

Exploring Skills for English Tests

Speaking Part 2: C1 to C2

Format of the task

There are three parts to the Speaking tests. **Part 1** of the Speaking test is NOT assessed but allows the candidates to familiarise themselves with the tests and the system.

In Part 2, candidates hear questions on two topics related to complex and abstract subjects. There are five questions per topic, 10 questions in total in Part 2.

Candidates hear each question and are given 30-40 seconds to give each answer. The topics and the language of the questions are accessible and appropriate to the level of the candidates.

Candidates at C1 and C2 levels should be able to deal with a wide variety of complex topics including hypothetical situations, politics, technology and personal identity.

Skills/functions being elicited.

In Part 2 of the Speaking tests, candidates are assessed on their ability to talk about a wide variety of topics using an excellent level of English. Questions will focus on all aspects of social, academic and professional contexts with little or no restrictions.

- Describing self in relation to aspects of culture and society
- Presenting well thought out arguments and opinions
- Giving detailed accounts of social, cultural ideologies
- Talking spontaneously and fluently
- Qualifying opinions and statements precisely in relation to degrees of, for example, certainty/uncertainty, belief/doubt, likelihood
- Showing a mastery of a very wide range of language to formulate thoughts precisely, give emphasis, differentiate and eliminate ambiguity

Tips for teachers

Provide candidates with:

- plenty of opportunities to practise talking about abstract topics
- opportunities for students should be familiar with the vocabulary and phrases needed to talk fluently and spontaneously about any subject
- practise in linking their ideas coherently and organising what they want to say
- opportunities for practising expressing finer shades of meaning
- Opportunities for students to expand on their responses where appropriate
- discussion from a variety of concepts such as cultural, social and professional arguments from a range of sources

Tips for learners

- Learn colloquial words and phrases from a variety of sources which cover many topics
- Practise forming constructive and relevant arguments that flow
- Practise speaking with friends so what you say flows naturally, linking ideas appropriately
- Remember to answer the questions fully and expand on information and ideas

Sample Speaking Part 2 Task

Now I am going to ask you some questions about university.

1. What are some of the advantages of a university education?
2. Do you think all young people should study at a university? Why/Why not?
3. Do you think all university courses should have an element of work experience? Why/Why not?
4. Some people do not take a job related to their degree. Why do you think this is?
5. Some people think that university education should be free. What are your opinions on this?

Questions 1 and 2 may be more factual in nature.

There may be a follow-up question asking for an explanation.

The final question will be more open and ask you to discuss the topic more broadly.

Sample Speaking Part 2 Response

1. There is no doubt that a university education is an advantage. It teaches people how to research, present information and is also an important networking tool for later life. It also teaches people to be more independent.
2. As I have said there are advantages, but some skills and jobs need practical applications not study. Not everybody wants to study or even needs to study at university, it all depends on life choices and the need for a degree. Many entrepreneurs have never been to university and are very successful.

Don't be afraid to expand on your answer, by provide examples or adding to what you have said.

It's OK to refer to an earlier answer you have given, but always try to add to your answer if you can.

3. No, not necessarily so. My degree did require some hands on experience and I spent some time doing teaching in a primary school but I don't see how someone who is studying one of the humanities, like philosophy, could have any kind of work experience.

Phrases like this, *No, not necessarily so*, show that you have understood the question.

Personal examples are OK and help support your arguments, opinions and views.

4. Yes, I think that is quite common. My degree is in Engineering, but I actually work as a design consultant for a soft furnishings company. I think the degree does teach us many skills but it can also open up other opportunities not necessarily in your original field of study. You might finish your degree and then decide you don't actually want to work in that industry.

Don't be afraid to give your opinion, provide examples or add to what you have said.

5. Where I live, it is very expensive to attend university but there are scholarships open to those who may not have the means to go. However, there are still living costs to take into consideration which can be quite high in the cities. It would be good if, for some courses, governments helped students by reducing tuition fees – courses like medicine, nursing or engineering where more people with these skills are needed. That would encourage more young people to go to university or to take up these careers and so become helpful members of their communities.

Remember to use all the language resources you have to show us what you can do. Remember also to use linking words, like however, to organise longer responses and link what you want to say.

Note: this sample task is for guidance purposes only. For examples of level-specific listening tasks, please refer to the Skills for English Practice Tests available through the Skills for English website: <https://skillsforenglish.com/language-learning/>