

A1 SPEAKING

› TEACHER GUIDE

The purpose of the Teacher's Guide

This guide is for teachers preparing learners for the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test.

It offers valuable insights, strategies and practical tips to help learners strengthen their speaking skills, build confidence and become more effective speakers.

It also supports you in addressing common challenges learners may encounter and helping them to enhance their existing abilities.

It features a range of practice activities drawn from the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test, with follow-up tasks that can be easily tailored to your classroom needs.

You can download free practice papers for the ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test from the LANGUAGECERT website.

Visit: [languagecert.org](https://www.languagecert.org)



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> The importance of developing speaking skills

In order to speak effectively, learners need to develop a range of skills, including:

- > conveying a message clearly and clarifying or rephrasing it if misunderstood.
- > using language appropriate to the context.
- > manipulating language (grammar, syntax, etc.) successfully to be understood.
- > using appropriate communicative functions.
- > producing both 'short turns' and 'long turns', making sure each turn relates to the previous one.
- > organising and presenting ideas clearly.
- > speaking as spontaneously as possible while checking that the listener is engaged and understands.

To ensure they are fully prepared for the Speaking test, it's essential to give learners plenty of opportunities to build these skills throughout the school year.



The challenges of speaking in a second language

For A1 learners, speaking in a second language can be exciting, but challenging. At this level, learners often have a very limited vocabulary and are just starting to learn simple grammar structures. This can make it hard for them to express their ideas or join basic conversations. Pronunciation can be difficult too, and many learners don't feel confident speaking in class or with others. A1 learners often need a lot of time to think of the right words, which can make speaking feel slow or uncomfortable. Understanding others, particularly if the speaker talks quickly and fluently and uses unfamiliar words, also impacts learners' ability to speak.

These challenges are a normal part of learning at this level. With regular practice and support, A1 learners can build their confidence and improve their speaking skills.

KEY CHALLENGES OF SPEAKING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE



Pronunciation and accent

A1 learners are still getting used to English sounds, and many of these do not exist in their first language. This makes it hard to say words clearly. Learners may not know where to put the stress in words or how to say questions with the right tone. They may also feel unconfident if their accent sounds very different.



Limited vocabulary

A1 learners often know only a small number of everyday words and short phrases. This makes it difficult for them to talk about more than a few simple topics. When they don't know a word, they often stop speaking or repeat the same phrases. This can make it hard to keep a conversation going.



Confidence and anxiety

Many A1 learners feel nervous when speaking English. They may worry about saying something wrong or not being understood. Because of this, they sometimes stay quiet in class or avoid speaking in front of others. Building confidence takes time and support.



Listening skills

Speaking well depends partly on understanding what others say, and listening can be a big challenge for A1 learners. They may not understand fast or natural speech and often miss words they haven't learned yet. This makes it hard for them to follow instructions or reply in conversations. Using slow, clear speech helps them build confidence.



Grammar and sentence structure

At A1 level, learners are just starting to use basic grammar and they often make mistakes with simple aspects, like verb forms or word order. Some English grammar rules may not exist in their language, which can be confusing. They may also take longer to build full sentences while speaking.



Fluency and hesitation

Fluency is limited at this stage – A1 learners often pause a lot or speak very slowly. They may also stop speaking to think or correct themselves. This can make their speech sound broken or unnatural, even if they are trying hard to communicate.



Cultural differences

A1 learners are still learning not only the language but also how it is used in real life. They may not know how to be polite in English or how to take turns in a conversation. Without understanding these small cultural rules, even correct language can sound strange or too direct.

Global speaking skills at A1 level

At A1 level, learners can:



take part in simple conversations provided the other person speaks slowly, repeats or rephrases things, and helps them find the right words



ask and answer basic questions about everyday needs or on familiar topics, e.g. *family, school, hobbies*



use simple phrases and sentences to describe what they do, where they live and people they know

A1 Proficiency Scales

The A1 Proficiency Scales outline the speaking skills learners should be able to demonstrate at A1 level, as defined by the CEFR.

At A1 level, learners can:

- **say short, memorised phrases and sentences**, though they often pause to think or find the right words.
- **give basic personal information**, such as their name, age, where they live or their likes and dislikes.
- **ask for simple things they need in class or everyday life**, e.g. *'Can I go to the toilet?' or 'I need a pencil.'*
- **understand and use familiar words and phrases** related to school, family and daily routines.
- **use simple grammar patterns**, though with limited accuracy.
- **pronounce simple words and phrases** clearly enough to be understood by patient listeners.
- **use basic polite expressions** such as *'hello', 'goodbye', 'please', 'thank you' and 'sorry'.*
- **join words using basic connectors** such as *'and' or 'then' (e.g. 'I have a cat and a dog'.).*



Getting to know the ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test

The ESOL for Schools test assesses all four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) across two components – Written and Spoken. The Speaking test is part of the Spoken component.



