

C2 Proficiency

Assessing speaking for Cambridge English
Qualifications: A guide for teachers



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Who this guide is for

Teachers around the world spend many hours evaluating learners’ speaking. This guide is for you. With lots of practical tips and real examples, it will help you to assess and develop learners’ speaking skills in preparation for their Speaking test.



Watch and assess a real example

Throughout the guide you'll see these feature boxes for each assessment criteria. They give links to real examples of Speaking tests and to the printable handouts in the [Appendix](#), which you can use to help you assess speaking and which you can give to your learners for [self-assessment](#).

For each Speaking test video we suggest you and your learners:

- Watch [Speaking test videos](#) and make notes in the tables in the Handout.
- Try applying the official assessment criteria to the videos by yourself, before you look at the real marks and comments.
- Compare your marks and comments with the examiner comments.

Read the examiner comments to help you understand the marks given, but don't expect to become an expert in assessing speaking skills like an examiner overnight! It takes time to get used to the differences between the bands. Cambridge English examiners go through a lot of training and quality assurance before they qualify as examiners.



Integrating teaching, learning and assessment methods to plan, measure and improve

Throughout the guide there are suggestions on how to combine learning and assessment in the feedback, activities and tips sections.

- ✓ Try the practical ideas and activities and reflect on how these techniques affect learning and teaching in your classroom.
- ✓ Discuss different approaches with learners to understand their preferences and needs, and to find out what approaches are most helpful to them.

- ✓ Read about different assessment and feedback methods.

Key terminology

Language assessment is a specialist field and there is some common terminology which you might not be familiar with. Understanding these terms will help you to use this guide.

Term	Teachers might say ...	Definition
Speaking assessment scales and assessment subscales	assessment / marking scales assessment / marking criteria	Areas which an examiner thinks about when marking the speaking test. For the C2 Proficiency exam, the scale is divided into the five subscales shown in the table on page 9.
Bands (0-5)	marks / scores / grades	Candidates get a mark for each of the subscales from 0 (lowest) to 5 (highest).
Descriptors	explanations / descriptions of the marking criteria	The bands are based on detailed descriptions of what the candidate can do.
Assessor	Examiner	The assessor listens and gives marks for Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication.
Interlocutor	Examiner	There are two speaking examiners in the test. The interlocutor speaks to the candidates and gives a mark for Global achievement.
Formative assessment	assessment for learning / classroom assessment / ongoing assessment	Giving learners feedback on their progress during a course, so that both teachers and learners can learn from the feedback.
Summative assessment	end of term test / exam end of course test / exam final test / exam	This is an evaluation of learners' progress up to that point. It is often in the form of exams and tests and gives learners a mark or grade.

How is the Speaking test assessed?

The C2 Proficiency speaking test consists of three parts and lasts about 16 minutes for a pair or 24 minutes for a group of three. The timing is adjusted for groups of three so that candidates have the same opportunities to speak.

Part	Timing	Interaction and task types	What do candidates have to do?
1	2 minutes for pairs 3 minutes for groups of three	A conversation on familiar topics. The interlocutor asks each candidate questions in turn.	Respond to questions using general interactional and social language.
2	4 minutes for pairs 6 minutes for groups of three	A collaborative task based on photos. First, the candidates discuss a question about two of the photos (1 minute). Then, they take part in a collaborative decision-making task, using all the photos.	Sustain an interaction, exchange ideas, express and justify opinions, agree and/or disagree, suggest, speculate, evaluate, and reach a decision through negotiation, etc.
3	10 minutes for pairs 15 minutes for groups of three	An individual long turn (2 minutes for each candidate) in response to a written question. Then, the examiner leads a discussion on topics related to the long turns	Organise a larger unit of discourse, express and justify opinions, develop topics.

★ **Top tips**

You can find lesson plans to practise each part of the test on our [website](#).

Assessing speaking

The key to understanding how well your learners' speaking skills are developing is through regular, effective assessment. You could choose a mix of **formative assessment** and **summative assessment** as both contribute to learning. See more information about this in the **FAQ section**. It's a good idea to use a mix of teacher feedback, **peer assessment** and **self-assessment** to give feedback from a range of different sources and in different ways.

There are activities throughout this guide on assessment and feedback.

 **Key terminology**

Peer assessment is when learners give feedback on each other's language, work, learning strategies or performance. [Research shows](#) that people who are similar to the learner in age, gender, first language and learning goals are very motivating as role models.

Self-assessment is when learners decide for themselves if they think their progress or language use is good or not. Developing good self-awareness is important for becoming an effective learner.

 **What are the benefits of peer assessment and self-assessment?**

Peer assessment provides feedback from different perspectives and can help the learner in the role of the **'assessor'** as well as the one receiving the feedback. Self-assessment helps learners understand their own strengths and weaknesses and can make them a more independent learners. It can also increase the opportunities for feedback in large classes when it's difficult to give individual feedback to all learners. These aren't a replacement for teacher assessment but should be used alongside it.

 **Top tips**

- Include speaking activities, even short ones, in every lesson – this gives you plenty of opportunities to monitor and assess your learners, especially if you have a large class.
- Give learners a checklist before a task to make it clear what is being assessed and provide a guide for the person giving the feedback. You could use the evaluation tables in the Appendix for this.
- Watch [Speaking test videos](#) with your learners so they can become familiar with what is expected in the exam. There are activities in this guide with ideas for how to do this.
- Use the **examiner comments** alongside the videos to help you understand why those marks were awarded. The more you do this, the easier it will be to assess your learners.
- Learners need training in doing peer and self-assessment so if it's new to them, don't expect learners to understand how to do it straightaway. It may also be useful to discuss with your learners some of the benefits of different types of assessment.
- Give learners a checklist before a task to make it clear what is being assessed and provide a guide for the person giving the feedback. Try this [lesson plan](#) (tasks 4 and 6), which shows you how you can use checklists for peer and self-reflection.
- Do not only practise speaking with exam tasks or practice tests. Learners need practice in the sub-skills of speaking to get better at the tests.
- Don't expect to cover everything in one lesson. Focus on one or two aspects of speaking for assessment. Make a note of other issues you notice to include in future lesson planning.
- If you have large classes, you could assess speaking using some of these ideas:
 - Group work e.g. projects
 - Group presentations: assess both rehearsals and presentations
 - Dialogues and role plays
 - Mini-speeches: practise in class and assess both rehearsal and presentation. Learners can also send recordings of their speeches.
 - You can find these teaching ideas in our [Cambridge English preparation materials](#).
- You can see lots of ideas for using peer and self-assessment in this webinar: [How to use Integrated Learning and Assessment in your classroom](#).



What does the Speaking test assess?

In the test, examiners assess candidates on their own individual performance and not in relation to each other. The **assessor** and the **interlocutor** give marks for the following criteria / subscale. Each of these will be explained in more detail on the following pages.

Global achievement	✓ The candidate can communicate about a wide range of topics including abstract ones. They can express themselves effectively with very little hesitation.	Interlocutor
	✗ The candidate can communicate about a range of topics but may not always be coherent expressing complex ideas.	
Grammatical resource	✓ The candidate uses a wide range of grammatical forms accurately.	Assessor
	✗ The candidate uses simple grammatical forms accurately. They may make mistakes with more complex grammar.	
Lexical resource	✓ The candidate uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to discuss unfamiliar and abstract topics.	
	✗ The candidate uses a limited range of vocabulary appropriately to discuss familiar and unfamiliar topics.	
Discourse Management	✓ The candidate can speak easily with very little hesitation. Their ideas are varied, very well-organised and relevant.	
	✗ The candidate can organise what they say and use a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	
Pronunciation	✓ The candidate is intelligible (you can understand what they say) and uses stress and intonation clearly and accurately.	
	✗ The candidate is intelligible. They mostly use stress and intonation correctly, but not all the time.	
Interactive Communication	✓ The candidate interacts with ease, makes links to what their partner says and keeps the conversation going with very little help. They can develop and broaden discussions.	
	✗ The candidate can start conversations, reply appropriately and develop the conversation.	

What's the difference between the bands?

In the Speaking test, examiners give a mark between 0 and 5 (**Bands**) for each of these areas based on detailed **descriptors**. Here is an example of the descriptors for Global Achievement at C2 level. Start from the bottom – Band 1 – notice how the language in the descriptions varies as you progress up the bands.

