

CELCE Speaking Ability section

What is the speaking test like, and what do I have to do during the speaking test?

Overview

During the Speaking Ability section of the CELCE, you will have a conversation with 2 examiners. One of the examiners will be the lead examiner and ask you most of the questions. The other examiner will primarily take notes, but might occasionally ask a question as well. The test consists of a 1-minute warm-up, which is not scored, followed by 5 tasks that are scored on a scale of 0-4 points. If a speaking topic is completely unfamiliar to you, you may ask for a different one. However, you can do this only twice for each task. In any case, you are unlikely to see an unfamiliar topic because topics are carefully chosen to be familiar to young adults like you.

Testing time

The duration of the speaking test is approximately 10-12 minutes, plus time for getting ready at the beginning and leaving the exam room afterward without feeling rushed.

Sample content for each part of the speaking test

Warm-up (approximately 1 minute): When you first enter the exam room, the examiners will check your identification and get you signed in. They will briefly introduce themselves and then ask you a few simple questions about who you are and how your day is going. This part of the conversation is NOT scored. Its purpose is just to help you feel relaxed and get used to speaking English with them.

Part 1: Description (*approximately 1 minute*)

In the first part of the exam, the lead examiner will ask you to describe something, and then give you a very short example. Your description should be longer than the examiner's example — your description should last up to about one minute. The examiner will help you think of things to say by asking you to say more about certain parts of what you are describing. The types of things you will be asked to describe will be familiar to you. Examples include your home, other familiar buildings or places, your family car, or one of your possessions. In any case, you will only be asked to describe one thing.

Part 2: Narration (*approximately 1-2 minutes*)

In Part 2, the lead examiner will ask you to narrate (tell a story about) something that has happened to you, personally. For example, the examiner might ask you about a trip that you have taken, such as a vacation trip or a visit to relatives, with a focus on a particular event or two that occurred during the trip. Or, the examiner might ask you about an experience you have had, such as a shopping trip or eating at a restaurant. You should provide as many details as possible. Or the examiner might ask you about a time something went wrong and how you managed. For example, you might be asked to talk about a time that you got lost, lost money, got locked out of a building or car, or arrived late for an appointment, class, or exam. You can talk about the problem and how you solved it or managed it in some way.

Part 3: Narration (*approximately 1-2 minutes*)

Part 3 is the same as Part 2, but with a new topic.

Part 4: Supported opinion (*approximately 2-3 minutes*)

In Part 4, the examiner will ask you to give your opinion on a current topic, and to give reasons for that opinion. Topic examples include use of computers in class, length of the school year, the importance of field trips, and homework.

Part 5: Supported opinion (*approximately 2-3 minutes*)

Just as in Part 4, the examiner will ask you to give an opinion on a current topic, and to give reasons for that opinion. More topic examples include: use of sunscreen to protect the skin, care of the elderly, care of younger siblings, and pet care.



Example of what an examiner might say during Part 4 or Part 5:

“What are your views on how strictly parents should encourage their children to follow healthy habits? Should they allow you the freedom of eating whatever you want, or should they tell you that you can eat only certain foods that they know are healthy? Which do you think is better, and why?”

How will my test be scored?

Each examiner will give you a rating from 0-4 points after you complete each of the 5 parts. This rating will be based on the criteria in the public rubric and sample responses that the examiners have heard many times during their training. The two examiners’ ratings will be added up and averaged to compute your basic score, which will be a score from 0-20 points. This basic score will be converted to a section score of 0-25 (rounded to the nearest whole number). For example, if you received 20 out of 20 points for your basic score, your Speaking Ability section score would be 25 (100% of the possible points). Or, if you received 12 points out of 20, your Speaking Ability section score would be 15 because 12 is 60% of 20, and 15 is 60% of 25.

This table shows you how scores from 0-20 correspond to the section score that is reported on a scale of 0-25. The scores from the two examiners are first averaged, then converted, then rounded off to the nearest whole number.

| Basic score 0-20 | Section score 0-25 |
|------------------|--------------------|
| 0 | 0 |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 4 | 5 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 6 | 8 |
| 7 | 9 |
| 8 | 10 |
| 9 | 11 |
| 10 | 13 |
| 11 | 14 |
| 12 | 15 |
| 13 | 16 |
| 14 | 18 |
| 15 | 19 |
| 16 | 20 |
| 17 | 21 |
| 18 | 23 |
| 19 | 24 |
| 20 | 25 |

For more information about CELC Speaking,
visit our website or contact MSU-Exams@elc.msu.edu