



**LANGUAGECERT IESOL EXAM
EXAM HELP BOOKLET
SPEAKING**

How to use this booklet

This booklet has been created to help you prepare for the tasks featured in the LanguageCert ISESOL exam. The booklet will focus on three exam levels, B1, B2 and C1.

The booklet has 3 sections with each section having been designed to guide you through the preparation process.

Table of Contents

1. The structure of LanguageCert ISESOL exams
2. The assessment of LanguageCert ISESOL exams
3. Preparing for the four criteria of assessment

1. The Structure of speaking tasks

When you are preparing for a language exam, it is important to familiarise yourself with the structure of the exam, so let's have a look at some of the things you can expect when taking a B1, B2 or C1 ISESOL exam. The exam has 4 parts each part having a different aim and focus. Each part is strictly timed, so don't worry if the interlocutor politely tells you to stop. It only means that the time allocated for that part is up. This section of the booklet will explain the focus of each part of the exam and the requirements you will be measured against.

Marks and features of each speaking task

	B1	B2	C1	Maximum marks (to be divided by two)
Part 1	<p>Giving personal information A warm-up activity to help relax candidates. Answering questions on familiar topics and expressing some opinions and ideas</p>	<p>Giving personal information A warm-up activity to help relax candidates. Answering questions on familiar and abstract topics and expressing opinions and ideas</p>	<p>Giving personal information A warm-up activity to help relax candidates. Answering questions on familiar and abstract topics and expressing opinions and ideas on a wide range of topics</p>	Maximum mark: 12
Part 2	<p>Communicating in everyday situations Acting out short role-plays in familiar formal, neutral and informal settings. Candidates respond or initiate as required. Candidates don't need to play the role of another person but must understand the context and role that the interlocutor plays.</p>	<p>Communicating in everyday situations Acting out short role-plays in formal, neutral and informal settings. Candidates respond or initiate as required. Candidates don't need to play the role of another person but must understand the context and role that the interlocutor plays.</p>	<p>Communicating in everyday situations Acting out short role-plays in formal, neutral and informal settings. Candidates respond or initiate as required. Candidates don't need to play the role of another person but must understand the context and role that the interlocutor plays.</p>	Maximum mark: 12

Part 3	<p>Exchanging information and opinions to perform a task</p> <p>The candidate and Interlocutor each have the same copy of six visual inputs around a central theme, topic or question. Both use the inputs to ask and answer questions, discuss and reach a conclusion. The task involves making personal decisions about the choices.</p>	<p>Exchanging information and opinions to perform a task</p> <p>The candidate and Interlocutor each have a similarly themed set of information. Each set of information contains some different details. Both use the inputs to ask and answer questions, discuss and agree 2-4 plans/ arrangements/ decisions. The task involves making personal decisions about the choices. The candidates do not see the Interlocutor's information.</p>	<p>Exchanging information and opinions to perform a task</p> <p>The candidate and Interlocutor each have the same written prompts. Both use these to ask and answer questions, expand and justify opinions, challenge and ask for clarification, and reach some kind of conclusion. The task requires sufficient language to discuss abstract concepts.</p>	Maximum mark: 12
Part 4	<p>Speaking about a selected topic</p> <p>30-second preparation time - note-taking allowed. Candidates demonstrate their ability to speak on a topic for a long turn, to describe, narrate or explain something and respond to questions.</p>	<p>Speaking about a selected topic</p> <p>30-second preparation time - note-taking allowed. Candidates demonstrate their ability to speak on a topic for a long turn, to describe, narrate or explain something and respond to questions.</p>	<p>Speaking about a selected topic</p> <p>30-second preparation time - note-taking allowed. Candidates demonstrate their ability to speak on a topic for a long turn, to describe, narrate or explain something and respond to questions.</p>	Maximum mark: 12

2. The Assessment of ISESOL exam

The 4 parts of the ISESOL exam are evaluated with the help of task-specific mark schemes. Each level has a task-specific mark scheme with descriptors for Task fulfilment and coherence, Accuracy and range of grammar, Accuracy and range of vocabulary and Pronunciation, intonation and fluency. There are four levels of performance with a corresponding mark in each of the above criteria: First Class Pass (3), Pass (2), Narrow Fail (1) and Fail (0). The total marks awarded for the task are the sum of the marks awarded to each criterion. Each of the 4 tasks is evaluated separately and the final grade is reached by dividing the total marks awarded for all 4 parts by two and rounding it up. In order to pass, a candidate needs to achieve a Pass (12 points).

Grade table for B1, B2 and C1

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Total marks: 24</i>
<i>FCP</i>	<i>20-24</i>
PASS	12-19 (50%)
<i>NF</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>F</i>	<i>0-10</i>

The four criteria of the mark schemes explained

Criterion	Task fulfilment and coherence (0-3 points)	Accuracy and range of grammar (0-3 points)	Accuracy and range of vocabulary (0-3 points)	Pronunciation, intonation and fluency (0-3 points)
	The ability to engage in effective communicative exchanges and connect utterances coherently	The ability to vary and demonstrate control of grammatical structures as appropriate to the task	The ability to vary and demonstrate control of lexis and register as appropriate to the task	The ability to produce the sounds of English in order to be understood with appropriate stress and intonation and maintain the flow of speech

Apart from the mark scheme, markers also rely heavily on the CEFR descriptors for the given level, so it might be a good idea to see if you satisfy the criteria.

