

General Description

Paper Format

The paper contains four parts.

The standard format is two candidates and two examiners.

One examiner acts as both interlocutor and assessor and manages the interaction either by asking questions or providing cues for candidates. The other acts as assessor and does not join in the conversation.

Task Types

Short exchanges with the examiner and with the other candidate; a one minute 'long turn'; a collaborative task involving the two candidates.

Task Focus

Exchanging personal and factual information, expressing and finding out about attitudes and opinions.

Timing

Approximately 14 minutes.

Marks

Candidates are assessed on their performance throughout the test.

Part	Task Format		Candidate Output	
	Interaction Pattern	Input	Discourse Features	Functions
Part 1 Interview three minutes	Interlocutor interviews candidates	Spoken questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding to questions expanding on responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving personal information talking about present circumstances talking about past experience talking about future plans
Part 2 Individual long turn four minutes	Interlocutor delegates an individual task to each candidate	Visual stimuli, with spoken prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustaining a long turn managing discourse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> coherence organisation of language & ideas appropriacy of vocabulary clarity of message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> giving information expressing opinions through comparing & contrasting
Part 3 Two-way collaborative task three minutes	Interlocutor delegates a collaborative task to the pair of candidates	Visual stimuli, with spoken prompts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turn-taking (initiating & responding appropriately) negotiating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exchanging information & opinions expressing & justifying opinions agreeing and/or disagreeing suggesting speculating
Part 4 Three-way discussion four minutes	Interlocutor leads a discussion with the two candidates	Spoken questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responding appropriately developing topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> exchanging information & opinions expressing & justifying opinions agreeing and/or disagreeing

The paired format of the FCE Speaking Test (two examiners and two candidates) aims to offer candidates the opportunity to demonstrate, in a controlled but friendly environment, their ability to use their spoken language skills effectively. The test takes 14 minutes. One examiner, the interlocutor, conducts the test and gives a global assessment of each candidate's performance. The other, the assessor, does not take any part in the interaction but focuses solely on listening to, and making an assessment of, the candidates' oral proficiency.

The test consists of four parts, each of which is assessed. Each part of the test focuses on a different type of interaction: between the interlocutor and each candidate, between the two candidates, and among all three. The patterns of discourse vary within each part of the test.

It is essential that students are able to participate in pair and group activities effectively, showing sensitivity to turn-taking and responding appropriately to their partners.

During classroom activities, students should be told to speak clearly and audibly so that they can be heard, and to paraphrase effectively when they do not know or cannot remember a word. Students should be familiar with the timing and the focus of each part of the test. They should be able to handle the whole test confidently, yet should feel free to ask for clarification of instructions where needed.

At the end of the Speaking Test, candidates are thanked for attending, but are given no indication of the level of their achievement.

Part 1

This part of the test gives candidates the opportunity to show their ability to give basic personal information about themselves, e.g. family life, daily routines, free-time activities etc. Candidates are expected to respond to the interlocutor's questions, and to listen to what their partner has to say.

The candidates do not need to talk to each other in this part of the test, though they may if they wish.

Candidates who find opportunities to socialise with others in an English-speaking environment will be well prepared for this part of the test. Candidates should be discouraged from preparing rehearsed speeches. This tactic is easy to spot as answers become over-long and unnatural.

Part 2

In this part of the test, candidates are given the opportunity to speak for one minute without interruption. Each candidate is asked to compare and contrast two colour photographs, commenting on the pictures and giving some personal

reaction to them. They are not required to describe the photographs in detail.

Candidates are expected to show their ability to organise their thoughts and ideas, and express themselves coherently in appropriate language. Candidates should pay attention while their partner is speaking, as they are asked to comment briefly (for about 20 seconds) after their partner has spoken. Candidates should be made aware, however, that they should not speak during their partner's long turn.

Candidates will always be asked to 'compare and contrast' two photographs. They will also be asked to say something which relates directly to the focus of the photographs. They should be taught to listen carefully and carry out this instruction or they may find it difficult to speak for a full minute.

Any thematically linked pairs of photographs, e.g. cut from magazines and given a focus by the teacher, will provide good practice for this part of the test. For example, a teacher might choose photographs of two different types of holiday and ask candidates to compare and contrast the photographs and say what sort of holiday they would expect to have in the different places.

Candidates should be timed as they need a feel for how long one minute is and candidates who do not practise this may find that they finish the task too quickly.

Part 3

The candidates are given oral instructions and provided with a visual stimulus (one or several photographs / artwork / computer graphics, etc.) to form the basis for a task which they carry out together. Candidates are expected to work towards a negotiated completion of the task and it is this interaction that counts, rather than the actual completion of the task.