The Speaking test consists of four parts.



The overall duration of the Speaking test is 6 minutes.



KEY FEATURES OF THE TEST

The table below summarises the key features of the test (skill assessed / focus, tasks presented, format of each part, marks awarded).

PART	SKILL & FOCUS	TASK FORMAT	RAW MARKS
1	Communicate personal information	Spell their surname and give their country of origin, then answer up to 5 questions about themselves (family, school, hobbies, etc.)	12
2	Communicate appropriately in social situations using a range of functional language to elicit or respond as appropriate	Respond to and initiate interactions in two or more situations	
3	Exchange information to complete a simple task	Exchange information to identify similarities and differences between two pictures of familiar everyday situations	
4	Present a topic, demonstrating the ability to use sentences and produce a piece of connected spoken English	Prepare a talk on a topic provided by the Interlocutor, then speak for half a minute about the topic and answer follow-up questions	

HOW THE TEST IS MARKED

- › The assessor uses four assessment criteria to evaluate the test taker's response: Task Fulfilment and Coherence; Accuracy and Range of Grammar; Accuracy and Range of Vocabulary; Pronunciation, Intonation and Fluency.
- › Each criterion is given equal importance and test takers are awarded up to 3 marks per criterion. The maximum raw score is 12 marks.
- › Marks are then converted to a scaled score from 0–50.
- › In order to be successful, test takers need to attain a minimum of 50% in their Speaking test.

KEY FEATURES OF THE TEST

Each of the four assessment criteria is scored on a scale from 0–3, with 0 being the lowest and 3 the highest. Descriptors for each criterion are provided (see table below), specifying what test takers are expected to demonstrate at each level. This markscheme helps assess whether learners' performance is below, at or above the required standard, and will enable you to gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses.

For more information about marking and assessing the A1 ESOL for Schools Speaking test, please refer to the 'Assessing Speaking Performance' handbook on our website.

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	Task Fulfilment and Coherence	Accuracy and Range of Grammar	Accuracy and Range of Vocabulary	Pronunciation, Intonation and Fluency
3	- Tasks are fulfilled effectively - Interaction generally relies on the support of the interlocutor - Intended message is usually communicated despite occasional misunderstandings - Use of very simple connectors	- A range of A1 level grammar is used - A reasonable level of accuracy - Errors may occur, but do not impede communication	- A range of A1 level vocabulary is used - Errors may occur, but do not impede communication	- Pronunciation is sufficiently clear despite first language influences - Noticeable pronunciation errors - The flow of language is maintained, generally with interlocutor support - Some hesitations and reformulations may be noticeable
2	- Tasks are mostly fulfilled - Interaction relies on the support of the interlocutor - The intended message is usually communicated despite noticeable misunderstandings - Some use of simple connectors	- A limited range of A1 level grammar is used - Some evidence of grammatical control - Errors occur and the message may occasionally be obscured	- A limited range of A1 vocabulary is used - Errors occur, and the message may occasionally be obscured	- Pronunciation can be understood with some effort - First language influences may obscure the message - The flow of language is maintained in very short utterances - Frequent hesitations and reformulations
1	- Tasks remain largely unfulfilled - Interaction breaks down despite the support of the interlocutor - Frequent failure to respond - Contributions lack relevance - Intended message is not successfully communicated - Ideas mostly expressed through unconnected words and phrases	- Insufficient range and control of A1 level language - Frequent errors obscure the intended message	- Range of vocabulary is too limited to deal with the A1 level tasks - Vocabulary errors often obscure the intended message	- Unclear pronunciation prevents clear understanding - Long hesitations and reformulations impede communication
0	- Tasks are largely unattempted and intended message is not communicated - No connected language - OR insufficient sample of language to assess	- Lacks the language to attempt the tasks - The intended message is generally obscured - OR insufficient sample of language to assess	- Lacks the vocabulary to attempt the tasks - The intended message is generally obscured - OR insufficient sample of language to assess	- Unclear pronunciation prevents any understanding - Frequent hesitation prevents any communication - OR insufficient sample of language to assess



Helping learners prepare for the ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test

Familiarising learners with the format and content of the test, as well as providing targeted practice, can significantly enhance their performance on Test Day.