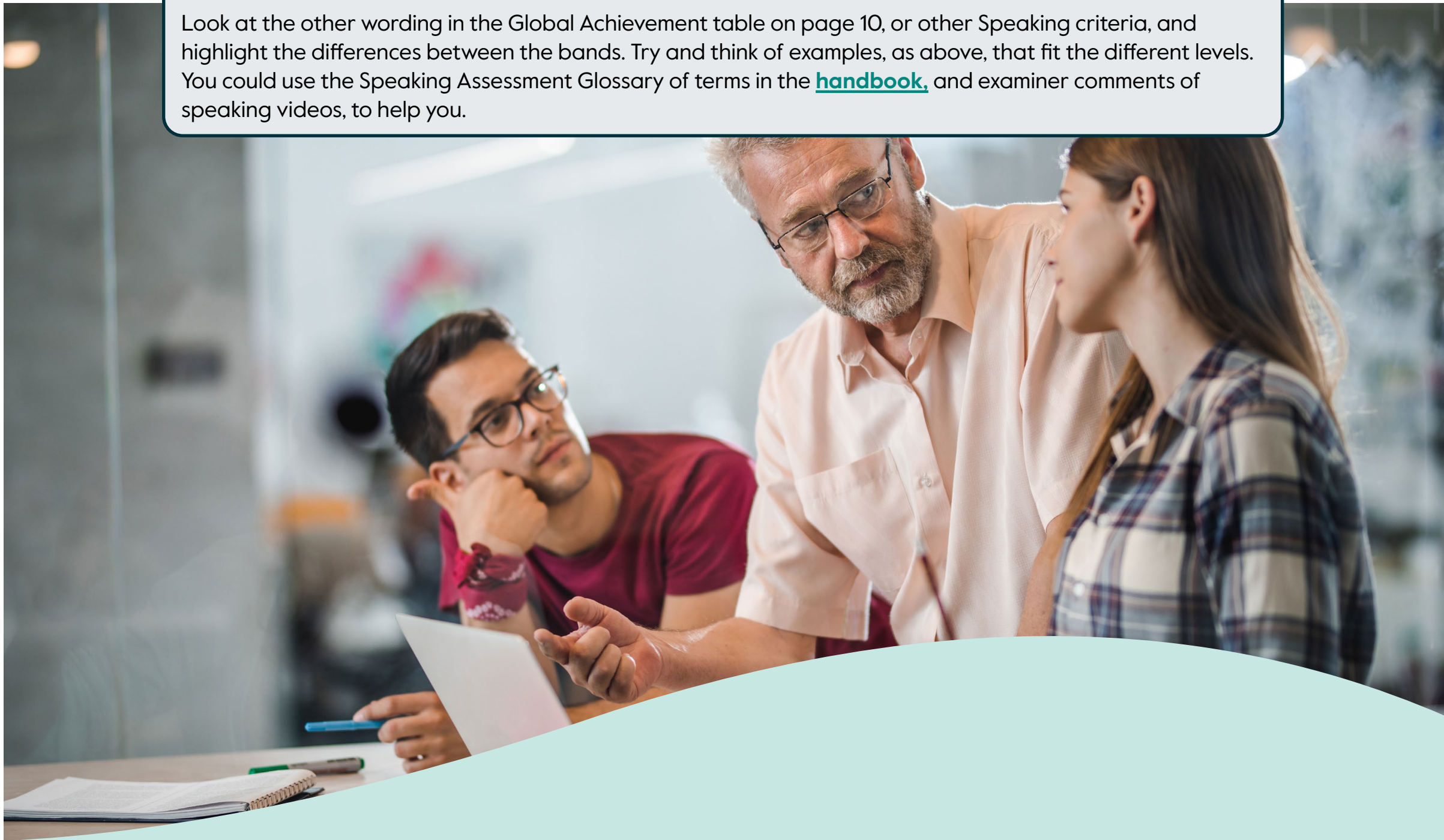
C2	Global Achievement
	Handles communication on all topics , including unfamiliar and abstract ones, with very little hesitation.
5	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources with flexibility to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended and coherent discourse .
4	Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.
	Handles communication on a wide range of topics , including unfamiliar and abstract ones , with very little hesitation.
3	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended and coherent discourse .
2	Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.
	Handles communication on a range of familiar and unfamiliar topics , with very little hesitation.
1	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent .
0	Performance below Band 1.

In this guide, you're going to look at each criteria in turn. You'll see a detailed breakdown of the criteria, examples of what candidates can do at different bands, learn top tips and get a lesson plan and activities to help your learners develop in each area.

Band 1	Band 3	Band 5
For example, at Band 1 the candidate can use language accurately to express ideas .	At Band 3 the candidate uses language accurately to express complex ideas .	At Band 5, the candidate can use language flexibly and accurately express complex ideas and concepts .
“ Students should think about what they're learning because it helps them.	“ It's good for students to reflect and think about their reasons for learning so that they can evaluate if they are meeting those goals.	“ A degree of self-reflection aids learning because evaluating and assessing concerns and obstacles can help you gain a better understanding of what you are actually learning.

 Try it yourself!

Look at the other wording in the Global Achievement table on page 10, or other Speaking criteria, and highlight the differences between the bands. Try and think of examples, as above, that fit the different levels. You could use the Speaking Assessment Glossary of terms in the [handbook](#), and examiner comments of speaking videos, to help you.



What's the difference between the bands?

Focus on feedback

Evidence of progress and actionable feedback

Many teachers are comfortable giving feedback on language but there are many other things involved in being a good speaker, as you have seen in this guide.

When it comes to speaking tasks in exams, learners are thinking about the format of the task – especially early on in their exam preparation journey – as well as ideas and the best language to use. It's motivating if you recognise and give credit for different things when they are practising speaking.

For example, if your learners are practising Speaking Part 2, monitor and collect some of the common issues and positives that you hear. For example:

Things I liked

- ✓ Everyone spoke for about a minute.
- ✓ I didn't hear anyone describing the photos.
- ✓ I heard lots of nice language for comparing and contrasting: ...it looks much more exciting than...

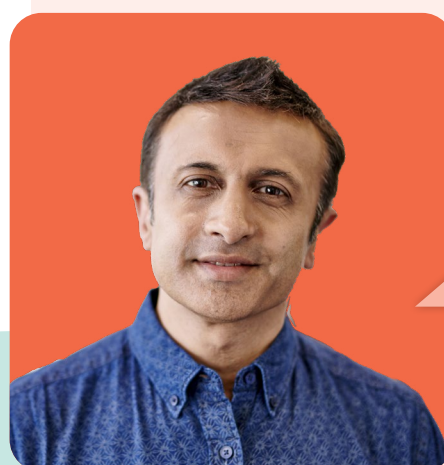
Things to work on

- ✓ Try to use words and phrases like, on the other hand, ...while in the second picture... to organise your answer.
- ✓ Don't forget to answer the question as well as compare the photos.

Notice there are more positive comments than areas to work on. It's important that your learners know when they are doing things well.

Give actionable feedback. Feedback should be specific enough that learners can take action, either to continue to do something they are doing well, or to make changes to improve. [Find out more about actionable feedback in this guide.](#)

Tell learners what you'll be focusing on in your feedback before you do a task. This helps them to understand the feedback and gives them a better chance of success.



My learners know they are already good at speaking, and want to focus more on writing. How can I persuade them to practise for the speaking exam?

“

Each paper in Cambridge English Qualifications is given equal weight. That means that a very strong performance in speaking may help to compensate for lower scores in other areas. Make sure your learners know this, and include regular, targeted speaking practice for different exam task types in your lessons. It's important to encourage learners to build on their strengths as well as improve areas where they are not as strong.

Understanding the assessment criteria

Developing learners' speaking skills involves a lot more than correcting grammar and pronunciation. This section looks at each of the six assessment criteria – Global Achievement, Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication in more detail and shows you how you can:

- Further develop your understanding of how the Speaking test is assessed.
- Improve your skills of assessment.
- Raise learners' awareness of the speaking assessment criteria.
- Help learners develop their peer and self-assessment skills.



Understanding Global Achievement

Global Achievement is the overall impression of a candidate’s speaking performance. In the exam, the Global Achievement mark is awarded by the interlocutor. The assessor gives detailed marks for the other five criteria (Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, Interactive Communication).

What is Global Achievement?

Understanding the Global Achievement mark is good way to start developing your assessment skills as it gives you an overall idea of the candidate’s level. Global Achievement is the overall impression score that the interlocutor gives to the candidate.

Band	Global Achievement	What does this mean?
5	Handles communication on all topics, including unfamiliar and abstract ones, with very little hesitation.	Topics which include ideas rather than concrete situations or events.
	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources with flexibility to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended and coherent discourse.	Can adapt the language they use in order to give emphasis, to fit the situation, and to be precise. For example, reformulating and paraphrasing ideas.
3	Handles communication on a wide range of topics, including unfamiliar and abstract ones, with very little hesitation.	Topics which candidates would not be expected to have much personal experience of tasks in the test.
	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and easy to follow .	Can speak at length and organise what they say well.
1	Handles communication on a range of familiar and unfamiliar topics, with very little hesitation.	Can understand and speak about the topics and tasks in the test.
	Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent .	Uses the right kinds of language to express themselves and what they say is mostly well organised.

Developing Global Achievement

★ Top tips

- Watch an [C2 Speaking test video](#) and complete the **Global Achievement table** in the **Appendix**. Make notes about language as well as how well they talked about the tasks and topics more generally. Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).
- Give learners a variety of speaking tasks, don't just practise exam tasks. Speaking tasks with a clear purpose offer more support than a general 'talk about' task. This also gives learners a reason to listen and respond which are essential skills for the Speaking test.
- Use activities with different interaction patterns such as pairs, threes, small groups and speaking to the whole class.
- Encourage your learners to speak clearly so that they can be heard by both the interlocutor and assessor.
- Give learners preparation time before a speaking task. Give them time to think about what they want to say and what language they could use, as this allows them to upgrade and improve their speaking skills.
- Give your learners opportunities to listen to as much English as possible and a variety of accents. Accents from different varieties of English from around the world are acceptable
- When you assess candidates for Global Achievement, try to think of the 'big picture' rather than counting the number of discourse markers or the number of mistakes they make.
- Remember that when you assess your learners, you are giving them an estimate of what they could achieve in the Speaking test. It might not be the same mark as the real test, as test conditions are always different to activities in the classroom.



My higher level learners are already fluent, confident speakers. How can I help them to develop their speaking further?

“ At higher levels, it isn't as easy for learners to notice or measure the development in their speaking skills, especially if they are already fluent and confident. Ensure your learners are familiar with what is expected by using the lesson ideas and activities in this guide to understand and develop specific speaking subskills and give specific actionable feedback to help your learners identify what they're doing well and how they can further improve their speaking.

