

Assessing Speaking Performance – Level A2

Examiners and speaking assessment in the A2 Key exam

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 Assessment English 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 three individual criteria:

- Grammar and Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Interactive Communication

How can I use the assessment scales?

Examiners use the A2 level assessment scales to decide which marks to give candidates taking the A2 Key Speaking test. Using the scales yourself during classroom speaking practice tasks will help you to:

- analyse your students' strengths and weaknesses when they do A2 Key Speaking tasks
- form an impression of how ready your students are to take the Speaking test.

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The assessment scales

The A2 Key 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. A2 Key is at Level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the descriptors for Band 3 and above generally indicate performance of at least A2 level.

A2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Maintains simple exchanges. Requires very little prompting and support.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>		
3	Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>		
1	Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms. Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.	Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.	Has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges. Requires additional prompting and support.
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.

For example, under Grammar and Vocabulary, the basic focus of the first bulleted descriptor at Band 3 is the same as at Band 1; the control of grammatical forms. However, at Band 3 'sufficient' replaces 'only limited' – *Shows sufficient control*, and the range of expected forms has been extended from *a few* to *simple grammatical forms* in general.

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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.

All three analytical criteria are assessed across the whole test. In Part 1 the candidates interact with the interlocutor and in Part 2 they talk to each other, using prompt cards to ask and answer questions.

How can I use the assessment scales with students?

You could:

- refer to the scales as you observe students carrying out an A2 Key speaking task
- note down examples of performance in terms of the listed criteria
- give students feedback on their strengths and weaknesses
- 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 Cambridge Assessment English TV YouTube channel there is video recording of two candidates called Rashid and Gonca taking the A2 Key Speaking test.

You can click on this **link** to watch each part of the test.

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The four activities use this recording to practise using the assessment scales.

Activity 1

1. Make a copy of the blank Grammar and Vocabulary table on page 5. You will see that statements from the assessment scales have been turned into questions.
2. Watch the A2 Key Speaking test video Part 1.
3. Note down examples of what Rashid 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 8.

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Activity 2

1. Make a copy of the blank Pronunciation table on page 6.
2. Watch the A2 Key Speaking test video Part 2.
3. Note down examples of what Gonca 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.

Activity 3

1. Make a copy of the blank Interactive Communication table on page 7.
2. Watch the A2 Key Speaking test video.
3. Note down examples of what both Rashid and Gonca do 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.

Remember

- In a real A2 Key Speaking test the marks awarded reflect a candidate's performance across the whole exam and not just in one or two parts 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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A2 Key SPEAKING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY	
Name of student	
Does the speaker use simple grammatical forms with sufficient control?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker use simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker use appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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A2 Key SPEAKING PRONUNCIATION	
Name of student	
Are the utterances mostly clear? Can the speaker be mostly understood?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker show limited control of intonation?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker show limited control of word and sentence stress?	
Good	Not so good
Are individual sounds mostly clear?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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A2 Key SPEAKING INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	
Name of student	
Can the speaker maintain simple exchanges with the interlocutor (Part 1)?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker react appropriately to what the interlocutor or other candidate says?	
Good	Not so good
Does the speaker need any prompting or support?	
Good	Not so good
Comments	

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A2 Key SPEAKING GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY	
Name of student: RASHID (Part 1)	
Does the speaker use simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control?	
<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I work</i> • <i>you know in my country</i> • <i>meeting all my friends</i> 	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I know him 20 years ago</i> • <i>this is beautiful room not favourite room</i> • <i>my friend like to quiet.</i>
Does the speaker use appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations?	
<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>living room</i> • <i>manager of insurance company</i> <i>my company</i> 	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>my friendly</i> • <i>this is (he is)</i> • <i>know him</i>
<p>Comments</p> <p>Rashid shows fairly good control of simple grammatical forms but his responses are often short. He uses appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations (living room, 20 years, my company) but does not show evidence of a range of vocabulary at the level.</p>	

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A2 Key SPEAKING PRONUNCIATION	
Name of student: GONCA (Part 2)	
Are the utterances mostly clear? Can the speaker be mostly understood?	
<p>Good</p> <p><i>Everything is clear and easily understood.</i></p>	<p>Not so good</p>
Does the speaker show limited control of word and sentence stress?	
<p>Good</p> <p><i>sentence stress and word stress are always correct</i></p>	<p>Not so good</p>
Are individual sounds mostly clear?	
<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>actually</i> • <i>adore</i> • <i>noisy</i> • <i>expensive</i> 	<p>Not so good</p>
<p>Comments</p> <p>Gonca's pronunciation is very clear and she is easy to understand. She has good control of phonological features at utterance and word level and she stressed everything correctly.</p>	

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A2 Key SPEAKING INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	
Name of student: RASHID (Parts 1 and 2)	
Can the speaker maintain simple exchanges with the interlocutor (Part 1)?	
<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I work</i> • <i>between 5/6 every week</i> • <i>living room</i> 	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • my friend like to quiet ... don't know what to do • One my friend? • name?
Does the speaker react appropriately to what the interlocutor or other candidate says?	
<p>Good</p> <p>All his questions and answers communicate appropriately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yes, I think.</i> • <i>Because I can cook anything in beach.</i> • This is best because I can talk with my family. 	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>yeah (definitely?) the high noisy</i>
Does the speaker need any prompting or support?	
<p>Good.</p>	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rashid often only gives short answers to his questions, the examiner has to ask 'why' on two occasions to elicit more information
<p>Comments</p> <p>Rashid is able to maintain communication in simple exchanges both with the interlocutor and his partner. He didn not ask his partner questions in Part 2 so the examiner had to ask them questions individually and prompt Rashid for more information in his replies.</p>	

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A2 Key SPEAKING INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	
Name of student: GONCA (Parts 1 and 2)	
Can the speaker maintain simple exchanges with the interlocutor (Part 1)?	
<p>Good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>My name is Gonca.</i> • <i>I'm from Turkey.</i> • <i>in my country, USA and here</i> 	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>In my parents with my parents</i> • <i>Yes, I like</i>
Does the speaker react appropriately to what the interlocutor or other candidate says?	
<p>Good</p> <p>All her questions and answers communicate appropriately</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What do you think about this picture?</i> • <i>Maybe, I don't like this, because very noisy</i> • <i>Yes, here Cambridge is yes, expensive</i> 	<p>Not so good</p>
Does the speaker need any prompting or support?	
<p>Good</p>	<p>Not so good</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At times Gonca only gives short answers to her questions, the examiner has to ask 'why' to elicit more information
<p>Comments</p> <p>Gonca is able to maintain simple exchanges throughout the test. She required some prompting to extend her answers. She reacts naturally to her partner when exchanging information and asked her partner one question regarding the pictures.</p>	