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EVOLVE

SPEAKING MATTERS



Testing Speaking Guide

Better
Learning

A GUIDE TO USING RESOURCES FROM EVOLVE TO TEST SPEAKING

January 2022

The Evolve course is designed to provide learners with numerous opportunities to build their confidence and proficiency in speaking, and also to practice the target language throughout the course in authentic communicative tasks. Teachers may want to assess the learners' progress in speaking skills at various points during the course.

This guide provides practical suggestions for how Evolve content can be adapted to support the assessment of speaking skills. For more information, we refer you to [Assessing Speaking](#) in the Cambridge Language Assessment series.


WHAT TO ASSESS

In this section we will look at what we are assessing when we test speaking:

- Linguistic accuracy: use of target language, both grammar and vocabulary
- Pronunciation: individual sounds, sounds in connected speech, intonation, chunking and pausing
- Communicative proficiency: task achievement, intelligibility
- Fluency: absence of hesitation, speed of delivery

The learning objectives and assessment criteria for each of the four areas above will obviously vary according to the level of the course and the particular unit or units of work. However, these four global areas will always be important when it comes to assessing the speaking skills of our learners and will serve as the basis for any assessment rubrics. It is likely that you will want to draw up different test items, or indeed, different tests, in order to be able to assess all four areas. We will look at this in more detail in the next section (HOW TO ASSESS).

The Evolve Student's Books and Teacher's Edition provide useful resources for outlining what needs to be assessed for the first bullet point above: Linguistic Accuracy. These will help provide both test-writers and teachers/assessors with a clear checklist of key target language.



1) 'Can-do' checklists in the Student Book

The Student Book provides a Progress Check checklist for each unit outlining the main communicative learning objectives of each unit. Here is an example from Level 2 Unit 10:

PROGRESS CHECK		
Can you do these things? Check (✓) what you can do.		
UNIT 10	Now I can ...	Pr
	<input type="checkbox"/> use words for jobs.	Wr
	<input type="checkbox"/> talk about things that are necessary.	jol
	<input type="checkbox"/> use words for health problems.	Wr
	<input type="checkbox"/> make predictions	to
	<input type="checkbox"/> ask for and offer help.	Wr
	<input type="checkbox"/> write an email giving advice.	wh
		Co
		Or
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		mi

Learners can be tested on their ability to fulfil all the points on the checklist. The Student's Book task on the Progress Check page invites the learners to write short notes to test themselves. A speaking assessment task could be structured to cover the same objectives (see HOW TO ASSESS below).

2) Language summaries in the Teacher's Edition

The language summary pages for each unit provide the teacher with a comprehensive guide of the key language covered in the unit. This can be used as a linguistic checklist for assessing the learners' mastery of the target language. Here is the language summary page from Level 2 Unit 10 that corresponds to the 'Can-do' statements in the Progress Check above.

UNIT 10 LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Nouns

Jobs
accountant
architect
call center worker
dentist
engineer
IT specialist
lawyer
mechanic
nurse
paramedic
photographer
physical therapist
police officer
project manager
receptionist

Talking about how to avoid something

You have to ...
You don't have to ..., but it's better if you do.

Making predictions about your future

Will you be OK?
I'll be fine.
I won't need anything.
You might have a headache later.
You may need something for that.

Verbs

Health problems
bang your head
break your leg
catch a cold
catch the flu
cut your finger
cut yourself shaving
have a fever/sore throat
have a headache/toothache/
stomachache
hurt your back
twist your ankle

Describing a problem and asking for help

Offering help
How can I help you?
What do you want me to do?
Asking for information about the problem
What's wrong?
What's the matter?

Where exactly does it hurt?
What happened?
Asking someone for help
Can you get it for me?
I need something for ...

Describing symptoms

My chest/head/stomach hurts.
I have pain here / in my back / in my tooth.
It hurts here.
It's like / It feels like
It's like something is squeezing my head.
It feels like my throat is blocked.

Insider English

The pain is killing me.

Glossary

device
microbe
speakers
square inch

Writing an email to your future self

I'm writing this email because ...
Who will ... ?
Will I ... ?
Do I ... ?
Does it ... ?
Anyway, I really just want to say that ...
By the way, you're ...

Useful phrases

What do you think of ... ?
I prefer ...
I think we should ...
Let's do/choose/think about ...
We can talk about ...
Our show will be in ...
The contestants will have to ...
It will be exciting to watch because ...

