

CUET 2026 May 19 Shift 1 English

Question Paper (Memory-Based) With Solutions PDF

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. Despite losing his job, he managed to _____ by doing small freelance projects.

- (a) white elephant
- (b) eke out a living
- (c) at sixes and sevens
- (d) Fabian policy

Correct Answer: (b) eke out a living

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This sentence requires filling in the blank with an appropriate English idiom that aligns with the context of financial survival. The subject has lost his primary job but is performing small, temporary tasks to sustain himself. The chosen phrase must mean making just enough money to survive or get by with difficulty.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's analyze the meanings of all the idiomatic choices: White elephant: A possession that is useless or troublesome, especially one that is expensive to maintain. This does not fit the context of earning money. Eke out a living (Correct): To earn just enough money to survive

or buy life's necessities, usually with great effort or by supplementing income through small tasks. This perfectly completes the sentence structure logically and grammatically. At sixes and sevens: A state of total confusion or disarray. It does not fit the blank as a verb phrase. Fabian policy: A policy of cautious delay or avoiding direct confrontation. This is entirely irrelevant to financial survival.

Therefore, "eke out a living" is the only option that logically explains how he survived financially after losing his job.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct idiomatic phrase to fill the blank is option (b).

Quick Tip: To "eke out" something means to add to it or stretch it out carefully. Think of stretching your last bit of savings or making small earnings last as long as possible!

2. Hobson's choice means:

- (a) A difficult puzzle
- (b) No real choice at all
- (c) A secret agreement
- (d) Extreme happiness

Correct Answer: (b) No real choice at all

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

Idioms often have fascinating historical origins that explain their current figurative definitions. The phrase "Hobson's choice" describes a specific situation where an individual is offered a choice that seems optional on the surface, but in reality, there is only one true possibility available: take exactly what is offered or leave it.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

The phrase comes from Thomas Hobson (1544–1631), a stable owner in Cambridge, England. Hobson kept a large collection of excellent horses for students and travelers to rent. However,

to ensure his best horses weren't overworked, he gave his customers a strict rule: they could either take the horse in the stall nearest the stable door or take no horse at all.

Therefore, even though customers thought they had a selection, they actually had no real choice at all. This perfectly matches Option (b).

Step 3: Final Answer:

The meaning of Hobson's choice is option (b).

Quick Tip: Remember the simple rule of Hobson's stable: "Take this one option, or take nothing at all!" It's an illusion of choice.

3. After the sudden resignation of the manager, the entire office was _____.

- (a) white elephant
- (b) at sixes and sevens
- (c) eke out
- (d) break through

Correct Answer: (b) at sixes and sevens

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This context describes an office environment immediately following a disruptive event: the sudden departure of leadership. The missing idiom must describe a state of confusion, lack of organization, or general disarray among the staff.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's look at the meanings of the available options to determine the best fit: White elephant: An expensive, useless, or burdensome possession. It does not make sense to describe an office as a white elephant in this context. At sixes and sevens (Correct): An idiom that describes a state of complete confusion, disorder, or disagreement. An office losing its manager unexpectedly would naturally be left in a state of chaos or confusion, making this the perfect fit. Eke out: To manage to make a living with difficulty. This does not fit the context or syntax of the sentence.

Break through: To make a sudden advance or discovery. This denotes a positive development, which contrasts with the unsettling nature of a sudden resignation.

Thus, "at sixes and sevens" is the only phrase that accurately describes the chaotic atmosphere of the leaderless office.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct idiomatic phrase to fill the blank is option (b).

Quick Tip: The expression "at sixes and sevens" comes from old dice games and trade disputes where reaching numbers 6 and 7 meant entering an unpredictable, disorderly situation. Think of random numbers rolling out of control to remember chaos!

