

# GAC001 Academic English I: Listening and Speaking Skills

GAC Academic English

## What this module is, and how it is marked

GAC001 is the listening and speaking half of Academic English at Level I. Its six units are **themes** 主题 — communicating, countries and cultures, modern lifestyles, journeys and travel, living things, technology — and the theme is only the material. What is assessed is the skill you practise on it.

Assessment is spoken and continuous. A typical set is a **listening test** 听力测试, a **short formal presentation** 正式演讲, participation in **discussion** 讨论 tasks, and **coursework** 平时作业. Nothing is a written examination, so the marks come from what you say and from what you understood.

- You are marked on **communication**, not on accent. Being understood, and re-pairing a misunderstanding, is the skill.
- △ A presentation read word for word from a script scores badly however good the English is. Prepare notes, not a text.

## Communicating: text types and purpose

The first unit sorts spoken English into kinds, because the kind tells you how to listen.

A **spoken text type** 口语语篇类型 is a recognisable form of talk: a conversation, an announcement, a lecture, an interview. Each has a **purpose** 目的 (to inform, to persuade, to entertain), an **audience** 听众, and a level of **formality** 正式程度.

- **Formal** 正式 English avoids contractions and slang, and uses full sentences: *We will begin by considering...*
- **Informal** 非正式 English is what a conversation actually sounds like: *So, first up...*
- Neither is better. Using the wrong one for the audience is the error.
- Listen for the **signposts** 提示语 that mark structure — *first, however, to sum up*. They tell you what is coming, which is more useful than any single word.

**Worked example.** Two openings on the same content.

*Announcement:* “The library will close at four o’clock on Friday for maintenance.”

*Conversation:* “Oh, by the way, don’t go to the library Friday afternoon — they’re shutting early.”

Same facts, different type. The first has no listener addressed and no reaction expected; the second has both. Naming the type is a marked skill, so practise saying which one you heard and why.

## Countries and cultures: listening for meaning

You will never catch every word, and you do not need to. Listening is selection.

- **Listening for gist** 泛听 is understanding the overall point on one pass. Ask “what is this mainly about?” and ignore the rest.
- **Listening for detail** 精听 is hunting for specific information — a date, a price, a name. Read the question first so you know what you are hunting for.
- **Predict** 预测 before you listen. Knowing the topic tells you which words are likely, and a word you expect is far easier to hear.
- Do not stop at a word you missed. **Keep going** — the sentence after it usually explains it, and stopping costs you the next three sentences too.
- **Context clues** 上下文线索 give you an unknown word’s meaning: what came before, what the speaker does next, the tone of voice.

## Modern lifestyles: responding and following instructions

The unit turns listening into doing, which is the hardest listening to fake.

- **Following instructions** 遵循指令 means acting on a sequence, in order. Listen for the ordering words (*first, then, once you have*) rather than trying to hold every noun.
- **Note-taking** 记笔记 while listening is selective: symbols and abbreviations, nouns and numbers, never full sentences. You cannot write and listen at the same speed.
- **Clarifying** 澄清 is a marked skill, not an admission of weakness. *Sorry, did you say fifteen or fifty?* is exactly the right move.
- **Restating** 转述 what you heard proves you understood: *So the deadline moved to Thursday, and we submit online.*

**Worked example.** You hear: “Take the second exit, go past the bank, and it’s opposite the post office — but if you reach the bridge you’ve gone too far.”

Useful notes: 2nd exit → past bank → opp. post office (X bridge = too far). Eight words and an arrow. Writing the sentence out would have lost the second half of it.

## Journeys and travel: preparing a short presentation

The Level I presentation is short and formal, and it is built rather than improvised.

- A presentation has three parts: **introduction** 引言 (what you will cover), **body** 主体 (two or three points), **conclusion** 结论 (what to remember).
- **Structure it out loud:** “I’ll cover three things. First... Second... Finally...” The audience cannot see your plan, so you say it.
- Use **notes**, cards or a slide with keywords. Never a full script.
- **Rehearse with a timer.** A four-minute talk written as text will run to seven when spoken.
- Prepare the **transitions** 过渡: moving between points is where an unrehearsed talk stalls.

## Living things: accuracy in interaction

This unit is about being accurate while you are actually speaking, which is harder than being accurate on paper.

- **Fluency** 流利度 is keeping going; **accuracy** 准确性 is getting the form right. Both are marked, and you improve them separately — a fluency drill should not stop for grammar.
- **Word stress** 重音 changes meaning: *REcord* the noun, *reCORD* the verb. Getting the stress wrong makes a correct word unrecognisable.
- **Intonation** 语调 carries the question. English rises at the end of a yes-no question, and a flat delivery can turn a question into a statement.
- **Self-correction** 自我纠正 is credited. *He go — he goes to the lab on Tuesdays.*
- **Turn-taking** 话轮转换 phrases keep a discussion moving: *Can I add something?*, *That’s a good point, but...*

## Technology: the formal discussion

The last unit puts everything into a group task, where you are marked for what you contribute.

- **Agree and disagree politely.** *I see what you mean, though I’d argue...* The disagreement is fine; the bluntness is what costs marks.
- **Support a claim** 支持观点 with a reason and an example. An opinion with neither is not an argument.
- **Bring others in** 邀请他人发言: *Wei, you’ve used that app — what did you think?* Listening is visible in a discussion, and examiners look for it.

- Work towards a **consensus** 共识 when the task asks for one. Reaching a decision is the task, not winning the argument.
- △ Dominating a discussion loses marks as surely as silence. The skill is interaction.

**Worked example.** A group must agree on one technology that most changed student life.

*Weak contribution:* “I think the phone. It is very useful and everyone has one.”

*Strong contribution:* “I’d argue for the phone, mainly because it replaced four devices at once — camera, dictionary, timetable, bank. Anna, you said the laptop earlier: does the laptop do anything students actually do every hour?”

The second gives a reason, a concrete example, and hands the turn on with a real question. That is what the mark scheme means by contributing to a discussion.