Understanding the speaking scales and improving learners' peer assessment skills

Activity 1

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the activities in the [Appendix](#) for your learners.

Steps:

1. Start by asking learners to discuss in pairs what makes a proficient English speaker.

Organise learners' ideas into five columns on the board: Grammatical Resource, Lexical Resource, Discourse Management, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication. Don't reveal the names of the columns yet. Here is an example of the answers your learners might give and how you could organise them:

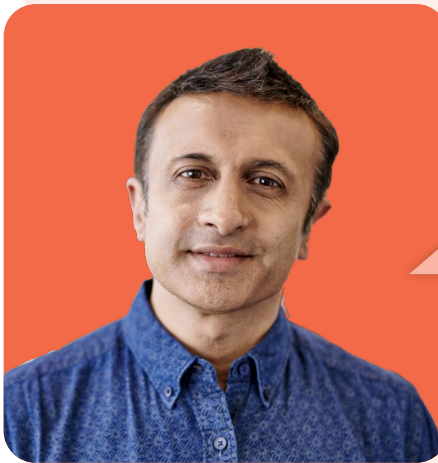
Grammar	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Interactive Communication	Pronunciation
Different tenses and complex conditionals	Phrasal verbs Idioms Less common words to express themselves	Longer range of linkers or connectors	Listens carefully Replies to questions Builds on what someone else says	Speaks clearly
Doesn't make a lot of mistakes				Pronounces words correctly Uses word stress and intonation correctly
Global Achievement				

Don't worry about the way they phrase things at this stage.
Explain that in the exam, the examiner is looking for these things too.

2. Elicit or provide the names of the five criteria as shown above. Explain that learners don't need to remember the headings but they need to understand what they mean.
Explain that Global Achievement is a general mark and today you're going to be examiners and assess some real candidates, focusing on Global Achievement.

Activity 1

3. Explain you're going to watch the first part of Part 2 of the C2 Proficiency exam. Elicit what learners know about this part of the exam. You could ask:
- Do they talk to the examiner or each other?
 - In Part 2, they should talk together.
 - What do they talk about?
 - They answer examiner questions which are based on photos.
 - Do groups of three have the same time to speak as pairs?
 - There is more time for groups of three so that candidates in groups of three or pairs have the same opportunities to speak. Groups of three have 6 minutes, groups of two have 4 minutes.
4. Tell them you're just going to watch the first part of Part 2, which is a focusing question based on two photos (the rest of Part 2 is another discussion question based on all four photos).
5. Share the video viewing task in the [Appendix](#). Give learners a little time to look at the photos. They don't need to discuss them yet.
6. Play the video of [Manuel, Jules and Thiago from 2:00-4:22](#). Learners identify the photos the candidates had to discuss.
Answer: 2 and 4 (the examiner refers to them as D and E).
7. Learners discuss in pairs what mark (out of 5) they would give the candidates. They write their scores on mini whiteboards or paper and hold them up. Compare these to the candidates' Global Achievement scores and Examiner comments in the Appendix. Remind them that this relates to the candidates' performance throughout the whole Speaking test. (Manuel 5, Jules 3.5, Thiago 5)
Remind candidates that achieving a Band 3 means that a candidate has met the criteria for C2 Proficiency level.
8. Replay the examiner's question at 2:00. Ask if the candidates answered the question [No. They talked about what was happening in the photos, but they didn't speculate about what might happen in the next 30 minutes.] Learners do the speaking task in the [Appendix](#).
Afterwards, ask:
How did they find the discussion task? How easy was it to speculate about the photos? Did they both spoke about the same amount?
Regroup learners into groups of three. Repeat the speaking activity, but this time they can choose two other photos from the video viewing task and speak together for two minutes.
Afterwards, discuss what was easier or more difficult about doing this task as a group of three?



My learners know that at C2 level they can be asked about a range of topics and are worried that they might have to talk about something they don't know about. How can I help prepare them for this situation?

“

Reassure learners that they need to show their language skills, not their knowledge about a topic. Support them with strategies to help them:

- Explain they don't know a lot about the topic, before saying anything they do know about it. See 'Coping strategies' on the next page for ideas.
- Connect the topic logically to something else that they know more about, but still answering the examiner's question.
- Describe what a friend, family member or colleague might say about the topic instead.

Plan lessons around a wide range of topics in your lessons to help learners feel more confident.

Developing Global Achievement activities

 Photo discussion	 Coping strategies	 Debates
Find some images with people in them. Give a speculative task (not just descriptive!), for example: <i>How would you feel in this situation?</i> <i>What do you think has just happened?</i> <i>Why are the people there?</i> <i>What is about to happen?</i> <i>What are they saying or thinking?</i> Learners work in pairs to discuss the question, using the images.	Brainstorm or ask AI to generate a list of obscure discussion topics. Learners rate each topic 1-5 (5 = I feel confident talking about this in English. 1 = I don't feel confident talking about this in English.) Elicit or teach phrases to help learners cope, such as: <i>It's not something I've thought about before, but.... Personally, I don't have any experience of this, but... I haven't considered my opinion on this before, but.... I'm not exactly an expert on this, but what I do know is...</i> Learners take it in turns to ask and answer questions about the obscure topics. They use the sentence starters to buy a little thinking time before giving their response.	Brainstorm or ask AI to generate a list of statements for discussion. Make groups of 4. Two learners are 'for', the other two are 'against'. Give them a few minutes to think of points and evidence for their argument. Then they have five minutes to debate their topic. At the end they can vote 'for' or 'against' according to the quality of the arguments. Afterwards ask them to reflect – who gave good evidence? Who responded with a counterpoint? Was the tone respectful throughout?

 **Focus on feedback**

- **Do it often!** You can use the speaking criteria to give your learners actionable feedback on their speaking at any time, provided they have been speaking long enough for you to hear enough of a sample.
- **Use the tables.** Get familiar with what is expected at C2 level by having the tables with criteria in this guide on hand when you're listening to students speaking.
- **Focus on a couple of criteria at a time.** You might choose to focus more on one or two criteria in a particular speaking activity. For example, you could focus on interactive communication and vocabulary in a practice collaborative task.
- **Vary feedback.** Make sure you give feedback on all the different criteria, not just grammar and vocabulary. Learners need to know how they are performing in all areas so that they can do their best in the speaking examination.
- **Give balanced feedback.** As well as giving specific suggestions on how to improve, highlight examples of good language for their level. You can also use the recordings to identify where more complex language could be used, and provide specific examples.

Read the section on actionable feedback in the [Cambridge Guide to integrating learning and assessment in your teaching](#).

What is Grammatical resource?

This covers the grammatical structures that candidates use in the test. Grammatical resource, along with lexical resource, is the area that learners are probably most familiar with and expect their speaking to be assessed on. However, it's still useful for them to understand exactly how they are assessed.

Band	Grammatical Resource	What does this mean?
5	Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility .	Can adapt the language they use to fit the situation and to give emphasis. For example, reformulating and paraphrasing ideas.
3	Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.	Consistently uses a variety of grammar accurately and appropriately to say what they mean.
1	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.	Uses accurately and with very few mistakes. Uses a variety of different grammar structures and longer, more complex sentence constructions: noun clauses, relative clauses, passives and verb patterns for example.

Grammar Resource in practice

Here are some examples of differences between the bands in Grammatical Resource.

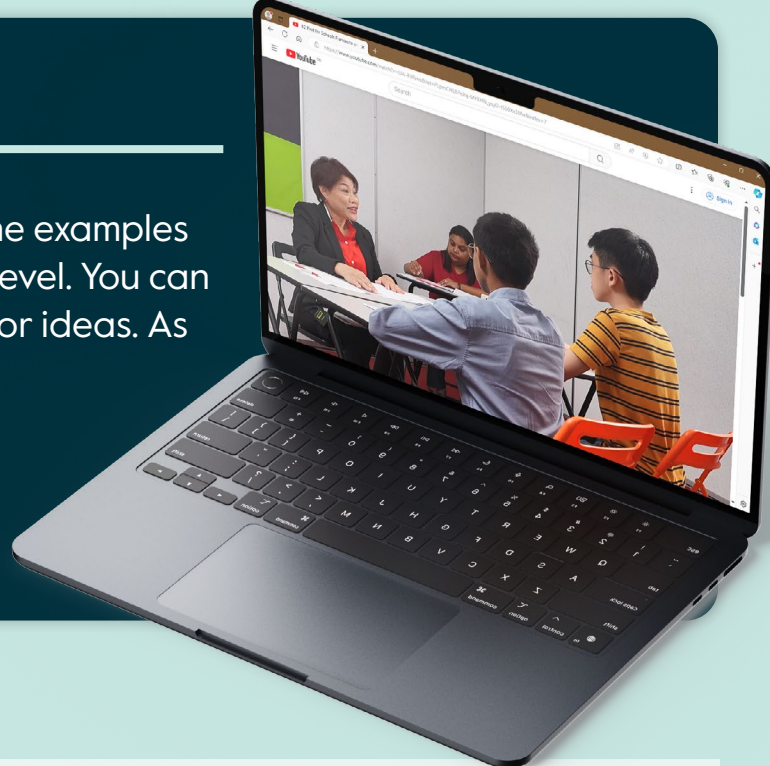
Band 1 For example, at Band 1 the candidate shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. “ The relationship between an athlete and their trainer is important. They need support and guidance.	Band 3 At Band 3, the candidate can maintain control of a wide range of grammatical forms. “ I truly think that professional sportsmen and women that are training for something special need support from their trainers.	Band 5 At Band 5, the candidate maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility . “ Working with a personal coach is perhaps the factor that makes the most difference to a person's sporting performance.
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**Watch and assess a real example**

Watch [Manuel, Jules and Thiago](#). Before you watch, think about the examples of complex grammatical structures you would expect to see at C2 level. You can use your C2 coursebook syllabus or [the English Grammar Profile](#) for ideas. As you watch, complete the in the [Appendix](#).

