

B1 SPEAKING

› TEACHER GUIDE

The purpose of the Teacher Guide

This guide is for teachers preparing learners for the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools B1 Speaking test. It offers valuable insights, strategies and practical tips to help learners strengthen their speaking skills and build their confidence. It also supports you in addressing common challenges learners may encounter and helping them enhance their existing abilities.

It features a range of practice activities drawn from the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools B1 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 B1 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

Speaking in a second language is a valuable skill, but it comes with a variety of challenges that can affect communication and confidence. Learners often struggle with pronunciation, limited vocabulary and unfamiliar grammar rules, which can make it harder to express ideas clearly. Issues with fluency, anxiety, cultural differences and listening comprehension further complicate matters, especially in real-time conversations. Understanding these obstacles is the first step towards overcoming them and becoming a more confident, effective speaker.

KEY CHALLENGES OF SPEAKING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE



Pronunciation and accent

Pronunciation in a second language often involves sounds that don't exist in a learner's native language. This can make it difficult to pronounce certain words clearly, resulting in misunderstandings. Stress, rhythm and intonation patterns may also differ, and an unfamiliar accent can make learners feel self-conscious or less credible in conversation. Overcoming this challenge requires active listening, imitation and often targeted pronunciation practice.



Limited vocabulary

A small or overly academic vocabulary can limit one's ability to express nuanced ideas or emotions. Learners may rely on basic words or 'safe' phrases, leading to repetitive or vague speech. This limits spontaneity and fluency in conversation. In real-world interactions, unfamiliar words may cause hesitation, frustration or communication breakdown. Building vocabulary through reading, listening and usage in context is essential to overcome this barrier.



Grammar and sentence structure

Mastering grammar in a second language is not just about memorising rules – it involves internalising them so they can be used naturally in speech. Errors in verb tense, word order or agreement can obscure meaning or make speech sound unnatural. Some grammatical concepts might not exist in a learner's first language, making them harder to grasp. Thinking about grammar while speaking also slows fluency and reduces confidence. Practice and immersion are key to making grammar automatic.



Fluency and hesitation

Fluency is not just about speaking quickly – it's about speaking smoothly, with natural pauses and minimal hesitation. Many learners pause often to search for the right word or correct themselves mid-sentence. This can disrupt the flow of conversation and make interactions feel stilted. Frequent hesitation may also cause speakers to feel they're not making progress. Improving fluency involves consistent practice, especially in real-time conversations where feedback is immediate.



Confidence and anxiety

Fear of making mistakes, being judged or not being understood can lead to language anxiety. This is particularly common in speaking situations, especially when interacting with native speakers or in formal settings. Such anxiety can lead to avoidance behaviours – like speaking very little or not at all – which slows progress. Building confidence often means accepting mistakes as part of learning, practising regularly in low-pressure environments, and gradually increasing exposure to more challenging situations.



Cultural nuances

Language is deeply tied to culture. Even when grammar and vocabulary are correct, a speaker may sound unnatural if they miss cultural cues such as tone, politeness conventions or body language. Idioms, humour, sarcasm and indirect communication styles can be especially hard to master. Misunderstanding these elements can lead to awkward or inappropriate responses. Learning about the culture alongside the language – through media, interaction and observation – can greatly improve communicative competence.



Listening comprehension

Speaking well depends partly on understanding what others say. If a learner struggles to catch spoken language – especially when it's fast, informal or accented – they may miss key points or fail to respond appropriately. This can make conversations feel intimidating or discouraging. Developing listening skills requires exposure to diverse speakers, real-life conversations and various forms of audio content (like podcasts or films), as well as practising strategies like listening for gist or key words.



Global Speaking skills at B1 level

At B1 level, learners can:



handle most travel situations using simple language



join conversations on familiar or everyday topics (e.g. *family, hobbies, work, travel, current events*) without preparation



describe experiences, dreams, hopes and plans, and briefly explain their opinions



tell a story or summarise a book or film and share their reactions.

B1 Proficiency Scales

The B1 Proficiency Scales outline the speaking skills learners should be able to demonstrate at B1 level, as defined by the CEFR.