In this section, you will find ideas for preparing learners for each of the four parts of the test, followed by clear, easy-to-use classroom activities drawn from A1 Speaking practice papers. These activities are designed to introduce learners to the test format and provide authentic practice. Additional activities are also included to reinforce learning for each section of the test and offer further opportunities for practice.

You can download free practice papers for the ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test from the LANGUAGECERT website.

Visit: languagecert.org

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING PART 1: ANSWERING PERSONAL QUESTIONS

Learners will be asked up to five questions about themselves.

- › Learners should listen carefully to the questions the Interlocutor asks to make sure they respond appropriately.
- › Ensure they know how to introduce themselves, spell their name and answer questions about personal details (e.g. *age, where they're from, where they live, their family, their home*).
- › Explain that each question will be about a different topic, but they will all ask for personal information.
- › Get learners to role play with a partner, asking and answering simple questions about themselves. You could create question cards for them to use. (See the Qualification Handbook on the LANGUAGECERT website for a list of A1 topics: www.languagecert.org)
- › Teach and practise simple language for expressing likes, dislikes and preferences. Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.

CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE SPEAKING PART 1



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Speaking test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 1 of the Speaking test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

PART 1 (1 minute 30 seconds)

- I: LanguageCert International ESOL, Speaking, Preliminary level, *(give today's date)*.
(Give candidate's full name.) Exam begins. Hello. My name's *(give full name)*. Can you spell your surname for me, please?
- C: *(Spells surname.)*
- I: Thank you. Where are you from?
- C: *(Responds.)*
- I: Thank you. Now, Part One. I'm going to ask you some questions about yourself.
(Choose up to five questions from the list as time allows.)

Questions

- Who's your best friend?
- When is your birthday?
- What do you do in the morning?
- What's your favourite colour?
- Where do you do your shopping?
- When do you watch TV?
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- Tell me what you are wearing today.
- What is your favourite food?
- What time does your English lesson start?

Sample taken from A1 Speaking Part 1 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › How does Part 1 begin? *(answer: with two personal questions – how you spell your surname and where you are from)*
- › After these two questions, how many more questions will the Interlocutor ask you? *(answer: up to five questions)*
- › What kind of questions are they? *(answer: questions about personal information)*
- › Are all the questions on the same topic? *(answer: no, each question is on a different topic)*

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge and provides practice for the Part 1 task.

Step 1

Tell learners that you will first review asking and answering personal questions, as this is what they will be expected to do in Part 1 of the Speaking test. Write the following question prompts on the board:

- › Where is / are / do / does ...?
- › How is / are / can / do / does ...?
- › When is / are / can / do / does ...?
- › How many ...?
- › Who is / can ...?

Give learners a few minutes to think of personal questions they could ask using the prompts.

Step 2

Invite volunteers to ask the rest of the class personal questions using the prompts on the board for support, e.g. '*Who can cook in your family?*', '*Where do you go after school?*' (monitor and provide support as needed). Their classmates give appropriate responses. After the activity, give brief feedback on common errors, such as incorrect use of auxiliary verbs, missing question words or incorrect word order.

Step 3

Put learners in pairs and give them a copy of the task. Have pairs perform role-plays in front of the class, with one of them acting as the Interlocutor and the other acting as the test taker. The 'Interlocutors' ask the 'test takers' the first five questions in the task and the test takers answer them. Learners then swap roles with the new Interlocutor asking the last five questions in the task.

Step 4

Monitor learners as they perform their role-plays and make mental or brief written notes on their strengths and weaknesses (e.g. *tenses*, *word order*). If necessary, plan remedial work for the next lesson.

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SPEAKING PART 1 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more speaking skills.

Play 'Ask-and-answer Bingo'

Prepare bingo cards with simple yes/no questions in each box, e.g. *'Do you have a pet?'* *'Are you ten years old?'* *'Do you like pizza?'* Give each learner a card. They walk around the room asking their classmates the questions. If someone answers 'Yes', they write that person's name in the correct box on their bingo card. If the answer is 'No', they ask someone else. The first learner to complete their card with classmates' names shouts *'Bingo!'* Afterwards, ask learners to share what they found with the rest of the class (e.g. *'Sofia has a pet. Amir can swim.'*).

Note: Model the activity first with a volunteer, reminding the class to ask and answer politely.