CEFR descriptors for B1, B2 and C1

	Accuracy	Range	Pronunciation	Fluency and interaction
B1	Uses reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used 'routines' and patterns associated with more predictable situations.	Has enough language to get by, with sufficient vocabulary to express him/herself with some hesitation and circumlocutions on topics such as family, hobbies and interests, work, travel, and current events.	Pronunciation is clearly intelligible even if a foreign accent is sometimes evident and occasional mispronunciations occur .	Can keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning and repair is very evident , especially in longer stretches of free production. Can initiate, maintain and close simple face-to-face conversation on topics that are familiar or of personal interest . Can repeat back part of what someone has said to confirm mutual understanding.
B2	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical control . Does not make errors which cause misunderstanding, and can correct most of his/her mistakes.	Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints on most general topics, without much conspicuous searching for words , using some complex sentence forms to do so.	Has acquired a clear, natural, pronunciation and intonation.	Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo; although he/she can be hesitant as he/she searches for patterns and expressions. There are few noticeably long pauses . Can initiate discourse, take his/her turn when appropriate and end conversation when he/she needs to, though he/she may not always do this elegantly. Can help the discussion along on familiar ground confirming comprehension, inviting others in, etc.
C1	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy ; errors are rare, difficult to spot and generally corrected when they do occur.	Has a good command of a broad range of language allowing him/her to select a formulation to express him/herself clearly in an appropriate style on a wide range of general, academic, professional or leisure topics without having to restrict what he/she wants to say.	Can vary intonation and place sentence stress correctly in order to express finer shades of meaning .	Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously, almost effortlessly . Only a conceptually difficult subject can hinder a natural, smooth flow of language. Can select a suitable phrase from a readily available range of discourse functions to preface his remarks in order to get or to keep the floor and to relate his/her own contributions skilfully to those of other speakers.

Mark Scheme for B1 level

	Task fulfilment and coherence	Accuracy and range of grammar	Accuracy and range of vocabulary	Pronunciation, intonation and fluency
3 FCP	<p>Maintains the interaction well, turn takes naturally, and gets the message across.</p> <p>Addresses the topic well. Contributes relevantly to the conversation/topic in all the situations.</p> <p>AND Links ideas into a linear sequence of points.</p>	<p>Reasonable range of grammar expected at B1 and sufficiently accurate.</p> <p>Errors occur, but they do not impede communication.</p>	<p>Sufficient range of vocabulary to deal with the tasks at B1 successfully. Errors occur, but they do not impede communication.</p>	<p>Pronunciation is clearly intelligible even if a foreign accent is sometimes evident and occasional mispronunciations occur.</p> <p>Intonation contributes to conveyed content.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Is able to keep going effectively without help and does not need to pause very often in order to search for language.</p>
2 P	<p>Maintains the interaction quite well, although may occasionally have to ask for repetition or clarification.</p> <p>Addresses the topic sufficiently well. Turn takes with a degree of independence. Contributes relevantly to the conversation/topic in most situations, although some misunderstanding may occur occasionally.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Connects ideas in simple ways and can generally be followed by a sympathetic listener.</p>	<p>Reasonable control of a relatively limited repertoire of the grammar expected at B1.</p> <p>Major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts, although the message is always communicated.</p>	<p>Good control of the vocabulary expected at B1, but major errors still occur when handling unfamiliar topics and situations. The errors do not generally impede communication.</p>	<p>Pronunciation is sufficiently intelligible, and is generally understood. Influence of L1 on intonation may be strong, but this does not often impede the communication.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Is able to keep going comprehensibly, even though pausing for grammatical and lexical planning or repair.</p> <p>Speaks without undue hesitation, except in longer stretches of free production.</p>
1 NF	<p>Fails to meet most of the task requirements. Has difficulty communicating at times and needs constant support from the interlocutor. Contributions are often irrelevant to the conversation/topic. Often misunderstands what is being said.</p> <p>AND/OR</p> <p>Does not link ideas and is often difficult to follow.</p>	<p>Range of grammar too limited to deal with the tasks at B1.</p> <p>Frequent grammatical errors occur, and these sometimes make the message difficult to follow.</p>	<p>Range of vocabulary too limited to deal with the tasks at B1.</p> <p>The errors sometimes make the message difficult to follow.</p>	<p>Pronunciation is unclear in places and at times may be difficult to understand.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Unnaturally sounding intonation often impedes communication.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Long pauses, while searching for language which should be available at B1, are noticeable.</p>
0 F	<p>Even with undue effort on the part of the listener, the message is often lost. Utterances mainly consist of disconnected phrases or sentences.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Insufficient sample of spoken language.</p>	<p>Lack of control even when using very simple structures.</p> <p>The message is mostly lost</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Insufficient sample of spoken language.</p>	<p>Range of vocabulary severely limited and insufficient to deal with the interaction. The message is mostly lost.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Insufficient sample of spoken language.</p>	<p>Poor pronunciation and/or intonation makes utterances difficult to understand.</p> <p>OR A great deal of hesitation and repetition puts undue strain on the listener.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>Insufficient sample of spoken language.</p>

