GAC001 Academic English I: Listening and Speaking Skills

GAC Academic English

What this module is, and how it is marked

You hear a change to a club meeting, explain a plan to classmates, or help a group choose a room. In each situation, useful English connects a message to an action. A listener needs the right details. A speaker needs a clear point and a chance to check understanding.

This guide supports GAC001-aligned listening and speaking practice. Its six **themes** are communicating, countries and cultures, modern lifestyles, journeys and travel, living things, and technology. The theme gives you something to talk about; the language skill is the focus.

Your teacher's current task brief explains the assessment you must complete. It may include a **listening test**, a **short formal presentation**, a **discussion**, or **coursework**. Read that brief for the time, permitted materials, criteria and submission rules. This guide does not replace it or promise a score for a particular speaking habit.

The six companion exercise sheets are original practice, not official GAC assessments. Their written tasks use printed messages, planning records and model responses. They help you check meaning and plan speech. Reading a transcript does not test your ability to hear a recording. A typed answer cannot establish pronunciation, pace or spoken delivery. Use teacher-reviewed audio and actual speaking practice for those skills.

For a written practice answer, check three things: does it answer the question, does it preserve the supplied evidence, and can another person follow it? For a spoken task, ask a listener what they understood and compare their account with your intended message.

Communicating: text types and purpose

A **spoken text type** is a form of talk, such as an announcement, conversation, interview or lecture. Its **purpose** is what it tries to achieve. Its **audience** is the people it addresses. Its **formality** depends on the relationship and situation.

Formal speech often uses carefully organised language. **Informal** speech may use contractions and short turns. Neither form is always better. A formal speaker can still say "we'll", and a friendly conversation can give a precise instruction. Decide from several features, not one word alone.

An announcement usually gives information to a group. A conversation allows people to ask and respond. Compare these original examples:

Announcement: "Tuesday's reading club will meet in the library seminar room instead of room 204. The start remains 15:30."

Conversation: "Are we still meeting at half past three?" "Yes, but use the library seminar room this week."

Both give the same change. The second also shows a listener checking it. When you identify a text type, explain which features support your choice.

Signposts such as "first", "however" and "finally" help organise a message. They can show sequence, a contrast or a final point. They do not make every statement that follows equally important.

■ Worked example: a condition is not a general deadline

Suppose the announcement also says: "If you need step-free access, email the co-ordinator by Monday lunchtime." The deadline applies to students who need that access. It is not a deadline for everyone to join the club. A useful reminder preserves the condition: "Students who need step-free access should email by Monday lunchtime."

A weak reminder says "Everyone must email on Monday." It changes who must act and makes the timing less precise. Ask: who, what, when, where, and under what condition?

■ Try it

A tutor says: "The workshop remains on Friday. Only students borrowing a school tablet need to collect it on Thursday." Must every student collect a tablet? No. The collection instruction applies only to borrowers; the workshop day has not changed.

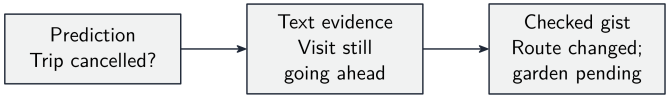
Countries and cultures: listening for meaning

Listening for gist means finding the overall point. **Listening for detail** means finding information needed for a particular question or action. A useful listener moves between these two purposes.

Before a recording, read the available task information. **Predict** likely topics or the kind of answer needed, such as a time or place. A prediction prepares your attention; it is not evidence that your guess is correct. When the speaker gives a different detail, use what was actually said.

Context clues are the surrounding words and situation that help explain a message. They can narrow possible meanings, but they do not always establish an exact definition. Mark an uncertain word and continue following the message. If

a second listening is allowed, return to that point. In a live conversation, ask for clarification.



■ Worked example: a changed route does not mean cancellation

A museum trip notice says the river path is blocked by a fallen tree. Visitors should use the hill entrance. The trip still goes ahead. An outdoor garden visit may be cancelled if the weather is unsafe; staff will decide on Saturday morning. Indoor galleries remain available.

The gist is "the trip continues with a changed route and a possible change to one activity". "The museum is closed" is not supported. "The garden visit is definitely cancelled" turns a possibility into a fact.