This fun, low-pressure activity practises asking and answering personal questions and builds confidence, fluency and listening skills for the Part 1 task.

Try a roll-and-ask activity

Write six personal questions on the board (e.g. *'What's your name?'*, *'Where do you live?'*, *'What's your favourite food?'*) and number them 1–6. Put learners in pairs and give each pair a dice. Learners take turns rolling the dice and asking their partner the question with the matching number. If learners roll the same number again, they repeat the question. For extra challenge, write only sentence starters on the board (e.g. *'What is ...?'*, *'Where do ...?'*) to encourage learners to form full questions independently.

This activity practises asking and answering personal questions, helping learners develop fluency, confidence and creativity in short exchanges.

Combine speaking with creativity

Have learners create posters or slides about themselves which include basic personal information such as their name, age, family, hobbies and favourite things. Put learners in pairs or small groups and have them take turns presenting their poster or slides to their partner or group. After each presentation, learners ask and answer simple follow-up questions.

This activity combines speaking and creativity, increasing learners' engagement and helping them to express themselves more confidently in English. It also gives them practice in asking for and sharing personal information.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING PART 2: TAKING PART IN ROLE-PLAYS

Learners will be asked to take part in two or three role-plays in different situations.

- › To familiarise learners with the task, put them in pairs and ask them to role play dialogues, with one of them acting as the Interlocutor and the other acting as the test taker.
- › Tell learners that the first role-play will be initiated by the Interlocutor and that they'll be asked to initiate the second role-play. If there's time, there may be a third role-play, which will be initiated by either the Interlocutor or the learner. Both the Interlocutor and the learner will be expected to produce two short turns for each role-play.
- › Before learners practise role-playing, ask them to review the language they will need to use. You could also provide them with a model response to guide them.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE SPEAKING PART 2



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Speaking test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 2 of the Speaking test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

PART 2 (1 minute)

I: Now, Part Two. I'm going to read some situations. I want you to start or answer. First situation (*choose one situation from A*).

A

- I'm your teacher. I start.
Can I have your homework, please?
- We're in the street. I start.
Excuse me. Where's the museum?
- I work in a bookstore. I start.
Can I help you?
- We're friends. You have a new phone number. I start.
What's your new phone number?

C: (*Responds.*)

I: (*Role-play the situation with the candidate – approximately two turns each.*)

I: Second situation (*choose one situation from B*).

B

- We're friends. I'm wearing a new jacket. You start.
- We are friends. You want me to help you with your bags. You start.
- We're in the same English class. You don't have a pencil. You start.
- I'm your new teacher. You want to know my name. You start.

C: (*Initiates.*)

I: (*Role-play the situation with the candidate – approximately two turns each.*)

I: (*Role-play a third situation from A or B if time allows.*)

I: Thank you.

Sample taken from A1 Speaking Part 2 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › What do you have to do in Part 2? (*answer: role play some situations*)
- › How many situations are there? (*answer: two situations, or three if time allows*)
- › Who starts the first role-play? (*answer: the Interlocutor*)
- › Who starts the second role-play? (*answer: the test taker*)
- › How many times do you speak? (*answer: around two times per role-play*)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity reactivates learners' prior knowledge of basic language functions used in everyday conversations and provides practice for the Part 2 task.

Step 1

Tell the class that before tackling Part 2, you will review a few language functions. Explain that a language function is the reason or purpose we use language, e.g. *requesting something, asking for information, offering to help*.

Step 2

To review language functions related to section A, ask the class these questions:

- › You want something from someone. What do you say to him/her?
(example answers:
Can/Could/May I have ...?
Could you give me ...?
I'd like ...)
- › You want to go somewhere but don't know where it is. What do you say to someone in the street?
(example answers:
Excuse me! Where's ...?
Excuse me! How do I get to ...?
Can you tell me where ... is?
Can you tell me the best way to ...?
I'm looking for ... Do you know where it is?)
- › A shop assistant offers to help you. What do you say to him/her?
(example answers:
I'd like ...
I'm looking for ...
I'm interested in ...
What I need is ...)
- › You don't have a friend's new telephone number. What do you say to him/her?
(example answers:
Hey! Can/Could I have your new telephone number, please?
Excuse me! I don't think I have your new telephone number.
You have a new telephone number, right? Could I have it, please?)

Step 3

Put learners in pairs and read out one of the situations from section A of the practice paper. Give learners a few minutes to role-play the situation with their partner. Observe pairs as they work, keeping notes (mental or written) of their strengths and weaknesses (e.g. *question forming, word order, tenses*). If necessary, plan remedial work for the next lesson.