Was one candidate better than the other in terms of Grammatical resource? Compare your ideas to the [Examiner Comments](#).

[Learn more about the English Grammar Profile.](#)





My learners are always worried about making mistakes. Is it okay if they make mistakes in the test?

“
It's important at C2 level to maintain control of a wide range of grammar, but a few mistakes are expected. Reassure your learners that examiners are not looking for perfection, even at the highest level. Give your learners plenty of praise when they use complex grammatical forms in their speaking, and encourage them by making sure they understand that they can gain marks in other areas (not just Grammatical Resource) to boost their speaking mark.

Developing Grammatical Resource

This is likely to be the area you are most familiar with and have lots of ideas for developing your learners' skills.

★ Top tips

- Regularly review new grammar. Learners need frequent practice of new language to be able to incorporate it into their speaking naturally and comfortably.
- Challenge learners to widen their range of language when they're speaking. Some learners might prefer to 'play it safe' and use simple language they know well. In the exam, however, they will be rewarded for trying to use more complex language.
- Praise learners for good language use. Feedback on correct responses or what learners have done well is just as important as telling them what they got wrong.
- Don't expect complete **accuracy** when speaking. Allow for minor errors which do not affect communication. Focusing too much on errors can affect learners' confidence in speaking.
- Avoid interrupting learners when they are speaking unless there is a complete breakdown in communication. Interrupting to make corrections or offer suggestions can have a negative impact on learners' confidence and affect the flow of what they are saying.

📖 Key terminology

Accuracy refers to how correct a learner's grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are when they are speaking. When developing learners' accuracy, you focus on the type, amount and seriousness of the mistakes and errors they make.

Accuracy can be compared to fluency. **Fluency** refers to how well a learner communicates meaning and can say what they want to say. Activities which develop learners' skills in fluency focus on communication, rather than how many mistakes they make in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. It's important for learners to develop both accuracy and fluency in their speaking.



My learners say they 'know' all the grammar, but they don't often use more complex structures when they speak. How can I help them to widen their range of grammar structures?

“
Ensure learners know that they will get higher marks for using a range of complex structures, even with a few mistakes. Raise their awareness of complex grammar structures during reading and listening activities and praise learners for using them when they speak. Learners can also use the examiner comments from the C1 speaking videos or higher in order to identify grammar structures that could help them to give the best performance possible.

😊☆☆ Focus on feedback

Research-based tips

It's really important to give your learners feedback on their speaking to build their confidence, highlight their strengths and point out areas where they can improve. Here are some research-based tips to guide you.

What does the research* say?	What should I do with my learners?
Numerous research findings have proven that feedback promotes language learning (Lyster et al., 2013; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Mackey et al, 2016). The benefits to learners may not be immediate or predictable, but they will take place.	Give actionable feedback regularly to your learners after speaking activities.
There is not enough evidence to claim that either delayed or immediate feedback is more effective than the other (Ellis, 2009).	Use a mixture of both depending on the speaking task in question, ensuring that you don't interrupt learners.
Feedback on correct responses is more effective than feedback on incorrect responses (Hattie, 2009).	It's really important to highlight and praise effective language use. Don't just look for mistakes!
It can be useful to highlight where learners have avoided common pitfalls or mistakes. This is likely to benefit both the individual student and others in the class, who will have their attention drawn to the language item in question (Ur, 2012).	Say things like "Well done! You used the third conditional correctly when you were speaking about unreal past situations. You said: <i>If I hadn't gone to that university, I wouldn't have met my girlfriend.</i> It's common for students to make the mistake of using 'would have' in both clauses, but you didn't!

*Cambridge papers in ELT, 2017. [Read the research here.](#)

📖 Key terminology

Delayed feedback – waiting until the end of a speaking activity to give feedback. This usually involves monitoring closely and making notes of good language use as well as errors to correct.

Immediate feedback – giving feedback immediately after the learner says something. This can be called 'on the spot' correction.

Assessing Grammatical Resource with your learners

Activity 2

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the activities in the **Appendix** for your learners.

Steps:

- 1. Ask how they think they can get a good mark the speaking test.
Clarify that at C2 level they need to use a wide range (variety) of grammatical structures including plenty of complex (difficult) grammar. Their accuracy should be very good, although a few mistakes are okay.
- 2. Elicit a couple of examples of complex grammar structures e.g. relative clauses, present perfect continuous. Distribute the **Appendix**. Learners work in pairs to brainstorm grammar they think examiners expect to hear at C2 level. They can use your C2 coursebook syllabus or [the English Grammar Profile](#) for ideas. They make notes in the first table, column 1.
- 3. Tell learners they're going to watch the second part of Part 3 of a speaking video (the discussion after the individual long turns). The topic is the importance of getting recognition for effort.
They should listen and note examples of complex grammar that they hear in column 2. Play the video of [Laura and Alejandro](#) (14:03-end) (2 minutes 45). Share examples in feedback.
- 4. Learners use the table in the **Appendix** to evaluate the candidates on the video. Compare to the examiner comments. Note: the [examiner comments](#) relate to the whole speaking test (they have only watched a section of Part 3). Laura and Alejandro both scored 2.5 for grammar, so they were not quite up to the standard for C2 (Band 3).
- 5. Learners work in pairs to improve some of the things Laura and Alejandro said 'Getting better marks for Grammatical resource' in the **Appendix**. Do the first one as an example to ensure they are considering grammatical range as well as accuracy.
They may suggest improvements to vocabulary as well as grammar, and that is okay – the main thing is that they are focusing on using a wider range of language accurately.
See suggested ideas in the **Appendix**.

Activity 2

- 6. Learners work in pairs to discuss the examiner question: *Why do some people seek public recognition while others prefer to avoid it?* As they speak, monitor and note good examples of complex grammar as well as simpler grammar that could be levelled up and common mistakes.
Display the examples you noted after the speaking for learners to improve, just as in the last exercise.
In feedback, build learner confidence by emphasising that mistakes are still okay even at C2 level, and the examiner is not expecting perfection, but they can get a better mark if they try to use more difficult and complex grammar. Also, grammar is not the most important part of speaking – they will get equal credit for good performance in vocabulary, pronunciation, interacting with others (Interactive Communication) and speaking for a longer time in a well-organised way (Discourse Management).



Developing Grammatical Resource activities

 Say it another way	 Record and reflect	 Expand the sentence
Give learners 4 or 5 simple sentences. For example, <i>He walked away.</i> <i>The news is bad.</i> Learners work in groups to think of as many ways as they can to say each sentence in another, more complex way - keeping the meaning almost the same. As a group, they decide on their favourite for each sentence. Each group shares their alternative sentences and as a class identify the most creative. For example, instead of saying <i>He walked away.</i> You could say <i>Feeling satisfied with what he had done, he walked away.</i> Or: <i>He walked away, crying softly.</i>	Learners record themselves doing a 1-minute individual speaking task. They listen to their recording, focusing on grammatical range and accuracy. They note examples of where they used accurate, complex grammar and where they could improve. They use this to write a short reflective paragraph on how they see their use of grammar when speaking. Learners share their recordings and reflections with you to listen to and add your own comments.	Write a word on the board. Ask learners, to add to it so that it still makes sense but is more complex. For example: <i>a table</i> <i>a wooden table</i> <i>a wooden table with five legs</i> <i>a wooden table with five legs, covered with a cloth</i> <i>a wooden table with five legs, covered with a delicate cloth.</i> Divide learners into pairs. Each pair starts with their own word. They hand their paper for another pair to expand, before receiving it back to expand again. Continue, with pairs swapping the papers between them, expanding each time. The activity ends when groups can't add anything more to the sentence. Share and compare the sentences and highlight complex grammar.



What is Lexical Resource?

This covers the grammatical structures that candidates use in the test. Grammatical Resource, along with Lexical Resource, is the area that learners are probably most familiar with and expect their speaking to be assessed on. However, it's still useful for them to understand exactly how they are assessed.

Band	Lexical Resource	What does this mean?
5	Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics .	Can adapt the language they use to fit the situation, and to be precise. For example, reformulating and paraphrasing ideas. Topics which include ideas rather than concrete situations or events.
3	Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics .	Consistently uses a variety of words and phrases accurately and appropriately to say what they mean. Topics which candidates would not be expected to have much personal experience of.
1	Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.	Words and phrases are suitable for the situation or task. For example, in <i>I'm very sensible to noise</i> , the word <i>sensible</i> is inappropriate as the word should be <i>sensitive</i> . Another example would be <i>Today's big snow makes getting around the city difficult</i> . The phrase <i>getting around</i> is well suited to this situation. However, <i>big snow</i> is inappropriate as <i>big</i> and <i>snow</i> are not used together. <i>Heavy snow</i> would be appropriate.

Lexical Resource in practice

Here are some examples of differences between the bands in Lexical resource.