The task gives candidates the opportunity to show their own range of language and their ability to invite the opinions and ideas of their partner. There is no right or wrong answer to the task.

Candidates need to be able to interact with each other in order to carry out the task. All classroom discussion in pairs and small groups, therefore, provides excellent preparation. Candidates should be taught to make positive contributions to move the discussion forward and show a willingness to turn-take, inviting others to speak and listening and responding, as well as initiating discussion themselves. In classroom activities, one student in each group could be made responsible for ensuring that every member of the group gets an equal opportunity to speak, so that students become alerted to the importance of turn-taking.

Part 4

In this part of the test, the interlocutor again directs the interaction by asking questions which encourage the candidates to broaden and discuss further the topics introduced in Part 3.

In order to be able to make a fair and accurate assessment of each candidate's performance, the examiners must be given a reasonable amount of language to assess and this part of the test gives candidates a final opportunity to show what they are capable of. Candidates must, therefore, be taught to provide full but natural answers to the questions asked. Candidates need to be encouraged to give opinions about everyday situations and current events so that they are able to participate fully.

NB In cases where there is an uneven number of candidates at a centre, the last Speaking Test of the session will be taken by three candidates together instead of two. The test format, test materials and procedure will remain unchanged but the timing will be longer: twenty minutes instead of fourteen.

Throughout the test, candidates are assessed on their own individual performance, not in relation to each other, according to the following criteria: Grammar and Vocabulary, Discourse Management, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication. These criteria should be interpreted within the overall context of the Cambridge Common Scale for Speaking (page 49), where FCE is at Level 3.

Both examiners assess the candidates. The assessor applies detailed Analytical Scales, and the interlocutor applies a Global Scale, which is a less detailed scale based on the Analytical Scales.

Grammar and Vocabulary (Accuracy and Appropriacy)

On this scale, candidates are awarded marks for the accurate and appropriate use of syntactic forms and vocabulary in order to meet the task requirements. At FCE level, candidates are expected to know enough grammar and vocabulary to produce accurate and appropriate language without continual pauses to search for words or structures.

The appropriacy and range of the candidates' vocabulary are assessed on this scale, but it should be noted that only the accuracy of the grammar is assessed here as the range of grammatical structures is assessed under Discourse Management.

Discourse Management (Range, Coherence and Extent)

In this scale, examiners are looking for evidence of the candidates' ability to express ideas in coherent, connected speech.

The FCE speaking tasks require candidates to construct sentences and produce utterances (extended as appropriate) in order to convey information and to express or justify opinions. The candidates' ability to maintain a coherent flow of language with an appropriate range of linguistic resources over several utterances is assessed here.

Pronunciation (Individual Sounds and Prosodic Features)

This refers to the ability to produce comprehensible utterances to fulfil the task requirements, i.e. it refers to the production of individual sounds, the appropriate linking of words, and the use of stress and intonation to convey the intended meaning.

First language accents are acceptable, provided communication is not impeded. It is recognised that at FCE level, even in the top assessment band, candidates' pronunciation will be influenced by features of their first language.

Interactive Communication (Turn-taking, Initiating and Responding)

This refers to the ability to interact by responding and initiating appropriately and at the required speed and rhythm

to fulfil the task requirements. It includes the ability to use functional language and strategies to maintain or repair interaction, e.g. in conversational turn-taking.

Candidates should be able to maintain the coherence of the discussion and may, if necessary, ask the interlocutor or the other candidate for clarification.

The ability of the candidates to initiate and respond appropriately while also displaying some sensitivity to the norms of turn-taking is assessed here. Positive contributions to the development of the task, i.e. a willingness and an ability to develop the task and move it towards a conclusion rather than supplying minimal responses, are also rewarded here.

Typical Minimum Adequate Performance

A typical minimum adequate performance at FCE level can be summarised as follows:

Although there are some inaccuracies, grammar and vocabulary are sufficiently accurate in dealing with the tasks. Mostly coherent, with some extended discourse. Can generally be understood. Able to maintain the interaction and deal with the tasks without major prompting.

Assessment is based on performance in the whole test, and is not related to performance in particular parts of the test. The assessor awards marks for each of the four criteria listed above. The interlocutor awards each candidate one global mark.

In many countries, Oral Examiners are assigned to teams, each of which is led by a Team Leader who may be responsible for approximately fifteen Oral Examiners. Team Leaders give advice and support to Oral Examiners, as required.