Note: Repeat Steps 2 and 3 for section B in the task.

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SPEAKING PART 2 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more speaking skills.

Organise a role-play walkaround

Post several easy role-play prompts around the room, e.g. *'Borrowing a pencil from a classmate'*, *'Ordering lunch in the school canteen'*, *'Asking where the school library is'*. Put learners in pairs and assign pairs different starting prompts so they are spread out around the room. Learners move from prompt to prompt, performing a role-play for each one.

This activity keeps learners engaged and motivated and exposes them to different social contexts.

Play a function sorting game

Prepare a set of category cards, each with a different type of functional language, e.g. *'Asking for something'*, *'Offering something'*, *'Asking for directions'*, *'Asking for help'*. Then create another set of cards, each with a simple functional phrase such as *'Can I have a sandwich, please?'*, *'Excuse me, where's the cinema?'*, *'Would you like a drink?'*, *'I'm looking for a T-shirt.'* Include several phrases for each category. Put learners in small groups and give each group both sets of cards. Learners work together to sort the phrases into the correct categories. To extend the activity, when they have finished sorting the cards, put learners in pairs. Pairs choose one phrase from each category and create short role-plays using those phrases. Encourage them to build short, natural conversations around each one.

This activity supports learners' understanding of when and how to use common expressions in real-life situations, building confidence and preparing them for the varied tasks in Speaking Part 2.

Create a listen and match task

Prepare a few short role-plays for different everyday situations, each with two turns per speaker (e.g. *a waiter in a café taking a customer's order*). Create a set of matching situation cards – one for each role-play (e.g. *'someone ordering some food'*). Hand out a set of situation cards to every learner and give them a few minutes to look at them. Then read out the first role-play (you could ask a volunteer to read it with you). Learners listen and hold up the situation card that matches what they hear. Provide the correct answer with feedback, then repeat with the other role-plays. To extend the activity, put learners in pairs and give each pair one of the role-plays to perform. If time allows, invite a few volunteer pairs to perform their role-plays for the class.

This activity strengthens listening comprehension by focusing on key words and everyday expressions. Practising the dialogue in pairs reinforces pronunciation and functional language, boosts confidence for Part 2 of the test and supports recall and imitation – key strategies for A1 learners.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING

PART 3: EXCHANGING INFORMATION

Learners will be asked to identify similarities and differences between two pictures of everyday situations.

- › Review the language and functions learners will need for this task, e.g. *how to ask for information* and *how to express agreement*.
- › Practise using pairs of pictures like the ones in the task, with clear differences and similarities, eliciting from learners the key vocabulary items in each picture.
- › Remind learners that in the real test, they will not be able to see the picture on the Interlocutor's task sheet.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



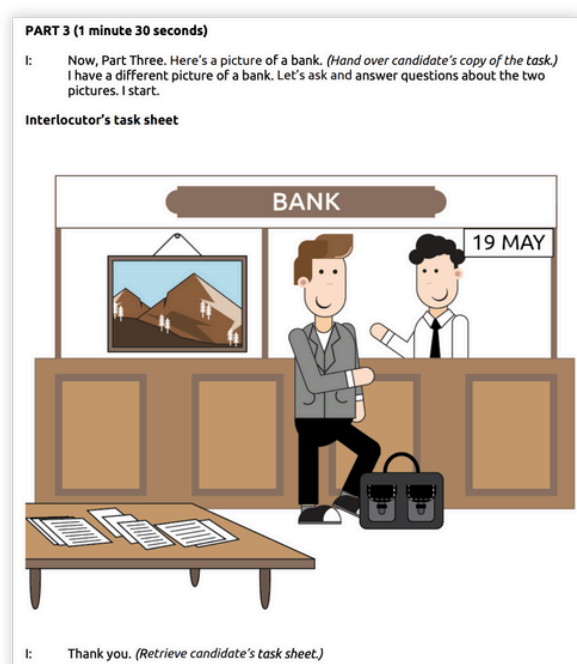
CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE SPEAKING PART 3



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Speaking test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 3 of the Speaking test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.



Sample taken from A1 Speaking Part 3 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › What do you have to do in Part 3? (answer: ask and answer questions about two pictures)
- › Are the pictures similar? (answer: yes, they are similar but there are a few differences between them)
- › Can you look at the Interlocutor's picture on their task sheet? (answer: no, you can't see the Interlocutor's picture)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge, develops their ability to form short sentences and provides practice for the Part 3 task.