Band 1	Band 3	Band 5
The candidate can use a range appropriate vocabulary. “ Public transport should be improved.	The candidate can use a wide range of vocabulary. “ The public transport infrastructure needs improvement. There should be more routes, more buses, and a timetable that works for working people.	The candidate can use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility.. “ Giving citizens a say in public spending decisions could increase feelings of ownership and raise politicians' awareness of areas of need.



Watch and assess a real example

Before you watch [Laura and Alejandro](#), think about the examples of vocabulary you would expect to see at C2 level. You can use your C2 coursebook or the [English Vocabulary Profile](#) for ideas. As you watch, complete the Lexical Resource table in the [Appendix](#).

Was one candidate better than the other in terms of Lexical Resource? Compare your ideas to the examiner comments.



Developing Lexical Resource

★ Top tips

- Encourage learners to read, listen and watch in English as much as they can so that they build up a wide vocabulary and become familiar with language usage. Encourage them to look up unfamiliar words.
- Present vocabulary in a context that helps learners to understand the meaning, for example through pictures, listening or reading a text or a video. Contexts that are relevant to learners' lives and interests provide the best hooks and are the most meaningful. Give and elicit examples to convey and check meaning.
- Make sure your learners have the information they need in order to be able to use the new vocabulary effectively - What does it mean? How is it used in a sentence? How do you say it? Are there social situations when it is or is not appropriate?
- Advanced learners have lots of metalanguage (language for talking about language), so encourage them to analyse new language in a text. For example, they can identify the part of speech, notice dependent prepositions, distinguish between transitive and intransitive verbs, notice collocations, and idiomatic language.
- Give students practice in paraphrasing when they do not know, or cannot remember, a word. Teach phrases like, *It's the thing you use for ...*, *I'm not sure of the exact word but...*, *It's the person who ...*, etc.
- Create a word bag or box or shared online document, and encourage learners to put new words and phrases in it. Use these words and phrases to play vocabulary review games like:
 - Taboo - learners pick a word/phrase and take it in turn to describe or show the meaning of a word without saying it
 - Stories - learners choose 5 words/phrases at random and make up the most creative story they can using these words
 - Odd one out - learners choose 5 words/phrases from a topic set and, in pairs, decide which word is the odd one out. They justify their choice to another pair. There are LOTS of possibilities! Encourage them to be creative.



My learners sometimes say they don't feel they're improving their grammar or vocabulary. How can I help them to see their progress?

“Encourage learners to keep records of new language, memorise and use it. Ask them to look at these records regularly their language records and actively make an effort to use new phrases in their speaking. Listen carefully when learners are speaking and highlight good examples of C2-level language. Praise both range and accuracy.”



Assessing Lexical Resource with your learners

Activity 3

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the activities in the [Appendix](#) for your learners.

Steps:

- On the board write:
Which areas of research should governments prioritise?
Learners discuss in small groups giving reasons. As they talk, note examples of good vocabulary for C2 and simpler vocabulary that could be upgraded. Elicit ideas from each group.
- Tell learners they're going to hear exam candidates discussing this question. They should try to identify if the opinions they hear are similar to or different from their own. Play the video of [Manuel, Jules and Thiago](#) from 17:00-20:16 (this is the discussion after the individual turns in Part 3). Elicit answers.
- Remind learners that in terms of vocabulary, examiners are listening for a good **range** and **appropriacy**. Ask them what they understand by these terms (**range**=variety, including more complex lexis; **appropriacy**=vocabulary is used correctly, for example in terms of relevance to topic or situation, collocation, register, connotation etc.) at C2 level.

Learners look at the table in the [Appendix](#) and watch the video again, circling their evaluation of each candidate.
- Ask learners if they think the three candidates met the criteria for C2 level in terms of lexical resource or not (They all did. Jules still met the standard by achieving Band 3 or above. Manuel and Thiago were very strong.) You may wish to show the [examiner comments](#).
- Lead a brief discussion of how they can improve the range and accuracy of their own vocabulary. In feedback, you can use some suggestions from the Top Tips section.

Candidate scores for Lexical Resource
Manuel 5
Jules 3.5
Thiago 5
- Return to the notes you made about your learners' vocabulary in the first activity. Write examples on the board. Ask students to find the good ones and improve the others. Finish by praising the good examples and reminding them that examiners don't expect perfect English!

Developing Lexical Resource activities

Level up

To help learners expand their range of vocabulary, introduce them to the [English Vocabulary Profile](#). Show them how to practise searching particular words or phrases and finding higher level alternatives. Or, get them to search for C1 level words on a topic you're studying. Encourage them to record new, higher level words or phrases and use them when they're speaking.

Which picture?

Learners use image search to find four very similar images. In pairs, they take it in turns to talk about one image. Their partner has to guess which one. Make sure they are using speculative language, such as *"It might be that..." "It strikes me..." "I wonder if..." "The most likely thing seems that..." "Could it be that...?"* Learners can make the task more difficult by talking about details that are common to all images.

Vocabulary mining

Learners 'mine' a video they've watched or text they've read recently for a few pieces of new and useful vocabulary. They can record it in their notebook, on a phone or make flashcards like the examples below, using an app like [Quizlet](#). Encourage them to make each word or phrase more memorable by writing an example sentence to show how it can be used.

Example:

get over someone

*She was devastated when her boyfriend ended the relationship, but eventually she **got over him**.*

Encourage them to review and use their new words and phrases often.

What is Discourse Management?

Band	Discourse Management	What does this mean?
5	Produces extended stretches of language with flexibility and ease and very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and detailed. Makes full and effective use of a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	The amount of language the candidate should say depends on the task. For example, in Part 1 this means a couple of sentences giving details but in the individual turn in Part 3 this means talking for two minutes. Words or phrases which help with meaning in a conversation such as <i>you know, well, basically, actually</i>.
3	Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied. Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	The candidate gives answers related to the task or question and doesn't go off topic. Words and phrases which show the connections between ideas – <i>therefore, as a result, on the other hand</i>.
1	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.	The candidate can present their ideas in a suitable order. For instance, in Part 3 they may talk about different aspects of each point rather than jumping back and forth between ideas.

Discourse Management in practice

Here are some examples of differences between the bands in Discourse Management.

Band 1

The candidate **uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers**.

“ I think the **first** priority is salary increases, because **this** motivates teachers. **After this** comes recognition.

Band 3

The candidate can **use a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers**.

“ **In the first place**, I believe that salaries motivate teachers, just like **they** motivate anyone else. **In this way**, a good salary shows teachers that their director appreciates them.

Band 5

The candidate shows they can **make full and effective use of a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers**.

“ **I want to start by saying** that teachers are incredibly hard-working. **They** do not get the financial recognition they deserve and **this** can lead to demotivation. **By the way**, I have heard that many teachers are **actually** leaving their jobs. **Therefore**, salaries are **one of the most**, if not the most important motivators for teachers.

✓ **Watch and assess a real example**

Watch [Manuel, Jules and Thiago](#) and make notes in the Discourse Management table in the [Appendix](#). Try and write down examples of language.

What band would you give each candidate for Discourse Management?

Compare your notes and scores with the [examiner comments](#).

Developing Discourse Management

★ Top tips

- To understand what Discourse management is in practice, it's a good idea to listen to and analyse people speaking. You could show closed captions in videos or read the **audioscripts** in the Listening sample tests. Use the table in the **Appendix** to help you to analyse speech in terms of discourse management.
- Make sure you include speaking activities with a fluency focus as these often help with the **sub-skills** within Discourse Management. See the activities on page 26.
- Crossover with other skills: in a writing lesson where you might focus on language to help organise text, add in a short speaking task using the same topic and phrases. Analyse listening scripts and reading texts to raise learners' awareness of how these words help to organise text.
- Focus on meaning: use sorting activities to help learners categorise cohesive devices with similar meanings.
- When monitoring and assessing your learners in any speaking activity, remember to provide feedback on how well they extend and organise their answers or that their answers were relevant to the task and topic. It can be tempting to focus on language accuracy, but they need to understand that there is more to speaking than grammar and vocabulary.



I've noticed during mock tests, that my learners, because they understand the 'examiner' well, give very short, natural answers throughout. How can I help them to give more extended responses?

“

Learners need to know that while shorter answers are more acceptable in Part 1 of the speaking examination, they do need to give more developed responses in other parts of the exam in order to fully demonstrate their speaking ability, in particular their discourse management. Include targeted activities to help them expand their responses in Parts 2 and 3

Assessing Discourse Management with your learners

Activity 4

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the activities in the **Appendix** for your learners.

Steps:

1. Tell learners that today they're going to watch a candidate doing the individual long turn part of the speaking exam and focusing on Discourse Management.

Divide learners into pairs, A and B.

A should think for a minute about what they know about the individual long turn.

B should think for a minute about what they know about what Discourse Management is.

Then, they tell each other.

See **Appendix** for answers

At C2 Proficiency level students are expected to produce extended stretches of language with very little hesitation.

2. Show the part of the examiner's instructions for Part 3 in the **Appendix**. Learners work in pairs to try to complete the gaps.

Read the bolded interlocutor's script in the **Appendix**. Instructions for the interlocutor are in italics. Where the script uses 'Candidate A/Candidate B', use names.

Learners listen to you and check their answers.

