

Exam English: General Questions

Exam Preparation

- Teacher's Insights -

 variable  B1 - C2  speaking, English for official examinations

As an ESL teacher, it is important to prepare your students for the speaking section of various English proficiency exams. This section usually involves answering general questions about various non-controversial topics. Your students must understand the type of answer they are expected to give, i.e. not one-liners. The following questions are provided as practice for Speaking Part 1 of many exams. You may use a random number generator to pick a question to answer. Encourage your students to practise regularly and develop their speaking skills to achieve success in their English proficiency exams.

Introduction: Read the introduction with your teacher.

There are various different examinations students may take to prove their English proficiency. Some of the most popular ones are the Cambridge exams, IELTS, TOEFL, Aptis, Pearson Test of English, TOEIC, and others.

In the majority of these exams, there is a speaking section which asks general questions. Although these questions may be simple, it is important to answer them as fully as possible and to the best of your ability. So, if you are asked about the town where you grew up, be prepared to say a little more than, "It is a nice town."

Below are a few tips to help you give the best answers as possible:

- **Listen carefully** to the question: Make sure you understand the question before you start to answer it. If you don't understand, don't be afraid to ask for clarification.
- **Use your best vocabulary**: Use vocabulary that is appropriate for the level of the exam and the topic. Show the examiner what you really know how to say.
- **But don't overdo it**: On the other hand, don't try to put every single idiom, collocation, and expression you know into one sentence. It'll sound silly, so just keep it natural.
- **Speak clearly** and at a reasonable pace: Don't get panicky and start speaking too fast. Take your time and don't rush through your answers.
- **Provide relevant details**: Try to provide specific details in your answers. This will help you demonstrate your language proficiency and communication skills.
- **Practise**: Review common topics and practise answering them before the exam. However, do not try to study for every possible topic; you'll need to be natural on the day.
- **Don't memorise**: Leading on from this, don't try to memorise answers. The examiner can always tell, and they're looking for you to speak naturally, so they'll ask you further questions.

Speaking: Answer the Speaking Part 1 (etc.) practice questions.

In many of the exams mentioned above, this part of the exam is called Speaking Part 1 or similar. Regardless of its exact name, the topics you are asked about tend to be similar. They are often general, non-controversial topics which the majority of people can respond to. You will not be expected to know rocket science or the anatomy of an octopus.

Below are 120 questions you may be asked as part of the speaking exam. To practise, we recommend finding a random number generator (there are many online) from 1 to 100. Pick a random question and... go!

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Personal Information

1. Can you describe the place where you grew up?
2. Can you tell me about a memorable experience from your childhood?
3. How many siblings do you have?
4. What is your occupation or job?
5. Can you tell me about your family?
6. What are your hobbies?
7. What are your interests?
8. Do you have any pets?
9. Have you ever travelled abroad?
10. What are your future goals?

Daily Routine

11. What time do you usually wake up in the morning?
12. What do you do first thing in the morning?
13. Do you have breakfast, and if so, what do you usually eat?
14. What is your typical work or school schedule like?
15. What do you like to do in your free time?
16. Do you find it easy to follow a stress-free routine?
17. How do you usually wind down at the end of the day?
18. What changes would you like to make to your daily routine?
19. What time do you usually go to bed?
20. Do you prefer to be busy or have a lot of free time in your schedule?

Travel and Transportation

21. What is your favourite mode of transportation and why?
22. Where is the most interesting place you have traveled to?
23. What are some must-see tourist attractions in your hometown?
24. What is your favourite way to explore a new place?
25. Have you ever had a difficult travel experience?
26. How do you usually get around your hometown?
27. What is your favourite type of trip?
28. Have you ever travelled alone?
29. Do you prefer to travel to cities or nature destinations?
30. Do you have any travel plans for the future?