The language summary is a useful tool for both writing test items and as a checklist when assessing learners' speaking skills (see HOW TO ASSESS below). It can be used in combination with the lesson outcomes in the main body of the Student's Book and section headings in the grammar and vocabulary reference sections at the back of the Student's Book.

Having established the target language for the unit, the next step is to establish assessment rubrics for the speaking test. The example below targets the main grammar and vocabulary from the core lessons in Level 2 Unit 10.

Linguistic accuracy

- Use at least three correct examples of *have to*/*don't have to* to talk about obligations
- Make at least three predictions using *will*, *may*, and *might* correctly
- Refer to at least three different jobs from the vocabulary list

Pronunciation

- Pronounce the weak form of "to" in *have to*/*don't have to* and the contracted form of *will* where appropriate
- Use correct word stress for the target vocabulary e.g. phoTOgrapher, reCEptionist
- Use appropriate sentence stress in sentences with the modals *will*, *may*, *might* e.g. You might have a headache later.

Communicative proficiency

- Able to talk about obligations associated with common jobs
- Able to make predictions about people's lives in the future

Fluency

- Able to speak confidently about a job using two or more full sentences with little hesitation
- Able to make two or three predictions using full sentences with little or no hesitation

Once you have the checklist, you can establish your pass mark and your grades and use the list above as a checklist. Fulfilling a given number of criteria will give a certain grade, e.g. a pass mark = fulfilling at least 6 of the criteria above.

The next step is to decide how to carry out the assessment: which tasks will you use? How will you manage the tests?



HOW TO ASSESS

There are two main resources in Evolve for tasks which can be used in speaking tests:

- 1 The speaking tasks in the Student's Book
- 2 The candidate recordings in the Practice Extra digital workbook

Speaking tasks in the Student's Book

Lessons 1 to 3 and the unit opener all include discussion exercises and short speaking tasks which can easily be adapted for use in speaking tests, whether for individuals, pairs or small groups. These can be used to target specific language areas while also assessing communicative proficiency, pronunciation, and fluency. They can be used for on-the-go assessment lesson by lesson, or they can be combined to create an end of unit, end of term, or end of year test. If using tasks from the Student's Book, learners will already be familiar with the tasks. This can be an advantage as it will put learners at ease, and it will also provide a concrete focus for exam preparation. However, you may prefer to use tasks which are new to the learners, in which case see the sections on tasks in the Teacher's Edition below.

Here's an example task, again taken from the Level 2 Unit 10, unit opener.

UNIT OBJECTIVES

- talk about how to avoid danger at work
- make predictions about your future
- describe a medical problem and ask for help
- write an email to your future self
- plan a healthy TV show

RISKY BUSINESS

10



START SPEAKING

A What can you see in the picture? Would you like to do this? Why or why not?

B Which of these dangerous or scary things do you enjoy? Think of three more things.

amusement parks	dark places	extreme sports
fast cars	horror movies	

C What things are you afraid of? For ideas, watch Celeste's video.



Are you afraid of the same things as Celeste?



The image in the unit openers offer a useful visual stimulus and the initial question, focusing on the high impact image, is a very useful question type for testing speaking as it gives the candidate something concrete to talk about.

Candidates could be tested individually or in pairs using the follow-up questions as a basis for discussion.

The test could take place in-person or online. If the test is taking place online, it can be recorded, and the recording can be accessed for assessment after the test.

The assessor could also choose from a bank of extension questions to target other language in the unit e.g. "Can you think of another dangerous job? What makes the job dangerous? What do you think the men will do next? How long do you think it will take them to finish the job?" etc.

Here is another example taken from the final speaking task at the end of the second lesson in Level 2 Unit 10. This task could be used in a test with pairs or groups of three, especially to target communicative proficiency and the ability to interact fluently in a conversation with one or more people. The learners will probably have done the task in class already and they will be repeating it for the test. This can help put learners at ease. It can also give lower-level learners more confidence as they prepare for their test. Task repetition is a very valid assessment tool as it allows learners to perform at their best.

4 SPEAKING

- A** You're going to ask a partner to make predictions about his/her future. Prepare your questions. Use the topics in the box or your own ideas.

family life health home studies work

Five years from now, do you think you'll live in a house or an apartment?
When will you retire from work?



Likewise, the role play task at the end of lesson three is well-suited to a speaking test either for pairs, or with the assessor taking one of the roles.

4 SPEAKING

PAIR WORK Choose a medical problem from this unit. Then follow the instructions below.