Mark scheme for B2 level

	Task fulfilment and coherence	Accuracy and range of grammar	Accuracy and range of vocabulary	Pronunciation, intonation and fluency
3 FCP	Handles the interaction with ease and confidence . Relates own contributions, which are fully relevant to the conversation/topic, skilfully . Takes turns spontaneously and integrates relevant detail into the conversation. Addresses the topic well, appropriately highlighting significant points, and supporting with relevant detail . Produces clearly organised and coherent speech , in an appropriate style.	Wide range of the grammatical structures expected at B2, a consistently high level of grammatical accuracy . Occasional minor syntactical problems and non-systematic errors occur, which are usually corrected.	Wide range of vocabulary and a consistently high level of accuracy .	Pronunciation and intonation clear and natural . AND Language use is fluent and effective . Does not need to search for language.
2 P	Handles the interaction with relative ease , managing the conventions of turn-taking, using appropriate phrases, well, though not always very 'elegantly' . Expresses his/her message clearly, with relevant supporting detail where appropriate. Content/contributions are mostly relevant to the conversation/topic, and it is rare that any misunderstanding occurs. Uses a limited range of cohesive devices to link his/her utterances into clear, coherent discourse but there may be some 'jumpiness' in long contributions.	Sufficient range of the grammatical structures expected at B2, a relatively high degree of grammatical control . AND/OR Errors occur , but they do not impede communication.	Sufficient range of vocabulary to deal with the tasks at B2 with a degree of formality appropriate to the circumstances. AND/OR Some errors occur , but they do not impede communication.	Pronunciation reasonably clear and is understood without difficulty. AND Intonation is natural , has a fairly even tempo and contributes to the content. AND Few noticeably long pauses, although there may be some hesitation when searching for patterns and expressions. No undue strain on the listener.
1 NF	Fails to meet most of the task requirements . Has difficulty in conveying the message, often relying heavily on the interlocutor to keep the interaction going or for support. Contributions are often irrelevant to the conversation or topic. Often misunderstands what is being said. Connects ideas relatively simply and may be difficult to follow in places.	Range of grammar too limited to deal with the variety of tasks at B2 . AND/OR A number of errors, some of which impede communication.	Range of vocabulary too limited to deal with the variety of tasks at B2. This results in lack of detail and/or clarity . AND/OR Errors occur, some of which impede communication.	Undue strain on the listener because: influence of L1 is strong on pronunciation, intonation and/or stress patterns. OR A substantial part of the message is unclear. OR Frequent hesitation , repetition and attempts to repair language.
0 F	Clearly fails to meet the task requirements . Has difficulty linking ideas into connected speech. Is often difficult to follow. OR Insufficient sample of language.	The range of grammatical structures is extremely limited for B2 level. There are a lot of errors , which interfere with the meaning and most of the message is affected . OR Insufficient sample of language.	The range of language is so restricted that the candidate consistently finds it difficult to express him/herself. Errors impede communication and most of the message is affected . OR Insufficient sample of language.	Extreme strain on the listener because: Influence of L1 impedes most of the message . OR Continuous hesitation and/or reliance on the interlocutor. OR Insufficient sample of language.

Mark scheme for C1 level

	Task fulfilment and coherence	Accuracy and range of grammar	Accuracy and range of vocabulary	Pronunciation, intonation and fluency
3 FCP	Interacts clearly, flexibly and spontaneously , sometimes incorporating complex, supporting detail, with precision and relevance and without having to impose any restrictions on the message. Relates his/her contributions skilfully to those of the interlocutor. Contributions are always relevant to the conversation/topic. Produces very clear, smoothly-flowing and well-structured speech , using cohesive and linking devices very effectively .	Effective use of a very wide range and a consistently high level of accuracy of grammatical structures. Errors are very rare and unobtrusive.	Effective use of a very broad range of vocabulary, including collocations and idiomatic expressions where appropriate. Errors are very rare and unobtrusive.	Natural and clear pronunciation. Stress and intonation patterns are sufficiently clear to be able to convey finer shades of meaning. AND Language use is fluent, natural and spontaneous, without any effort .
2 P	Interacts flexibly and effectively . Confidently manages the conventions of turn-taking and relates contributions skilfully to those of the interlocutor. Produces detailed, complex descriptions, connects the subtopics, supports each point of an argument and closes with an appropriate conclusion. Content/contributions are relevant to the conversation or topic, and misunderstandings do not occur. Displays controlled use of discourse organisation , connectors and cohesive devices to produce clear, smoothly flowing, well-structured contributions.	Wide range of grammar expected at C1 used with a consistently high level of grammatical accuracy . Few errors occur, mainly when using more complex structures, and are generally corrected.	Broad range of the vocabulary expected at C1 , used effectively . This enables the candidate to compensate for occasional gaps in vocabulary through circumlocution. Occasional minor slips , but no major errors of vocabulary.	Clear pronunciation , Stress and intonation patterns sufficiently clear to be able to convey finer shades of meaning . AND Language use is fluent and spontaneous . No noticeable pauses . AND Compensation strategies are rarely used. Only conceptually difficult subjects hinder a natural, smooth flow of language.
1 NF	Fails to meet most of the task requirements . Communication is unclear in places and some strain is put on the listener . There is undue reliance on support from the interlocutor. Contributions are sometimes irrelevant to the conversation/topic and/or sometimes he/she misunderstands what is being said. Uses only a limited number of cohesive devices to link speech into coherent discourse, resulting in unnatural and/or poorly flowing contributions.	Range of grammar too limited to deal adequately with the tasks at C1 level. AND/OR Some noticeable errors , which are not corrected.	Range of vocabulary too limited to deal adequately with the tasks at C1 level, no reformulation. AND/OR Some noticeable errors , which are not corrected	Pronunciation and intonation are heavily influenced by L1 . Intonation and stress patterns sometimes put a strain on the listener AND/OR Hesitation is noticeable in places. OR Sometimes reliance on the interlocutor to maintain discourse.
0 F	Fails to meet the task requirements . OR Mostly fails to link his/her utterances into organised speech . OR Insufficient sample of language.	Range of grammar extremely limited and insufficient to deal with the tasks. Frequent errors put a strain on the listener. OR Insufficient sample of language.	Range of vocabulary extremely limited AND/OR Mostly inappropriate use of vocabulary , even in relatively simple situations. OR Insufficient sample of language.	Strong influence of L1 and/or unnatural intonation and stress patterns put great strain on the listener and may sometimes even impede meaning. OR Not fluent or spontaneous . Hesitation while searching for language is very evident . OR Insufficient sample of language.

