Cambridge Pre-U Modern Foreign Languages

Speaking Test: Guidance for Candidates

Short Course

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Pre-U Modern Foreign Language Short Course – Speaking Test

These notes are intended to help you to feel prepared for your Speaking Test in Pre-U Short Course French, German, Italian, Russian or Spanish.

Format of the Speaking Test

The Speaking Test consists entirely of a Prepared Topic Discussion. There is no question paper for this test.

The test will last 8 to 10 minutes in total.

A CIE Examiner will visit your school or college to conduct the Speaking Test. At the beginning of the day you will have the chance to meet him/her and go through the procedures for the test.

The Examiner will record your examination. While you are speaking, they will make notes and mark the examination. They are not allowed to tell you how you have done or show you the mark sheet.

The Prepared Topic Discussion:

You will need to choose and prepare a topic for this part of the examination. Your topic must be related to the history, current affairs or culture of a country where the language you are studying is spoken. You will need to fill in a **Speaking Test Prepared Topic Submission Form** giving details of your topic together with between five and eight sub-headings, and your teacher will arrange for this to be sent to the Examiner at least two weeks before your examination. You should keep a photocopy of this form to bring into the test with you, to act as a prompt. If you wish, you can also bring up to three pieces of visual material, but you **may not** bring in a script or any notes in addition to the **Topic Submission Form**.

In the examination, you will be able to talk for up to **one minute** about your topic (e.g. why you chose it, the interesting/contentious points) before the Examiner will begin to ask you questions. If you have not finished talking after one minute, the Examiner will interrupt you to begin the discussion.

Choosing your topic:

Whatever topic you choose, you **must** relate it to the history, contemporary society or cultural heritage of a country where the target language is spoken. For example, you might choose to talk about drug problems in modern society, but you need to ensure that you make specific reference to a country where the language is spoken. Where you do not fulfil this requirement, the mark for content will be adversely affected.

It is important that you deliver your presentation in as natural a way as possible. With the exception of the one minute introduction, the test is conducted through discussion, so you will need to listen carefully to what the Examiner says or asks, and be ready to respond in a relevant way. Remember that you can take your headings and up to three pieces of visual material in to the test with you.

You will need to show evidence that you can present relevant facts, express opinions and hypotheses and put forward points for discussion. When choosing a topic, you should think about how a conversation about it might develop: if you cannot think of half a dozen questions you could be asked about it, it is unlikely to present a fruitful source for discussion. Marks are awarded for the ideas and opinions you express, so you need to think carefully about how you can express these if the topic you choose is very factual. If the only way to continue conversation on the topic would be to ask for additional factual information, the topic is unlikely to score highly for the expression of opinions and the ability to raise issues for discussion.

Aim to develop your answers to the Examiner's questions beyond simple short responses. In the course of the conversation, you must be prepared to substantiate, elaborate, clarify and qualify issues from the presentation. If you can develop your answers, you will have the opportunity to steer the conversation to some degree, which is a hallmark of the higher band of the mark scheme. In order to give you every opportunity to do this, Examiners will ask questions of the *"tell me more about…", "why…?", "how…?"* variety, rather than closed questions which may be answered by *"yes/no"*. The Examiner's objective will be to encourage you to contribute as much as possible to the conversation and to advance beyond simple sentence responses, without playing too large a part in the conversation him/herself.

The Examiner is not necessarily an expert on your chosen topic. He/she will at all times adopt the position of the interested layperson, and ask a series of general, open-ended questions, designed to allow you to talk freely about the aspects of the topic which have particularly interested or engaged you.

Remember that the Examiner is on your side, and wants to reward your strengths - but cannot do this if they are not expressed!

Prepared Topic Discussion (30 marks)

- Factual Knowledge and Opinions (14 marks)
- Range and Accuracy (10 marks)
- Pronunciation and Intonation (6 marks)

Factual Knowledge and Opinions (14 marks)	**Range and Accuracy (10 marks)**	**Pronunciation and Intonation (6 marks)**
13–14 *Excellent* Excellent factual knowledge of subject, understanding, illustration and opinion. Excellent preparation and discussion.	**9–10 *Excellent*** Excellent level of accuracy. Confident and effective use of wide range of structures.	**6 *Excellent*** Authentic pronunciation and intonation.
11–12 *Very good* Comprehensive knowledge of subject, demonstrating clear understanding and using appropriate illustration. Range of relevant opinion, confidently discussed.	**7–8 *Very good*** Very good level of accuracy, over range of structures. Tenses and agreements generally reliable, but some lapses in more complex areas.	**5 *Very good*** Very good pronunciation and intonation.
9–10 *Good* A good range of knowledge, generally well used. Relevant opinions. Ideas discussed well.	**5–6 *Good*** Good level of accuracy, with some inconsistency. Some complex language attempted. Errors do not impair communication.	**4 *Good*** Generally good pronunciation and intonation.
7–8 *Satisfactory* Solid base of knowledge, but insecure in some areas. Opinion adequate. Not always able to develop discussion.	**3–4 *Satisfactory*** Gaps in knowledge of grammar. Communication impaired by errors.	**3 *Satisfactory*** Satisfactory pronunciation and intonation.
4–6 *Weak* Limited knowledge, with obvious gaps. Some irrelevance and repetition. Opinions limited. Discussion pedestrian and/or hesitant.	**1–2 *Weak*** Little evidence of grammatical awareness. Accuracy only in simple forms.	**2 *Weak*** Many sounds mispronounced.
1–3 *Poor* Very limited knowledge. Material very thin and vague. Very hesitant discussion.		**1 *Poor*** Native language heavily influences pronunciation and intonation, impeding communication.
0 No knowledge shown of topic.	**0** No rewardable language.	**0** Wholly inauthentic pronunciation and intonation.