C1 Advanced (CAE) - How to do key word transformations

Let's look at the instructions for the key word transformations task and an example question. We're going to work through the question step by step to see the best way to go about it.

Understanding the instructions

Every key word transformations task includes exactly the same set of instructions. Look at the instructions and decide whether the following statements are true or false.

Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. ***Do not change the word given****. You must use between* ***three*** *and* ***six*** *words, including the word given.*

1 The 1st sentence and the 2nd sentence always use the same grammar. _____
2 Your final answer will have the same meaning as the original sentence. _____
3 The key word must be used in your answer. _____
4 You can change the key word (e.g. to make it plural, to change the tense). _____
5 An answer with five words is possible. _____

Answering the question

Step 1 – Identifying similar content

In order to identify what we need to transform, first we need to identify what content from the 1st sentence has already been included in the 2nd sentence.

Look at the sample question and underline or highlight the content in the 1st sentence that is already included in the 2nd sentence.

0 Despite the fact that he had been to the station earlier, Kyle couldn't remember the way back.

HOW

Kyle had forgotten ..... he had been to the station earlier.

Step 2 – Identifying content to be transformed

Now we know what we don't need to change, circle or highlight the content in the 1st sentence that we are going to be transforming with the key word.

These steps help us focus our attention and not spend too much time on each question. It is easy to have a mental block with key word transformations, so let's try to avoid that by concentrating only on the essential information.

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Step 3 – Considering the language

Using the key word to help, think about the content that is missing and try to identify which language point or whether multiple language points are being tested. At C1 Advanced level, there is often more than one language point that is used to transform the sentences.

Look at this list of language points. Which one(s) are being tested in the example question?

1 participle clauses
2 fixed expressions
3 past tenses
4 cleft sentences
5 linking words and phrases
6 modal verbs

Step 4 – Answering the question

Now we are ready to answer the question. Complete the 2nd sentence with a similar meaning to the 1st sentence using between three and six words.

Step 5 – Checking your answer

Before we finish, it's essential to check your answer and look carefully at the details. It's easy to make a simple mistake and lose a point or two when it could have been easily avoided.

Use this checklist to check your answer to the example question.

1 The number of words is correct (between 3 and 6).
2 The key word has been used in its original form.
3 The meaning of the 2nd sentence is sufficiently similar to the 1st.
4 The tenses in the 2nd sentence correspond to the 1st.
5 The subjects in the 2nd sentence correspond to the 1st.
6 Any pluralisation of nouns is correct.
7 Any necessary prepositions have been included and used accurately.
8 Any necessary determiners have been included and used accurately.
9 Any verb patterns have been constructed correctly.
10 Spelling is correct.

Use this checklist with every key word transformations question you complete. It may seem like a lot at first, but with time, it will become second nature.

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How to do key word transformations – Answer Key

Understanding the instructions

1 F 2 T 3 T 4 F 5 T

Answering the question

Step 1 – Identifying similar content

o Despite the fact that he had been to the station earlier, Kyle couldn't remember the way back.

HOW

Kyle had forgotten ..... he had been to the station earlier.

Step 2 – Identifying content to be transformed

o Despite the fact that he had been to the station earlier, Kyle couldn't remember the way back.

HOW

Kyle had forgotten ..... he had been to the station earlier.

Step 3 – Considering the language

o Despite the fact that he had been to the station earlier, Kyle couldn't remember the way back.

HOW linking words? fixed expressions?

Kyle had forgotten ..... he had been to the station earlier.

Step 4 – Answering the question

o Despite the fact that he had been to the station earlier, Kyle couldn't remember the way back.

HOW linking words? fixed expressions?

Kyle had forgotten ..... how to get back even though ..... he had been to the station earlier.

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