3. Preparing for the four criteria of assessment

In this section, we will give you some ideas and guidance on how you can score the highest marks for each of the 4 criteria we mentioned in the previous chapter.

1. Task fulfilment and coherence

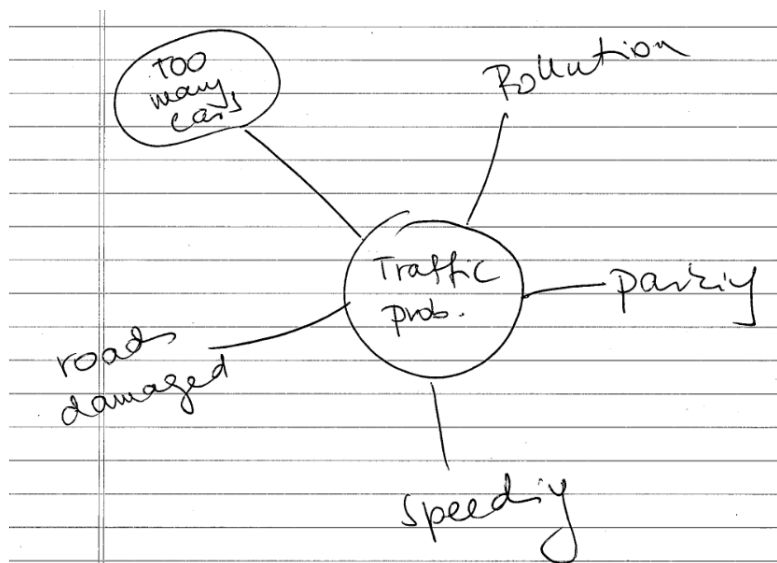
Task fulfilment and coherence measures how well you handled the interaction, if you managed the conventions of turn-taking appropriately, connected your ideas into coherent utterances and if you could initiate and respond naturally. It also measures how well-structured your speech was in Part 4. Let's see some tips regarding task fulfilment and coherence.

TIP #1

Practise speaking as fluently and coherently as possible. **Use a stopwatch** to measure the time you can fill with continuous talking. Start with one minute and a familiar topic and build it up to 2 minutes and a more complex topic. At first, just focus on solving the task and talk as much as you can and then when you are comfortable with this, try to focus on arranging your ideas into a more cohesive speech.

TIP #2

When practising speaking, **make some notes** before you start talking. Sometimes candidates break the flow of speech not because of a language problem, but because they have run out of ideas. Avoid this by learning to take notes effectively. It will prove to be effective in the exam where you'll have 30 seconds to take notes. This might not be a lot of time, but you can learn to use it to the full. Try not to write full sentences, but write a list of bullet points or a mind map instead. This way you can generate ideas and at the same time create links between your ideas. Here's an example for you.



TIP #3

Speaking the required amount is also important and it takes practice to be able to do that. The required amount of time depends on the exam level you are taking. At C1 level, for instance, you'll have to talk for 2 minutes. You can practise the art of talking about practically anything by playing the 'Just one minute' game. The rules of the game are simple. You have one minute to talk about a topic that has been chosen for you. The difficulty of the topic depends on your level. What you cannot do is deviate from the topic, hesitate or repeat an idea you've already mentioned ('no hesitation, deviation or repetition'). This game is excellent at building fluency and practising talking without any hesitation. You can start with easier topics such as 'my family', 'a country I'd like to visit', 'my favourite food', 'If I had three wishes, I'd like...' and then at C1 level, you can try more difficult topics such as 'The healthcare system in my country'.

TIP #4

Turn-taking skills are important as well. Turn-taking skills involve knowing when to talk and when to let the other person talk. That's where different discourse markers come in. Discourse markers can be used to create a link between your input and the other person's input in an interaction.

Interrupting or reacting to other people	Accepting, taking and keeping the turn	Getting other people to talk
Before I forget	What I wanted to say was...	I'd like to hear your opinion.
Before you continue, (can I just say)...	What was I going to say? Oh yes,...	I'll let you go first.
Can I/ Could I come in (here/ there)?	I'd like to start the discussion by...	Please go ahead.
Can I/ Could I (just) say something (here)?	I just want to make one more point/ say one more thing	I'd be interested to hear your views (on...)/ what you think (about...)
Can I/ Could I stop you there?	The next point I want to make is...	..., but I'd be interested in hearing your take on it.
I'd like to make a point here (if I can/ could/ may/ might).	And that's not all.	..., but I'm sure you have another point of view.
Me too! In fact,...	And what's more,...	Can you give me your thoughts on...?
That reminds me of...	Not only that, but...	Do you agree?
(I'm) sorry to hear that.	Mmm. Good point. Also,...	Do you have an opinion on...?
Amazing!	As I was saying	Do you/ Did you want to add anything?
How wonderful/ exciting/ depressing/ embarrassing/ ironic!	To get back to the point in hand/ to what I was saying	How about you?
I know what you mean.		Have you considered?
Oh my goodness!		What do you reckon?
That sounds great/ awful/ horrible.		What's your take on?

