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Tactics for TOEIC® Speaking and Writing Tests

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OXFORD

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Introduction

The TOEIC® Test

The TOEIC® (Test of English for International Communication) test is an English language proficiency test for non-native speakers of English. It measures the everyday English listening and reading skills of people working in an international environment. More than 5,000 corporations and institutions in over 60 countries use the TOEIC test, with nearly 5 million people registering to take it each year.

The TOEIC® test has recently been redesigned, with some question types remaining the same and some replaced with authentic tasks that test a broader range of sub-skills. The score scale and the range of difficulty tested have not changed, so scores on both forms of the test are comparable. The redesigned test provides useful information for test users and test takers, allowing them to make informed decisions regarding job recruitment, placement, promotion, and further training.

The TOEIC® Speaking and Writing Tests

Developed in response to market demand for reliable assessments of productive English language skills, the TOEIC® Speaking and Writing components are Internet-delivered tests that complement the TOEIC Listening and Reading test sections. The TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests are designed to measure the test-taker's ability to communicate clearly in spoken and written English with tasks that are set in general and workplace contexts.

Both the TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests are made up of a number of tasks that provide evidence of test-taker performance across a broad range of proficiency. Responses to the tasks are scored online by trained and calibrated human raters using task-specific scoring guides. Scores on different tasks are weighted according to their level of difficulty, and the total score on each test is converted to a scaled score. Descriptions of the skills typical of test takers at different points on the score range provide test users and test takers with information that can help them make well-informed decisions.

TOEIC® Test Preparation

English learners who are preparing to take any of the TOEIC® test components (Listening and Reading; Speaking, or Writing) generally do best when they are very familiar with the test format. A thorough understanding of test directions and task requirements allows the test taker to focus fully on demonstrating his or her language proficiency. Because TOEIC tests are proficiency tests that assess a wide range of language, test takers who have become familiar with the TOEIC test format should concentrate on improving their overall language skills.

This book is designed to help you prepare for the TOEIC® Speaking and Writing tests.

Tactics for TOEIC® Speaking and Writing Tests

About this course

The course was designed to help you develop the test-taking and linguistic skills that you will need to do well on the TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests. It is endorsed by ETS (Educational Testing Service) and contains authentic ETS test questions and examiner comments.

Sample Speaking and Writing Tests

In both the Speaking and Writing sections of the course, there is a sample test with official questions provided by the developers of the TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests. You can see just how the test questions or tasks will be presented on the computer screen when you take the actual test.

Authentic sample responses to test tasks

Along with the sample tests, there are authentic student responses for each score level of each test task, with sample Speaking test and responses included on audio CD.

Examiner's comments on sample responses

Authentic responses to sample test tasks are accompanied by scores, examiners' comments and scoring guidelines for each question.

Scoring information

Useful information on how to interpret test scores is included in both the Speaking and Writing sections of the book.

Test-taking strategies

Each unit of the book provides information and strategies that will help you to maximize your success when you take the test. You will become very familiar with test directions and test tasks. Tips on how to manage your time will help you to demonstrate your proficiency efficiently and effectively.

Strategies for improving language proficiency

Each unit includes a variety of strategies to build and reinforce your natural use of English and to improve your overall language proficiency in the skill areas tested.

How the book is organized

The book is divided into two sections, the first section focusing on preparation for the TOEIC Speaking Test and the second section on the TOEIC Writing Test. The complete course includes 20 units with each unit covering one part of one test. In a cyclical approach to test preparation, each part is covered at least twice in the book.

Every unit follows a consistent and easy-to-follow format. The main focus of each unit, and the key test-taking and linguistic skills developed in the unit, are shown below.

A. Focus

This part of each unit features a number of "test tips" that provide important information about the test along with advice on how to use the tips. The key points fall into two areas:

1. **Language building** – This includes a variety of different tasks aimed at building vocabulary and grammatical knowledge relevant to specific parts of the test and to the test as a whole.
2. **Test tactics** – These activities give immediate practice and reinforcement of test-taking skills such as time management and help you to approach test tasks effectively and efficiently.