At B1 level, learners can:

- **make themselves understood** in short exchanges, despite frequent pauses and corrections.
- **manage everyday topics** (e.g. *family, hobbies, work, travel, current events*) using basic vocabulary, though they may hesitate or repeat themselves.
- **handle routine situations**, even if they sometimes struggle to find the right words.
- **express ideas on familiar topics with basic vocabulary**, occasionally using indirect language (circumlocutions).
- **generally control simple vocabulary** but make errors with complex ideas or unfamiliar situations.
- **use common phrases and sentence patterns accurately in predictable situations.**
- **be understood**, even with a foreign accent or occasional mispronunciations.
- **handle basic functions** like asking for information, making requests or expressing opinions simply.
- **socialise effectively** using simple, familiar expressions and routines.
- **adapt memorised phrases** to fit different situations with limited word changes.
- **start, continue and end conversations** on familiar or personal topics.
- **link simple points together to tell a story or describe something** using basic connectors (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'then').



Getting to know the ESOL for Schools B1 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 12 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 and express opinions and ideas	Spell their surname and give their country of origin, then answer up to 5 questions about themselves (e.g. family, studies, free time)	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 and opinions, and cooperate to reach an agreement or decision	Have a short discussion to plan, arrange or decide something using visual prompts	
4	Present a topic (narrating, describing, communicating ideas and expressing opinions)	Prepare a talk on a topic provided by the Interlocutor, then speak for one and a half minutes 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.

THE B1 SPEAKING MARKSCHEME

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 B1 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 with little or no support from the interlocutor • Interaction is maintained • Turn taking is natural • Contributions are relevant • Intended message is successfully communicated • Ideas are successfully linked and sequenced	• A reasonable range of B1 level grammar is used • Grammar is sufficiently accurate • Errors may occur, but do not impede communication	• A sufficient range of B1 level vocabulary is used to deal with the tasks • Errors may occur, but do not impede communication	• Pronunciation is clearly intelligible despite first language influences • Occasional pronunciation errors do not impede communication • Intonation is used to help convey meaning • The flow of language is generally maintained without interlocutor support • Occasional hesitations may be evident
2	• Tasks are mostly fulfilled with a degree of independence • Interaction is maintained most of the time • Turn taking is mostly natural • Contributions are mostly relevant • Intended message is mostly successfully communicated • Ideas are mostly well linked and sequenced	• A relatively limited range of B1 level grammar is used • Grammar is reasonably accurate • Major errors may occur, but the message is always communicated	• A range of B1 level vocabulary is used to deal with the tasks • Major errors may occur, but do not generally impede communication	• Pronunciation is sufficiently intelligible for general understanding • First language influences on stress and intonation are noticeable, but meaning remains clear • Pronunciation and intonation errors only occasionally impede communication • The flow of language is generally maintained despite some hesitation • Hesitation may be more evident in longer stretches of free production
1	• Tasks remain largely unfulfilled • Interaction is only maintained with the constant support of the interlocutor • Very little natural turn taking takes place • Contributions lack relevance • Intended message is not successfully communicated • Ideas are not linked and the sequence of ideas is difficult to follow	• Range of grammar is too limited to deal with the B1 level tasks • Frequent errors sometimes make the message difficult to follow	• Range of vocabulary is too limited to deal with the B1 level tasks • Vocabulary errors make the message difficult to follow	• Unclear pronunciation leads to difficulty in understanding • Inappropriate intonation and stress patterns impede communication • Long hesitations are evident even in the production of B1 level language
0	• The tasks are unfulfilled and intended message is not communicated • Utterances mainly consist of disconnected words and phrases • OR insufficient sample of language to assess	• Lack of control even when using basic structures • The intended message is lost • OR insufficient sample of language to assess	• Lacks the vocabulary to deal with the tasks • The message is mostly lost • OR insufficient sample of language to assess	• Unclear pronunciation and/or intonation prevents clear understanding • A great deal of hesitation places strain on the listener • OR insufficient sample of language to assess



Helping learners prepare for the ESOL for Schools B1 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 B1 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 B1 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.

- › Ensure learners 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, ideas and opinions.
- › 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 B1 topics: www.languagecert.org).
- › Teach and practise simple language for expressing likes, dislikes and preferences.
- › Advise learners to avoid giving rehearsed answers to anticipated questions, as this will help them to sound more natural.
- › 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 (3 minutes)

I: LanguageCert International ESOL, Speaking, Achiever 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, one from each of the different topic areas, as time allows. Name the topic; e.g. 'Now, Watching films.')'

Topics

Watching films

- What was the last film you watched?
- Do you have a favourite film actor or director? (Who?)
- What types of films do you like best?
- Are there any kinds of films you don't enjoy watching? (Why?)

