

Paper 3: Speaking

Paper Format

This paper contains four parts.

The standard format is two candidates and two examiners.

One examiner acts as both assessor and interlocutor and manages the interaction by asking questions and setting up the tasks. The other acts as assessor and does not join in the conversation.

Task Types

Short exchanges with the examiner; a collaborative task

involving both candidates; a one-minute long turn and a follow up discussion.

Timing

10–12 minutes per pair of candidates.

Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test.

There are a total of 25 marks in Paper 3, making 25% of the total score for the whole examination

Part	Task Type and Format	Task Focus	Timing
1	Each candidate interacts with the interlocutor. The interlocutor asks the candidates questions in turn, using standardised questions.	Giving information of a factual, personal kind. The candidates respond to questions about present circumstances, past experiences and future plans.	2–3 minutes
2	Simulated situation. Candidates interact with each other. Visual stimulus is given to the candidates to aid the discussion task. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	Using functional language to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement.	2–3 minutes
3	Extended turn. A colour photograph is given to each candidate in turn and they are asked to talk about it for up to a minute. Both photographs relate to the same topic.	Describing photographs and managing discourse, using appropriate vocabulary, in a longer turn.	3 minutes
4	General conversation. Candidates interact with each other. The topic of the conversation develops the theme established in Part 3. The interlocutor sets up the activity using a standardised rubric.	The candidates talk together about their opinions, likes/dislikes, preferences, experiences, habits etc.	3 minutes

Preparing for the Speaking Test

Introduction

In the PET Speaking Test, candidates are examined in pairs by two examiners. One of the examiners acts as an interlocutor and the other as an assessor. The interlocutor directs the test, while the assessor takes no part in the interaction. Examiners change roles during the course of an examining session, but not during the examining of one pair. There are a number of different 'packs' of material that examiners can use.

The test takes between ten and twelve minutes and consists of four parts which are designed to elicit a wide range of speaking skills from the candidates. Where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the final Speaking test will be a group of three rather than a pair. The group of three test is not an option for all candidates, but is only used for the last test in a session, where necessary.

Part 1

The test begins with a general conversation led by the interlocutor, who asks the candidates questions about their

personal details, daily routines, likes and dislikes, etc.

Candidates are addressed in turn and are not expected to talk to each other at this stage. At an appropriate point, candidates are asked to spell all or part of their name.

The purpose of this conversation is to test the language of simple social interaction, and to enable each candidate to make an initial contribution to the test, using simple everyday language. As they are talking about themselves using familiar language, this conversation should help to settle the candidates, enabling them to overcome any initial nervousness.

Although the interlocutor's questions are designed to elicit short rather than extended responses, candidates should be discouraged from giving one-word answers in this part. Especially when asked about their daily routines or their likes and dislikes, candidates should be encouraged to extend their answers with reasons and examples.

This part of the test assesses the candidates' ability to take part in spontaneous communication in an everyday setting. Candidates who find opportunities to socialise with others in

an English-speaking environment will be well prepared for this part of the test. Where this is not possible, however, such situations need to be recreated in the classroom through structured speaking tasks that practise appropriate language in a similar context. Candidates should be discouraged, however, from preparing rehearsed speeches as these will sound unnatural and will probably fail to answer the specific questions asked.

Part 2

This part of the test takes the form of a simulated situation where the candidates are asked, for example, to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations and negotiate agreement with their partner. It is not a role-play activity, however, as candidates will always be giving their own views and opinions about an imaginary situation, rather than assuming an unfamiliar role.

In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, repeating the instructions whilst candidates look at the prompt material. The interlocutor then takes no further part in the interaction. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other.

A sheet of visual prompts is given to the candidates which is designed to generate ideas and provide the basis for the discussion. Candidates may, however, introduce their own ideas if they wish. Candidates are assessed on their ability to take part in the task, rather than on the outcome of their discussions, and so it is not necessary for them to complete the task in the time given. Candidates are assessed on their use of appropriate language and interactive strategies, not on their ideas.

