Be noticeable
- (B) Be hidden
- (C) Be prominent
- (D) Be ordinary

Correct Answer: (A) Be noticeable

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

This question tests the understanding of the phrasal verb "stand out".

We need to find the option that correctly explains what it means when an object or person stands out.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Literal and Figurative Definition:** The phrasal verb "stand out" means to project outward or to be extremely easy to see or notice because of being different, better, or more distinctive than other surrounding elements.
- **Analyzing Option (A) 'Be noticeable':** This is the primary and most common meaning. When someone or something stands out, they draw attention and are easily noticed by observers.
- **Analyzing Option (B) 'Be hidden':** This is the direct antonym of standing out, as hiding involves blending in or escaping notice.

- **Analyzing Option (C) 'Be prominent':** "Be prominent" is also a strong synonym that is correct in many contexts. However, "be noticeable" is the core, everyday meaning of the phrase that is widely accepted in basic definitions.
- **Analyzing Option (D) 'Be ordinary':** Being ordinary is the opposite of standing out, as standing out implies having an extraordinary, unique, or distinct quality that differentiates oneself from the crowd.

Step 3: Final Answer:

Thus, the phrasal verb "stand out" is correctly defined as (A) Be noticeable.

Quick Tip: To verify the meaning of a phrasal verb, substitute the option directly into a sentence. For example: "Her bright yellow jacket made her **stand out** in the crowd" is equivalent to "Her bright yellow jacket made her **noticeable** in the crowd."

5. Choose the correctly spelled words.

- (A) Mischievous
- (B) Mischievius
- (C) Entrepreneur
- (D) Enterprenuer

Correct Answer: (A) Mischievous and (C) Entrepreneur

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

The task is to identify the correctly spelled words from the given list.

This question tests spelling knowledge of words that are frequently misspelled in written English due to pronunciation errors or foreign origins.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Analyzing Option (A) and (B):** The word meaning playfully troublesome or harmful is spelled "mischievous" (m-i-s-c-h-i-e-v-o-u-s). Many people mistakenly pronounce this word as having four syllables ("mis-chee-vee-us"), which leads to the common incorrect spelling "mischievious" with an extra "i". Thus, Option (A) is correct and (B) is incorrect.

- **Analyzing Option (C) and (D):** The word for an individual who starts a business, taking on financial risks, is spelled "entrepreneur" (e-n-t-r-e-p-r-e-n-e-u-r). Because it is a French loanword, it is highly prone to misspelling. Option (D) "Enterprenuer" contains spelling errors at the beginning ("enter" instead of "entre") and end ("nuer" instead of "neur"). Thus, Option (C) is correct.

- **Conclusion:** Both Option (A) and Option (C) represent correctly spelled words.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correctly spelled words are (A) Mischievous and (C) Entrepreneur.

Quick Tip: For "mischievous", remember it has only three syllables: mis-chie-vous. Keeping this pronunciation in mind will prevent you from writing the extra "i" in "mischievious".

For French loanwords like "entrepreneur", break them down into syllables: en-tre-pre-neur.

6. Choose the correct pair.

(A) Pale – light in color

(B) Pail – bucket

(C) Peel – remove skin

(D) Pale – fruit skin

Correct Answer: (A) Pale – light in color

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

This question evaluates homophones, spelling, and vocabulary definitions.

We must examine each word and its corresponding definition to identify the correct pairing.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Homophones and Vocabulary:** Homophones are words that sound the same but have different spellings and definitions. Here, we are looking at "pale", "pail", and "peel".
- **Analyzing Option (A):** "Pale" is an adjective that means light in color, lacking intensity, or whitish. Therefore, "Pale - light in color" is a correct pair.
- **Analyzing Option (B):** "Pail" is a noun referring to a cylindrical container with a handle, commonly used to carry liquids; it is indeed a bucket. This is also a correct pair.
- **Analyzing Option (C):** "Peel" is a verb that means to strip or remove the outer skin of a fruit or vegetable. This is also a correct pair.
- **Analyzing Option (D):** "Pale" paired with "fruit skin" is incorrect because the outer skin of a fruit is called a "peel", not "pale".
- **Question Nuance:** Because options (A), (B), and (C) are all technically correct pairs, this question might have been designed with a typo, or meant to ask "Choose the incorrect pair", which would make (D) the answer. However, interpreting it as written, we highlight (A) as a primary correct pair.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct pair is (A) Pale – light in color (with B and C also being valid definitions).