Languages

- Which languages can you speak?
- Which countries would you like to visit and learn their languages?
- Do you think your first language is easy for people to learn? (Why?/ Why not?)
- Why do you think so many people learn English?

Health and Fitness

- How often do you take physical exercise?
- Are there any things you don't eat or drink because they are bad for you?
- How can schools help students to keep fit and healthy?
- Where can you go in your town to keep fit?

Making things

- Is there some food you can cook? (What?)
- Have you made anything useful or decorative for your home?
- What things did you learn to make in your first years at school?
- Are you good at painting, drawing and other creative activities?

(continued)

Sample taken from B1 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 initial questions, how many questions will the Interlocutor ask you? *(answer: up to five questions)*
- › What kind of questions will they be? *(answer: questions asking about personal information and opinions)*
- › Will all questions be on the same topic? *(answer: no, each question will be on a different topic)*

TEST ACTIVITY

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

Step 1

Tell the class that the focus of the lesson will be 'films' / 'watching films', and write the following words related to films on the board:

plot
casting
musical score
theme
setting
special effects

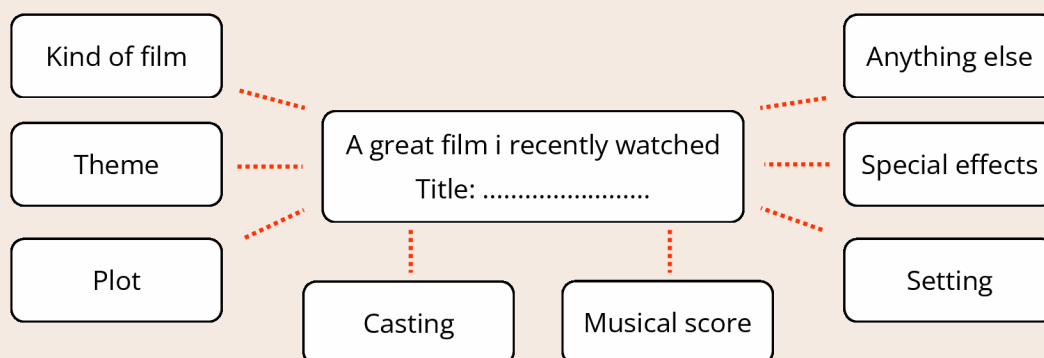
Put learners in pairs and ask them to discuss what they think the words mean.

Step 2

Ask pairs to share with the class their ideas from Step 1, before providing the correct definitions. (*example answers: plot – what happens in the film; casting – the choice of actors to play particular roles in a film; musical score – the music written specifically for a film; theme – the main subject or message of a film; setting – the location where the film takes place; special effects – 'tricks' used in a film to make a scene look real*)

Step 3

Having clarified the meanings of the film-related words, ask learners to think of a great film they recently watched. Draw the mind map below on the board. Have learners copy it and add relevant pieces of information under each prompt.



Step 4

Ask a few learners to share information about their film with the rest of the class. Tell them to use their notes from their mind map.

Step 5

Now ask the class the four questions about watching films from Part 1 of the practice paper. See how the class respond and make mental or written notes on their strengths and any weaknesses you spot (e.g. tenses, prepositions, word order). Plan remedial work for the next lesson if needed.

Note: Remind learners that in the actual test, they will only be asked one question per topic. The aim is to give short, accurate and clear responses, as the Interlocutor will immediately move on to a new question on a different topic.

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.

1. Organise a 'Topic Roulette' game

Create a spinner (physical or digital) which is divided into 8–10 topic areas, such as hobbies, work, food, travel, education, shopping, music, free time, family and sports. One learner spins the wheel and answers a random open-ended question related to the selected topic, from a list which has been prepared beforehand, e.g. 'Do you prefer shopping in small shops or big supermarkets? Why?' Limit their response to 30–45 seconds to ensure everyone gets a turn.

This activity simulates the unpredictability of Part 1, helping learners develop the ability to give spontaneous, consistent responses – a key skill for Part 1 – whilst boosting confidence and quick-thinking skills

2. Set a speed chat challenge

Prepare some Part 1-style questions before the lesson. Divide the class in half. One half forms a line or circle and the other half stands facing them so that everyone has a partner. Call out the first question (e.g. 'What do you do in your free time?'). Allow 30 seconds for learners to answer the question in their pairs and to ask each other a follow-up question. After 30 seconds, learners in one line or circle move one step to the left to face a new partner. Call out a new question and repeat the process.

