

Cambridge English

Assessing Speaking Performance – Level C2

Examiners and speaking assessment in the Cambridge English Proficiency

Speaking tests are conducted by trained examiners. The quality assurance of Speaking Examiners (SEs) is managed by Team Leaders (TLs) who are in turn responsible to a Professional Support Leader (PSL), who is the professional representative of Cambridge English Language Assessment for the Speaking tests in a given country or region.

All of the examiners (PSLs, TLs and SEs) must prove each year, through a certification process, that they are competent to assess. In addition, they are regularly monitored during live testing sessions.

Although candidates take the test in pairs or groups of three, throughout the test they are assessed on their individual performance and not in relation to each other. They are awarded marks by two examiners: an *assessor* and an *interlocutor*.

The *interlocutor* awards a mark for the performance as a whole, using the Global Achievement scale.

The *assessor* awards marks for five individual criteria:

- Grammatical Resource
- Lexical Resource
- Discourse Management
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication.

How can I use the Assessment Scales?

Examiners use the C2 Level Assessment Scales to decide which marks to give candidates taking the *Cambridge English: Proficiency* Speaking test. Using the scales yourself during classroom speaking practice tasks will help you to:

- analyse your students' strengths and weaknesses when they do *Cambridge English: Proficiency* Speaking tasks
- form an impression of how ready your students are to take the Speaking test.

The Assessment Scales

The *Cambridge English: Proficiency* Assessment Scales are divided into six bands from 0 to 5, with 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Descriptors for each criterion are provided for bands 1, 3 and 5 and indicate what a candidate is expected to demonstrate at each band. *Cambridge English: Proficiency* is at Level C2 of the Common European Framework of

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Reference (CEFR), and the descriptors for band 3 and above generally indicate performance of at least C2 level.

C2	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is intelligible. Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation. Widens the scope of the interaction and develops it fully and effectively towards a negotiated outcome.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>				
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>				
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>				

As you look through the scales, it may help to highlight words which make one band different from another. Always remember that Level C2 is generally described as ‘Fully operational command of the spoken language’.

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For example, under Lexical Resource, the beginning of the first descriptor at Band 3 is similar to Band 1 – but whereas in Band 3 ‘*Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility*’ is the requirement, in Band 1 the range required is ‘*limited*’ and ‘*flexibility*’ is not mentioned. Also, Band 3 goes on to say ‘...*to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics*’ whereas at Band 1 this requirement is ‘*to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics*’ with no mention of the abstract. At Band 5, ‘*range*’ becomes ‘*wide range*’ but the rest of the descriptor is the same as for Band 3.

Don’t worry if a lot of the terms used in the scales are new to you – in the Handbook for Teachers you will find a Glossary of Terms for Speaking.

Although all five analytical criteria are assessed across the whole test, Part 3 (the long turn) is the main opportunity for examiners to assess Discourse Management, and Part 2 tends to be when they focus most on Interactive Communication.

How can I use the Assessment Scales with students?

You could:

1. Refer to the scales as you observe students carrying out a *Cambridge English: Proficiency* speaking task.
2. Note down examples of performance in terms of the listed criteria.
3. Give students feedback on their strengths and weaknesses.
4. Think about whether your students are ready for the exam and how they could improve.

However, it can be difficult for a teacher to manage a speaking practice task (i.e. be the interlocutor), make notes of what the students say and refer to the Assessment Scales, all at the same time. The following activities are designed to help you get started.

On the Teacher Support website there is a set of video recordings of two candidates called Maaïke and Dan taking the *Cambridge English: Proficiency* Speaking test.

You can click on these links to watch each part of the test.

- [Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Part 1](#)
- [Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Part 2](#)
- [Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Part 3](#)

The five activities use these recordings to practise using the Assessment Scales.

Activity 1

1. Make a copy of the blank **Grammatical Resource and Lexical Resource** tables on pages 5 and 6. You will see that statements from the Assessment Scales have been turned into questions.
2. Watch the *Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Parts 1-3*
3. Note down examples of what Dan does well and not so well for each of the questions in the Comments box on the assessment sheet.
4. Compare the notes you have made with a completed example on pages 10 and 11.



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Activity 2:

1. Make a copy of the blank **Discourse Management** table on page 7.
2. Watch the *Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Parts 1-3*
3. Note down examples of what Maaïke does well and not so well for each of the questions in the Comments box on the assessment sheet.
4. Compare the notes you have made with a completed example on page 12.