TIP #5

Using cohesive devices effectively is useful in a spoken exam too even though they are usually associated with writing essays. In Part 4, you will need to talk for a fixed period of time, but if you are to succeed, you'll need to do more than merely talk for the required time. In the Task fulfilment and coherence criterion, you'll be measured against whether or not you can provide a detailed and complex description and this will involve connecting the subtopics, supporting each point of argument and closing with an appropriate conclusion. Linking words and other organisational patterns can help turn your speech into an effectively organised presentation. That is if you can use them consistently, correctly and without repetition. What do you need to know about a linking word to be able to use it?

- its meaning
- its function within the speech eg to express contrast, results etc.
- its position within the sentence, eg: However,...

You don't need to know every linking word here, but you should learn 2 or 3 expression for each important function. Choose the ones you will be comfortable with using and make sure you don't end up repeating it throughout your speech in Part 4.

Cause and effect

because, so, therefore, thus, consequently, hence, as a result,

To start

First, at first, once, once upon time, to begin with, at the beginning, starting with, initially, from this point, earlier, last of all, at last, at the end, in the end, final finally, to finish, to conclude, in conclusion,

To add a point

and, also, as well as, moreover, too, furthermore, additionally, in addition to, at the same time, again, too, equally importantly, in addition, likewise, above all, most of all, least of all, and, either...or, neither...nor, nevertheless, to continue, second, secondly, in the second place, next, the next time, then, after that, following that, subsequently, on the next occasion, so far, later on, third, in the third place, consequently, last,

Repetition

So briefly, in short, in fact, in particular, that is, in simpler terms, to put it differently, in other words, again, once more, again and again, over and over, to repeat, as stated, that is to say, to retell, to review, to rephrase, to paraphrase, to reconsider, to clarify, to explain, to outline,

To generalise

On the whole, in general, generally, as a rule, in most cases, broadly speaking, to some extent, mostly, above all, chiefly, essentially, largely, primarily, usually

To give an example

For example, as an example, for instance, in this case, in the case of, to illustrate, as illustrated by, as revealed by, to show, to demonstrate, in particular, such as, namely, for one thing, indeed, in other words, to put it in another way, thus, to explain, suppose that, specifically, to be exact, that is to say

To conclude or summarise

To conclude, in conclusion, to close, last of all, finally, to end, to complete, to bring to an end, thus, hence, therefore, as a consequence of, as a result, in short, to sum up, to summarise, to recapitulate consequently,

To compare

As, as well as, like, in much the same way, resembling, parallel to, same as, identically, of little difference, equally, matching, also, exactly, similarly, similar to, in comparison, in relation to

To express attitude

Frankly, honestly, I think, I suppose, after all, no doubt, I'm afraid, actually, as a matter of fact, to tell the truth, unfortunately, I believe, in my opinion, to be honest,

To contrast, disagree and 'qualify'

Though, although, and yet, but, despite, despite this fact, in spite of, even so, however, in contrast, by contrast, on one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, in one way, in another way, although this may be true, nevertheless, nonetheless, still, yet, a striking difference, another distinction, otherwise, after all, instead, unlike, while it is true,

To emphasise

Above all, after all, indeed, as a matter of fact, the main issue is, chiefly, especially, actually, the most significant, the chief characteristic, to emphasise, more importantly, most important of all, most of all, significantly, without a doubt, certainly, to be sure, surely, absolutely, obviously, in truth, to add to that, without question, unquestionably,

Time 1

Before, earlier, previously, formerly, recently, not long ago, at present, presently, currently, now, by now, until, today, immediately, simultaneously, at the same time, during, all the while, in the future yesterday, tomorrow, henceforth, after, after a short time, after a while, soon, later, later on, following, the following week,

Time 2

Suddenly, all at once, instantly, immediately, quickly, directly, soon, as soon as, just then, when, sometimes, some of the time, in the meantime, occasionally, rarely, seldom, infrequently, temporarily, periodically, gradually, eventually, little by little, slowly, while, meanwhile, always, all of the time, without exception, at the same time, repeatedly, often, frequently, generally, usually,

TIP #6

Make sure you **pay attention to the instructions** of each part of the exam so that you don't end up talking about something else or not meeting the aim of a task. The instructions themselves are always the same so the best thing to do is to use the practice papers to fully familiarise yourself with them so that you will know what to expect.

Eg Now, Part Two. I'm going to read some situations. I want you to start or respond as necessary. First situation

TIP#7

You will also need to make sure you **understand the key words** in the questions in Part 1, the scenarios in Part 2, the task sheet in Part 3 and the topic in Part 4 otherwise you may end up talking about something else. Let's see some examples of key words for each part.

Part 1

How do you think online news could **threaten** the future of newspapers?