This activity mimics the quick question-and-answer format of the test, while giving learners repeated opportunities to practise fluency and interaction with different partners.

3. Play around with questions and answers

To help learners become familiar with test-style questions, give them example answers (e.g. 'I usually watch films at the weekend.') and ask them to guess the original question (e.g. 'When do you usually watch films?'). Provide example answers for five different topic questions. Now extend the activity by giving learners topic words (e.g. 'travel', 'school', 'music') and having them write their own questions.

This approach helps learners understand question formats and encourages active thinking.

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.
- › Have learners practise the language functions likely to be needed in this part of the test (e.g. expressing views, offering an apology, responding to a request).
- › Remind learners that they should think about who they are speaking to and ensure their responses are appropriate in terms of style, language and tone (as the Interlocutor will assume a variety of roles, e.g. a friend, a head teacher, a manager).
- › 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 (3 minutes)

I: Now, Part Two. We are going to role-play some situations. I want you to start or respond.
First situation (choose one situation from **A**).

A

- I'm a teacher visiting your school. I start.
Could you tell me where I can find the Director's office, please?
- We're friends at a science museum. I start.
We've got about an hour. What shall we look at first?
- I am the sports camp instructor. You can't find your sports equipment. I start.
Are you looking for something?
- We're classmates. I start.
I have to miss tomorrow's lesson. Can you let the teacher know?

C: (Responds.)

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

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

B

- I'm a waiter in a restaurant. You are not happy with the food I've given you. You start.
- I'm your friend. I've been waiting for you for twenty minutes. You start.
- You're behind me in a queue at the supermarket. You have one thing in your basket, and you're in a hurry. You start.
- You are at the principal's office. Your friend is not feeling well, and you want to inform the school nurse. 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 B1 Speaking Part 2 practice paper

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

- › What are you required to do in Part 2? (answer: role-play some situations)
- › How many situations will you be asked to role-play? (answer: two situations, or more if time allows)
- › Who starts the first role-play? (answer: the Interlocutor)
Who starts the second role-play (answer: the test taker)
- › How many turns are you expected to produce? (answer: around two turns per role-play)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity revises learners' knowledge of language functions 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. for apologising, interrupting or thanking someone.

Step 2

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

- › What would you say if you wanted to give directions to a specific place?
(example answers:
It's on the right, opposite ...
You'll see ... on the right / on the left / straight ahead of you.
You can't miss it!
Next to ... is ...
Go along ... and ...
Go straight on until you get to ...
Go as far as ... and then ...
Go past the ... and you'll see ...)
- › What would you say if you wanted to make a suggestion (e.g. when talking with a friend)?
(example answers: *Why don't we ...? / Shall we ...? / How about ...? / Do you fancy ...? / What if we ...?*)
- › What would you say if you wanted to explain or clarify something you said?
(example answers:
Actually, what happened is that ...
To tell you the truth, I ...
Well, let me explain ...
What I mean is ...
What I'm trying to say ...
What I wanted to say ...)
- › What would you say if you wanted another speaker to clarify something?
(example answers:
I don't understand. What do you mean ...?
Excuse me, but did you say ...?
Could you explain what you mean?
Pardon? Could you say that again, please? I don't understand.
What are you trying to say?
What do you mean by that?)

Step 3

To review language functions related to Part B, ask the class these questions:

- › What would you say if you wanted to complain about something (e.g. at a fast-food restaurant)?
(example answers:
I'm sorry to bother you, but ...
I'm sorry to say this, but ...
Excuse me, but I'm really not happy with ...
I understand it's probably not your fault, but ...)

- › What would you say if you wanted to politely complain or express disappointment to a friend?
(example answers:
That's a pity! / What a shame! / That's too bad!
I'm sorry, but ...
It's not what I was expecting ...
Why didn't you tell me ...?
I wish you had ...)

- › What would you say if you wanted to ask for a favour (e.g. from your teacher)?
(example answers:
Could I please ...?
Can I ask you for a favour? I need to ...
I know you're very busy / in a hurry but do you think I could ...?
I hate to be asking you this, but ...
Would you mind if I ...?)

- › What would you say if you wanted to inform someone about an urgent issue?
(example answers:
Excuse me, but I really need ...
I'm sorry for disturbing you, but it's urgent ...
Excuse me, but this cannot wait ...
Can I trouble you for a moment? It's urgent ...
If you have a moment, could you please ...?)

Step 4

Now put learners in pairs and ask them to do the role-plays in the practice paper. Observe learners as they perform their role-plays, keeping notes (mental or written) to help plan follow-up activities or remedial work for the next lesson.

