



International Certificate (PTE General)

Oral Exam Guidance

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Warm-up section (optional): 1 minute max.

As of May 2021, test takers have the option of participating in an optional Warm-up Section to help them break the ice prior to the start of the test. Interlocutors will find the following guidance in the test instructions handbook:

Good morning/afternoon My name is _____; Can you tell me your name please?

Before we begin the test, would you like to do a warm-up with some non-test questions?

Give the candidate the option to participate or to begin the test questions right away.

Warm-up exercise:

- Ask some simple questions to establish rapport, such as:
 - How is your day going?
 - What do you think of the weather today?
 - Share something about yourself and ask them to tell you about themselves
 - where they work/go to school/how long they have been studying English.
- **Do not ask about any topics within the paper.**
- Smile and be encouraging.
- Keep the warm-up time under one minute so you do not get off schedule.

Clearly bring the warm-up to a close and state, ***'Thank you. Now we will begin the test.'***

Please note: The Warm-Up section is **not** scored but **must** be recorded to prevent malpractice and for quality assurance purposes.

Level A1: Approximately 3.5 minutes long overall

The test has two sections:

- **Section 10: Discussion: Not tested at this level**
- **Section 11: Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 12: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 90 seconds long

Level 1: Approximately 3.5 minutes long overall

The test has two sections:

- **Section 10: Discussion: Not tested at this level**
- **Section 11: Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 12: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 90 seconds long

Level 2: Approximately 5.5 minutes long overall

The test has three sections:

- **Section 10: Discussion**
 - The test taker engages in a discussion with the interlocutor on a given topic
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 11 Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 90 seconds long
- **Section 12: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 120 seconds long

Level 3: Approximately 5.5 minutes long overall

The test has three sections:

- **Section 10: Discussion**
 - The test taker engages in a discussion with the interlocutor on a given topic
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 11: Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 90 seconds long
- **Section 12: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 120 seconds long

Level 4: Approximately 6 minutes long overall

The test has three sections:

- **Section 11: Discussion**
 - The test taker engages in a discussion with the interlocutor on a given topic
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 12: Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 13: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 120 seconds long

Level 5: Approximately 6 minutes long overall

The test has three sections:

- **Section 10: Discussion**
 - The test taker engages in a discussion with the interlocutor on a given topic
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 11: Describe picture**
 - The test taker has to respond to a visual stimulus
 - Approximately 120 seconds long
- **Section 12: Role play**
 - The test taker conducts a conversation with the interlocutor in which the test taker and interlocutor are given specific roles and a specific situation
 - Approximately 120 seconds long

Common errors and how to avoid them

Issue	Impact	Solution
A response goes over time.	If a response goes over time, the full response may not be marked. Candidates may not have the opportunity to access the full range of marks because of this.	- Have a timer or clock in view and mentally note the candidate's start time. - Ensure the candidate stays on track. - If necessary, interrupt to put the candidate back on track.
A response is under time.	Not allowing sufficient time / the recommended time, candidates do not have the opportunity to access the full range of marks.	- Have a timer or clock in view and mentally note the candidate's start time. - Allow candidates to speak for the recommended times for each task. - If there is a minimal response from a candidate after 3 to 5 seconds, encourage additional responses by using phrases such as "Is there anything else you would like to add?", "Can you say something more?" etc.
Unnecessarily improvised prompts.	Unnecessarily improvised prompts and departures from the script lead to inconsistencies between candidates and can have a negative impact on achievement. If the improvised prompts are at a lower level of language demand than the script, they might prompt language from candidates which is also below the level required.	- Keep to the script. Please refer to The Role of the Interlocutor document. - If a candidate does not understand or respond, repeat the prompt. Do not rephrase a prompt at the same level. - Prompts should be simplified only if a candidate does not understand the prompt after it has been repeated verbatim.
Off topic responses.	Responses that go off topic and do not address the task are at risk of not being scored and could also lead to malpractice investigations.	Interlocutors should promptly re-direct candidates who go off-topic back onto the topic.
Suspected gamed response.	Scripted responses, rehearsed responses and responses with unnatural stress and intonation risk not being scored and could also lead to malpractice investigations.	- Ensure candidates do not have any materials in the room. - Redirect candidates who try to introduce a pre-prepared speech.
Interlocutor maladministration: Prompts / question not given.	Candidates may not have the opportunity to access the full range of marks.	Ensure all prompts are used when necessary.
Interlocutor maladministration: Prompt / question asked when it has already been answered.	Candidates can be confused by this and it could have a negative impact on the candidates' remaining responses.	Ensure you listen actively to candidates' responses and respond appropriately.