The Team Leaders are responsible to a Senior Team Leader who is the professional representative of UCLES for the Speaking Tests. Senior Team Leaders are appointed by UCLES and attend an annual co-ordination and development session in the U.K. Team Leaders are appointed by the Senior Team Leader in consultation with the local administration.

After initial training of examiners, standardisation of marking is maintained by both bi-annual examiner co-ordination sessions and by monitoring visits to centres by Team Leaders. During co-ordination sessions, examiners watch and discuss sample Paper 5 Speaking Tests recorded on video and then conduct practice tests with volunteer 'candidates' in order to establish a common standard of assessment.

The sample tests on video are selected to demonstrate a range of task types and different levels of competence, and are pre-marked by a team of experienced assessors.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 5
CPE Fully operational command of the spoken language.
 Able to handle communication in most situations, including unfamiliar or unexpected ones.
 Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express complex ideas and concepts and produce extended discourse that is coherent and always easy to follow.
 Rarely produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
 Pronunciation is easily understood and prosodic features are used effectively; many features, including pausing and hesitation, are 'native-like'.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 4
CAE Good operational command of the spoken language.
 Able to handle communication in most situations.
 Able to use accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce discourse that is generally coherent.
 Occasionally produces inaccuracies and inappropriacies.
 Maintains a flow of language with only natural hesitation resulting from considerations of appropriacy or expression.
 L1 accent may be evident but does not affect the clarity of the message.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 3
FCE Generally effective command of the spoken language.
 Able to handle communication in familiar situations.
 Able to organise extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
 Maintains a flow of language, although hesitation may occur whilst searching for language resources.
 Although pronunciation is easily understood, L1 features may be intrusive.
 Does not require major assistance or prompting by an interlocutor.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 2 (Threshold)
PET Limited but effective command of the spoken language.
 Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.
 Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
 Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.
 Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.
 Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

CAMBRIDGE LEVEL 1 (Waystage)
KET Basic command of the spoken language.
 Able to convey basic meaning in very familiar or highly predictable situations.
 Produces utterances which tend to be very short – words or phrases – with frequent hesitations and pauses.
 Dependent on rehearsed or formulaic phrases with limited generative capacity.
 Only able to produce limited extended discourse.
 Pronunciation is heavily influenced by L1 features and may at times be difficult to understand.
 Requires prompting and assistance by an interlocutor to prevent communication from breaking down.

Pre-Waystage Level

Zero

First Certificate in English
Speaking Test

Part 1 (3 minutes)

Interlocutor

Good morning / afternoon / evening. My name is and this is my colleague

He / she is just going to listen to us.

Could I have your mark sheets, please?

Thank you.

So, you are and? Thank you.

First of all, we'd like to know something about you, so I'm going to ask you some questions about yourselves.

either: (for UK-based candidates)

- Where are you from (Candidate A)? and you (Candidate B)?

or: (for candidates taking the Speaking Test locally)

- (Candidate A), do you live in (name of town where examination is being held)?
- What do you like about living (here / name of candidate's home town)?
- And what about you (Candidate B)?

(Select one or more questions from each of the following categories as appropriate.)

House and Home

- Do you live in a house or an apartment? What's it like?
- Can you tell us something about your neighbourhood?

Daily Life

- Do you have a regular pattern to your day? What usually happens?
- What do you normally do at the weekend?

Education

- What do you like most about your school?
- or: (if candidate has left school)
- What was your school like?

Languages

- How do you think you will use English in the future?
- Do you speak any other languages?

Likes and Dislikes

- What kind of books do you like to read?
- Do you play a musical instrument?

Travel

- How do you normally travel to work / school?
- Where do you spend your holidays?

First Certificate in English
Speaking Test

Part 2 (4 minutes)

- 17 Families
- 18 Something Special

Interlocutor

[17]

Now, I'd like each of you to talk on your own for about a minute.

I'm going to give each of you two different photographs and I'd like you to talk about them. (Candidate A), here are your two photographs. **They show families spending time together.**

[Hand over picture sheet 17 to (Candidate A).]

Please let (Candidate B) see them.

(Candidate B), I'll give you your photographs in a minute.

(Candidate A), I'd like you to compare and contrast these photographs, and **say how important you think it is for families to spend time together.**

Remember, you have only about a minute for this, so don't worry if I interrupt you. All right?

Candidate A

⌚ 1 minute

Interlocutor

Thank you. [Retrieve photographs.]

(Candidate B), do you think family occasions are always enjoyable?

Candidate B

⌚ 20 seconds

Interlocutor

Thank you.

Now, (Candidate B), here are your two photographs. **They show people who have done something special.** Please let (Candidate A) have a look at them.

[Hand over picture sheet 18 to (Candidate B).]

