

# 1st CERTIFICATE SPEAKING EXAM GUIDE

## PART 1 : PERSONAL INFORMATION (3 minutes)

The interlocutor will begin by asking each of you one or two personal questions:

Example Questions:

- *Where are you from?*
- *Tell me something about your family.*
- *What did you enjoy most when you were at primary school?*
- *Do you have any plans for a holiday this year?*
- *Do you play any musical instruments?*

This is the interviewer's first impression of you! Giving full answers to the examiner's questions will help get the interview off to a good start. A few tips include....

**1) Avoid giving short, uncommunicative replies.**

Q: Tell me something about your family.

A: ***I live with my mum, dad and sister and brother. (Don't stop there!) My sister's younger than me and still goes to school. My brother works as a computer technician.***

**2) Avoid short, 'yes', 'no' answers to closed questions.** (These are questions beginning 'Have you ...', 'Do you ...', 'Is it ...' etc which can be answered simply with a yes or no answer).

Q: Do you have any plans for a holiday this year?

A: ***Yes. (Don't stop there!) If I get the chance I'd like to visit my friend in Germany. We haven't seen each other for a while and I'm really looking forward to seeing him and getting to know Germany.***

Q: Do you play any musical instruments?

A: ***No. (Don't stop there!) We had music lessons when I was at school but I was never very good.***

**3) Offer examples to help you explain a statement.**

Q: Why are you preparing for the FCE exam?

A: ***No reason really. (Don't stop there!) I enjoy learning English and I think it would be good to have a qualification to show my level.***

### REMEMBER!

DO use complete sentences and elaborate on your answers whenever you can. No one-word or super short answers! Be sure to always say WHY.

DO listen to your partner and show interest in what he/she says.

DO use a variety of tenses, language and structures at the beginning to give yourself confidence.

DON'T give answers that you have learned ahead of time – they don't sound natural!

DON'T go on and on for each question – give enough info but don't ramble!

## PART 2 : LONG TURN (3 minutes)

The interlocutor gives Speaker 1 a set of three photographs and asks Speaker 1 to talk about TWO of the photographs for one minute. Then the interlocutor asks Speaker 2 about the photographs and Speaker 2 responds for 30 seconds.

Then the process switches - The interlocutor gives Speaker 2 a set of three photographs and asks Speaker 2 to talk about TWO of the photographs for one minute. Then the interlocutor asks Speaker 1 about the photographs and Speaker 1 responds for 30 seconds.

Listen for the interlocutor's questions to help you with the structure of your talk. He/she will always ask a question with multiple parts! **\*\*Be sure to answer ALL parts of the question! (Hint: If you forget the questions, they will be in a box up at the top of the paper with the photographs.)**

Ex: "I'd like you to **compare and contrast** two or three of these pictures, **saying** what the people in the photographs are doing, **and** what your opinion is of doing sport."

A) Start with a general summary of the topic:

***'These two photographs show people involved in a sport.'***

B) Then move on to a comparison of the two pictures, using words to help explain the comparison:

***Both*** photographs were taken outside and ***each of*** the people are concentrating hard on what they're doing. 'The top photo shows a woman rock climbing ***whilst*** the bottom photo is of a young skating ... It looks like the woman is out in the natural world ***whereas*** the boy is in a man-made skating park ..... etc.'

C) Finally give your opinion with examples, again using signposting words and expressions to help the examiner follow your argument.

***'In my opinion***, sport is important for people in lots of ways. ***For example***, it's a way to keep fit of course, ***but*** we ***also*** meet new people ***and*** can get a lot of enjoyment from a sport ... etc.'

**You will find some useful expressions for this section in the boxes below:**

### To Compare:

*Both, same, also, like, similar to, similarly, alike, whereas, each, likewise, just as, in the same way, as well as, on a similar note*

### To Contrast:

*Different from, although, however, one difference is, on one hand...on the other hand, in comparison to, by comparison, instead of, in contrast to, unlike, even though, on the contrary, yet, differs from*