Quick Tip: Always pay close attention to homophones in writing section exams.

To remember: "Pail" contains "ai" like "rain", which goes inside a bucket. "Pale" refers to a color shade (lacking color).

7. Synonyms of "Offspring"

- (A) Progeny
- (B) Descendants
- (C) Ancestors
- (D) Children

Correct Answer: (C) Ancestors

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

The goal is to analyze the synonyms of the word "offspring".

We need to determine the relationship between "offspring" and the given options, keeping in mind that the highlighted option in the question image is the non-synonym (antonym).

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Definition of Offspring:** The word "offspring" refers to a person's child or children, or the young of an animal or plant. It represents descendants moving forward in a family line.
- **Analyzing Option (A) 'Progeny':** "Progeny" is a formal collective term referring to descendants or offspring. Thus, it is a direct synonym.
- **Analyzing Option (B) 'Descendants':** "Descendants" refers to people who are descended from a common ancestor, which matches the definition of offspring.
- **Analyzing Option (D) 'Children':** "Children" is the most common synonym for offspring in everyday English.
- **Analyzing Option (C) 'Ancestors':** "Ancestors" refers to people from whom one is descended (such as parents, grandparents, etc.). This is the exact opposite of offspring, making it an antonym. Because Option (C) is marked with a cross in the source image, the question likely intended to ask: "Which of the following is NOT a synonym of Offspring?", making (C) the correct choice for that negative query.

Step 3: Final Answer:

If the question is to identify the non-synonym (antonym), the correct answer is (C) Ancestors. If it asks for positive synonyms, (A), (B), and (D) are correct.

Quick Tip: Always read the question prompt carefully to see if it asks for a "synonym" or "not a synonym".

Draw a quick mental family tree: Ancestors go upward (past generation), while Offspring go downward (future generation).

8. Choose the correct active/passive voice conversions.

- (A) The letter was written by him.
- (B) She sings a song.
- (C) A song is sung by her.
- (D) The work completed yesterday.

Correct Answer: (B) She sings a song. and (C) A song is sung by her.

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

This question requires us to identify active and passive voice sentences that form a correct grammatical conversion pair.

We will analyze the structure of each sentence to find the active-passive relationship.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Active and Passive Voice Rules:** In an active sentence, the subject performs the action on the object. In a passive sentence, the object becomes the subject, the verb is modified with a form of "be" and a past participle, and the original subject is added as an agent after "by".

- **Analyzing Option (B) 'She sings a song':** This is a grammatically correct active voice sentence in the Simple Present tense.

- Subject: "She"

- Verb: "sings" (Simple Present)

- Object: "a song"

- **Analyzing Option (C) 'A song is sung by her':** This is the correct passive conversion of Option (B).

- The object "a song" becomes the passive subject.
- The singular present tense auxiliary "is" matches the simple present verb "sings".
- The past participle of "sing" is "sung".
- The pronoun "she" becomes the object pronoun "her" following "by".
- Thus, (B) and (C) represent a complete, correct conversion pair.
 - **Analyzing Option (A):** "The letter was written by him" is a valid passive sentence, but its active counterpart ("He wrote the letter") is not listed here to form a pair.
 - **Analyzing Option (D):** "The work completed yesterday" is grammatically incomplete in the passive voice; it should be "The work **was** completed yesterday".

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct active/passive voice conversion pair is (B) She sings a song. and (C) A song is sung by her.

