

# Assessment

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## Examiners and marking

The quality assurance of Speaking Examiners (SEs) is managed by Team Leaders (TLs). TLs ensure all examiners successfully complete examiner training and regular certification of procedure and assessment before they examine. TLs are in turn responsible to a Professional Support Leader (PSL) who is the professional representative of Cambridge Assessment English for the Speaking tests in a given country or region.

Annual examiner certification involves attendance at a face-to-face meeting to focus on and discuss assessment and procedure, followed by the marking of sample Speaking tests in an online environment. Examiners must complete standardisation of assessment for all relevant levels each year and are regularly monitored during live testing sessions.

## Assessment scales

Throughout the test candidates are assessed on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. They are awarded marks by two examiners: the assessor and the interlocutor. The assessor awards marks by applying performance descriptors from the analytical assessment scales for the following criteria:

- Grammar and Vocabulary
- Discourse Management
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication

The interlocutor awards a mark for global achievement using the global achievement scale.

Assessment for B2 First is based on performance across all parts of the test, and is achieved by applying the relevant descriptors in the assessment scales. The assessment scales for B2 First (shown on page 82) are extracted from the overall Speaking scales on page 83.

B2 First Speaking Examiners use a more detailed version of the following assessment scales, extracted from the overall Speaking scales on page 83:

B2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

B2	Global achievement
5	Handles communication on a range of familiar topics, with very little hesitation. Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Handles communication on familiar topics, despite some hesitation. Organises extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>
1	Handles communication in everyday situations, despite hesitation. Constructs longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>

## Overall Speaking scales

	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with flexibility and ease and very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and detailed.</li> <li>Makes full and effective use of a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation.</li> <li>Widens the scope of the interaction and develops it fully and effectively towards a negotiated outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>C2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied.</li> <li>Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers.</li> <li>Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>C1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas.</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers.</li> <li>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar and Vocabulary</b>					
<b>B2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views, on a range of familiar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Attempts some complex grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views, on a range of familiar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition.</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is generally appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately.</li> <li>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.</li> </ul>
<b>B1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition.</li> <li>Uses basic cohesive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately.</li> <li>Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.</li> </ul>
<b>A2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces simple exchanges, despite some difficulty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty.</li> <li>Requires prompting and support.</li> </ul>
<b>A1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces very simple exchanges, with some repetition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges.</li> <li>Requires additional prompting and support.</li> </ul>

# Speaking assessment glossary of terms

## 1. General

### Conveying basic meaning

**Conveying basic meaning:** the ability of candidates to get their message across to their listeners, despite possible inaccuracies in the structure and/or delivery of the message.

### Situations and topics

**Everyday situations:** situations that candidates come across in their everyday lives, e.g. having a meal, asking for information, shopping, going out with friends or family, travelling to work, taking part in leisure activities. An A2 Key task that requires candidates to exchange details about a store's opening hours exemplifies an everyday situation.

**Familiar topics:** topics about which candidates can be expected to have some knowledge or personal experience. B2 First tasks that require candidates to talk about what people like to do on holiday, or what it is like to do different jobs, exemplify familiar topics.

**Unfamiliar topics:** topics which candidates would not be expected to have much personal experience of. C1 Advanced tasks that require candidates to speculate about whether people in the world today only care about themselves, or the kinds of problems that having a lot of money can cause, exemplify unfamiliar topics.

**Abstract topics:** topics which include ideas rather than concrete situations or events. C2 Proficiency tasks that require candidates to discuss how far the development of our civilisation has been affected by chance discoveries or events, or the impact of writing on society, exemplify abstract topics.

### Utterance

**Utterance:** people generally write in sentences and they speak in utterances.

An utterance may be as short as a word or phrase, or a longer stretch of language.

## 2. Grammar and Vocabulary

### Appropriacy of vocabulary

**Appropriacy of vocabulary:** the use of words and phrases that fit the context of the given task. For example, in the utterance *I'm very sensible to noise*, the word *sensible* is inappropriate as the word should be *sensitive*. Another example would be *Today's big snow makes getting around the city difficult*. The phrase *getting around* is well suited to this situation. However, *big snow* is inappropriate as *big* and *snow* are not used together. *Heavy snow* would be appropriate.

### Flexibility

**Flexibility:** the ability of candidates to adapt the language they use in order to give emphasis, to differentiate according to the context, and to eliminate ambiguity. Examples of this would be reformulating and paraphrasing ideas.

### Grammatical control

**Grammatical control:** the ability to consistently use grammar accurately and appropriately to convey intended meaning.

Where language specifications are provided at lower levels (as in A2 Key and B1 Preliminary), candidates may have control of only the simplest exponents of the listed forms.