Activity 3:

1. Make a copy of the blank **Pronunciation** table on page 8.
2. Watch the *Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Parts 1-3*.
3. Note down examples of what Maaïke does well and not so well for each of the questions in the Comments box on the assessment sheet.
4. Compare the notes you have made with a completed example on page 14.

Activity 4:

1. Make a copy of the blank **Interactive Communication** table on page 15.
2. Watch the *Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking Test Sample Video Parts 1-3*
3. Note down examples of what Dan does well and not so well for each of the questions in the Comments box on the assessment sheet.
4. Compare the notes you have made with a completed example on page 9.

Remember:

- In a real *Cambridge English: Proficiency Speaking* test the marks awarded reflect a candidate's performance across the whole exam and not just in one part of it. As you become more familiar with the assessment criteria and gain more experience in analysing your students, you will find it easier to focus on all of the criteria during classroom practice tasks.
- Being able to refer to the Assessment Scales will help you to analyse your students' strengths and weaknesses and to estimate whether they are ready for the Speaking test. However, it won't necessarily give you an accurate prediction of the marks that your students will achieve in a real test, as the candidate may be affected by other factors such as nervousness.



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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING GRAMMATICAL RESOURCE	
Name of student	
Does the speaker maintain control of grammatical forms?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker use a wide range of grammatical forms?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING LEXICAL RESOURCE	
Name of student	
Does the speaker use a range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT	
Name of student	
Does the speaker produce extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation?	
Good	Not so good
Are the contributions relevant? Are they coherent? Are they varied?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker use a wide range of cohesive devices? And discourse markers?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING PRONUNCIATION	
Name of student	
Are the answers clear? Can the speaker be generally understood?	
Good	Not so good
Is the speaker's intonation appropriate?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker use sentence stress correctly? Is word stress correct?	
Good	Not so good
Are individual sounds clear? Are they correctly produced?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	
Name of student	
Does the speaker interact with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers? Good	Not so good
Does the speaker react appropriately to what the interlocutor or other candidate says? Good	Not so good
Does the speaker keep the interaction going? Does the speaker say more than the minimum? Does the speaker involve the other candidate? Good	Not so good
Does the speaker try to widen the scope of the interaction and negotiate towards an outcome? Does the speaker need support? Good	Not so good
Comments	

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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING GRAMMATICAL RESOURCE	
Name of student Dan	
Does the speaker maintain control of grammatical forms?	
Good <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>You have to set up a routine and stick to it</i>• <i>...what we are supposed to do and how we are supposed to do it</i>• <i>The effort they made to get where they are</i>• <i>...and the frustration you must feel</i>	Not so good
Does the speaker use a wide range of grammatical forms?	
Good <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Then we've got a competition in school which is...well we've all been through it...</i>• <i>...even though you're not going to meet later on in life</i>• <i>...you will always be there for each other</i>	Not so good
Comments <p>Generally good grammatical control. Very few errors and there is evidence of a wide range (eg 'even though...', 'what we are supposed to do and how we are supposed to do it') ...</p> <p>N.B. Candidates are marked on the language that they 'use' and 'attempt to use' to convey their message, so they should be encouraged to be ambitious in their use of language. However, comprehension is important so mistakes shouldn't result in their being difficult to understand.</p>	



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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING	
LEXICAL RESOURCE	
Name of student Dan (all parts of the test)	
Does the speaker use a range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility?	
Good <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Set up a routine and stick to it</i>• <i>Discipline, timetable, schedule</i>• <i>Furthermore</i>• <i>Competition between brands</i>• <i>Song contest</i>• <i>Share the same goals</i>• <i>Stubborn</i>• <i>Budget, money issues</i>• <i>You will always be there for each other</i>• <i>It bonds you</i>	Not so good <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A memory of their trainings</i> (something to remind them of their training?)• <i>Be proud over</i> (proud of)
Does the speaker give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics?	
Good <ul style="list-style-type: none">• E.g. In Part 2, in the discussion task (photos illustrating competition)• <i>Even though you can use white lies sometimes..</i>• <i>Honesty is something that really is the foundation of a friendship</i>• <i>You need to be honest, or else it will undermine...</i>	Not so good
Comments <p>There is evidence of range in Dan's performance, and he is certainly able to exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics, for example when talking about the concept of Friendship</p>	



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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING

DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT

Name of student Maaike (all parts of the test)

Does the speaker produce extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation?