<p><b>To Agree:</b></p> <p><i>Of course.</i>  <i>You're absolutely right.</i>  <i>I think so too.</i>  <i>That's a good point.</i>  <i>Exactly./ Absolutely.</i>  <i>I don't think so either./ Me neither.</i>  <i>So do I./ Neither do I.</i>  <i>That's true.</i>  <i>I agree with you entirely.</i>  <i>That's just what I was thinking.</i>  <i>I couldn't agree more.</i>  <i>I agree with you 100 percent.</i>  <i>You're absolutely right.</i>  <i>That's exactly how I feel.</i>  <i>No doubt about it.</i>  <i>(weak) I suppose so./I guess so.</i>  <i>You have a point there.</i>  <i>I was just going to say that!</i></p>	<p><b>To Disagree:</b></p> <p><i>I don't agree with you.</i>  <i>However...</i>  <i>That's not entirely true.</i>  <i>On the contrary...</i>  <i>Yes, but don't you think...</i>  <i>That's not the same thing at all.</i>  <i>I'm afraid I have to disagree.</i>  <i>I'm not so sure about that.</i>  <i>I don't think so.</i>  <i>(strong) No way.</i>  <i>I'm afraid I disagree.</i>  <i>(strong) I totally disagree.</i>  <i>I beg to differ.</i>  <i>(strong) I'd say the exact opposite.</i>  <i>Not necessarily.</i>  <i>That's not always true.</i>  <i>That's not always the case.</i>  <i>No, I'm not so sure about that.</i></p>
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<p><b>To talk about a photograph:</b></p> <p><i>In the picture I can see...</i>  <i>The picture shows...</i>  <i>This is a picture of...</i>  <i>In the foreground/background....</i>  <i>At the top/bottom/middle of the picture...</i>  <i>On the right/left...</i>  <i>In the top/bottom right/left corner...</i></p>	<p><b>To compare two photographs:</b></p> <p><i>Both photographs show...</i>  <i>In both photographs...</i>  <i>In the first/second photo...</i>  <i>One big difference between the photos is that...</i>  <i>Another important difference is that...</i>  <i>One similar aspect of both photos is...</i>  <i>Compared with....</i>  <i>The first photograph show X while/whereas the second shows Y...</i></p>
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**\*For a complete list of useful expressions, visit the Speaking Bank on pgs. 156-157\***

### **REMEMBER!**

DON'T waste time telling the interlocutor which two photos you are going to talk about. Simply start speaking about them.  
DO use high level vocabulary words for comparing and contrasting.  
DO organize your thoughts.  
DO remember that the second question is printed above the pictures (in case you forget it!)  
DO keep speaking until the interlocutor tells you to stop. Practice speaking for one minute in English to see what it feels like.

### PART 3: COLLABORATIVE TASK (4 minutes)

In this part of the test you and your partner will talk together. The interlocutor will place a new set of pictures on the table between you for you to discuss together.

1. Be prepared to ask your partner for his or her opinion rather than simply stating your own. For example:

***'What do you think?' 'How about you?' 'Do you think ...?'***

2. Listen carefully to what your partner says and respond to comments he or she makes to help the discussion flow. For example:

***'Do/Have/Are you?' 'Don't/Haven't/Aren't you?' 'Do you think so?' 'Really?'***

3. If you disagree try expressing this politely. For example:

***'I see what you mean but ...' 'I can see your point but ...' 'But don't you think ...'***

4. Use expressions to allow yourself time to think. For example:

***'That's a good question.' 'Well, let me think ...' 'It's difficult to say ...'***

5. You'll possibly find you don't understand something your partner has said. If this happens, take control with simple questions like those below to help you deal positively with the situation. This will also give you the chance to impress the examiner with your communication skills.

A) If you didn't quite understand a word or phrase just say something like:

***"Sorry but could you explain what you mean by ..... " or***

***"I haven't come across that word/expression before. Could you explain what you mean?"***

B) If you didn't hear or didn't understand something your partner has said, ask them to repeat it:

***"Sorry, I didn't catch that. Could you say that again?"***

***"Excuse me. Could you repeat that?"***

C) Alternatively, you might want to confirm what you think your partner said so you could say something like:

***"Do you mean ..... "***

***"When you say ....., are you asking/do you mean .....?"***

#### REMEMBER!

DO discuss each of the prompts in detail. It doesn't matter if you don't talk about all of them.

DO listen to your partner and respond to what he/she has to say before adding your own ideas.

DO invite your partner to respond and/or contribute – remember, it should be a conversation between the two of you!

DON'T worry if you don't come to an agreement with your partner. The important part is discussing and sharing your opinion!

DON'T dominate the conversation – be sure your partner gets a chance to speak as well.

#### PART 4: DISCUSSION (4 minutes)

In this final part, the interlocutor will ask you some further questions related to the photographs you discussed in Part 3. You will be giving your opinion and commenting on your partner's opinion.

Useful language:

**To talk about personal likes/dislikes:**

*I love/quite like/ really like, don't like/ hate camping because...*

*I find (don't find) visiting museums quite boring/exciting/expensive, relaxing because...*

*I'm (I'm not) very interested in/quite keen on sport...*

**To ask for opinions:**

*What do you think of Latin TV?*

*What's your opinion on ice skating?*

*How do you feel about going on a cruise?*

**To express preferences:**

*I'd (I wouldn't) like to...*

*I'd rather/prefer to live*

**Remember: Would like + to + infinitive OR like + gerund**

**REMEMBER!**

DO use filler words/phrases when you need time to think so there aren't long pauses:

- *That's an interesting question...*
- *Well, that's something I've never thought about before, but I would say that...*

DO answer both aspects of the question if the question has two parts. Give reasons and examples for your opinion on both!

For an example video of two students taking the 1<sup>ST</sup> Certificate Exam, visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-tqeI9t4x9E> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EdeZp0n0JHw>.