All classroom discussions in pairs and groups will provide preparation for this part of the text. Candidates should be encouraged to make positive contributions that move the discussion forward by picking up on each other's ideas. Candidates should learn to discuss the situation fully with their partners, using the range of visual prompts to extend the discussion, before coming to a conclusion. It is useful to point out to candidates that if they rush to reach a conclusion too soon, opportunities to demonstrate their language skills may be lost – and it is these skills rather than the outcome of the discussion which is being assessed.

Part 3

In this part of the test, each candidate is given one colour photograph to describe. The photographs will depict everyday situations and candidates are asked to give a simple description of what they can see in their photograph.

This part of the test allows candidates to demonstrate both their range of vocabulary and their ability to organise

language in a long turn. Their descriptions are expected to be simple, however, and candidates at this level are not expected to speculate about the context or talk about any wider issues raised by the scenes depicted.

Candidates should be encouraged to describe the people and activities in the photographs as fully as possible. They should imagine that they are describing the photograph to someone who can't see it, naming all the objects and including illustrative detail such as colours, people's clothes, time of day, weather, etc.

Whilst the photographs will not call for difficult or specialised vocabulary, candidates will be given credit for the ability to use paraphrase or other appropriate strategies to deal with items of vocabulary which they do not know or cannot call to mind. Candidates should therefore be given plenty of classroom practice in both the language of description and strategies for dealing with unknown vocabulary.

The photographs will have a common theme, which candidates will be told, but will differ in terms of their detailed content. Although this theme establishes a common starting point for Part 4, the photographs are returned to the interlocutor at the end of Part 3 and play no further part in the test.

Part 4

In this part of the test, the candidates speak to each other. The interlocutor sets up the task, then takes no further part. The theme established in Part 3 is now used as the starting point for a general conversation in which the candidates discuss their own likes and dislikes, experiences, etc. Candidates are expected to engage with the task independently, negotiating turns and eliciting opinions from each other. In the event of a complete breakdown in the interaction, the interlocutor may subtly intervene to redirect the students with further prompts, but will not take part in the task itself. Candidates should be able to talk about their interests and enthusiasms and give reasons for their views and preferences. Credit will be given for the use of appropriate interactive strategies and candidates should be encouraged to elicit the views of their partner(s), pick up on their partner's points and show interest in what their partner(s) are saying, as well as talking about themselves.

If, at any time during the test, candidates have difficulty in understanding an instruction, question or response, they should ask the interlocutor or their partner to repeat what was said. Marks will not normally be lost for the occasional request for repetition.

Assessment

Throughout the test, candidates are assessed on their language skills, not their personality, intelligence or knowledge of the world. They must, however, be prepared to

develop the conversation, where appropriate, and respond to the tasks set. Prepared speeches are not acceptable. Candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. Both examiners assess the candidates according to criteria which are interpreted at PET level. The interlocutor awards a mark for global achievement, whilst the assessor awards marks according to four analytical criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.

Grammar and Vocabulary

This scale refers to the accurate and appropriate use of grammatical forms and vocabulary. It also includes the range of both grammatical forms and vocabulary. Performance is viewed in terms of the overall effectiveness of the language used in dealing with the tasks.

Discourse Management

This scale refers to the coherence, extent and relevance of each candidate's individual contribution. On this scale the candidate's ability to maintain a coherent flow of language is assessed, either within a single utterance or over a string of utterances. Also assessed here is how relevant the contributions are to what has gone before.

Pronunciation

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements. This includes stress, rhythm and intonation, as well as individual sounds. Examiners put themselves in the position of the non-language specialist and assess the overall impact of the pronunciation and the degree of effort required to understand the candidate. Different varieties of English, e.g. British, North American, Australian etc., are acceptable, provided they are used consistently throughout the test.

Interactive Communication

This scale refers to the candidate's ability to use language to achieve meaningful communication. This includes initiating and responding without undue hesitation, the ability to use interactive strategies to maintain or repair communication, and sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking.