Good

Maaike gives good extended answers where appropriate.

For example:

In Part 1, Maaike gives a good extended answer to the question ‘What’s the most interesting place for visitors to see there (the Netherlands)?’

In Part 2 when talking about different aspects of competition, Maaike expands on Dan’s point about team spirit.

- *I think the competition has a different feel to it if it’s a team sport rather than an individual sport, which is shown in picture B.*

In Part 3, Maaike talks with ease at length about lifelong friends.

Not so good

Are the contributions relevant? Are they coherent? Are they varied?

Good

Her contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and usually detailed.

Many examples throughout the interaction in Part 2. For example, Maaike she is able to talk coherently about picture G without being able to clearly identify what is happening in it.

In Part 3, Maaike talks about honesty in friendship and shows an ability to deal with the abstract aspect of the topic. She also responds well to the question about short term friends.

In part 3, when Dan is talking about a team talking about different personalities, Maaike expands on the points he made.

Not so good

- *Not as good as go to regular shops*
- *It’s more easy to step in.*



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Does the speaker use a wide range of cohesive devices? And discourse markers?

Good

Maaïke makes good use of a wide range of cohesive devices (conjunctions, determiners, pronouns, related vocabulary etc.) and discourse markers

- *Yeah, maybe, I think, really, it's true, so, well..., and..., rather than..., of course*

Not so good

Comments

Maaïke's performance is fluent and coherent throughout and is an instructive example of a candidate making the best of the time available without at any time dominating the test. She extends when she can and her contributions are always relevant. The performance peaks with the long turn and then discussion on the topic of friendship.

Students need to prepare carefully for the long turn. It can be compared with a solo musical performance. At this level they may need to be encouraged to talk about their chosen topic in more abstract or general terms, as Maaïke and Dan do here with friendship.



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Cambridge English: Proficiency (LEVEL C2) SPEAKING PRONUNCIATION	
Name of student Maaike (all four parts of the test)	
Are the answers clear? Can the speaker be generally understood?	
Good Clear and easily understood at all times.	Not so good
Is the speaker's intonation appropriate?	
Good Intonation is generally good and never gets in the way of the meaning. Gets more expressive as the test proceeds.	Not so good Not so much L1 interference as a certain monotony in the earlier stages.
Does the speaker use sentence stress correctly? Is word stress correct?	
Good Sentence stress and word stress is nearly always correct. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I think it's a very good picture</i> • <i>They really mean a lot to me</i> • <i>Honesty is very important</i> • <i>There can be many thjings that can break a friendship</i> 	Not so good
Are individual sounds clear? Are they correctly produced?	
Good Clear throughout and clearly produced	Not so good
Comments	
Pronunciation is clear and natural sounding all through the test..	



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INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	
Name of student Dan	
Does the speaker interact with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers?	
Good Many examples; perhaps the best is with the photographs (topic, competition) in Part 2, where the interaction with Maaïke is very spontaneous, quick-paced and natural.	Not so good
Does the speaker react appropriately to what the interlocutor or other candidate says?	
Good <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I agree to some extent, but...</i> • <i>You need to be honest, or else...</i> 	Not so good
Does the speaker keep the interaction going? Does the speaker say more than the minimum? Does the speaker involve the other candidate?	
Good In Part 2 particularly, Dan keeps the interaction moving with fairly short interventions in the form of comments or further questions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We've all been through that.</i> 	Not so good Dan is very good at involving his partner but his own contributions to the interaction tend occasionally to be quite short. He might have taken first turn more often.
Does the speaker try to widen the scope of the interaction and negotiate towards an outcome? Does the speaker need support?	
Good Dan negotiates towards an outcome in Part 2 (choosing a picture for a poster on the topic of competition). Dan widens the scope of the interaction on the topic of friendship, honesty with friends etc..	Not so good
Comments	
Introduces some new ideas, reacts naturally and appropriately to what partner says, involves partner in discussion, but does not usually make the first response. Contributions, while relevant, tend to be quite short initially, but his performance 'warms up as it goes along'.	