Examiner's script and answers:

Interlocutor	Now, in this part of the test you're each going to talk on your own for about (1) two minutes. You need to listen while your partner is speaking because you'll be asked to (2) comment afterwards.
A	So (Candidate A), I'm going to give you a card with a (3) question written on it and I'd like you to tell us what you think. There are also some ideas on the card for you to use if you like.
	All right? Here is your card, and a copy for you (Candidate B).
	Place Part 3 booklet, open at Task 1(a) in front of Candidate A
	Remember (Candidate A), you have about two minutes to talk before we join in.
	[Allow up to 10 seconds before saying, if necessary: Would you like to begin now?]
Candidate A	⌚ 2 minutes
Interlocutor	Thank you.
	Ask (4) one of the following questions to Candidate B:

Activity 4

3. Tell learners they are going to watch [Thiago doing his individual long turn](#) (13:46–16:04). They read Video viewing task 1, watch and make notes.

Suggested answers:

Thiago develops ideas by talking about:

- what parents are entitled to know about
- the types of teacher schools should employ

His response is extended, with very little hesitation and repetition.

4. Learners read Video viewing task 2 on the handout, watch and make notes.

Suggested answers:

Example discourse markers Thiago uses:

- *Well, Since, but, I also think that, Lastly, aside from that*

Lexical fields:

- children / The next generation / kids / students
- behavioural problems / misbehaviour
- directors / higher ups

Thiago is very strong for C2 – he was awarded 5 for Discourse Management. Show some of the examiner comments in the handout, if you like.

5. Learners do the Part 3 practice task on the handout in pairs, taking it in turns to speak. Encourage them to give each other feedback on the criteria you’ve discussed in this lesson. Support this with your own feedback and observations, ensuring you balance suggestions with positive comments.

Focus on feedback

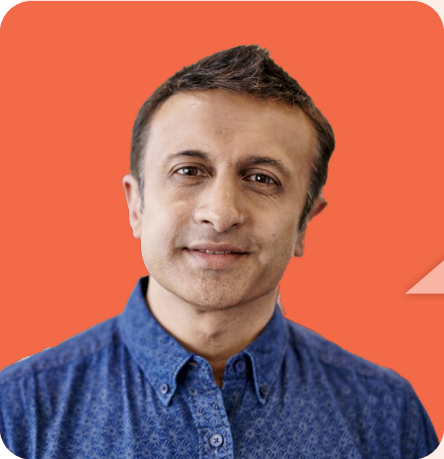
Encouraging reflection and self-assessment

- **Encourage reflection.** Learners can use recordings of themselves speaking to reflect on their speaking subskills – what they did well, and how they think they can improve. Encourage them to share their reflections and questions about their speaking skills with you so that you can add your own observations..
- **Use checklists.** After a speaking activity, give learners a simple checklist, for example: *Everybody contributed equally. I listened and built on what other learners said. I gave examples and reasons for my opinions.* They complete it alone, then compare with their group.

Try Idea 16: Peer and self-assessment in the [Cambridge Guide to Integrating Learning and Assessment](#).

Developing Discourse Management activities

 Discourse markers race	 Fillers	 No repetition or hesitation
Prepare a list of discourse markers that you’ve recently focused on so that they can be shown one by one to the class. Learners discuss a topic in groups. Periodically, show one of the discourse markers. Learners who notice it, should try to integrate it into their discussion and then raise their hand, but continue the conversation without stopping. Notice which groups did it first – that is the competitive element! Continue, showing other discourse markers from time to time.	Elicit or teach some useful fillers to give learners ‘thinking time’ and avoid hesitation. For example, <i>Now, let me see..., What else..., So, I’ve mentioned... already, And another thing...</i> In groups they practise talking for 1 minute on the topic of their choice, using fillers to avoid hesitation.	Learners write topics on slips of paper (or ask AI to generate a list). In groups, they put their slips face down on the table. They take it in turns to turn over a piece of paper and talk about the topic for 1 minute. The other group members have to time them and listen very carefully to see if they repeat themselves or hesitate. They say ‘repetition!’ or ‘hesitation!’ if they spot this. The learner who spotted the repetition or hesitation first takes over the topic. They move to a new topic if they run out of things to say or if someone in the group manages to talk about a topic for 1 minute.



I understand that in the higher level exams, learners need to speak for as long as possible. Is that right?

“Some higher level learners attempt to give very long answers in Part 1. The examiner may cut them off in order to keep to the time limit and this can dishearten some candidates, leading to them saying less in subsequent parts of the exam. Make sure they know when shorter answers are acceptable (Parts 2 and 3). Remind them the examiner will tell them exactly how long they have for the discussion task in Part 2 and individual long turn in Part 3. Give plenty of practice for all types of exam tasks so that learners are familiar with the types of questions they’ll be asked and the kind of response that is expected.

What is Pronunciation?

Band	Pronunciation	What does this mean?
5	Is intelligible . Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.	You can understand the meaning of what the candidate says. Includes the pronunciation of individual sounds, word and sentence stress and intonation - see Band 3.
3	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate . Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	The rise and fall of the voice sounds natural. Putting the stress in the right place in a multi-syllable word: comfortable or photographer . For example, saying ð in than/this or ei in eight accurately.
1	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate . Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Natural and used properly most of the time. The candidate puts stress in the correct place in a sentence most of the time. See the words in bold in these examples: <i>What about music? There's the guy, too, talking to the people, but they're walking.</i>

Pronunciation in practice

Here are some examples of differences between the bands in Pronunciation. Stressed words are in bold. Stressed syllables are underlined. Intonation is shown by arrows. Corrected utterances are shown in brackets.

Band 1 Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed . “ It's definitely something new for me. [It's definitely something new for me.]	Band 3 Sentence and word stress is accurately placed . “ It's something I haven't considered before.	Band 5 Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning . “ ↓ Well , I've certainly never encountered that ↑ before !
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**Watch and assess a real example**

Watch the video of **Manuel, Jules and Thiago**. Use the table in the **Appendix** to evaluate and make notes on the candidates' pronunciation.
Compare your notes and scores with the **examiner comments**.



Developing Pronunciation

★ Top tips

- In English, pronunciation is often not clear from the spelling so make sure you model the correct pronunciation of new words or phrases (say it yourself or use the audio or video) and get learners to repeat (drill).
- Include activities to help your learners notice pronunciation features as well as practise them. For example, they can identify the word or sentence stress after listening to you say something, or when watching a video clip.
- Don't forget to use the pronunciation activities in your coursebook. It can be tempting to skip these when you're short of time but paying regular attention to different aspects of pronunciation will help your learners over time. See the activities on page 33.
- Include features of pronunciation (such as stress) when teaching new language - for example, by marking stress with CAPital LEtters...) or circles over the stressed syllable or word.
- Make pronunciation visual to support learners. Highlight your mouth position when pronouncing a word, use your fingers to show the number of syllables, use gesture to highlight where to put stress.



Do I really need to do drills with learners at C2 and above? It seems a bit patronising.

“

Higher level learners still need support with pronunciation, particularly of new language items. However, you don't need to automatically drill every piece of new language. Instead, when learners encounter new language, encourage them to predict and attempt the pronunciation by themselves. Notice when they have difficulty and provide support through correction, modelling and drilling, just as you would with lower level learners.

Assessing Pronunciation with your learners

Activity 5

Preparation: Print out enough copies of the activities in the **Appendix** for your learners.

Steps:

- Learners discuss in small groups what they find easy and difficult about English pronunciation. Make sure they focus on speaking rather than listening.

Highlight what examiners are looking for in terms of pronunciation (key terms in bold):

 - **Intelligibility** is key i.e. can the examiner understand what you say.
 - Examiners are not looking for a perfect English accent. It's normal and expected for learners to speak English with their own accent.
 - **Word stress and sentence stress** can change the meaning of a word and sentence. For example, I love you emphasises the feeling of love, not like or hate. I love you emphasises I love you and no one else.
 - **Intonation** adds meaning too, for example we can show that we are unsure (rising), excited (emphatic), confident (falling) etc.
- Tell learners they're going to watch clips of two candidates during their individual long turn in Part 3 of the C2 Proficiency exam. Focusing on Pronunciation, they should identify which candidate scored higher.

Play a clip of **Laura's long turn** (6:41-8:03) followed by **Manuel's** (9:10-10:11). Learners discuss their impressions afterwards, but don't go into scores yet.:

Manuel scored higher than Laura in Pronunciation – in fact in all areas of assessment.
- Focus learners on the table in the **Appendix**. Ask them to listen again and evaluate the candidates. If they are worried about this, reassure them it's just to help them to notice different aspects of pronunciation. Play the video clips again.

Ask them to justify their choices. You could refer them to the examiner comments in the **Appendix** to compare their ideas.
- Learners discuss in small groups how to improve pronunciation. They can add ideas to a shared document or build a list on the board. They compare their ideas to the **Appendix**.
- Learners plan how to improve their own pronunciation, using ideas from the list.

Reassure them once again that having an accent is totally fine! Everyone has one, even native speakers.

Developing Pronunciation activities

 What do you MEAN?	 Draw the links	 Say it like you're...
Write a sentence on the board, such as: <i>It's possible there are two correct answers.</i> Invite learners to say the sentence with the main stress on different words. Each time, ask them what they mean. For example: Possible – emphasises possibility. It's not impossible. Or, it's <i>just</i> possible! Two – not one Correct – not incorrect Answers – not questions. Or, something about the answers is unusual or surprising. Learners write their own sentences and practise saying them with the stress on different words. With a partner, they discuss how this affects meaning.	Dictate a sentence from your coursebook. Ask learners to draw the links between the end of one word and the beginning of the other. They have to listen and repeat the sentences several times to identify the links. For example: <i>He works_in_a large_office.</i> Elicit that final consonant sounds link to initial vowel sounds. In pairs, learners practise saying and identifying connected speech from other audio or video clips.	ABrainstorm some adjectives or feelings, such as: unsure, confident, interested, bored, in love, angry etc. Now ask learners to choose a phrase or sentence from a recent lesson, and one of the adjectives or feelings. They should say the phrase in that way. Their partner has to guess how they are feeling. This helps learners to focus on intonation.