B. Tactic practice

This part of the unit aims to further contextualize and reinforce the language building and/or test tactics points that have been introduced. Tactic practice activities feature tasks that follow the same format as those on the actual test.

C. Mini-test

The Mini-tests aim to give practice for each test part, with timings similar to those in the actual TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests. All the items in the Mini-tests are official TOEIC Speaking and Writing Test items.

Using natural English

This feature appears just before the Mini-tests in each unit of the speaking section and focuses on the development of native-like intonation, stress, and patterns of connected speech – features that give English its rhythmic characteristics and contribute significantly to perceived fluency.

Word list and accompanying quizzes

Building an extensive vocabulary is a key way to improve your communication skills. To help you accomplish this, the most challenging vocabulary from each unit is listed, defined and exemplified at the back of the book. These words are organized by unit to allow for easy after-class review, or they may be studied in advance to prepare for a lesson. To help ensure that these words are understood and remembered, the word list for each unit includes quiz exercises for students to test themselves.

Key and tapescripts

The Key and tapescripts for Units 1–20 are in a separate booklet at the back of the Student's Book.

How to approach the course

The teacher or test taker using this book can choose to work through each unit from the beginning or tailor the material to suit individual needs. The text was specifically written to suit a variety of course lengths and styles.

Approach 1: Fixed courses

For fixed courses of 30 to 40 hours, Units 1–20 can all be covered in the order presented.

Approach 2: Shorter/Non-fixed courses

Courses may be custom-designed for shorter/non-fixed study durations, or ones which aim to only target a specific test or specific test part.

Those wishing to prepare for only one of the tests can turn directly to the appropriate section of the book.

To isolate specific test parts you can use the quick find design feature on the side of each page.

TOEIC® Speaking Test

The TOEIC Speaking Test: An Overview

The TOEIC Speaking Test is designed to measure the ability to communicate in spoken English in the context of the international workplace. The test is composed of eleven tasks and takes approximately twenty minutes to complete. The range of ability among English learners who will take the TOEIC Speaking Test is expected to be broad; that is, both very capable speakers and speakers of limited ability can take the test. The test is designed to provide information about the language ability of speakers across a range of language proficiency levels. To this end, the tasks are organized to support the following three claims:

1. *The test taker can generate language intelligible to native and proficient non-native English speakers.*
2. *The test taker can select appropriate language to carry out routine social and occupational interactions (such as giving and receiving directions, asking for and giving information, asking for and giving clarification, making purchases, greetings and introductions, etc.)*
3. *The test taker can create connected, sustained discourse appropriate to the typical workplace.*

These claims are meant to be hierarchical. A test taker who can successfully complete the tasks that support the third claim will probably be very successful at carrying out the tasks that support the first and second claims. Conversely, the tasks that support the third claim will distinguish between moderately high-level speakers and very high-level speakers.

The following chart shows how the tasks in the TOEIC Speaking Test are organized:

Question	Task	Evaluation Criteria
1–2	Read a text aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pronunciation• intonation and stress
3	Describe a picture	all of the above, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• grammar• vocabulary• cohesion
4–6	Respond to questions	all of the above, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• relevance of content• completeness of content
7–9	Respond to questions using information provided	all of the above
10	Propose a solution	all of the above
11	Express an opinion	all of the above

How to Improve Your Score on the TOEIC Speaking Test

The TOEIC Speaking Test features a variety of timed tasks appropriate for test takers across a broad range of proficiency. There are several areas on which you can focus in order to improve your performance on this test.

Key test-taking strategies

- Familiarity with the test format, instructions and question types – Although all the instructions are printed at the start of each test part, knowing these beforehand will save you time and energy on the day of the test.
- Time management – The tasks in the Speaking Test are timed. Understanding how much time you have to complete each of the various tasks and maintaining an appropriate pace as you prepare and produce your responses will help you to improve your overall performance.