For detail, separate the times: meet at the school gate at 08:40; the bus leaves at 08:50; arrival is planned for 09:30. A reminder that gives only 08:50 may cause students to miss the meeting time.

■ Try it

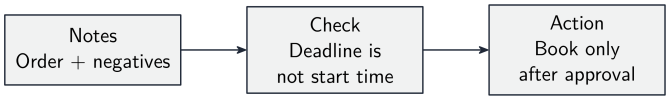
A speaker says: "We might move the discussion indoors if it rains." Which part is certain? There is a plan for a discussion and a possible indoor location. Rain and the move are not established by this sentence. Preserve "might" and "if" in your account.

Modern lifestyles: responding and following instructions

Following instructions means carrying out the required actions and respecting their conditions. Some actions must happen in order. Others are separate requirements. Listen for words such as "before", "after approval", "only if" and "once".

Note-taking is selective. Record the action, important details, conditions and questions. Short phrases and clear abbreviations can help, but do not shorten so much that you cannot understand your own notes later. A useful note might be "send tutor Thu 16:00; wait approval BEFORE booking".

Clarifying means asking about what is uncertain. Name the problem: "Is 16:00 the form deadline or the meeting time?" **Restating** means saying the message again in your own words so the speaker can check it. Neither requires pretending you understood everything.



■ Worked example: permission changes the sequence

A project briefing gives these instructions: download the blank form; save your own copy with the group code; complete the transport and access sections; send it to the tutor by Thursday at 16:00; wait for approval before booking a vehicle. Do not edit the shared blank form.

A suitable checklist preserves the private copy, both sections, the deadline and the approval condition. Booking a vehicle immediately after submission is a mistake: submission and approval are different events.

If the briefing time is shown only on a separate notice that you do not have, mark "briefing time: check notice". Do not turn the form deadline into a meeting time. An honest gap in your notes is safer than a confident invented detail.

■ Try it

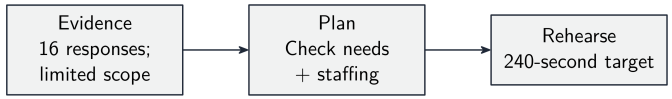
A teacher says: "Send me the equipment list today. Buy the materials only after I approve the list." A student sends the list and immediately buys materials. What is missing? The teacher's approval. Sending a request does not supply it.

Journeys and travel: preparing a short presentation

Start with the actual task: your purpose, audience, available time, permitted notes and expected evidence. Then plan an **introduction** that identifies the question, a **body** that develops it, and a **conclusion** that states the next step or main finding.

Prepare **transitions** between points: "The survey gives one view. However, it does not tell us about staffing." A transition should show a real relationship. Adding "therefore" does not make a conclusion valid.

A note card may contain a point, its evidence and a reminder of its limit. Practise aloud with a timer. Measure your own talk rather than guessing that a written script will always take a fixed extra time. If it runs long, remove repetition or reduce scope while keeping essential evidence and limits. Check the task rules before choosing how much to read from notes.



■ Worked example: a small poll is a starting point

A class poll on later library closing receives 16 responses: 10 prefer later hours, 4 prefer current hours, and 2 have no preference. You do not know what nonresponders think. You have no staffing or cost information, and no change has been approved. A careful claim is "Ten of the sixteen respondents preferred later hours." "Everybody wants later hours" goes beyond the evidence. A reasonable next step is to ask nonresponders and discuss staffing with the librarian.

For a four-minute classroom practice talk, one possible plan is 30 seconds opening, 60 seconds evidence, 90 seconds limits and options, 40 seconds next steps, and 20 seconds conclusion. This totals 240 seconds. It is an example allocation, not an official GAC timing rule. If rehearsal takes 4 minutes 40 seconds, it is 40 seconds over that practice limit. Cut repeated points and rehearse again.

■ Try it

Why should a speaker keep the sentence about nonresponders even when shortening the talk? It limits what the poll can show. Removing it may make a small set of responses sound like the whole class.

