

Speaking practice cards. These original topics are practice material, not official test questions. Choose a card, take one minute to prepare brief notes, then practise a two-minute response. Develop a real example instead of reciting a model. Use the discussion questions to practise explaining a wider view. A printed or typed answer cannot establish a pronunciation score.

1. Describe a teacher who influenced you.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- who the teacher was
- what subject they taught
- what they did that was different
- and explain why they influenced you

Discussion: What makes someone a good teacher?

Discussion: Has the role of a teacher changed since your parents were at school?

Discussion: Do you think students learn more from teachers or from each other?

Discussion: Should teachers be paid according to their students’ results?

2. Describe a journey you remember.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where you went
- who you went with
- what happened on the way
- and explain why you remember it

Discussion: Why do people enjoy travelling to new places?

Discussion: Has cheap air travel been good for the places people visit?

Discussion: Do you think people will travel less in the future?

Discussion: Is it better to travel alone or with others?

3. Describe a skill you learned that took a long time.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the skill was
- how you learned it
- what was difficult about it
- and explain why you kept going

Discussion: Are some skills easier to learn as a child?

Discussion: Should schools teach practical skills as well as academic subjects?

Discussion: Why do people give up on things they are learning?

Discussion: Is it better to learn from a teacher or from the internet?

4. Describe a building you like.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where it is
- what it looks like
- what it is used for
- and explain why you like it

Discussion: What makes a building beautiful?

Discussion: Should old buildings be protected even when they are not useful?

Discussion: How have the buildings in your city changed in the last twenty years?

Discussion: Do the buildings people live in affect how they feel?

5. Describe a decision you had to make.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the decision was
- what the choices were
- who helped you
- and explain how you decided

Discussion: Do people make better decisions alone or in a group?

Discussion: Should young people make their own decisions about their education?

Discussion: Why do people sometimes regret decisions that were sensible at the time?

Discussion: Is it possible to make good decisions quickly?

6. Describe something you own that is important to you.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what it is
- how you got it
- how often you use it
- and explain why it matters to you

Discussion: Why do people become attached to objects?

Discussion: Do people own more things than they used to?

Discussion: Is it better to repair something or replace it?

Discussion: Do advertisements change what people want to own?

7. Describe a change in your life that turned out well.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what changed
- when it happened
- how you felt at the time
- and explain why it turned out well

Discussion: Why do people find change difficult?

Discussion: Are young people more willing to change than older people?

Discussion: Should governments try to slow down social change?

Discussion: What kinds of change are hardest to adapt to?

8. Describe a meal you will not forget.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where you ate it
- who you were with
- what you ate
- and explain why you remember it

Discussion: Why do families in many countries eat together less than they used to?

Discussion: Is traditional food disappearing?

Discussion: Should schools teach children to cook?

Discussion: Do people in your country spend a lot on eating out?

9. Describe a time someone helped you.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- who helped you
- what the situation was
- what they did
- and explain how you felt afterwards

Discussion: Why do some people find it hard to ask for help?

Discussion: Should schools encourage students to help each other?

Discussion: Do people help strangers less in big cities?

Discussion: Is volunteering common in your country?

10. Describe a website or app you use often.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what it is
- what you use it for
- how often you use it
- and explain why it is useful to you

Discussion: Do people rely on technology too much?

Discussion: How has the internet changed the way people learn?

Discussion: Should there be limits on how much data companies collect?

Discussion: Will people still use phones in twenty years?

11. Describe a quiet place you like to go.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where it is
- how often you go there
- what you do there
- and explain why it is important to you

Discussion: Is it harder to find quiet places than it used to be?

Discussion: Does noise affect how well people work?

Discussion: Should cities have more parks?

Discussion: Do people need time alone?

12. Describe a piece of news you remember hearing.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the news was
- where you heard it
- how you reacted
- and explain why it stayed with you

Discussion: Where do most people get their news now?

Discussion: Is it possible to know whether a news story is true?

Discussion: Should the news be free for everyone?

Discussion: Do people follow international news as closely as local news?

13. Describe a plan you have for the next few years.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the plan is
- when you made it
- what you need to do first
- and explain why it matters to you

Discussion: Do people plan further ahead than they used to?

Discussion: Is it useful to have a long-term plan?

Discussion: Why do so many plans not work out?

Discussion: Should governments plan decades ahead?

14. Describe a rule you disagree with.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the rule is
- who made it
- who it affects
- and explain why you disagree with it

Discussion: Why do organisations need rules?

Discussion: Should students help decide the rules at their school?