Quick Tip: To convert an active sentence to passive, always match the tense of the auxiliary verb to the tense of the main verb in the active sentence.
Simple Present (sings) must always use present auxiliaries (is/am/are) + past participle (sung).

9. Correct use of "Council" and "Counsel"

- (A) The council passed a law.
- (B) He sought legal counsel.
- (C) The counsel members met today.
- (D) She gave wise counsel.

Correct Answer: (C) The counsel members met today.

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

This question tests the ability to distinguish between the homophones "council" and "counsel"

and use them correctly in context.

We must identify which sentences are correct, and find why Option (C) represents an incorrect usage.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

- **Defining "Council":** A "council" is a noun referring to an advisory, deliberative, or legislative body of people formally constituted and meeting regularly (e.g., city council, student council).
- **Defining "Counsel":** "Counsel" can act as a noun meaning advice, opinion, or instruction. It can also refer to a legal adviser or barrister. As a verb, it means to give advice or professional guidance.
- **Evaluating Sentence (A):** "The council passed a law" is correct. Since a council is a legislative body, passing laws is an appropriate action for it.
- **Evaluating Sentence (B):** "He sought legal counsel" is correct. Here, "counsel" refers to professional legal advice or a legal representative.
- **Evaluating Sentence (C):** "The counsel members met today" is incorrect. Since the sentence refers to members of a deliberative assembly meeting together, the correct word is "council", making it "The **council** members met today". This incorrect usage is circled in the source paper, indicating it is the targeted answer for incorrect usage.
- **Evaluating Sentence (D):** "She gave wise counsel" is correct because "counsel" is used as a noun meaning wise advice or guidance.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The sentence that demonstrates an incorrect use of the homophones is (C) The counsel members met today.

Quick Tip: Remember that a council is a city body or group of people (both have 'c').
Counsel is advice or a personal advisor (both are related to guidance or sensing what is right).

10. Fill in the blanks with suitable phrasal verbs.

A. Please _____ the meeting till tomorrow.

- B. Good friends always _____ each other.
- C. Her talent helped her _____ in the competition.
- D. We should never _____ others.

- (A) A - put off, B - stand by, C - stand out, D - look down on
- (B) A - stand by, B - put off, C - look down on, D - stand out
- (C) A - stand out, B - look down on, C - put off, D - stand by
- (D) A - look down on, B - stand out, C - stand by, D - put off

Correct Answer: (A) A - put off, B - stand by, C - stand out, D - look down on

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Question:

This question requires us to match the correct phrasal verbs to the blank spaces in the sentences to make them grammatically correct and contextually meaningful.

We will define each phrasal verb and match them systematically.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

• **Analyzing Sentence A:** "Please _____ the meeting till tomorrow."

- The sentence refers to shifting a meeting to another day.
- The phrasal verb "put off" means to postpone or delay an event.
- Therefore, Blank A matches with "put off".

• **Analyzing Sentence B:** "Good friends always _____ each other."

- This sentence describes a characteristic of loyal friends.
- The phrasal verb "stand by" means to support someone or remain loyal to them, especially during difficult times.
- Therefore, Blank B matches with "stand by".

• **Analyzing Sentence C:** "Her talent helped her _____ in the competition."

- The sentence describes how a competitor's talent helped her perform exceptionally well.
- The phrasal verb "stand out" means to be prominent, superior, or easily noticed compared to others.
- Therefore, Blank C matches with "stand out".

• **Analyzing Sentence D:** "We should never _____ others."

- This sentence states a moral rule about how to treat people.
- The phrasal verb "look down on" means to think of or treat someone as inferior.
- Therefore, Blank D matches with "look down on".

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct matching sequence is A - put off, B - stand by, C - stand out, and D - look down on, which corresponds to Option (A).

Quick Tip: When dealing with multiple-choice matching questions, solve the easiest phrasal verb first. Postponing a meeting is a very common context for "put off", which lets you quickly eliminate options that do not start with "put off".