Global Achievement

This scale refers to the candidate's overall effectiveness in dealing with the tasks in the four separate parts of the PET Speaking Test. The global mark is an independent impression mark which reflects the assessment of the candidate's performance from the interlocutor's perspective. The interlocutor gives one global mark for each candidate's performance across all parts of the test.

Marking

As mentioned above, assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The assessor awards marks for each of the four criteria listed above. The interlocutor awards each candidate one global mark.

In many countries, oral examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a team leader who may be responsible for approximately fifteen oral examiners. Team leaders give advice and support to oral examiners, as required.

The team leaders are responsible to a senior team leader who is the professional representative of Cambridge ESOL for the speaking tests. Senior team leaders are appointed by Cambridge ESOL and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the UK. Team leaders are appointed by the senior team leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by team leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample speaking tests recorded on video and then conduct practice tests with volunteer candidates in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on video are selected to demonstrate a range of nationalities and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

CPE**LEVEL C2****Fully operational command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.

Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.

Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.

Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

CAE**LEVEL C1****Good operational command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most situations.

Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.

Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.

Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.

L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

FCE**LEVEL B2****Generally effective command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in familiar situations.

Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.

Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.

Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.

Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

PET**LEVEL B1 (Threshold)****Limited but effective command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.

Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.

Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.

Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.

Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

KET**LEVEL A2 (Waystage)****Basic command of the spoken language.**

Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.

Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.

Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.

Only able to produce limited extended discourse.

Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.

Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

Pre-Waystage Level**Zero**

Preliminary English Test Speaking Test

Part 1 (2-3 minutes)

Phase 1
Interlocutor

A/B Good morning / afternoon / evening.
Can I have your mark sheets, please?

A/B I'm and this is
He / she is just going to listen to us.

A Now, what's your name?
Thank you.

B And, what's your name?
Thank you.

Back-up prompts

B What's your surname?
How do you spell it?
Thank you.

A And, what's your surname?
How do you spell it?
Thank you.

How do you write your
family's second name?

(Ask the following questions. Ask A first)

Where do you live / come from?

Do you work or are you a student in?
What do you do / study?

Thank you.
(Repeat for B)

Do you live in?

Have you got a job?
What job do you do? / What
subject(s) do you study?

Phase 2

(Select one or more questions from the list to ask each candidate. Ask Candidate B first)

Do you enjoy studying English? Why (not)?

Do you think that English will be useful for you in
the future?

What did you do yesterday evening / last
weekend?