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.

1. Organise a language function matching race

Prepare two sets of cards: one with language functions (such as complaining or suggesting) and another with matching sample phrases or short dialogues. Have learners work in pairs or small teams to race to match the functions to the correct phrases/dialogues.

This is a fun, engaging way to help learners develop a stronger awareness of functional language in context.

2. Help learners create a 'Formality Ladder'

Show the class different ways to express a particular function with varying levels of formality, e.g. complaining about something (possible expressions – 'Hey, this sucks!', 'I'm not very satisfied...', 'Forgive me for mentioning this, but ...'). Ask learners to rank these expressions from the least to the most formal (they could number them). Then put learners in pairs, give them a particular situation (e.g. 'You've ordered food in a restaurant but your meal is cold') and ask them to select the appropriate response. Afterwards, learners can role-play the exchange, adjusting their tone depending on who they are speaking to, e.g. a friend or a stranger.

This activity encourages learners to develop flexibility and use language appropriately for different social contexts.

3. Use role-play to bring scenarios to life

Prepare pictures (on slides or printed out) of everyday places and events – e.g. a lost luggage desk at an airport, people queuing in a café, a classroom where a student looks confused, or a busy supermarket checkout. Put learners in pairs and show the class one of the pictures at random. Pairs identify a possible scenario (e.g. 'someone has lost their bag at an airport') and then role-play a short interaction based on that scenario, with each learner taking two short turns.

This activity helps develop learners' contextual awareness, supports visual learners, and encourages spontaneous speaking and creativity.

4. Set a dialogue repair task

Show learners short cartoons or comic strips (on slides or printed out) that depict awkward or inappropriate conversations, e.g. someone speaking rudely in a shop or being too informal in a formal setting. Ask learners to spot what went wrong in the interaction. Then, have them rewrite or role-play a more appropriate version using polite and context-appropriate language.

This activity encourages critical thinking and reflection while reinforcing the importance of politeness, tone and appropriate language in real-life situations.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING PART 3: RESPONDING TO A VISUAL WITH PROMPTS

Learners will be asked to discuss a given topic with the Interlocutor. They will be provided with visual prompts related to the topic.

- › To prepare for this task, review with learners the functional language they will need (e.g. how to make suggestions, express agreement/disagreement, emphasise a point, justify an opinion).
- › Remind learners to talk about the visuals, e.g. sharing their opinion about them, rather than just describing what they can see, and encourage them to justify their opinions, instead of just stating them.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



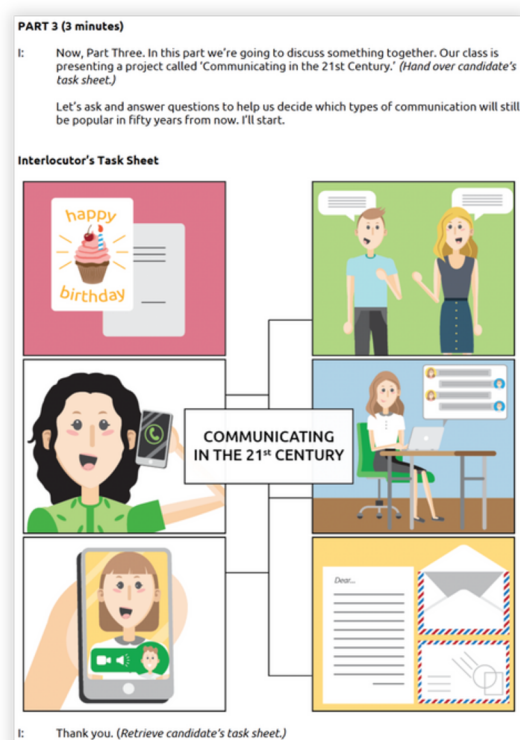
CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE SPEAKING PART 3



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 give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.



Sample taken from B1 Speaking Part 3 practice paper

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

- › What are you required to do in Part 3? (answer: discuss something with the Interlocutor)
- › What will the Interlocutor give you for this part of the test? (answer: a task sheet)
- › What will there be on the task sheet? (answer: prompts, i.e. ideas test you can use in the discussion)
- › Will the Interlocutor have a task sheet similar to yours? (answer: no, some prompts will be different)
- › Will you be allowed to look at the Interlocutor's task sheet? (answer: no)
- › Will you be given any preparation time? (answer: no)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge of the world and provides practice for the Part 3 task.