Step 1

Give learners a copy of the Candidate's Task Sheet and tell them to look at the picture. Ask them what they can see. (*example answers: two men / a woman / a bank / a picture / a table / a vase / a pen / a date / flowers*)

Step 2

Write the following prompts on the board:

three people / bank

pen / desk

picture / wall

flowers / vase

table / desk

man / speaking

woman / smiling

Tell learners to look at the picture again and think of sentences they could say about it using the prompts. Model an example answer, e.g. *'There are three people in the bank'*. Then ask volunteers to share their ideas with the class.

Step 1

Put learners in pairs. Give one learner in each pair the Interlocutor's Task Sheet and tell the other learner to look at the Candidate's Task Sheet they were given in Step 1. Explain that they will take turns asking and answering questions about each other's pictures. Before they begin, model some questions and answers with a volunteer, e.g.

Teacher: In my picture there are two men. What about you?

Learner: In my picture, there are two men and a woman.

Learner: In my picture, there is a vase with flowers on the table. What about your picture?

Teacher: In my picture there are papers on the table.

Note: Tell the learners with the Interlocutor's Task Sheet to ignore the instructions and focus on the picture only.

Step 4

In pairs, learners ask and answer questions about their pictures, trying to identify similarities and differences. Remind them to ask questions about their partner's picture too, rather than just talking about their own. To support them, write these prompts on the board:

- › What about your picture?
- › Do you have ... in your picture?
- › Is there also ... in your picture?
- › Can you also see ... in your picture?

For extra challenge, ask learners to try to use all of these prepositions in their answers:

- › on (*example answer: The vase is on the table.*)
- › in (*example answer: There are three people in the bank.*)
- › near (*example answer: The woman is near the table.*)
- › in front of (*example answer: The table is in front of the desk.*)
- › behind (*example answer: The assistant is behind the desk.*)
- › between (*example answer: The woman is between the table and the desk.*)

Step 5

Observe learners as they work and provide feedback on how well they completed the activity (*e.g. prepositions, use of articles, word order*).

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SPEAKING PART 3 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more speaking skills.

Play 'Picture Comparison Bingo!'

Prepare two sets of bingo cards, each with six images related to both pictures in the practice paper (e.g. *a man wearing glasses, flowers on a table*). Three of the pictures should be the same in each set and three should be different. Put learners in pairs and give each of them a card from a different set (tell them not to show each other their cards). Learners try to identify which of their pictures are the same as their partner's by asking questions, e.g. *'Is there a man wearing glasses in your picture?'* The first pair to identify all of the matching pictures shout *'Bingo!'*

This game-based activity motivates learners to practise asking and answering questions in a dynamic setting. It helps reinforce vocabulary and listening skills while encouraging spontaneous communication and peer interaction, all of which support Speaking Part 3 test objectives.

Set a picture description task

Write some gapped sentence structures on the board, e.g.:

- › In my picture, there is/are ...
- › The ... is/are on / near / in front of ...
- › I can see a ... but in your picture there is no ...
- › Where is the ... in your picture?
- › Is there a ... in your picture?

Put learners in pairs and give one of them the Interlocutor's Task Sheet and the other the Candidate's Task Sheet. Learners take turns describing, comparing and asking questions about their pictures, using the sentence structures for support.

Note: Tell the learners with the Interlocutor's Task Sheet to ignore the instructions and focus on the picture only.

The sentence structures in this activity scaffold language production, making it easier for A1 learners to formulate sentences and comparisons. This helps reduce anxiety and builds confidence in using key vocabulary and basic grammar.

Organise a describe-and-draw challenge

Prepare simple pictures – either from a practice paper or use clip art images and cartoons – one for each learner. Put learners in pairs and give each of them a picture (tell learners not to look at each other's pictures). They take turns to describe their picture while their partner draws it. Pairs then compare their drawings with the original pictures and discuss any similarities and differences.

This activity practises clear speaking and careful listening using key vocabulary and basic sentence structures. It encourages accuracy, use of prepositions and comparison language – supporting skills needed for the Part 3 task. The interactive and creative format increases learner engagement and motivation, making language practice feel more like a game than a test.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING

PART 4: PRESENTING A TOPIC

Learners will be asked to speak about a topic selected by the Interlocutor for half a minute, and answer follow-up questions. They will be given 30 seconds to prepare.