I'd like you to compare and contrast these photographs, and **say which person you think has worked harder.**

Remember, (Candidate B), you have only about a minute for this, so don't worry if I interrupt you. All right?

Candidate B

⌚ 1 minute

Interlocutor

Thank you. [Retrieve photographs.]

(Candidate A), have you ever done something special?

Candidate A

⌚ 20 seconds

Interlocutor

Thank you.





waiter

receptionist

porter

cleaner



pianist

chef

barman

**First Certificate in English
Speaking Test**

21 Hotel Staff

Parts 3 & 4

Part 3 (3 minutes)

Interlocutor Now, I'd like you to talk about something together for about three minutes. I'm just going to listen.

I'd like you to imagine that a busy international hotel is looking for staff for the holiday season. Here are some of the jobs available.

[Place picture sheet 21 in front of the candidates.]

First, talk to each other about how difficult it would be to do these jobs without training. Then say which job you would each find the most difficult.

You have only about three minutes for this. So, once again, don't worry if I stop you, and please speak so that we can hear you. All right?

.....

Candidates A & B
⌚ 3 minutes

Interlocutor Thank you.
[Retrieve picture sheet 21.]

Part 4 (4 minutes)

Interlocutor *[Select any of the following questions as appropriate.]*

- If you worked in a hotel, where would you like that hotel to be?
- What do you think you would learn from working in a hotel?
- Would you prefer to stay in a big international hotel or a small friendly hotel? Why?
- Would you like a job in the tourist industry? Why (not)?
- Which areas do tourists normally go to in your country? What do they do there?
- In what ways can tourists be a problem?

Thank you. That is the end of the test.
[Check that all test materials have been replaced in the file.]

COMMON QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

GENERAL

What is the mark allocation for each paper?

Each paper is equally weighted at 40 marks.

What is the pass mark?

To pass the examination with Grade C it is necessary to achieve approximately 60% of the total marks available (200).

Must candidates achieve a pass on each paper to pass the examination?

No. Candidates cannot pass or fail any individual paper. The candidate's grade is based on their total score from all five papers. There are no 'hurdles' or minimum levels of achievement required.

Can candidates make notes on the question paper?

Yes, but their notes won't be marked.

Is the use of dictionaries allowed?

No.

PAPER 1 READING

What is the mark allocation?

Each task is weighted approximately equally. For Parts 1, 2 and 3, each question is worth two marks and in Part 4, each question is worth one mark.

As the Paper is 1 hour 15 minutes long, what would be the recommended timing for each Part?

Some tasks may take longer than others, depending how you approach them, but it is worth remembering that each task is worth approximately equal marks (after weighting of Parts 1, 2 and 3).

If candidates make a mistake in filling in their answer sheets, is this picked up by the computer?

If they fill in more than one lozenge for a question, the computer rejects the answer sheet, which is then dealt with on an individual basis. Checks are in place to identify incomplete answer sheets, which are also then checked.

Do questions in Part 2 (multiple-choice task) follow the order of the text?

Yes, with global questions at the end.

Can the task in Part 3 be a mixture of gapped sentences and paragraphs?

No, the text will have either sentences or paragraphs removed, but not both in the same task.

What about the danger in Part 1 or Part 3, for example, that if a candidate makes one mistake, this may have a knock-on effect on at least one other question?

The statistical analysis produced when material is pretested shows whether candidates are choosing wrong answers, so this potential problem can be spotted in advance and unsuitable materials are not included on the paper.

PAPER 2 WRITING

How long do the set books remain on the list?

They are normally retained for two years.

The set books for **2001** are:

Agatha Christie, *Best Detective Stories of Agatha Christie* (Longman Fiction)

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (Longman Fiction or Oxford Bookworms)

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Longman Fiction, Penguin Readers or any edition)

George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Longman Fiction or any edition)

Charles & Mary Lamb, *More Tales from Shakespeare* (Longman Fiction or Penguin Readers)

The set books for **2002** are:

Agatha Christie, *Best Detective Stories of Agatha Christie* (Longman Fiction)

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Longman Fiction, Penguin Readers or any edition)

George Orwell, *Animal Farm* (Longman Fiction or any edition)

Charles & Mary Lamb, *More Tales from Shakespeare* (Longman Fiction or Penguin Readers)

Jules Verne, *Round the World in Eighty Days* (Penguin Readers or any edition)

Refer to the Examination Regulations for up-to-date information.

Is each part worth equal marks?

Yes.

If candidates include the address when writing a letter, will they be penalised?