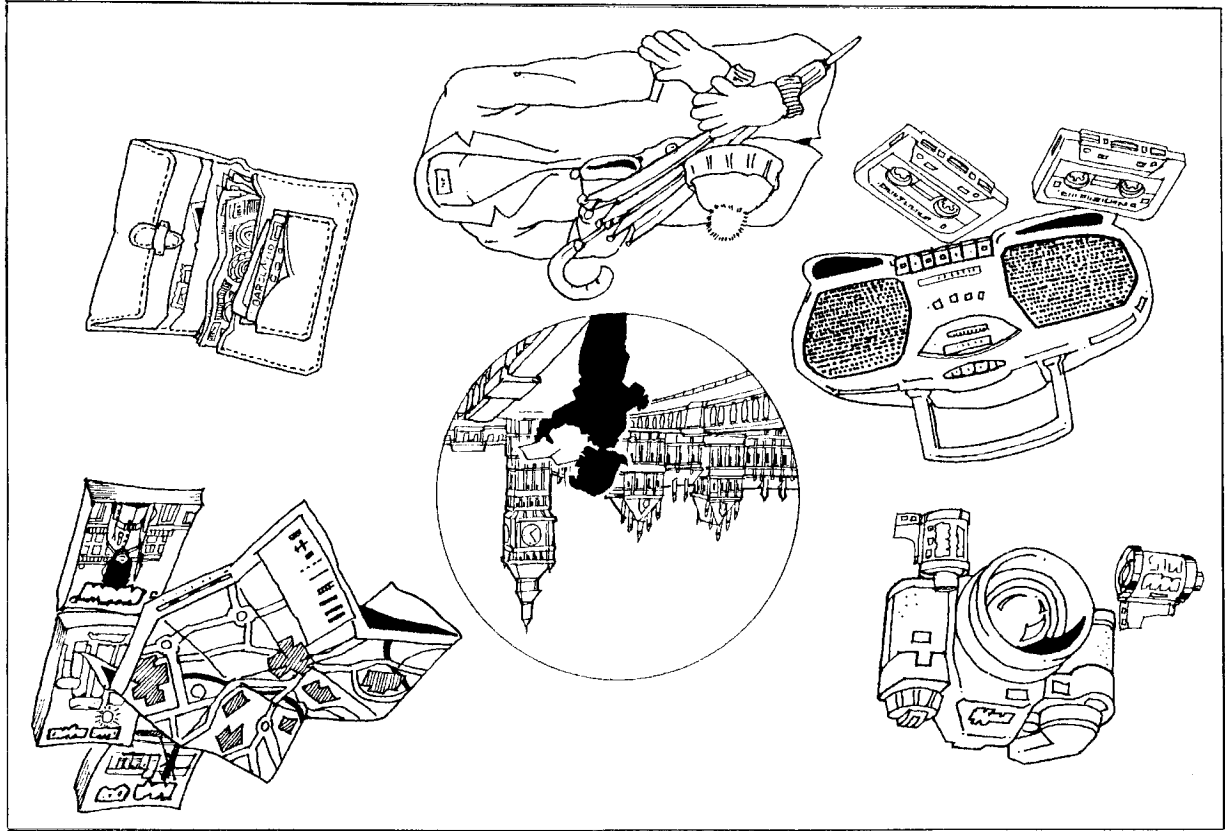
What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Thank you.

(Introduction to Part 2)

In the next part, you are going to talk to each other.

Sample Material - Part 2



Preliminary English Test

Part 2 (2 - 3 minutes)

Speaking Test (Trip to England)

Interlocutor

Say to both candidates:

I'm going to describe a situation to you.

A friend of yours is planning to spend 6 months in England to improve her English. Talk together about the things she will need in England, and decide which are the most important things to take / bring with her.

Here is a picture with some ideas to help you.

Hand over **Picture Sheet** to the candidates.

N.B. One A3 sheet to be shared.

Pause

I'll say that again.

A friend of yours is planning to spend 6 months in England to improve her English. Talk together about the things she will need in England, and decide which are the most important things to take / bring with her.

All right? Talk together.

Allow the candidates enough time to complete the task without intervention. Prompt only if necessary.

Thank you.

Time

About 2 - 3 minutes (including time to assimilate the information).

Sample Material - Part 3

Preliminary English Test

Part 3 (3 minutes)

Speaking Test (Reading and writing)

Interlocutor

Say to both candidates:

Now, I'd like each of you to talk on your own about something. I'm going to give each of you a photograph of people reading and writing.

Candidate A, here's your photograph. (Hand one of the photographs to Candidate A.) Please show it to Candidate B, but I'd like you to talk about it. Candidate B, you just listen. I'll give you your photograph in a moment.

Candidate A, please tell us what you can see in your photograph.

(Candidate A)

Approximately one minute.

If there is a need to intervene, prompts rather than direct questions should be used.

Thank you.

Retrieve photograph from Candidate A.

Now, Candidate B, here's your photograph. It also shows reading and writing. (Hand the second photograph to Candidate B.) Please show it to Candidate A and tell us what you can see in the photograph.

(Candidate B)

Approximately one minute.

Thank you.

Retrieve photograph from Candidate B.

Part 4 (3 minutes)

Interlocutor

Say to both candidates:

Your photographs showed people reading and writing. Now, I'd like you to talk together about the different kinds of reading and writing you did when you were younger, and the kinds you do now.

Allow the candidates enough time to complete the task without intervention. Prompt only if necessary.

Thank you. That's the end of the test.

Time

Parts 3 & 4 should take about 6 minutes together.