Discussion: What happens when a rule is widely ignored?

Discussion: Are rules in your country stricter than they used to be?

15. Describe a place where you like to study or work.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where it is
- when you go there
- what it is like
- and explain why you work well there

Discussion: Do people work better at home or in an office?

Discussion: How important is the design of a workplace?

Discussion: Will most people work from home in the future?

Discussion: Do long working hours make people more productive?

16. Describe a photograph you like.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what is in it
- who took it
- when it was taken
- and explain why you like it

Discussion: Why do people take so many photographs now?

Discussion: Do photographs change how we remember things?

Discussion: Should people be allowed to photograph anyone in public?

Discussion: Is photography an art?

17. Describe a time you changed your opinion about something.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what your original opinion was
- what made you reconsider it
- what you thought afterwards
- and explain why changing your opinion mattered

Discussion: Why can people find it difficult to admit they were wrong?

Discussion: What makes evidence persuasive?

Discussion: Should schools encourage students to question their first answers?

Discussion: Can a person change an opinion without losing confidence?

18. Describe something you repaired or helped to repair.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the item was
- what was wrong with it
- how you approached the repair
- and explain how you felt about the result

Discussion: Why do some people replace things instead of repairing them?

Discussion: Which practical skills would be useful to teach at school?

Discussion: How can a repair service make its limits clear?

Discussion: Should manufacturers make products easier to repair?

19. Describe a book you borrowed and enjoyed.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the book was about
- where you borrowed it
- what you particularly remember
- and explain why you enjoyed it

Discussion: What are the advantages of borrowing rather than buying books?

Discussion: How can a library help readers choose suitable books?

Discussion: Does reading on a screen change how people choose material?

Discussion: Should readers finish a book they do not enjoy?

20. Describe a piece of art you saw in a public place.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where you saw it
- what it looked like
- how people responded to it
- and explain what you thought of it

Discussion: What can public art add to an ordinary space?

Discussion: Who should decide which artworks appear in public places?

Discussion: Can art be useful even when people disagree about it?

Discussion: How might the location change someone's response to an artwork?

21. Describe a routine you started that has been useful.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the routine involves
- when you started it
- how you fitted it into your day
- and explain why it has been useful

Discussion: Why do people sometimes abandon a new routine?

Discussion: Is a small change easier to maintain than a large one?

Discussion: How can a routine help without making life too rigid?

Discussion: Should schools give students more control over daily schedules?

22. Describe an event you helped to organise.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the event was
- what you were responsible for
- what difficulty you encountered
- and explain what you learned from the experience

Discussion: What makes an event easy for visitors to navigate?

Discussion: How should a team divide organising tasks?

Discussion: Why is it useful to have a backup plan?

Discussion: How can organisers learn from an event after it finishes?

23. Describe a resource you shared with other people.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the resource was
- who shared it
- how you arranged its use
- and explain what made the arrangement work or fail

Discussion: What kinds of resources are suitable for sharing?

Discussion: Why do shared resources need clear rules?

Discussion: How can a group handle unequal demand fairly?

Discussion: Does ownership always make people take better care of something?

24. Describe a walk you enjoyed near where you live.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where you walked
- who you were with
- what you noticed along the way
- and explain why you enjoyed the walk

Discussion: What makes a neighbourhood pleasant to walk through?

Discussion: Why might people overlook places close to home?

Discussion: Should walking routes serve visitors and residents differently?

Discussion: How can local information change someone’s experience of a familiar place?

25. Describe a plant you grew or helped to look after.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the plant was
- where it was kept
- what you did to look after it
- and explain what you learned from the experience

Discussion: Why might people enjoy growing plants in small spaces?

Discussion: What can students learn from maintaining a garden?

Discussion: How should a shared garden divide responsibilities?

Discussion: Can enthusiasm replace the need for practical knowledge?

26. Describe a public facility you find useful.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the facility is
- where it is
- how you use it
- and explain why it is useful to you

Discussion: How should a town decide which facilities to fund first?

Discussion: Why does opening time affect a facility’s usefulness?

Discussion: Can a free facility still be difficult to access?

Discussion: How can users give useful feedback about a public service?

27. Describe a piece of advice that you found useful.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- who gave you the advice
- what the advice was
- when you used it
- and explain why it helped

Discussion: What makes advice easier to act on?

Discussion: Should advice always be based on personal experience?

Discussion: Why might the same advice help one person but not another?

Discussion: How can someone disagree with advice politely?