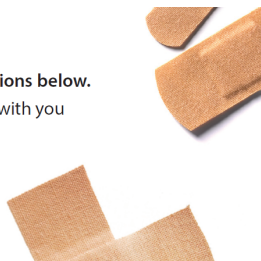
Student A: You have a medical problem. Ask for help and explain what is wrong with you and what happened.

Student B: You see someone who is not well. Ask them about their problem, what happened, and how you can help.

Begin your role plays like this:

A Are you OK? What's the matter?

B I'm not sure, I think



Obviously, these tasks are also suitable for higher levels. Here is an example of a discussion task in Level 6 which could be adapted to individual, pair, or small group assessment. In the case of individual assessment, the learner could be given ten minutes to gather their thoughts and prepare their answers before they speak. (For a test you would probably want to remove the prompt to use a specific language area, unless this is the main goal of the assessment.)

This task (as any of the others outlined above) could also be used as an assessment tool on a Learning Management System or Virtual Learning Environment. The learner could prepare their answer, record it, and submit to their teacher for assessment. In this case, the assessment would focus on pronunciation and fluency.

4 SPEAKING

A **GROUP WORK** **THINK CRITICALLY** Imagine a robot assistant for the following jobs. What tasks do you think it could feasibly take on? Would it do those tasks better, worse, or as well as a human? What tasks would the human still have to do? Use commenting adverbs to make your attitudes clearer.

- a clerk in a hotel
- a nurse in a hospital
- a teacher in a kindergarten



Speaking tasks in the Teacher's Edition

The Teacher's Guide provides photocopiable speaking tasks that can be adapted for speaking tests. There is one task per unit. These tasks include images, discussion questions, role plays, and discussion tasks. We'll look at an example of each task type and how it can be adapted to a test situation.

Working with images

Level 2 Unit 7 Healthy Eating.

You can use the photographs from the task and supply your own questions e.g.

- What kind of food can you see in the two photos?
- What's the difference between the food in the two photos?
- What kind of food do you prefer to eat? Why?
- Do you think you have a healthy diet? Why/why not?
- Are there any changes you'd like to make to your diet?



Discussion questions

Level 2 Unit 8, Tips for Travelers.

In this case the questions are already supplied along with the photos. This task can be set for individuals, pairs, or groups and could be delivered live, in-person, or online or pre-recorded and submitted for assessment.

TIPS FOR TRAVELERS

A Look at the pictures. What are the people doing / have they done? Do you do these things when you travel? How do you feel when other people do these things? Why?



Role plays

Level 2 Unit 4, What are you doing this weekend?

As with role play tasks in the Student's Book, these can be used to assess learners in pairs, or the assessor/teacher can take on one of the roles. The role cards can be used with very little or no adaption required. Learners can be given time to familiarize themselves with the task before they perform the role play. Preparation time can be given before the learners enter the test room, in which case they can see the role cards five to ten minutes before they start the test, or they can be given one or two minutes during the test itself. These tasks are equally useful in person and online. In an online classroom setting, teachers/assessors can choose to record the role play and assess the learners once all the tests have been recorded. Or learners could meet online to record their role play and share it with their teacher/assessor.

UNIT 4 SPEAKING

WHAT ARE YOU DOING ON THE WEEKEND?

Student A

- A** Your favorite band is playing at a festival this weekend. You know your friend hates the band, but you want him/her to come with you. Invite your friend to the festival. Use these questions to help you.

- What is your friend doing on the weekend?
- Can your friend change his/her plans?
- What other things are happening at the festival? Maybe your friend likes food or another band.
- Are other friends coming with you?

Hey! What are you doing this weekend?



- B** Your coworker is having a birthday party next weekend.

You don't really like him/her, so you don't want to go. Tell him/her you have other plans.

- What are you doing next weekend?
- Why can't you change your plans?

Student B

- A** Your friend's favorite band is playing at a festival this weekend. You hate the band, and you don't want to go to the festival with him/her. Tell him/her you have other plans.

- What are you doing this weekend?
- Why can't you change your plans?

- B** You're having a birthday party next weekend. You want your coworker to come, but you don't think he/she wants to come. Invite your coworker to your party. Use these questions to help you.

- What is your coworker doing next weekend?
- Can your coworker change his/her plans?
- What is happening at your party? Maybe a famous actor or musician is coming.
- Are your other coworkers coming to your party?

Hey! What are you doing this weekend?