**Attempts at control:** sporadic and inconsistent use of accurate and appropriate grammatical forms. For example, the inconsistent use of one form in terms of structure or meaning; the production of one part of a complex form incorrectly; or the use of some complex forms correctly and some incorrectly.

Spoken language often involves false starts, incomplete utterances, ellipsis and reformulation. Where communication is achieved, such features are not penalised.

### Grammatical forms

**Simple grammatical forms:** words, phrases, basic tenses and simple clauses.

**Complex grammatical forms:** longer and more complex utterances, e.g. noun clauses, relative and adverb clauses, subordination, passive forms, infinitives, verb patterns, modal forms and tense contrasts.

### Range

**Range:** the variety of words and grammatical forms a candidate uses. At higher levels, candidates will make increasing use of a greater variety of words, fixed phrases, collocations and grammatical forms.

## 3. Discourse Management

### Coherence and cohesion

**Coherence and cohesion** are difficult to separate in discourse. Broadly speaking, coherence refers to a clear and logical stretch of speech which can be easily followed by a listener. Cohesion refers to a stretch of speech which is unified and structurally organised.

Coherence and cohesion can be achieved in a variety of ways, including with the use of cohesive devices, related vocabulary, grammar and discourse markers.

**Cohesive devices:** words or phrases which indicate relationships between utterances, e.g. addition (*and, in addition, moreover*); consequence (*so, therefore, as a result*); order of information (*first, second, next, finally*).

At higher levels, candidates should be able to provide cohesion not just with basic cohesive devices (e.g. *and, but, or, then, finally*) but also with more sophisticated devices (e.g. *therefore, moreover, as a result, in addition, however, on the other hand*).

**Related vocabulary:** the use of several items from the same lexical set, e.g. *train, station, platform, carriage*; or *study, learn, revise*.

**Grammatical devices:** essentially the use of reference pronouns (e.g. *it, this, one*) and articles (e.g. *There are two women in the picture. The one on the right ...*).

**Discourse markers:** words or phrases which are primarily used in spoken language to add meaning to the interaction, e.g. *you know, you see, actually, basically, I mean, well, anyway, like*.

### Extent/extended stretches of language

**Extent/extended stretches of language:** the amount of language produced by a candidate which should be appropriate to the task. Long-turn tasks require longer stretches of language, whereas

tasks which involve discussion or answering questions could require shorter and extended responses.

### Relevance

**Relevance:** a contribution that is related to the task and not about something completely different.

### Repetition

**Repetition:** repeating the same idea instead of introducing new ideas to develop the topic.

## 4. Pronunciation

### Intelligible

**Intelligible:** a contribution which can generally be understood by a non-EFL/ESOL specialist, even if the speaker has a strong or unfamiliar accent.

### Phonological features

**Phonological features** include the pronunciation of individual sounds, word and sentence stress and intonation.

**Individual sounds** are:

- pronounced vowels, e.g. the /æ/ in *cat* or the /e/ in *bed*
- diphthongs, when two vowels are rolled together to produce one sound, e.g. the /əʊ/ in *host* or the /ei/ in *hate*
- consonants, e.g. the /k/ in *cut* or the /f/ in *fish*.

**Stress:** the emphasis laid on a syllable or word. Words of two or more syllables have one syllable which stands out from the rest because it is pronounced more loudly and clearly, and is longer than the others, e.g. imPORtant. Word stress can also distinguish between words, e.g. proTEST vs PROtest. In sentences, stress can be used to indicate important meaning, e.g. *WHY is that one important?* versus *Why is THAT one important?*

**Intonation:** the way the voice rises and falls, e.g. to convey the speaker's mood, to support meaning or to indicate new information.

## 5. Interactive Communication

### Development of the interaction

**Development of the interaction:** actively developing the conversation, e.g. by saying more than the minimum in response to the written or visual stimulus or to something the other candidate/interlocutor has said; or by proactively involving the other candidate with a suggestion or question about further developing the topic (e.g. *What about bringing a camera for the holiday?* or *Why's that?*).

### Initiating and responding

**Initiating:** starting a new turn by introducing a new idea or a new development of the current topic.

**Responding:** replying or reacting to what the other candidate or the interlocutor has said.

### Prompting and supporting

**Prompting:** instances when the interlocutor repeats, or uses a backup prompt or gesture in order to get the candidate to respond or make a further contribution.

**Supporting:** instances when one candidate helps another candidate, e.g. by providing a word they are looking for during a discussion activity, or helping them develop an idea.

### Turn and simple exchange

**Turn:** everything a person says before someone else speaks.

**Simple exchange:** a brief interaction which typically involves two turns in the form of an initiation and a response, e.g. question–answer, suggestion–agreement.