[Learn more about teaching pronunciation.](#)

    **Focus on feedback**

Managing assessment and feedback

- **Focus on a few students.** When you monitor speaking, it can be useful to focus on assessing a few students at a time. Keep notes about each student to refer back to and ensure you are assessing all your learners.
- **Record students.** If it's difficult to listen carefully to students in class, you could ask them to record themselves doing a speaking task and send it to you. If you do this, ensure you comply with your local Data Protection and Child Protection laws.



What is Interactive Communication?

Band	Interactive Communication	What does this mean?
5	Interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation.	Makes consistently smooth links to what others have said, building on them with their own ideas and referring back so that the transitions are seamless.
	Widens the scope of the interaction and develops it fully and effectively towards a negotiated outcome.	A decision which takes into account their own and their partners' point of view.
3	Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers.	Refers to things people said earlier in the conversation using phrases like <i>As you said earlier...</i>
	Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.	Develops and broadens the discussion, and proactively involves the other candidate with a suggestion or question about further developing the topic.
1	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers.	Starts conversations and replies to questions or things their partner says.
		Keeps the conversation going.
	Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.	Opens out the conversation by adding new ideas.
		Works together to complete the task.

Interactive Communication in practice

Here are some examples of differences between the bands in Interactive Communication.

Band 1 The candidate initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. “ Shall we talk about improving public transport? ... I take your point, it could be too expensive ... ”	Band 3 The candidate interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers. “ As I see it, the main issue is affordability. Would you agree with that? ... yes, I see what you mean, and that also has an impact on... Yes, and as you said, it's better to ... ”	Band 5 The candidate interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation. “ It's similar to what you mentioned about...but I think it also involves... and what if...?...I can see your point but I still think the main issue here is...Right, and that goes back to what we discussed earlier about... ”
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**Watch and assess a real example**

Watch [Laura and Alejandro](#). Complete the Interactive Communication table in the [Appendix](#). Try to write down examples when the candidates start conversations, reply appropriately and develop the conversations with new ideas.
Compare your notes and scores with the [examiner comments](#).



Developing Interactive Communication

★ Top tips

- Encourage your learners to start discussions and to respond to what other learners have to say. Teach them useful phrases to do this such as: *Let's start with... What do think about this one? Shall we move on to... I'm not sure I agree with you on that etc.*
- Use lots of pair and small group activities to encourage participation
- Use **speaking tasks with a clear purpose or goal** so learners have to work together to reach an outcome.
- Get to know your learners' interests and include these topics in speaking activities. These will be more likely to generate conversation and discussion.
- In classroom activities, make one learner in each group responsible for ensuring that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. This helps to understand the importance of turn-taking.
- In Part 3 of the exam, advise your students not to try to rush through all the prompts in their discussion. It is better to deal with several of them in depth than to try to deal with all of them superficially.

Assessing Interactive Communication with your learners

Activity 6

Steps:

1. Ask learners to think about a good discussion they had recently. Who was it with? What was it about? What made it 'good'? Pairs discuss, then share ideas briefly.
2. Play [Laura and Alejandro \(3:08-6:35\)](#) The task is simple – is their discussion 'good'? EAfter watching, you may wish to feed in the following points, but don't spend a lot of time on details:
Good points about the discussion: They keep to the topic, listen to each other, focus on the task, link to what the other says.
Things to improve: There is a lot of agreement and simple adding of points, rather than developing and widening the discussion.
They do look mostly at the pictures rather than each other. This is a bit unnatural in normal conversation, but it's quite normal in an exam situation when candidates are nervous and don't know each other. It also helps them to focus.
3. Pairs discuss the questions below. They should use what they noticed in Laura and Alejandro's discussion to inform their answers:
A. What do you understand by Interactive communication?
B. Is it easier to have a discussion in a pair or group of three? Why?
C. What should you remember when doing the interactive tasks in the exam?
A. Share the band 3 descriptor for Interactive Communication at C2 level in the **Appendix**. Answer any questions to make sure learners are clear.
B. Remind learners the test time is extended for groups of three and they have the same opportunities to speak as pairs.
4. Learners watch Laura and Alejandro again. This time they evaluate the candidates using the table in the handout. In feedback, refer to the [examiner comments](#). Laura meets the C2 standard for Interactive Communication (Band 3); Alejandro just falls short at 2.5.
5. Learners discuss the advice they would give Laura and Alejandro if they were taking the test again, and identify a learning point from this activity.

Developing Interactive Communication activities

 Discussion detective	 Point to point	 Discussion bingo
Participants work in groups, each group nominates a detective to monitor the discussion. Each group brainstorms things for the detective to look out for, for example, listening carefully, asking questions, equal participation, polite disagreement. During the discussion the detective makes notes. Afterwards, the group members self-assess using their agreed criteria. The detective gives their impressions from their notes.	Pairs create a question about a topic that interests them, for example ‘Should university education be free for all?’ ‘What can young people do about the climate crisis?’ Individually, they write a list of six contrasting points about the topic, or they can ask AI with a prompt like “Tell me six completely different points to answer this question.” They discuss a topic in pairs trying to weave in very different points. Remind them that they cannot simply go from point to point without listening to, discussing and building on what their partner says. Afterwards they reflect on how easy or difficult it was to introduce new points to widen the conversation.	Brainstorm phrases under these headings: Adding a point, adding a contrasting point, agreeing, disagreeing. Make sure they’re suitably complex for C2 level. Learners draw a 3x3 grid and choose 9 phrases to write in it. In pairs or 3s they discuss a topic. Each time they use one of their phrases, they cross it off their grid.



Focus on feedback

Supporting peer feedback

Be specific. Give learners specific things to listen for when doing peer feedback on speaking. For example, for Interactive Communication, ask them to note how often each person speaks; for Grammatical Resource, ask them to note down examples of complex grammar. Different learners could focus on different criteria, and use their notes to give peer feedback. This encourages learners to listen for specific subskills rather than just spotting mistakes. Use the video viewing tasks in the **Appendix** for more ideas.

Try Idea 16: Peer and self-assessment in the [Cambridge Guide to Integrating Learning and Assessment](#).



Appendix

These activities can be photocopied or displayed for classroom use.

Global Achievement

Watch the C2 Speaking test video of [Laura and Alejandro](#). Use the table to evaluate and make notes on the candidates' Global Achievement.

Candidate's name:		
Can they understand and speak about the topics and tasks in the test?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
How much do they hesitate ?	• Very little • Some hesitation • A lot	• Very little • Some hesitation • A lot
Do they use the right kinds of grammar and vocabulary to express themselves?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Do they give more than simply short answers ?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Is what they say well-organised ?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Overall, what do they do well?		
Overall, what could they improve?		

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Activity 1 - Handout: Global Achievement

Video task

Which two photos do the candidates discuss?



Speaking task

Work in pairs. Choose **two** photos and answer the examiner question below, using the photos as a prompt.

“Look at the photos and talk together about what might happen in the next 30 minutes.”

Activity 1: Examiner’s comments

These comments relate to the candidates’ performance across the whole Speaking test (Parts 1-4).

Global Achievement

Manuel

Manuel handles communication on all topics with no hesitation. He is able to discuss complex ideas with flexibility and produces extended and coherent discourse with appropriate and accurate use of grammar, vocabulary and phonological features.

Global Achievement score: 5

Jules

Jules handles communication on all topics, with very little hesitation. She is able to discuss complex ideas and produce extended and coherent discourse – e.g. her extended turn in Part 3.

She uses appropriate and accurate language to express herself but tends to repeat herself and rely on responding to what the other speakers have said rather than taking the initiative.

Global Achievement score: 3.5

Thiago

Thiago handles communication on all topics, with no hesitation. He is able to discuss complex ideas with flexibility and produces extended and coherent discourse throughout the test.

Global Achievement score: 5

Grammatical Resource

Watch and assess a real example

Before you watch, think about the examples of complex grammatical structures you would expect to hear at C2 level. You can use your C2 coursebook syllabus or [the English Grammar Profile](#) for ideas. Make notes in the first table, column 1.

As you watch, note examples of complex grammar that you hear in column 2.

	Simple grammatical forms	
	How is their range (variety?)	Do they use these forms accurately ?
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
	Complex grammatical forms	
	How is their range (variety?)	Do they use these forms accurately ?
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate’s name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Activity 2 - Handout: Grammatical Resource

Before you watch, think about the complex grammar structures you think examiners expect to hear at C2 level. You can use your C2 coursebook syllabus or [the English Grammar Profile](#) for ideas. Make notes in the first table, column 1.

As you watch, note examples of complex grammar that you hear in column 2.

Complex grammar at C1 level	
Examples - my ideas	Examples I heard in the video
e.g. relative clauses	

Watch again and complete the table.

	Grammatical forms	
	How is their range (variety?)	Do they use grammar accurately ?
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • Not many different forms	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes

Getting better marks for Grammatical Resource

Look at the examples of what Laura and Alejandro said. How can they be improved? Remember to think about the complexity of the grammar as well as accuracy.

- The people that don't seek for recognition is just happy with what they have.
- They don't need something else, say 'OK, I have done something good.'
- The people that only with knowing what they have done it's good for them.
- They have created an enterprise that it have helped a lot of people.