- › Tell learners that they will be given a pen/pencil and a piece of paper to write notes during the preparation time.
- › Advise learners to make good use of their preparation time to plan what they're going to say and to ensure they're able to maintain a steady flow as they answer.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE SPEAKING PART 4



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Speaking test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 4 of the Speaking test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

PART 4 (2 minutes including follow-up questions)

I: In Part Four you are going to talk about something for half a minute. You are going to talk about (choose topic for candidate).

Topics

A Your favourite sport

B What you do in the evening

C A shop you like

I: (Hand over piece of paper and pen/pencil.) You now have thirty seconds to write some notes to help you. You are going to talk about (repeat topic). (Withdraw eye contact for thirty seconds. Leave recorder running.)

I: (Candidate's name), please start.

C: (Talks.)

I: (When candidate has talked for a maximum of half a minute, say, 'Thank you', and then ask some follow-up questions.)

Follow-up questions

Your favourite sport

- Where do you do this sport?
- Do you like any other sports?
- Do you like to watch sports on TV?
- Are sports important? (Why?/ Why not?)

What you do in the evening

- What do you read in the evening?
- What do you do in the morning?
- When do you meet your friends?
- When do you eat a meal with your family?

A shop you like

- When do you go to this shop?
- Who do you go shopping with?
- How often do you buy clothes?
- What is your shoe size?

I: Thank you, (give candidate's name.) That is the end of the exam.

Sample taken from A1 Speaking Part 4 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › What do you have to do in Part 4? (answer: talk about a topic chosen by the Interlocutor)
- › How long do you have to talk about the topic? (answer: half a minute)
- › Will you have any preparation time? (answer: yes, 30 seconds)
- › Can you make notes? (answer: yes, you are given blank paper and a pen/pencil to make notes)
- › What happens after your talk? (answer: the Interlocutor asks a few follow-up questions)
- › Are the follow-up questions about the topic? (answer: yes, all of them are about the topic)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge, encourages personal engagement with the topic and provides practice for the Part 4 task.

Step 1

Tell learners they are going to prepare and give a short talk about their favourite sport. To help them think about the topic, write the following questions on the board and have learners copy them into their notebooks:

- › What's your favourite sport?
- › Why do you like it?
- › Do you do this sport near your home?
- › When do you do this sport?
- › Who do you do this sport with?
- › Is it an easy sport?
- › Is it an expensive sport?

Step 2

Ask learners to note down next to each question a few words/phrases that they would like to use in their talk. To begin with, give learners a minute to complete this task, but as they approach Test Day, gradually reduce the time to 30 seconds.

Step 3

Invite volunteers (or each learner, if time allows) to give their talk to the rest of the class using their notes from Step 2 to guide them. As in Step 2, give them a minute to do this but gradually reduce the time to 30 seconds as they approach Test Day.

Step 4

After each volunteer/learner has given their talk, ask them one or two follow-up questions from the relevant section of the practice paper. Observe learners and make brief mental or written notes on areas that need attention. If necessary, plan remedial work (e.g. on word order, articles, prepositions) for the next lesson.

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR SPEAKING PART 4 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more speaking skills.

Use pictures to prompt a story

Show the class a sequence of three or four pictures that tell a simple story (e.g. *a child going to school*). Give learners a minute to write notes about what is happening in the pictures. Then invite a couple of volunteers to talk about the story for a minute. Encourage the rest of the class to ask follow-up questions. Repeat this activity a few times using a different sequence of pictures each time.

Note: As learners approach Test Day, gradually reduce the time for notetaking and giving their talks to 30 seconds each.

Visual storytelling helps learners connect ideas and practise sequencing language, which supports coherence and confidence in longer speaking turns.

Get learners working together to generate ideas

Prepare a fact-file template and give one copy to each learner. The template should have a title and prompts related to an A1 topic, e.g.:

[Title] *My town*

[Prompts]

Name of town:

What you can see:

How you can travel:

Favourite place in town:

Give learners a minute to complete their fact file. Then invite volunteers (or each learner, if time allows) to present their fact file to the rest of the class, setting a time limit of a minute for each talk. Encourage their classmates to ask follow-up questions.

Note: As learners approach Test Day, gradually reduce the time for completing their fact files and giving their talks to 30 seconds each.

Creating fact files helps learners gather and organise information visually, reducing pressure and aiding memory during their presentation. It also encourages using basic sentence structures and key vocabulary.