Step 1

Tell the class that the topic of the lesson is 'Communicating in the 21st century'. Put learners in pairs and ask them to note down on a piece of paper or in their notebooks how people communicate with each other today. (*example answers: phone (landline and mobile) / social media / emails / letters / face to face / cards and postcards*)

Step 2

Ask the class which of the ways to communicate that they identified in Step 1 is their preferred method and why.

Step 3

Ask learners to look at Part 3 of the practice paper and elicit what they are required to do. Demonstrate the task with a volunteer and then put learners in pairs. Ask one or more pairs to do the task in front of the class, with one learner pretending to be the Interlocutor and the other pretending to be the test taker. Make notes (mental or written) as they do the activity.

Step 4

Using the notes you made in Step 3, provide feedback on how well the class completed the activity.

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.

1. Set a timed speaking challenge

Put learners in pairs and give everyone the same topic to discuss (e.g. *'How I usually spend my weekend'*, *'My favourite food'*). Set a time limit of two to three minutes. Monitor the conversations, making mental or written notes on areas for improvement.

Remind learners that in the test, time is limited, so practising under timed conditions builds confidence and helps them to organise their ideas quickly. This activity also encourages good pacing, helping to keep the conversation flowing.

2. Do a role-play role swap

Put learners in pairs, with one acting as the Interlocutor and the other as the test taker. The Interlocutor begins a conversation on a given topic. After one minute, ring a bell (or use another signal) to prompt pairs to swap roles. Each learner must adapt quickly to their new role and keep the conversation going by asking and answering questions, exchanging opinions and making decisions. Continue swapping roles every minute until each learner has had at least two turns as Interlocutor and two as test taker.

This activity develops adaptability, quick thinking and the communication skills essential for success in the test.

3. Create 'What would you do if ...?' scenarios

Present hypothetical scenarios related to different communication challenges (e.g. *'What would you do if you received a confusing email?'* or *'How would you ask a friend to stop texting during dinner?'*). Put learners in pairs and have them discuss and role-play their responses, exchanging opinions and making decisions. Give learners a few scenarios to choose from and monitor and provide guidance as needed.

This activity promotes the use of problem-solving language and encourages practical application in real-life situations.

4. Enhance speaking activities with music

To add variety to speaking practice, incorporate short instrumental music clips or ambient sounds related to a specific setting (e.g. a café, a park). Music can help learners mentally transport themselves to the scenario, enhancing their emotional engagement and focus.

This sensory input encourages learners to adjust their tone, pace and language use appropriately. When used strategically, music can also reduce anxiety, boost motivation, and ultimately improve fluency and confidence in real-life speaking situations.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR SPEAKING PART 4: TALKING ABOUT A TOPIC AND ANSWERING FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

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

- › To prepare for this task, have learners practise presenting their ideas clearly and in a logical order, using sequencing words such as 'First of all', 'Then' and 'Finally'. They should also practise phrases for expressing opinions, ideas and feelings (e.g. *'I think', 'In my opinion'*).
- › In the task, learners should 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. They'll be given a pen/pencil and a piece of paper to write notes before they speak.
- › Explain that the Interlocutor may interrupt them, for example, if they have said enough and don't need to provide any further information.
- › Remind learners that the Interlocutor will ask them a few follow-up questions after they have finished speaking.
- › When practising for this part, begin by allowing learners to speak for less than a minute. Then gradually increase their speaking time as they become more confident.
- › Learners often focus excessively on their mistakes. To counter this, encourage them to give each other compliments after each individual talk, focusing on areas such as content, pronunciation or confidence. This fosters a supportive environment, boosts self-esteem and reduces anxiety related to speaking. Additionally, hearing peers' strengths enables learners to learn new strategies and language, enhancing their overall speaking skills.
- › 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 (3 minutes including follow-up questions)

I: In Part Four you are going to talk on your own about something for one and a half minutes. Your topic is *(choose topic for candidate)*.

Topics

A A sports event you would like to go to

B Your favourite holiday place

C Your life before you started school

I: *(Hand over piece of paper and pen/pencil.)* You now have thirty seconds to write some notes to help you. So your topic is *(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 one and a half minutes, say, 'Thank you', and then ask some follow-up questions.)*

Follow-up questions

A sports event you would like to go to

- Who would you like to go to the sports event with?
- Do you prefer to watch sports live or on TV? (Why?)
- What new sport would you like to try?
- Are there any sports you really don't like watching? (Why?)