Part 2

I'm your waiter/waitress. You think there is a **mistake** in your **bill**. You start.

Part 3

We're members of an organisation to raise money and public awareness for an **animal charity**.

Part 4

An **influential** figure from your country's **history**.

You are allowed to ask for clarification, so you need to be prepared with the language necessary for you to be able to do so.

Could you explain what you mean by ... ?

Sorry, could you repeat what you said please?

I am not sure if I understood it correctly. Do you mean...?

I'm afraid I don't understand

What does ...mean?

TIP #8

There are different **functions** you have to perform in the course of any scenario in Part 2 ranging from asking for directions to apologising. The good thing about functional language such as apologising or making a request is that it is not dependent on the topic, and therefore is transferrable to any situation irrespective of the topic of conversation. Use our 'Topics and requirements' booklet to prepare for all communication functions you can be asked for.

TIP #9

In Part 3, you'll have to **discuss something** with the examiner. Depending on the level, this might be a discussion with the aim of reaching a compromise or at higher levels, exchanging ideas on more complex topics. A discussion involves more than merely stating your opinion. You will have to show that you know how to come to a compromise: state your opinion, ask for the other's opinion and work towards an outcome.

Asking for someone's opinion	Expressing opinions	Summarising
What do you think (of / about ...)?	I think (that) ...	So what it comes down to is ...
Have you considered ... ?	In my view / opinion, ...	
What's your view / opinion / take on....?	I'm convinced / positive that ..	The point I'm trying to make is ...
Don't you agree that ... ?	To my mind, ...	Let me just recap what's been said so far.
	Personally, I think ...	In short ...
	As I see it, ...	In other words ...
	From my point of view, .	To sum up ...
	As far as I'm concerned	
	I don't think ...	
	I'm not sure (about / if) ..	
	I don't have a strong / definite opinion about that.	
	I firmly believe	
	I have reason to believe	
	I'm a great believer in	

Agreeing	Disagreeing
I share your opinion on	I have doubts about that
I entirely agree	I have a different opinion
I agree up to a point	We are poles apart
I can go along with that	I tend to disagree
We are in complete agreement	I strongly disagree
I tend to agree	I'm afraid I disagree / can't agree with you
I couldn't agree with you more	I take / see your point, but ...
That's exactly what I think	I see what you mean, but ...
My point exactly	I'm not sure about that
I agree to some extent	I'm not sure that's true / correct / right

TIP #10

Build your ideas up and don't just make a statement without properly supporting it. Practise supporting each idea with further sentences. For instance, if your topic is 'The importance of the arts', and you are not a big fan of ballet or the opera, you might think this will be difficult. However, if you learn the 'tripod' technique whereby you support each idea with at least two more sentences, you will be able to talk about anything. Let's take the above example of the topic of arts.

Don't say: *'I don't really like the arts'.*

Do say: *'Well, I must admit I have never been a big fan of the arts, because I have never been able to relate to them. For instance, I could never understand what a ballet performance was about. However, I believe it must have a place in life otherwise it wouldn't be so popular.'*

Can you see how the main idea (I don't like the arts) was communicated in the second case? The speaker started with one sentence, but then supported it by saying why he/she feels that way and provided an example. Finally, the speaker closed with a contrasting opinion (statement + why + example)

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- *Make sure you understand the question in Part 1 before you answer it. If you don't understand a word, ask for clarification (in English)*
- *Focus on the instructions in Part 2. It's imperative that you understand what your role in the scenario is, who is supposed to start and what you need to say. If you didn't understand the scenario, ask the interlocutor to repeat it.*
- *In Part 2, there's no need to take on a persona or act in an unnatural way. Make sure you focus on the register you have to use, and initiate or continue a dialogue as naturally as you can.*
- *Don't talk about the first question in Part 1 for two minutes, because you might end up repeating yourself or going off topic. Just talk for about 30 seconds and when you stop talking, the interlocutor will ask you another one.*
- *Don't do a monologue in Part 3. Instead, ask and answer questions about the topic and try to reach a compromise.*
- *Remember that Part 3 is about taking an active part in a discussion, so don't be afraid to take the initiative and move on to the next item on the task sheet once you have agreed on it. You do not have to wait for the interlocutor to do so.*
- *The aim of Part 3 is to reach some sort of an agreement or make a rank order. Instead of just reading out the key ideas, tell the interlocutor any ideas you might have on the topic and always support your views.*
- *Use the time you get for preparation in Part 4: gather your thoughts, make sure you understand the topic you are supposed to talk about, and make notes about the key ideas you wish to highlight. Again, check the topic areas listed for your level, as this task should be related to one of those, too. Practise beforehand: you should be comfortable talking for two minutes about a given topic.*

2. Accuracy and range of grammar

TIP #1

When you are preparing for the exam, practise making your speech in line with the requirements of the attempted level. Remember that you have to show the examiner that your language skills are at the level and therefore it is vital that you show them what you know. You need to **level up your language**.

Use the grammar table in our Topics and Requirements document to identify the grammar requirements of your level and make sure you are fully familiar with those structures and all others that are below your own level. Just as an example, present simple and present continuous tenses are already required at A1 – Preliminary level, so if these two tenses occupy the majority of your speech, you'll end up not meeting the range of grammar required at B2 and C1.

The table below shows only some of the structures required at these levels. Remind yourself to try and use them during the spoken exam to demonstrate that you know them.