Organise a show-and-tell session

Ask learners to bring to class a small favourite object. Give them a minute to write notes about their object, e.g. what it is, where they got it, why they like it. Learners then take it in turns to talk to the class about their object for 30 seconds, followed by one or two simple follow-up questions from you or their classmates.

Note: As learners approach Test Day, gradually reduce the preparation and presentation time to 30 seconds each.

Talking about a familiar object motivates learners and makes it easier to organise their thoughts. It also builds confidence in using descriptive language and answering questions naturally.



A1 general speaking tips

These tips provide useful strategies for tackling the different A1 Speaking tasks and will help learners approach the test with confidence.

- › Explain to learners the role of the Interlocutor and what is expected of them well before they take their test.
- › Remind them to always listen carefully to the Interlocutor's prompts to ensure they provide an appropriate response.
- › Reassure learners that they will not be penalised for asking the Interlocutor to repeat a question or prompt, but make it clear that they cannot ask the Interlocutor to paraphrase or translate a question.
- › When they're practising for the test, encourage learners to make their responses interesting and engaging, and to avoid one-word answers.
- › Reassure learners that there are no right or wrong answers and that they will only be marked on the language they use and not their opinions.
- › Tell learners that if a topic or question does not apply to them (e.g. *favourite sports*) they can use their imagination and invent their answers.
- › Divide your class into pairs and get them to practise both asking and responding to similar questions with their partner.
- › Foster a supportive atmosphere in class where learners feel comfortable speaking.

Ensuring learners are ready for the ESOL for Schools A1 Speaking test

When learners have finished preparing for the Speaking test, it's important that they retain key information about it. On Test Day, learners often experience nerves, which can lead to forgetfulness or confusion about the procedures. Taking extra time to review test expectations and ensure learners are fully prepared can help alleviate anxiety and ensure the test process runs more smoothly.

Here's a list of questions to remind learners of what to expect in the Speaking test (you may wish to add some of your own):

- › How many parts does the Speaking test have? *(answer: four parts)*
- › What do you have to do in Part 1? *(answer: spell your surname, say where you are from and answer up to five questions)*
- › What do you have to do in Part 2? *(answer: role-play two or more situations with the Interlocutor)*
- › What do you have to do in Part 3? *(answer: exchange information with the Interlocutor to find similarities and differences between two pictures)*
- › What do you have to do in Part 4? *(answer: talk for half a minute on a topic chosen by the Interlocutor and answer follow-up questions)*
- › Are test takers assessed in pairs? *(answer: no, all test takers are assessed individually)*
- › How long is the Speaking test? *(answer: 6 minutes)*

Helpful resources and contact information

At LANGUAGECERT, we're committed to providing comprehensive support for both learners and teachers.

Our website offers a wealth of free resources to help prepare for both the Written and Spoken components of the ESOL for Schools A1 test.

Handbooks provide teachers with practical tips and valuable strategies for effectively preparing learners for the test. They also include detailed descriptions of tasks at every level. Our free downloadable practice papers are an excellent tool for helping learners become familiar with the format and content of the test.

ESOL for Schools Written component resources:

- Listening-Reading-Writing Qualification handbook
- Qualification Overview handbook
- Assessing Writing Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Sample answer sheets
- Teacher Guide (Listening & Reading, Writing)

ESOL for Schools Spoken component resources:

- Speaking Qualification handbook
- Preparing Learners for the ESOL Speaking Exams Guide
- Assessing Speaking Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Teacher Guide (Speaking)

Additional support available:

- Books
- FAQs
- Live webinars

To access these resources, visit: www.languagecert.org/en/preparation

Further information

For more information about the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools tests, visit our website www.languagecert.org or contact our Customer Services team.

Appendix

Appendix: Essential language structures and functions for A1

At A1 level (for Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking), learners are expected to be familiar with a number of structures and language functions as shown in the table below.

› Functions/notions

Directions
Describing habits and routines
Giving personal information
Greetings
Telling the time
Understanding and using numbers
Understanding and using prices

› Discourse markers

Connecting words – *and, but, because*

› Grammar forms

Verb forms
Adjectives: common and demonstrative
Adverbs of frequency
Comparatives and superlatives
going to
How much/many and very common uncountable nouns
I'd like
Imperatives (+/-)
Modals: *can/can't/could/couldn't*
Past simple of to be
Past simple
Possessive adjectives
Possessive s
Prepositions: common, of place, including *in/on/at*
Present continuous
Present simple
Pronouns: simple, personal
Questions
There is/are
to be, including question + negatives



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