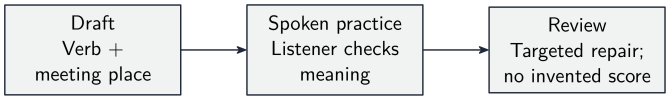
Living things: accuracy in interaction

Fluency is connected speech that a listener can follow. **Accuracy** includes using language forms that express the intended meaning. A practice activity may focus on one, but both support communication. A fluent answer can contain a wrong detail; an accurate sentence can still be hard to follow in a long, unclear explanation.

Word stress is the stronger beat in a word. For example, the noun "record" commonly has first-syllable stress, and the verb has second-syllable stress. **Intonation** is the pattern of voice pitch across a phrase. A yes-no question can use rising or falling-rising pitch depending on its meaning and context. Do not use "all questions rise" as a rule.

Self-correction can repair meaning: "He go–he goes to the lab on Tuesdays." A brief repair may help the listener. Constantly restarting every minor error can interrupt the message. There is no automatic score increase for every correction.

Turn-taking gives people opportunities to speak and respond. "Can I add a point about the room?" can open a turn. After someone responds, deal with their point rather than reciting your next prepared sentence.



■ Worked example: separate a wrong detail from an unknown cause

The intended message names lab 2. A partner's written note says lab 3. The note shows a mismatch, but it does not establish whether pronunciation, attention, noise or writing caused it. Without reviewed audio, you cannot grade the speaker's sounds from the typed sentence alone.

A practical repair is "The meeting is in lab 2, not lab 3. Could you say the room back to me?" The listener's response checks the detail. Practise the sentence aloud, then review the actual recording or delivery with your teacher if pronunciation remains a concern.

■ Try it

During a connected-speaking practice, a learner notices a minor grammar error. Must they stop the whole talk and restart? No. They can make a brief repair if meaning needs it, continue, and review selected errors afterwards. The exercise purpose and listener's needs guide the choice.

Technology: the formal discussion

Support a claim with relevant evidence and a reason connecting it to the decision. Identify limits. One person's preference is evidence of that person's view, not proof that everyone agrees.

Bring others in with a real invitation: "Mei, how does the room capacity affect your choice?" Listen to the answer. Polite disagreement can still be clear: "I understand why quiet matters, but this room holds only eight and we expect ten."

A **consensus** is a shared decision that the group has actually reached. Silence alone does not prove agreement. Ask participants to respond, summarise the proposed choice, and check for remaining concerns. A discussion decision is also different from permission or a confirmed booking.

■ Worked example: a preference is not a completed decision

Ten students are expected at a study meeting. The quiet library room holds eight, and its opening time is unconfirmed. Room 204 holds twelve, with a supervisor available until 17:00. The exact meeting start has not been set and neither room is booked. The task permits a choice between these two rooms.

A useful contribution is: “I prefer room 204 because it can hold ten people. We still need to check the start time and booking process. Dan, you preferred the library. Does its capacity change your view?” This connects the supplied numbers to the decision, keeps the outstanding checks, and invites a response.

“Everyone agrees, so I have booked it” invents both agreement and a booking. “Let’s use another room” leaves the two-room task unless the group obtains permission to change it. Speaking for most of the time does not itself make a useful contribution.

■ Try it

The group favours room 204, but one participant has not answered. What should happen before calling the decision shared? Invite that participant’s view and check whether anyone still objects. Then confirm the booking procedure and timing. A good discussion leaves the group with a decision it can explain and actions it can verify.

Vocabulary card meanings

themes: The main ideas that a text or a talk keeps returning to. listening test: An exam task in which marks come from what is heard. short formal presentation: A brief prepared talk in a polite, official style. Listening for gist: Listening for the overall idea rather than every detail. Listening for detail: Listening in order to catch specific facts, names or numbers. Predict: To guess what will come next before you hear or read it. Following instructions: Doing the steps in the order a speaker gives them. Note-taking: Writing short points while you listen or read. Clarifying: Asking or explaining so that a confused point becomes clear. Restating: Saying the same point again in new words. Self-correction: Fixing your own mistake while you are still speaking. Support a claim: Giving a reason or a fact that makes an opinion stronger. Bring others in: Inviting another person in the group to speak.