Candidates do not need to include addresses in the letter-writing tasks, and it will only be a waste of the space provided if they do so. However, they will not lose any marks for it.

Will supplementary answer paper be provided for candidates with large handwriting?

Candidates can use the blank pages in the question booklet to make notes, or finish their answers, if necessary. Supplementary answer paper will also be provided if necessary.

Will there always be a report task included in Part 2?

Not necessarily. Part 2 will always have three different tasks, plus a choice of two tasks on the set books in Question 5.

Don't short story tasks sometimes demand too much creativity?

It is not expected that candidates should need to be particularly creative or imaginative; their main aim should be to carry out the instructions of the task. However, some candidates do like to be given the opportunity to use their imagination.

Taking into account the age and background of the candidates, isn't it possible that there may be only one realistic option in Part 2 for some candidates?

The range of tasks in Part 2 are designed to cater for the wide variety of FCE candidates. Well-prepared candidates will be able to find some choice. Trialling of Paper 2 tasks helps predict more or less popular topics and tasks.

PAPER 3 USE OF ENGLISH

How are the key word transformations (Part 3) marked?

Each transformation is divided into two parts, each worth one mark, so a candidate may score 0, 1 or 2 marks depending on the accuracy of the response.

If candidates write two possible answers to a question, how are they marked?

If both are correct, the candidate is awarded the mark(s); if one is incorrect, no marks are awarded. (This is also the same for the Listening Paper.)

Are contractions (e.g. didn't, won't, etc.) counted as one word?

No. To count the number of words, the full form should be taken into account, i.e. didn't = did not = 2 words.

What if the answer is right, but a candidate has misspelt it?

All spellings must be correct in Paper 3.

PAPER 4 LISTENING

Is there any background noise on the tape?

No. Sound effects may be used to 'set the scene', but are not used while there is speech.

In Part 2 does spelling have to be correct?

Some common low-level words are expected to be correct. Otherwise, minor errors are not penalised.

How do you guarantee that the different versions are all equal in difficulty?

For security purposes, there are several versions of the Listening Test in use at each session. As for the other papers, the material for the Listening Tests is pretested in advance, in order to check that it is suitable in terms of content as well as levels of difficulty. At the Question paper construction stage, papers are put together at the same level of difficulty, as shown by pretesting statistics. After the examination has been taken, before grading takes place, the Listening Test results are analysed and the average marks gained by candidates in each test are compared.

PAPER 5 SPEAKING

Is Part 1 assessed?

The examiners assess performance throughout the whole test.

Is 2:2 the only possible format?

The standard format is two examiners and two candidates, and wherever possible, this will be the form which the Speaking Test will take. At centres with an uneven number of candidates, the last candidate will form a group of three with the previous pair of candidates. In exceptional circumstances and emergencies only a 1:1 test format will be allowed.

Are candidates from the same school paired together?

In some centres candidates from the same school are paired together. However, where candidates from a number of different schools are entered at the same centre, some candidates may find that they are paired with a candidate from another school. Candidates should check with the centre through which they are entering for the local procedure.

Does knowing your partner make it easier or harder to do well?

There is no evidence to suggest that candidates perform better in an UCLES EFL Speaking Test when examined with someone they know or vice versa. Some candidates feel relaxed and confident when paired with someone they know, others may feel inhibited. In both cases, the examiners are trained to provide equal opportunities for all candidates to perform to the best of their ability.

Does it matter if a candidate uses slang or speaks with a regional UK or other accent?

The use of slang is acceptable provided that it is appropriate and grammatically correct. Different varieties of standard English accents, e.g. UK, North American, Australasian, etc. are also acceptable so long as they are used consistently.

May candidates interrupt or ask questions during their partner's 'long turn' in Part 2?

Candidates should be allowed to speak without interruption from their partner in this part of the test.

What about the mis-matching of candidates, e.g. a shy person with an extrovert?

Examiners are trained to deal with this kind of situation and ensure no-one is disadvantaged. Everyone has the chance to show what they can do. However, candidates must remember that while it is important not to dominate a weaker candidate, it is vital that they make the best use of the time available to show off their language skills.

ENTRIES AND RESULTS**What is the date of the FCE examination?**

The FCE examination can be taken three times a year, in March, June and December. The dates are published in the Examination Regulations. Check with your UCLES Local Secretary or British Council Office.

Where can candidates enrol?

The UCLES Local Secretary or British Council Office can give you information about centres where the examination is taken. You should not apply to UCLES directly. Fees are payable to the local centre, and will vary slightly from place to place.

How do candidates get their results?

Results are issued to Local Secretaries approximately six weeks after the examination has been taken. Certificates are issued about a month after that.