Your favourite holiday place

- What would it be like to live in that place all the time?
- Do you think that place will change in the future? (Why?)
- Which other places would you like to visit?
- What kind of holiday place would you **not** enjoy? (Why?)

Your life before you started school

- Have you got photos from the time before you started school?
- Do you think children start school at the right age?
- How did you feel about starting school?
- What things can children learn better at home than at school?

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

Sample taken from B1 Speaking Part 4 practice paper

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

- › What are you required to do in Part 4? *(answer: talk about a topic chosen by the Interlocutor)*
- › How long are you expected to talk? *(answer: one and a half minutes)*
- › Will you be given any preparation time? *(answer: yes, 30 seconds)*
- › Will you be allowed to make notes *(answer: yes, you will be given blank paper and a pen/pencil to make notes)*
- › Will the Interlocutor participate in your talk? *(answer: no, you will talk on your own for one and a half minutes)*
- › What will happen after your talk? *(answer: the Interlocutor will ask a few follow-up questions)*
- › Will the follow-up questions be related to the topic? *(answer: yes, all of them will be related to the topic)*

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity develops learners' ability to plan and structure a short talk and provides practice for the Part 4 task.

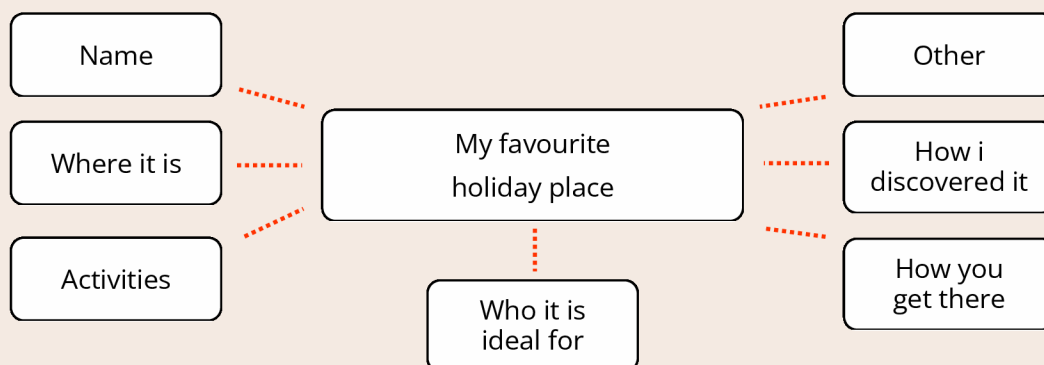
Step 1

Tell the class that the topic of the lesson is 'Favourite holiday places'. Then ask them the following questions:

- › Do you have a favourite holiday place? Where is it?
- › What's so special about it?

Step 2

Draw the mind map below on the board and ask the class to copy it. Tell learners that on Test Day, creating a mind map to refer to can help them organise their ideas and better structure their response. Now give them enough time to add brief notes under each prompt:



Step 3

Ask a few volunteers to 'present' their favourite holiday place to the rest of the class, using the notes in their mind maps to help them.

Step 4

Observe learners as they present, keeping notes (mental or written) to help plan follow-up activities or remedial work 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.

1. Use picture prompts to get learners talking

Show learners an engaging photo related to a familiar topic (e.g. a holiday destination, a city, a festival). Give them 30 seconds to prepare a short talk, creating a mind map or jotting down bullet points. Ask a few learners (as many as time allows) to speak individually for one and a half minutes, describing the photo and expressing their opinions.

A visual stimulus helps learners to practise generating ideas and expressing opinions, which can reduce anxiety and further develop fluency.

2. Encourage peer interviews to support speaking practice

Put learners in pairs. One learner asks their partner a series of quick questions on a set topic (e.g. a favourite holiday place). The other learner gives short responses, making a few brief notes as they answer. They then switch roles. Tell learners to use their notes to prepare a short individual talk of one and a half minutes. Ask a few volunteers to give their talk to the rest of the class and provide brief feedback afterwards.

This activity promotes active listening and supports idea generation, helping learners develop content for their individual speaking tasks. It addresses a common challenge where learners have sufficient language but struggle with producing ideas.

3. Get learners working together to generate ideas

Divide the class into small teams and assign everyone the same topic, for example, 'How I spend my free time', 'My best friend' or 'My favourite sport'. Give teams two minutes to create a mind map with as many ideas on the topic as possible. Then, one member from each team delivers a one-and-a-half-minute talk using their group's ideas.