Discussion tasks

Level 2 Unit 6, Buy now, pay later

Discussion tasks differ from discussion questions as they require the candidates to work together to reach a decision and are therefore suitable for tests in pairs or small groups. These tasks test the learners' communicative proficiency as well as their fluency. They can also be set up to test specific language items. For example, the task below can be used to assess the learners' use of future verbs and vocabulary to talk about shops and shopping.

The task below can be used with little or no adaptation. As with the role play, you will want to give the learners a short time to read the prompts and familiarize themselves with the task before they begin.

UNIT 6 SPEAKING

WHAT'S WRONG WITH OUR STORE?

You are managers of a large department store. Your boss sent you this memo. Discuss the changes you are going to make.

MEMO

To: Store managers

From: The boss

Subject: Customer complaints

We received these complaints from our customers. We need to make some changes for our customers.

Please decide how to fix these problems and send your ideas to me by the end of the month. We can make three changes now and three changes in the future. The team with the best solutions will get a bonus.

"The price tags are hard to read."

"I can never find a salesperson when I want to ask a question."

"There aren't enough clothes in large sizes."

"The checkout is very slow."

"I bought some shoes, and they broke after one week!"

"The fitting rooms are not clean, and they are very small."

"There are sale signs everywhere. It's hard to know what's on sale."

"I always get lost in your store. I can't find the departments I'm looking for!"

"The salespeople aren't very friendly or polite."



Practice Extra digital workbook

The online activities in the Practice Extra digital workbook provide two task types which can easily be adapted to testing:

- 1) Lesson 3: Role play
- 2) Lesson 5: Video discussion questions

Role plays

For these tasks, the learner takes one role and records their answers which they can then play back, record via a screencasting tool, and submit to their teacher/ assessor. The example below is taken from Practice Extra digital workbook Level 2, Unit 10. As with all pre-recorded submissions, these tasks are best suited to assessing pronunciation and certain aspects of fluency, as the candidate can script, rehearse, and repeat their answers before submission.

You are Anna. Record your voice.

Doctor

Anna

What's wrong?

Explain your problem.

What happened?

Explain what happened.

Where exactly does it hurt?

Explain where it hurts.

OK. Please take these pills. You will feel better soon.

Say thank you.

Play all

Next

Video discussion questions

In Lesson 5 in Practice Extra for each unit, there are two or more video clips where people are posed a question and the students hear two or three people answering the question. In a test situation, learners could view the video as a prompt and then record themselves answering the same questions. They could use the record and submit screen on Practice Extra to submit their recording to their teacher for assessment. Or they could record it as a separate audio file and share the file.

This example is taken from Practice Extra digital workbook Level 2, Unit 10. This is the video prompt that learners could watch as a model for their own answer. Once again, as with all pre-recorded test submissions, the assessment would focus on pronunciation and fluency.

Watch the video and choose the correct answer.

00:01 00:33

Who likes to watch shows about food?

- ☐ Abby
- ☐ Robert
- ☐ Emily

Some practical considerations when conducting online tests

Live tests

These can be held in a video conferencing room such as Zoom, Google Meet, Teams meeting rooms, etc. Learners will need to be able to activate their cameras and microphones. The assessor will need to be able to record the test for subsequent evaluation.

Learners can be tested individually, or in pairs or small groups. Test material can be shared via screensharing or by sharing links in the chat. Learners can use their computers, or a mobile device. It is easy for the assessor to monitor the learners on their cameras and see whether they are reading from a script or using notes.

Live tests can be used to assess the full range of speaking areas as outlined in the opening section.

Pre-recorded tests

Learners can record answers to test questions and tasks and submit these to their teacher. They can be submitted as video or audio files. In the case of video files, it is easier for the assessor to check the identity of the candidate if this is required. Pre-recorded answers are useful for focusing on pronunciation in particular, as even if a learner is reading from a pre-prepared script, the assessor can still evaluate the pronunciation of individual sounds, sounds in connected speech, intonation, chunking and fluency.

It is possible to require learners to record spontaneous speech, in which case all four areas (as outlined in the opening section) can be assessed. However, this can be stressful and therefore counterproductive for lower levels. With more advanced level learners (B2+), the teacher/assessor can send a prompt (e.g. a photo and discussion questions) and the learner must record a time-stamped response within a given time limit e.g. 5 minutes. This recording can be video or audio, the former being preferable.



We want to help you find the right solution for your needs, from course materials to support and teacher training. More information and resources are available here:

cambridge.org/evolve



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