Lexical Resource

Before you watch, think about the examples of vocabulary you would expect to see at C2 level. You can use your C2 coursebook syllabus or [the English Vocabulary Profile](#) for ideas. Make notes in the first table, column 1.

As you watch, note examples of C2 vocabulary that you hear in column 2.

Vocabulary at C1 level	
Examples - my ideas	Examples I heard in the video

Watch again and complete the table.

	Lexical Resource	
	How is their range (variety?)	Do they use the words and phrases accurately ?
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • A bit simple for C2	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • A bit simple for C2	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Candidate's name:	• Wide • Good • A bit simple for C2	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Discourse Management

Watch the video. For each candidate, circle the word that reflects their performance in Discourse Management and note examples. You could choose to focus on one candidate, if you prefer.

Try and write down examples of what they say.

Candidate's name:	Candidate's name:	Candidate's name:
In Part 2 they spoke <i>extensively / were prompted by the examiner.</i>	In Part 2 they spoke <i>extensively / were prompted by the examiner.</i>	In Part 2 they spoke <i>extensively / were prompted by the examiner.</i>
<i>Very little / some hesitation</i>	<i>Very little / some hesitation</i>	<i>Very little / some hesitation</i>
A <i>wide range / range</i> of cohesive devices and discourse markers Examples:	A <i>wide range / range</i> of cohesive devices and discourse markers Examples:	A <i>wide range / range</i> of cohesive devices and discourse markers Examples:
<i>No / very little / some repetition</i>	<i>No / very little / some repetition</i>	<i>No / very little / some repetition</i>
<i>Always / mostly relevant</i>	<i>Always / mostly relevant</i>	<i>Always / mostly relevant</i>

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Activity 4 - Handout: Discourse Management

Examiner's script

Interlocutor	Now, in this part of the test you're each going to talk on your own for about (1) You need to listen while your partner is speaking because you'll be asked to (2).....afterwards.
 A	So (Candidate A), I'm going to give you a card with a (3)written on it and I'd like you to tell us what you think. There are also some ideas on the card for you to use if you like.
	All right? Here is your card
	Place <i>Part 3</i> booklet open at <i>Task 1(a)</i> in front of candidate A.
	Please let (Candidate B) see your card
	Remember (Candidate A), you have about two minutes to talk before we join in.
	[Allow up to 10 seconds before saying, if necessary: Would you like to begin now?]
Candidate A ⌚ 2 minutes	
Interlocutor	Thank you.
	Ask (4)..... to Candidate B:
	• What do you think? • Do you agree? • How about you?

Video viewing task 1

Watch Thiago talking about this question in Part 2 of the C2 Proficiency exam:

What responsibilities do schools have to different groups?

- parents
- teachers
- employers

Make notes on the questions as you watch.

1. How does Thiago develop ideas (e.g. widening the topic beyond the suggested points, but still answering the question)?

2. Does he give an extended response? Yes / No
3. Does he hesitate? No / very little / sometimes
4. Does he repeat himself? No / very little / sometimes

Video viewing task 2

1. Watch again. Note down any discourse markers he uses to organise what he says.

2. Thiago makes good use of lexical fields. What other words or phrases does he use for the following?

- Children / _____ / _____ / _____ / _____
- Behavioural problems / _____
- Directors / _____

3. What score do you think he got for Discourse Management?

Examiner comments about Discourse Management

Remember these comments are about Thiago's performance throughout all three parts of the test.

Thiago uses extended language with some flexibility.

His contributions are always relevant and coherent, with good development of ideas (e.g. regarding teacher responsibilities or the family in Part 3):

- it looks like they're in a rural town, or at least they've gone away from the city (Part 2)
- Presumably ... or at least (Part 2)
- Aside from that ... and lastly ... by all means ... (Part 3).

He makes good use of markers, pronominal, cataphoric and anaphoric reference and lexical fields:

- Presumably ... at least ... it seems that ... Alright, so ... whereas ... for example ... as well ... (Part 2).

Discourse Management score: 5

Part 3 individual long turn speaking task

Task 1 (a)

Which is preferable making your own decisions or asking others for advice?

- In education
- At work
- At different ages

Task 1 (b)

How much are people’s decisions influenced by the media?

- Spending habits
- Current affairs
- Entertainment
- Spending habits

Pronunciation

Watch the video. Use this table to evaluate and make notes on the candidates’ Pronunciation.

Try and write down examples of what they say.

Compare your ideas to the examiner comments.

Candidate’s name:			
Can you understand the candidate easily?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes
Is their intonation suitable?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:
Is word and sentence stress in the right place?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:
Do they pronounce individual sounds correctly?	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Usually • Sometimes Examples:

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Activity 5: Pronunciation

Examiner comments - Pronunciation

Laura

Laura is almost always intelligible, although it is occasionally hard to follow a word or two when she speaks fast, as she does occasionally, running words into each other, thus giving her an uneven speed of delivery, sentence stress and intonation and making longer stretches harder to follow.

Intonation is generally appropriate, but with little variation and often uneven, produced in short bursts that can be hard to follow:

- To move into the hustle and bustle of places ... and socialise with people that you don't know (Part 2)
- Other things that are in the world (Part 2)

Word stress is almost always accurately placed, but with little variation in sentence stress:

- Opportunity, awareness, socialise familiar representative educated (Part 2) with occasional lapses:

- Phot**o**graph (Part 1) ... Ext**r**overt ... **s**afari (Part 2) ... Un**n**erv**i**ng (Part 3)

Individual sounds are almost always articulated clearly, despite occasional lapses:

- “d” for “th”: dat, dey’re “b” for “v”: sabbanah, bisiting, some intrusive “e”: Efrica, especial; some long “ee” sounds but these instances are rare.

Pronunciation score: **2.5** (below C2 level)

Manuel

Manuel is intelligible throughout and uses phonological features effectively to convey and enhance meaning.

He uses stress for emphasis:

- While I **do** agree that a hands-on experience **does** allow for better learning, I **also** believe that ...

His word stress is always accurate, his intonation and sentence stress are natural and used effectively to enhance meaning. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.

Pronunciation score: **5** (above C2 level)

Interactive Communication

Watch the video. Use this table to evaluate and make notes on the candidates' Interactive Communication.

Try and write down examples of what they say.

Candidate's name:			
Do they start conversations?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:
Do they reply to the questions and comments of others?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:
Do they open out the conversation by adding new ideas?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes Examples:
Do they need help from other candidates or the examiner?	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Activity 6: Interactive Communication handout

C2 Proficiency Band 3 descriptor for Interactive Communication

Band	Interactive Communication	What does this mean?
3	Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers . Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome .	[linking contributions to those of other speakers] refers to things people said earlier in the conversation using phrases like <i>As you said earlier...</i>
		[Widens the scope of the interaction] Develops and broadens the discussion, and proactively involves the other candidate with a suggestion or question about further developing the topic. This also includes starting conversations and replying to questions or things their partner says.
		[negotiates towards an outcome] works together to make a decision taking into account what they both have said during the discussion.

Video viewing task

Watch the video. Use this table to evaluate the candidates' Interactive Communication.

Candidate's name:			
Do they start conversations?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes
Do they reply to the questions and comments of others?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes
Do they open out the conversation by adding new ideas?	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes	• Almost always • Often • Sometimes
Do they need help from other candidates or the examiner?	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No	• Yes, several times • Yes, once or twice • No

Look at the Band 3 descriptors for Interactive Communication. Do you think they both achieved this?

Compare your ideas to the [examiner comments](#).

Frequently asked questions

What if a candidate asks for clarification or says they don't understand a question, how can examiners rephrase the questions?

Examiners can't explain or rephrase but they can repeat questions and instructions, so it's a good idea to teach your learners phrases like *Can you say that again?* or *Can you repeat that, please?* These are natural in spoken language and will help their interactions in the classroom as well as in the exam.

Is it better to show my students a higher level Speaking test video or a lower level one?

It's useful for learners to see a range of levels as they will all be aiming for different bands themselves. You could show Band 3 candidates as a confidence boost early on, then show higher levels later and ask them to say what the candidates did well.

My students feel intimidated being faced with an examiner. How can I prepare them?

Do role plays and regularly practise tasks with learners being the examiner. Show your learners the videos of Speaking tests so they can see the examiners are friendly.

How do formative assessment and summative assessment both contribute to learning?

Formative assessment encourages learners to become more involved in their learning. They think more actively about where they are now, where they are going and how to get there. Teachers also use the feedback to plan the next stages of teaching and learning in ways which will improve learners' performance. Summative assessment can be a very useful guide to progress but should not be the only type of assessment, as there is no focus on how to make further improvements. Both assessment types work together.

Useful links

Free teaching resources on our website

- [Cambridge Guide to Integrating Learning and Assessment.](#)

Preparation pages contain Speaking test videos, examiner comments, lesson plans and sample tests

- [C2 Proficiency Preparation page](#)

Speaking test videos

The videos are linked from activities within this guide. You can also find each video in the 'Speaking test video' section on the C2 Proficiency Preparation page (see link above).

The playlist for all levels of Speaking test videos is on this [YouTube playlist](#)

Examiner comments

You can also find examiner comments on each video in the 'Speaking test video' section for the C2 Proficiency Preparation page (see link above).

Teacher Handbooks

- [C2 Proficiency](#)

Lesson Plans

Some lesson plans are linked from activities within this guide. There are many more lesson plans in the 'Lesson Plans' section on the C2 Proficiency Preparation page (see link above).

Audioscripts are in the sample tests which are linked from the C2 Proficiency Preparation page (see links above).

- [Mock test toolkit](#)



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