Interlocutor maladministration: Candidate isn't given time to study the card (Section 12: Role Play).	Candidates with less time to formulate responses are disadvantaged compared to those who receive the appropriate time to study the card.	• Ensure the candidate is given 15 seconds to study the card (this does not count against the total section time).
Interlocutor maladministration: Interlocutor talks in a monotone or disinterested fashion.	Candidates are less engaged and potentially underperform.	• Prior to the test, practice saying the prompts with a natural, animated and interested tone.
Interlocutor maladministration: Use of praise.	Candidates mistakenly believe they are correct and continue to make errors.	• Avoid giving reinforcing messages that could be interpreted as evaluating their performance. • Avoid unnecessary backchanneling as this can also put candidates off.
Interlocutor maladministration: Mispronunciation.	Candidates may misunderstand the prompt or need further clarification. This may lead to inconsistencies between candidates and can have a negative impact on achievement.	• Prior to the test, check pronunciation and practice saying the prompts.

Section Specific errors and solutions

Section	Error	Impact	Solution
10: Discussion	Candidate does not get the opportunity / time to put their point across.	Candidates disadvantaged and assessed on less material.	Ensure the candidate leads the discussion.
	Candidate treats this section as a monologue rather than an exchange of ideas.	Interaction cannot be assessed.	Interrupt where necessary and ensure at least three turns are taken.
	Not all prompts used, and time is short.	Candidate not assessed on less than this requirement.	Ensure the whole of the time is used and have at least 3 turns each.
11: Describe picture	Prompts / question given when already answered.	Candidate would be confused which could have a negative impact on their responses.	Ensure you listen to the candidates' responses and do not ask a question which has already been answered.
	Prompts / question not given.	Candidate is not assessed on a direct question regarding the picture(s).	Ensure candidates are asked at least one prompt and the full use of the time is given.
12: Role play	Candidate isn't given time to study the card.	Candidate has less time to formulate a response.	Ensure the candidate is given up to 15 seconds to study the card (this does not count against the total section time)
	Monotone recital from interlocutor.	Candidate is less engaged and potentially underperforms.	Practice what to say and how prior to the test.
	Candidate talks for longer than the required time.	Responses after the required time not assessed.	Ensure candidate stays on track and interrupt, if necessary.

International Certificate-spoken test score guide

The scores for each relation to the maximum they are in direct

Levels A1 – 4	
Score range	Traits
0 – 5	Fluency
0 – 5	Interaction
0 – 5	Range
0 – 5	Accuracy
0 – 5	Phonological Control
Total maximum mark = 25	
Level 5	
Score range	Traits
0 – 3	Fluency
0 – 3	Interaction
0 – 3	Range
0 – 3	Accuracy
0 – 3	Phonological Control
Total maximum mark = 15	

section are calculated in score. For levels A1-4, proportion.

At Level 5, a test taker may score a total of 10 marks over the 5 traits. This is converted to a score out of 25 by applying the ratio of 10:15 (score achieved divided by the maximum number of score points available), then multiplied by 25. The result is rounded to the nearest whole number giving a weighted score of 17:

$$10/15 = 0.667 \times 25 = 16.6 \text{ (Rounded to 17)}$$

Score = 17

The marking scale below from 1–5 is used by examiners to allocate score points to each of the five traits of the analytic level descriptive criteria: fluency, interaction, range, accuracy and phonological control. The marking scale for Level 5, however, is from 1-3 given there is no CEF level above C2.

1	The performance is below the level
2	The performance is just at the level (borderline test taker)
3	The performance is at the level
4	The performance is almost at the next level
5	The performance is at the next level

0 = A score of 'zero' is used for SILENCE or IRRELEVANCE or NON-ENGLISH material.