4. The abandoned airport project became a _____ for the government.

- (a) white elephant
- (b) cortege
- (c) discourse
- (d) brevity

Correct Answer: (a) white elephant

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This sentence context describes a major public infrastructure venture ("airport project") that has been abandoned. For a government, such an idle, expensive asset represents a massive drain on financial resources without providing any practical public utility. The missing vocabulary item must be an idiom that characterizes a burdensome, useless, and costly possession.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's analyze the definition and suitability of each option: White elephant (Correct): An idiom used to describe a possession that is completely useless, unwanted, or unprofitable, especially one that is extremely expensive to maintain or build. An abandoned infrastructure project fits this description perfectly. Cortege: A solemn procession, especially for a funeral. This is

completely irrelevant to an engineering or financial project. Discourse: Written or spoken communication or debate. This does not fit the financial context. Brevity: Concise and exact use of words in writing or speech; shortness of time. This does not make grammatical or contextual sense here.

Thus, "white elephant" is the only option that logically describes the government's financial burden.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct idiomatic phrase to fill the blank is option (a).

Quick Tip: The term "white elephant" comes from an old custom where the King of Siam would give a rare white elephant to courtiers he disliked. The cost of feeding and housing the sacred beast was so high that it would financially ruin the recipient!

5. A long procession, especially for a funeral, is called a:

- (a) philistine
- (b) cortege
- (c) itinerary
- (d) discourse

Correct Answer: (b) cortege

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This question tests single-word substitutions for descriptive phrases. We need to identify a specific collective noun or term that directly defines a formal, organized group of people or vehicles moving along together during a funeral service.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's examine the dictionary definitions of all four vocabulary options: Philistine: A person who is hostile or indifferent to culture, the arts, or refined intellect. Cortege (Correct): A formal, slow-moving procession, specifically one accompanying a funeral, consisting of mourners,

vehicles, or a casket. This perfectly matches the prompt's definition. Itinerary: A detailed plan or route proposed for a journey or trip. Discourse: A formal, structured conversation, speech, or piece of writing on a specific subject.

Therefore, "cortege" is the precise lexical term for a funeral procession.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct one-word substitution is option (b).

Quick Tip: Think of a "cortege" as a formal, slow-moving column of vehicles or people accompanying a funeral carriage. It shares historical roots with the word "court," implying a structured, formal escort.

6. Choose the pair of antonyms.

- (a) adroit – skillful
- (b) verbose – lengthy
- (c) corpulent – emaciated
- (d) philately – stamp collection

Correct Answer: (c) corpulent – emaciated

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This problem requires evaluating the semantic relationship between pairs of words. While three of the options present pairs of synonyms or direct definitions, one pair consists of words with completely opposite meanings (antonyms). We must verify each relationship to isolate the antonym pair.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's analyze the relationships in each pair: Option (a): Adroit means clever or skillful in using the hands or mind. Therefore, adroit and skillful are synonyms. Option (b): Verbose means using or expressed in more words than are needed, which is equivalent to being lengthy. Therefore, these are synonyms. Option (c): Corpulent means excessively fat, large, or bulky. On the other hand, emaciated means abnormally thin or weak, especially because of illness or

a lack of food. Because one means excessively fat and the other means abnormally thin, they are antonyms. This satisfies the question requirement. Option (d): Philately is the study or collection of postage stamps. This is a word paired with its direct definition.

Thus, option (c) is the only pair that represents opposites.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The pair of antonyms is option (c).

Quick Tip: To remember "corpulent," think of "corps/corpus," which means body—someone who has a lot of "body" is fat. To remember "emaciated," focus on the "mac" root, which sounds like "meager" or lacking mass!

7. An _____ speaker can explain difficult ideas very clearly and skillfully.

- (a) itinerant
- (b) adroit
- (c) emaciated
- (d) cantankerous

Correct Answer: (b) adroit

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This context requires selecting a descriptive adjective that characterizes a person's speaking ability, specifically their skillfulness and clarity when handling complex topics. The missing vocabulary word must denote high competence, cleverness, or dexterity in performance.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's evaluate the definitions of all four options to find the correct match: Itinerant: Traveling from place to place. This describes a physical movement pattern, not a communication skill. Adroit (Correct): Clever, adept, or highly skillful in using the hands or mind. When used to describe a speaker, it means they are exceptionally skilled at structuring arguments and explaining complex points smoothly. Emaciated: Abnormally thin or weak, especially because

of illness or a lack of food. This is a physical condition and is completely irrelevant here. Cantankerous: Bad-tempered, argumentative, and uncooperative. A cantankerous speaker would be hostile rather than clear and skillful.