28. Describe a time a plan did not go as you expected.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you had planned
- what went wrong
- what you did afterwards
- and explain what you would do differently next time

Discussion: Why do people underestimate how long a task will take?

Discussion: What makes a backup plan realistic?

Discussion: Should people explain a delay before they know how to solve it?

Discussion: How can a team recover when one task is late?

29. Describe a problem you solved with a team.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the problem was
- who was involved
- how you reached a solution
- and explain what made the teamwork useful

Discussion: When is a team more useful than working alone?

Discussion: How can quieter members contribute to a discussion?

Discussion: What should a team do when its first solution fails?

Discussion: Does a good team always need one leader?

30. Describe a tradition that is important to your family.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what your family does
- when you do it
- how you take part
- and explain why it matters to you

Discussion: Why do some family traditions continue while others change?

Discussion: Should younger people be allowed to adapt traditions?

Discussion: Can a small everyday habit become a tradition?

Discussion: How can families include people who live far away?

31. Describe a demonstration that helped you understand something.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- where you saw it
- what was demonstrated
- what you noticed
- and explain how it changed your understanding

Discussion: Why can a demonstration be easier to remember than an explanation?

Discussion: What are the limitations of learning from one demonstration?

Discussion: Should students make predictions before seeing a result?

Discussion: How can a presenter make a demonstration accessible to a large audience?

32. Describe a simple tool that you use regularly.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the tool is
- how you obtained it
- what you use it for
- and explain why you prefer it

Discussion: Why do simple tools sometimes remain useful despite new technology?

Discussion: What makes a tool easy for a beginner to use?

Discussion: Should people learn a manual method before an automated one?

Discussion: How can a tool influence the way someone approaches a task?

33. Describe a day when you had several important things to do.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what the tasks were
- how you decided their order
- what you could not finish
- and explain how you felt at the end of the day

Discussion: How should people choose between urgent and important tasks?

Discussion: Why is it difficult to estimate a realistic daily workload?

Discussion: When is it useful to ask someone else for help?

Discussion: Can a successful day include unfinished work?

34. Describe a small action you took to reduce waste.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you changed
- what prompted the change
- what difficulties you encountered
- and explain whether you continued doing it

Discussion: Why do small environmental habits sometimes fail to continue?

Discussion: How can organisations make a less wasteful choice convenient?

Discussion: Should environmental claims explain the limits of an action?

Discussion: How can a school check whether a waste-reduction project actually helped?

35. Describe a purchase you thought about carefully before making.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you wanted to buy
- what you compared
- how you made your decision
- and explain whether the purchase met your needs

Discussion: Why can a large number of choices make a decision harder?

Discussion: How useful are reviews when choosing a product?

Discussion: Should a low price be the main reason for a purchase?

Discussion: How can advertising influence what people think they need?

36. Describe an interesting conversation you did not expect to have.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- who you spoke with
- where the conversation happened
- what you discussed
- and explain why it stayed in your memory

Discussion: What makes a conversation more than an exchange of information?

Discussion: How can people ask questions without making someone uncomfortable?

Discussion: Why might people from different generations misunderstand each other?

Discussion: Do digital messages make unexpected conversations easier or harder?

37. Describe something you learned about the history of your area.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you learned
- where the information came from
- how you checked or explored it
- and explain why it interested you

Discussion: What sources can help people learn about local history?

Discussion: Why is it useful to distinguish a memory from a written record?

Discussion: Should changes to an area preserve signs of its past?

Discussion: How can a local history project include different experiences?

38. Describe a small success that was important to you.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you were trying to do
- what made it difficult
- how you achieved it
- and explain why it mattered to you

Discussion: Why can a small achievement matter more than a public prize?

Discussion: How should people measure progress on a difficult task?

Discussion: Can comparison with others reduce motivation?

Discussion: What kind of encouragement helps someone continue practising?

39. Describe feedback that helped you improve something.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you were working on
- who gave you the feedback
- what they pointed out
- and explain how you used their comments

Discussion: What makes feedback specific enough to be useful?

Discussion: Should feedback focus on every mistake at once?

Discussion: Why might people react defensively to helpful comments?

Discussion: How can someone check whether a revision actually improved the work?

40. Describe a time you had to understand unfamiliar instructions.

Prepare brief notes on these points, then give your own response.

- what you were trying to do
- why the instructions were difficult
- how you clarified them
- and explain what you learned

Discussion: What makes instructions clear for a beginner?

Discussion: When is a diagram more useful than a written explanation?

Discussion: Should people ask for help before trying a task themselves?

Discussion: How can someone test whether instructions are easy to follow?