This activity encourages collaboration and reduces pressure on individual learners.

4. Interview yourself

Assign the class a topic (e.g. 'My favourite weekend activities') and have learners work individually to prepare three or four questions related to the topic. Learners then deliver a one-and-a-half-minute talk, using their answers as a guide. Note: There may not be time for all learners to give their talks in a single lesson.

This approach builds confidence by allowing learners to rehearse smaller language chunks before presenting the complete talk.



B1 General Speaking Tips

These tips provide useful strategies for tackling the different B1 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.
- › Remind learners to use 'fillers' (e.g. 'Well ...', 'You know ...', 'I mean ...', 'Let me think ...') to avoid long pauses and hesitation. Fillers will help them to provide more fluent responses.
- › Practise a few interaction skills with learners, e.g. how to take turns, how to add extra information and how to politely disagree, so that they can interact with the Interlocutor more effectively.
- › Divide your class into pairs and get learners to practise both asking and responding to questions that are similar to the ones in the tasks.
- › Foster a supportive atmosphere in class where learners feel comfortable speaking.
- › Encourage learners to record themselves so that they can review their own language use and presentation style (e.g. use of filler words, posture, eye contact, whether they're speaking too fast). Taking an active role in evaluating their own performance supports learner independence and long-term progress. Learners can set personal targets based on their self-observation (e.g. 'I need to pause more' or 'I want to use more connectors next time'), making their practice more focused and intentional.
- › Have learners practise the task in pairs or with you, using the free practice papers on the LANGUAGECERT website. You can also show them the mock test videos on the website so that they know what to expect on Test Day.
Visit **www.languagecert.org**

Ensuring learners are ready for the ESOL for Schools B1 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 are you required to do in Part 1? *(answer: communicate personal information, including spelling your surname and saying where you are from, and express opinions and ideas)*
- › How many questions will the Interlocutor ask you in Part 1? *(answer: up to five questions)*
- › What are you required to do in Part 2? *(answer: role-play two or more situations with the Interlocutor)*
- › What are you required to do in Part 3? *(answer: exchange information and opinions, cooperate with the Interlocutor to reach agreement/a decision)*
- › What are you required to do in Part 4? *(answer: talk for one and a half minutes on a topic chosen by the Interlocutor and answer follow-up questions)*
- › How much preparation time will you have in Part 4? *(answer: 30 seconds)*
- › Are test takers assessed in pairs? *(answer: no, all test takers are assessed individually)*
- › What is the overall duration of the test? *(answer: 12 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 B1 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 and pre-recorded webinars

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

Further information

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

Appendix

Appendix: Essential language structures and functions for B1

At B1 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

Describing places
Describing past experiences and storytelling
Describing feelings, emotions and attitudes
Expressing opinions

› Discourse functions

Initiating and closing a conversation
Checking understanding (from both a speaker's and a listener's point of view)
Managing interaction (interrupting, changing topic, resuming, or continuing)

› Discourse markers

Linkers: sequential – past time
Connecting words expressing cause and effect, contrast, etc.
Markers to structure informal spoken discourse
Contrasting opinions (on the one hand ...)

› Questions

Wh- questions in the past
Complex question tags

› Grammar forms

Past continuous
used to
would expressing habit in the past
Past perfect
Future
Future time: will & going to (prediction)
Present perfect
Past simple
Present perfect continuous
Conditionals: zero, first, second and third

Passives

Reported speech (range of tenses)

Modals: might, may, will, probably
(possibility)

Modals: must / can't (deduction)

Modals: must / have to, ought to, need to
(obligation and necessity)

Modals: should have, might have, etc. (past)

Articles: with countable and uncountable
nouns

Determiners

Broad range (e.g. all the, most, both)

Adjectives

Adverbial phrases of time, place and
frequency, including word order

Adjectives vs adverbs

Adverbial phrases of degree/extent,
probability

Comparative and superlative forms of
adverbs

Intensifiers

Broader range of intensifiers (e.g. too, so,
enough)

Wide range (e.g. extremely, much too)

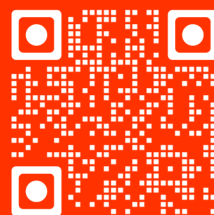
› Pragmatic awareness

Colloquial language

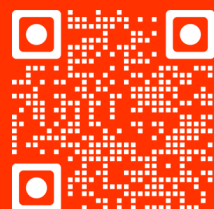
Lexico-grammatical features

Phrasal verbs

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