Food and Drink

31. What is your favourite type of cuisine?
32. What is your favourite food?
33. Do you enjoy cooking?
34. What is your favourite meal of the day?
35. What is a typical breakfast, lunch, and dinner in your country?
36. Do you have any dietary restrictions or preferences?
37. What is your favourite restaurant?
38. Have you ever tried a new food and ended up liking it?
39. Do you prefer to eat out or cook at home?
40. Have you ever had a memorable dining experience?

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Weather

41. What is your favorite season?
42. What is the typical weather like in your hometown?
43. How do you dress for different weather conditions?
44. What is your favourite outdoor activity in good weather?
45. Have you ever experienced extreme weather conditions?
46. Do you prefer warmer or cooler weather?
47. How does the weather affect your daily routine?
48. Do you have any favourite winter or summer activities?
49. Have you ever been caught in a sudden rainstorm?
50. How do you prepare for different weather conditions?

Education

51. What is your favourite thing about learning English?
52. What was your favourite subject in school?
53. Can you tell me about a particularly challenging academic experience?
54. What study habits do you find most effective?
55. What is your current academic goal?
56. Have you ever studied abroad?
57. What is the most interesting subject you have studied?
58. What extracurricular activities did you participate in during school?
59. What type of degree or certification are you pursuing?
60. What would you like to study in the future?

Health and Fitness

61. Do you enjoy exercising?
62. What is your favorite type of physical activity?
63. What is your favorite healthy food?
64. What is the best way to stay healthy in your town or city?
65. Have you ever hurt yourself doing exercise?
66. What is your preferred way to stay healthy and active?
67. What is your favorite way to de-stress?
68. Do you practise any mindfulness or meditation activities?
69. Do you think that enough is done to help people stay healthy in your country?
70. If you could be a professional sportsperson, what would you like to be?

Shopping

71. Where is your favourite place to go shopping?
72. What is your preferred method of shopping (in-person, online, etc.)?
73. What type of products do you like to buy?
74. Do you have a favourite brand of clothing or accessories?
75. What is your most recent purchase?
76. Do you prefer to shop alone or with friends?
77. What is your favourite item in your wardrobe?
78. What do you like to shop for when you're travelling?
79. Do you think that all shopping will be done online in the future?
80. If you could get any one thing for free, what would you get?

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Entertainment

81. What is your favourite book and why?
82. What is your favourite movie?
83. Do you have a favourite TV show?
84. What is your favourite type of music?
85. Have you ever been to a live concert or performance?
86. Do you have a favourite cultural event or festival?
87. What is the most recent book you've read?
88. What is your favourite type of movie genre?
89. Do you prefer to watch movies or TV shows?
90. What is your most recent cultural experience?

Technology

91. What is your favourite gadget or device?
92. How do you use technology in your daily life?
93. What is your favourite app and why?
94. Do you prefer to use a laptop or mobile device?
95. What is your favourite social media platform?
96. Have you ever taken an online course?
97. Do you think technology has had a positive or negative impact on society?
98. What is your favourite way to use technology for leisure activities?
99. Have you ever had a negative experience with technology?
100. How do you think technology will continue to evolve in the future?

Work and Career

101. What is your current job or occupation?
102. Can you tell me about your work experience?
103. What is the most challenging part of your job or studies?
104. How do you stay motivated at work or at school?
105. What skills or qualities do you think are important for success in your field?
106. What is your dream job or career?
107. Do you prefer working alone or in a team?
108. Would you rather work from home or in an office with other people?
109. What professional goals do you have for the future?
110. Have you ever changed careers or changed what you were studying?

Relationships and Socialising

111. Do you have a close group of friends?
112. What do you enjoy doing with your friends?
113. How often do you spend time with friends or family?
114. Do you prefer to spend time alone or with others? Why?
115. What qualities do you look for in a friend?
116. Have you stayed friends with many people from your childhood?
117. What do you think is the key to maintaining a healthy and strong relationship?
118. Do you prefer to make plans or go with the flow when socialising?
119. What is your favorite social activity or event?
120. How has socialising changed for you over the past year?