B1	B2	C1
	Relative clauses eg: My neighbour, who was good friends with my father at the time, was knocking on the door.	
	Participle clauses - Present Opening the window, I accidentally cut my finger.	Participle clauses - Past When taken twice, this pill can reduce anxiety.
Present perfect with since/for; ever/never; yet/already, just I have never seen him before.	Present perfect simple and continuous I have been working for this company for 5 years. This is the first time I have flown on an aeroplane.	
Future simple verb forms I will go there tomorrow	Past perfect They had already left by the time I realised this.	'Would' expressing past habit I remember the childhood summer I spent at my grandma's. We would get up early to go to the market, then we would go home and make breakfast.
	0, 1st, 2nd, 3rd conditionals If I knew him, I'd call him. If I had studied harder, I would have passed the exam.	All conditionals including mixed conditionals If I knew him, I'd call him. If I had studied harder, I would have passed the exam. If I had finished university, I would have a better job now.
	Simple passive with a number of tenses This book was written by Jane Austen.	All passive structures This book is said to be good.
	Question tags You love him, don't you?	
	Causative with have and get I got my uncle to fix my car.	
	Verb + infinitive or gerund I suggest going to the cinema. I want to go home.	
	Reported speech He said he would do it. He asked me to go with him.	
Range of modals (possibility and probability in the future) might, may, will probably	Range of modals should/might/may/needn't/need to/I'd rather/ought to/must/mustn't/can't	Range of modals, past and present should have/might have/may have/needn't have/must have/can't have

TIP #2

Don't be afraid to go back and **correct an error** you made instead of pretending it never happened. Remember that the exam is recorded so it is unlikely that the markers will miss it anyway, so you might as well show that it is not a systematic error, but merely a slip.

TIP #3

A lot of students find it hard to 'level up' their grammar while speaking even when they are confident using more complex structures in speaking. **Practise speaking using help cards** with specific grammatical structures that you have to use and use the card to remind yourself to use them.

Talk for 2 minutes about the education system of your country. Use the following grammatical structures

Grammar

- Having had first-hand experience with..., I can say
- In today's fast paced life where you..., it is important to...
- I have been learning.... all my life/for ...years
- By the time I realised this,
- If you were to choose a school,....
- At first it might seem to be the easier option to..., but
- Not only is it..., but also...
- This might have been true in the past...

TIP #4

Listen to a recording of you talking and use it to pinpoint your areas of weaknesses. For example, you talk about one question in Part 1 for too long and as a consequence you start repeating yourself or you go off topic because you have run out of ideas or you give a monologue in Part 3 instead of asking and answering questions to solve the task together.

Now let's see tips from the examiners themselves

- *Correct your mistakes if you notice them*
- *Do not feel embarrassed if you make a mistake - just correct it and go on. Also, ask for clarification if need be*
- *If you have difficulties finishing a sentence, try to backtrack and reformulate the sentence. In other words, do not struggle for minutes with a sentence that you cannot finish. Start a new one instead.*
- *Do not talk to the interlocutor using your mother tongue. Solve problems in English. For example, say 'Can you explain what 'enhance' means?'*
- *During preparation, try to eliminate basic errors, such as errors made in present or past simple tenses, using present tense to describe a past event, omitting 'to be' in front of adjectives, etc.*

3. Accuracy and range of vocabulary

TIP #1

When you are preparing for the exam, practise making your speech more in line with the requirements of the attempted level. Remember that you have to show the examiner that your language skills are at the level and therefore it is vital that you show them what you know. Replace generic words such as nice, good, big etc. with **more descriptive and more specific vocabulary**. The below table might help you with this.

nice	great, wonderful, lovely, brilliant
	pleasant/perfect/beautiful /sunny weather
	a cosy/a comfortable/an attractive/ bright room
	a pleasant/an interesting/an enjoyable experience
	expensive/fashionable/smart clothes
	a kind/a charming/an interesting man
	delicious/tasty/spicy food
bad	terrible, horrible, awful / dreadful
	an unpleasant/a foul/a disgusting smell
	appalling/dreadful/severe weather
	an unpleasant/a frightening/a traumatic experience
	a terrible/serious/horrific accident
	an awkward/an embarrassing/a difficult situation
	We were working in difficult/appalling conditions
	I feel unwell/sick/terrible. I don't feel (very) well
interesting	fascinating, compelling, stimulating, gripping, absorbing
good	excellent, amazing, wonderful, marvellous, outstanding, terrific
sad	down, unhappy, gloomy, upset
happy	cheerful, delighted, pleased, glad, content, thrilled
like	admire, adore, fancy, cherish, desire, enjoy
say	reply, remark, declare, state, explain, announce
big	huge, giant, large, massive, enormous
small	tiny, petite, teeny, wee
pretty	beautiful, gorgeous, cute, attractive, handsome, stunning
scared	afraid, frightened, horrified, petrified

TIP #2

If you are **struggling with a sentence**, remember you have several options. You can abandon the idea. You can paraphrase/restructure the sentence. You can start from the beginning.

If the problem is caused by a lack of vocabulary, try to solve it by circumlocution (describing the word in question), generalisation (using more general words instead of the specific one you can't remember eg stuff) or approximation (using collective terms instead of the specific item eg flower instead of rose).

TIP #3

A lot of students find it hard to **'level up' their vocabulary** while speaking even when they are confident using more complex structures in speaking. Practise speaking using help cards with specific vocabulary that you have to use and use the card to remind yourself to use them.

