

Examples of Task Types

Example 1

Follow the instructions to read some sentences from among those printed in Part A. Read the sentences in the order requested. This order will be different from the printed order. Read aloud as smoothly and naturally as you can.

1. My roommate never cleans the kitchen.
2. He cooks hamburgers and leaves his dirty dishes in the sink all night.
3. I usually just eat cereal.
4. So I guess my dishes are easier to clean than his.
5. Carol is taking a trip next week.
6. She has the whole week off, but I'm not sure where she's going to go.
7. I know she has family in Oregon, so she may drive there.
8. I think her cousin's getting married.
9. There are advantages and disadvantages to eating alone.
10. For one thing, you don't have to be neat.
11. It's generally all right if you spill or drop food on yourself.
12. On the other hand, who do you talk to?

Task Orientation: closed. The test taker merely has to read the sentences aloud, in an order indicated by a computer generated voice. The outcome of the task is entirely dictated by the rubric and the input, and no deviation is allowed.

Interactional Relationship: non-interactive. There is no communication between speakers.

Goal Orientation: none. In this task type there is no goal orientation at all, because there is no 'communication' taking place. It is feasible to have a computer administered and scored task that did involve a convergent goal orientation, and an example will be given below. But for the most part computer administered speaking tests cannot simulate divergent goal orientations.

Interlocutor Status and Familiarity: No interlocutor.

Topics: Home, travel, food.

Example 2

You must talk with a teacher for about 5 minutes.
While you are talking, an assessor will be listening to what you and the teacher say.

As the end of the year approaches people all over the world will look back and think about it. What kind of year have you had? What were the best things about the last year for you?

You and your teacher are going to talk about this for about five minutes.

Topics you talk about could include the following:

- Study and/or work
- Health
- Travel
- People
- Special events
- Plus anything else you want to talk about

Task Orientation: open. While the input suggests topics it is made clear that the learner does not have to use any items in the list, and may talk about anything else that may have affected their life in the past year. The list is provided merely as support for those who may not be able to generate specific ideas.

Interactional Relationship: one-way. The learner is being asked to communicate opinions and views to the teacher; while the teacher may ask clarification questions, or encourage the learner through the use of appropriate backchannelling, it is clearly the case that the learner is intended to spend most of the time talking to the teacher. Communication is not co-constructed.

Goal Orientation: convergent.

Interlocutor Status and Familiarity: The interlocutor is a teacher, and therefore the status of the interlocutor is high. The teacher is one who has not taught the learner, and so familiarity is low.

Topics: Familiar topics about which the learner can express thanks, requirements, opinions, comment, attitude, confirmation, apology, wants or needs, information; narrate a sequence of events; elicit information, directions, or service.

Example 3

SAMPLE TEST - SPEAKING

EXAMINER MATERIAL

PRELIMINARY ENGLISH TEST

Part 3 (3 minutes)

Oral Test 4 (A Quiet Time)

Tasks Describing people and places; saying where people and things are and what different people are doing.

**Interlocutor
Frame**

Say to both candidates:

Now, I'm going to give each of you a photograph of people enjoying a quiet time.

Candidate A, here is your photograph. (Hand one of the photographs to Candidate A.) Would you show it to Candidate B and talk about it, please?
Candidate B, I'll give you a photograph in a moment.

Candidate A, would you start now, please? Thank you.

If there is a need to intervene, prompts rather than direct questions should be used.

Now, Candidate B, here is your picture. (Hand the second photograph to Candidate B.) Would you show it to Candidate A and tell him/her about it, please? Ready?

Thank you.

Assessment The candidates should talk about the photographs with little or no prompting. Specialized words such as 'hair-band' and 'crane' are not expected.

Retrieve the photographs before moving to Part 4.

Part 4 (3 minutes)

Tasks Talking about one's likes and dislikes; expressing opinions.

**Interlocutor
Frame**

Say to both candidates:

Your photographs showed people enjoying a quiet moment in different ways. Now, I'd like you to talk together about the kind of things **you** like to do when you want to be **quiet** and the kind of things you **don't** like to do.

Assessment The task is achieved if the candidates can talk, with little or no prompting, about the kind of things they like to do when they want to be quiet and the kind of things they don't like to do.

Time **Parts 3 & 4** should take about **6 minutes** together.

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Task Orientation: Guided. Picture prompt items are very common in tests of speaking, providing the test taker with something specific to talk about, while allowing some flexibility in expression. It is possible to develop such tasks into open activities when the pictures are used as a springboard to wider discussions of topical issues.

Interactional Relationship: This task is intended to be two-way between the two test takers, while also offering the possibility for each to have a longer turn. While one test taker is the main speaker, the other may ask clarification questions or make comments. The interlocutor frame does not allow for the active participation of a third person, although it does allow for intervention if necessary, using prompts rather than direct questions. In many cases, however, these generate one-way interaction unless the test takers take the initiative to ask questions.

Goal Orientation: Convergent. The purpose of the task is to describe a picture and come to some agreement about its meaning.

Interlocutor Status and Familiarity: Same status, frequently familiar with each other. In paired tasks part of the aim is to reduce the social distance between the test taker and the teacher interlocutor by allowing two learners to interact. The rationale is to encourage different types of interaction that may generate a richer sample of language that may allow scoring on more complex constructs (see the extended discussion in Chapter 7).

Topics: Variable and extensive.

Situation(s): Variable.

Example 4

Student A

Your Questions.

You need to ask Student B for this information about a business centre.

Location	.....
Name of Manager	.....
Languages Spoken	.....
Fax Service	.....
Methods of Payment	.....

Reverse side of Student A's card:

Information

This is the information about the other business centre. Try to answer Student B's questions.

London Enterprise Centre 271 Carlton Hill Avenue, London Mon – Fri 8 am – 8pm, Sat 9 am – 2 pm Range of accommodation available for hire: Boardroom (20 seats) Small lecturer theatre (75 seats) Secretarial service also available Room Service: Drinks and snacks Business lunches in the restaurant Booking Manager, Miss Cruz Tel: 3277154 Fax: 3268193

Student B

Your Questions.

You need to ask Student B for this information about a business centre.

Address of centre	.....
Opening hours	.....
Meeting rooms	.....
Refreshments	.....
Contact person	.....

Reverse side of Student B's card:

Information

This is the information about the other business centre. Try to answer Student A's questions.

Bangkok Business Centre 53 – 57 Pacific High Road, City Centre First-class professional service provided by Mr Jaffee (MBA) and staff All reception staff speak Thai, English, Japanese Range of accommodation available for hire: Photocopying and fax facilities: 1 st floor, 7 days a week Translation service available: reasonable charges All major credit cards accepted

Task Orientation: Guided. All relevant information is provided to the test takers. The task requirement is that they understand the question being asked by their partner, select the appropriate information from the card, and communicate this clearly and accurately.

Interactional Relationship: Two way. This is a classic example of an information gap activity that Pica et al. (1993) argue is the most effective in task based classroom learning. It is therefore not surprising that it is very widely used in face-to-face speaking tests in order to measure strategic, textual, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences.

Goal Orientation: Convergent. The purpose of the task is to communicate and record information effectively.

Interlocutor Status and Familiarity: Same status, with variable familiarity.

Topics: Variable.

Situations: Variable.