Therefore, "adroit" is the only adjective that logically and grammatically fits the blank to complete the description.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct word to fill the blank is option (b).

Quick Tip: To remember "adroit," think of the word "add right." An adroit person adds the right skills to any task to get it done cleverly and smoothly!

8. "Brevity" means:

- (a) Loudness
- (b) Intelligence
- (c) Shortness in speech or writing
- (d) Confusion

Correct Answer: (c) Shortness in speech or writing

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This question tests direct lexical definitions. The abstract noun "Brevity" deals with properties of language, communication, or time duration. We must identify its core meaning from the multiple-choice selection.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

The noun "Brevity" comes from the Latin root *brevis*, which means short (the same root that gives us words like brief and abbreviate).

In English, it is used to define: 1. Concise and exact use of words in writing or speech. 2. The quality of lasting for a very short duration of time.

Looking at our choices, Option (c) ("Shortness in speech or writing") matches this definition

perfectly. It is famously referenced in William Shakespeare's play Hamlet through the quote, "Brevity is the soul of wit," meaning a good point should be made using as few words as possible.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct definition of Brevity is option (c).

Quick Tip: Link "Brevity" directly to the word "Brief." Both share the exact same root and denote keeping things short and directly to the point!

9. The professor's explanation was so _____ that students lost interest quickly.

- (a) verbose
- (b) adroit
- (c) taciturn
- (d) concise

Correct Answer: (a) verbose

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

The clue in this sentence is the cause-and-effect relationship: "students lost interest quickly." This indicates that the professor's lecture style had a negative quality—likely being too long, tedious, or repetitive. The missing word must describe a style of speaking or writing that uses far more words than necessary.

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's analyze the vocabulary options: Verbose (Correct): Using or expressed in more words than are needed; wordy and repetitive. A verbose explanation easily becomes boring, causing students to lose interest, which fits the sentence perfectly. Adroit: Skillful or clever. A skillful explanation would keep students engaged rather than bored. Taciturn: Reserved or uncommunicative in speech; saying very little. A professor cannot give a long explanation if they are taciturn. Concise: Giving a lot of information clearly and in a few words. This is a positive quality that prevents boredom.

Thus, "verbose" is the only word that logically explains why the students became bored and disconnected.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct word to fill the blank is option (a).

Quick Tip: Think of "Verbose" as being packed with "Verbs" and words! It describes someone who talks endlessly in circles instead of getting straight to the point.

10. A person who travels from place to place is known as:

- (a) itinerant
- (b) emaciated
- (c) sagacious
- (d) corpulent

Correct Answer: (a) itinerant

Solution:

Step 1: Understanding the Concept:

This problem requires identifying a single-word substitution for a specific behavioral lifestyle: traveling continuously from location to location, often for work or trade (such as itinerant preachers or itinerant laborers).

Step 2: Detailed Explanation:

Let's review the definitions of each option to find the correct fit: Itinerant (Correct): Traveling from place to place; wandering or unfixed. It comes from the Latin word iter, meaning a journey (the same root behind itinerary). This matches the definition exactly. Emaciated: Abnormally thin or weak due to illness or lack of food. Sagacious: Having or showing keen mental discernment and good judgment; wise. Corpulent: Excessively fat or bulky in body composition.

Because options (b), (c), and (d) describe physical or intellectual traits rather than movement, "itinerant" is the correct choice.

Step 3: Final Answer:

The correct one-word substitution is option (a).

Quick Tip: Connect the word "Itinerant" to your travel "Itinerary." Since an itinerary is a travel plan, an itinerant person is someone whose lifestyle is constantly defined by an itinerary!