Talk for 2 minutes about the education system of your country. Use the following words.

Vocabulary

- Boarding school
- Vocational school
- Secondary/primary school
- Higher education
- GCSE
- Compulsory
- Enrol on a course
- Extra-curricular activities
- Tuition fee
- Grade point average
- Academic year
- Obtain a degree in
- Graduate from
- Expel sb from school
- Failure
- Learning difficulties
- Play truant

TIP #4

Learn at least a handful of vocabulary for every topic and subtopic of the exam. As an example, if you want to be able to talk about the topic 'Diets', you should possess at least a basic range of vocabulary related to dieting.

DIETS

- Nutrition, nutrients
- Protein, carbs, fats, calories
- Metabolism, burn calories
- Healthy vs. Unhealthy
- Vitamins and minerals
- Wholemeal
- Vegetarian, vegan
- Artificial sweeteners, additives
- Low-fat, low-calorie, low-carb
- organic

TIP #5

Try to **practise words** in various ways. For example, when you are covering the topic of dieting, it will help you memorise the words faster if you read articles about the topic where you can see the target words in context. Furthermore, you can also use online word learning tools to practise the words.

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- *Make sure you check the list of topics for your level. While preparing for the exam, devote some time to all the topic areas. However, if you don't think you can comment on a question related to a certain topic, just tell the interlocutors, who will then continue the exam with another question.*
- *Do not waste time searching for words that you cannot remember. Try to solve the task in an alternative way*
- *Try not to 'translate' from your mother tongue into English because you may end up not finding the right words to express what you want to say. If you cannot remember the exact word you are trying to use, use a more general one or a synonym. Eg 'Flower' instead of 'rose'*

4. Pronunciation, intonation and fluency

TIP #1

Pronunciation can be improved by studying the pronunciation of individual sounds. One aspect of the pronunciation of individual sounds is the concept of minimal pairs. **Minimal pairs** are words that vary by only a single sound (e.g. sit /sɪt/ and seat /si:t/). Using minimal pairs is useful to practise the pronunciation of different sounds and it will also help you not to make 'impeding errors' which may cause misunderstanding. Practise the pronunciation of the minimal pairs below and use a dictionary to help you with any pronunciation you are unsure of.

BID	BEAD	SLICK	SLEEK
DIP	DEEP	FIND	FIEND
FIST	FEAST	SKID	SKIED
PILL	PEEL	SKIM	SCHEME
SIN	THIN	MISS	MYTH

You can find further examples of minimal pairs on the Internet.

TIP #2

Homophones are words which are pronounced in exactly the same way, but which might be spelt differently. By studying homophones, you might be able to get rid of systematic and 'fossilised' pronunciation errors. A very commonly mispronounced word is the past tense of win (won) which should be pronounced /wʌn/, but is very often pronounced /wɒn/. If you memorise a homophone pair for won (one), and you practise them regularly, it will be easier for you to pronounce won correctly. You might also try and use them together in the same sentence, eg 'I have **won one** and a half million pounds!

allowed / aloud	heard / herd
bare / bear	higher / hire
billed / build	I'll / isle
boar / bore	knead / need
board / bored	knot / not
bread / bred	pause / paws
cereal / serial	peer / pier
fir / fur	rappier / wrapper
flew / flu	saw / sore
flour / flower	sew / sow

TIP #3

Apart from having various other benefits, **watching films** can also help you improve your pronunciation and listening comprehension as well. If you can, make sure you turn the English subtitles on so that you can identify the difference between connected speech and the pronunciation of separate chunks of language. At first, this will help you understand connected speech better and after a while, you will pick up some of the features of connected speech without noticing.

You do not have to dedicate hours to this. Instead of feature films, you can watch TV shows too which vary greatly in length, genre, topic and difficulty.

TIP #4

Recording yourself can help you to improve your intonation and to **get rid of any unwanted features in your speech** such as using 'Um' too much. Record yourself speaking and then listen to the recording and ask yourself 'Am I easy to listen to? Is it easy to understand me?'

TIP #5

It's perfectly acceptable to hesitate at times and to stop to look for words. However, long pauses may cost you valuable marks as they will break your fluency. That's where **fillers** come in. Fillers can be used to buy you time while at the same time show the other party that you are still in charge.

Well, let me think for a second.

This is a very interesting question.

How shall I put it?

Well, it depends, really..

I have never really thought about this issue/question before, but...

Let me see

Well, let me think about that for a moment

Now let's see some tips from the examiners themselves

- *During preparation, use authentic listening materials such as films. They will help you acquire a natural intonation.*
- *Try to vary your tone following at least the basic rules of intonation (yes/no questions have rising intonation and wh-questions have falling intonation)*
- *Do not talk monotonously. Try to use your voice as an instrument to express yourself, your message, your feelings.*
- *Use your intonation to convey feelings (excited, sad, worried). This will be especially useful in Part 2 where the scenario might require you to comfort a sad friend or congratulate someone on passing an exam.*
- *Remember that the exam is recorded, so you need to communicate using your voice and not body language or gestures.*
- *Use music to help improve your pronunciation. It can help with the pronunciation of individual sounds as well as word stress, sentence stress and intonation. Download the lyrics too as they can help you the same way as subtitles can help you understand films. You can also try singing along and imitating the artist's accent and intonation.*