Linguistic skills

- Phonological skills – Your pronunciation, intonation, and stress will be directly evaluated in the Speaking Test. Developing these areas will improve your ability to score well on the test and will make your speech more comprehensible in everyday conversation.
- Grammar knowledge – The Speaking Test will require you to speak in longer sentences and to produce paragraph-length speech. An understanding of grammatical form, meaning, and use will help you express yourself clearly. Maintaining a consistent level of accuracy will improve your overall performance on the Speaking Test and will also help you communicate in everyday situations.
- Knowledge of key vocabulary and useful phrases – Vocabulary, both in single words and in phrases, is a key area contributing to scores in each part of the test. This course provides a selection of high-frequency vocabulary and phrases that are appropriate to the tasks in the test.
- Listening comprehension skills – Some tasks in the Speaking Test will require you to listen and respond appropriately. Good listening comprehension skills are important in completing these tasks successfully.
- Understanding of organizational conventions – Some of the language tasks in the Speaking Test, such as responding to a voice mail or giving an opinion, can be more easily completed if you can follow standardized organizational patterns in English. An understanding of the ways ideas are organized, and of the words and phrases that are often used to join ideas together, will also help you to be understood in English in the real world.

TOEIC Speaking Claims

The tasks in the TOEIC Speaking Test are designed to capture evidence of a test taker's speaking abilities as defined in the TOEIC Speaking Claims.

General Claim: The test taker can communicate in spoken English to function effectively in an international workplace context.

Claims and specific tasks

Claim 1: The test taker can generate language intelligible to native and proficient non-native English speakers.

This claim is supported by two tasks:

Questions 1–2: Read a text aloud

The test taker reads aloud two short passages. The passages are texts that would naturally be spoken aloud in a real-world context; e.g., an announcement or advertisement

For this task, the test taker will be measured on these criteria:

Pronunciation
Intonation and stress

Question 3: Describe a picture

The test taker describes a photograph. The subjects of the photograph are people involved in a familiar activity.

For this task, the test taker will receive an overall score based on these criteria:

Pronunciation
Intonation and stress
Grammar
Vocabulary
Cohesion

Claim 2: The test taker can select appropriate language to carry out routine social and occupational interactions (such as giving and receiving directions, asking for information, asking for clarification, making purchases, greetings and introductions, etc.)

This claim is supported by two sets of tasks:

Questions 4–6: Respond to questions

The test taker is asked three questions about a topic.

For these tasks, the test taker will receive an overall score based on these criteria:

Pronunciation
Intonation and stress
Grammar
Vocabulary
Cohesion
Relevance of content
Completeness of content

Questions 7–9: Respond to questions using information provided

The test taker responds immediately to three questions about a written agenda.

For these tasks, the test taker will receive an overall score based on these criteria:

Pronunciation

Intonation and stress

Grammar

Vocabulary

Cohesion

Relevance of content

Completeness of content

Claim 3: The test taker can create connected, sustained discourse appropriate to the typical workplace.

This claim is supported by two tasks:

Question 10: Propose a solution

The test taker responds to a voice mail message.

For this task, the test taker will receive an overall score based on these criteria:

Pronunciation

Intonation and stress

Grammar

Vocabulary

Cohesion

Relevance of content

Completeness of content

Question 11: Express an opinion

The test taker states a personal opinion or position on an issue and gives reasons or examples for the opinion.

For this task, the test taker will receive an overall score based on these criteria:

Pronunciation

Intonation and stress

Grammar

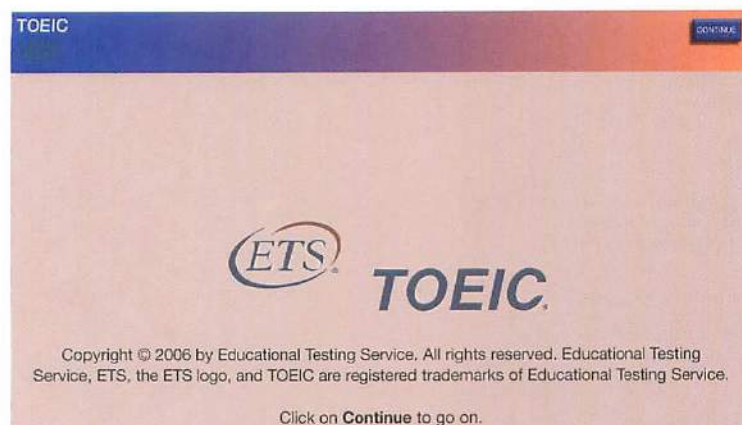
Vocabulary

Cohesion

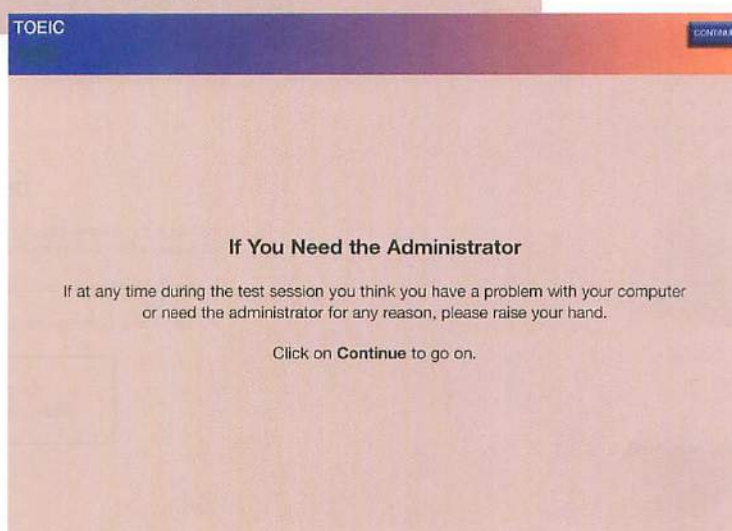
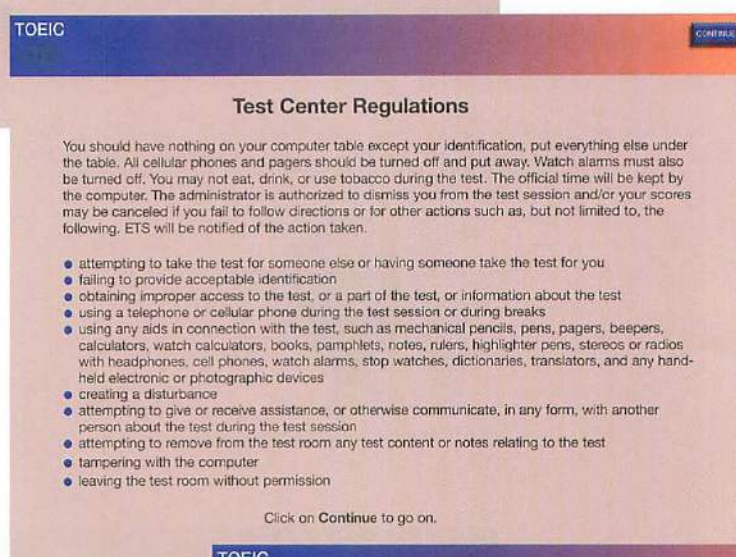
Relevance of content

Completeness of content

TOEIC® Pre-test Screens



Familiarize yourself with these screens before the test to make sure you understand them. Once you have finished reading each screen, click on the blue "continue" button in the top-right-hand corner.



TOEIC

CONTINUE

Confidentiality Agreement

The contents of this test are confidential and the property of ETS. Unauthorized disclosure or reproduction in part or in whole of this test is prohibited. Violators of this policy will be banned from future testing and any scores earned will be canceled. Violators will also be prosecuted to the fullest extent of applicable laws.


I understand that by clicking on the "Continue" button above, I will be given access to this confidential material only for the purpose of taking the test. I agree that I will not disclose to any person or entity, reproduce or otherwise use, the test questions, instructions, or other material revealed to me in the course of taking the test.

Click on **Continue** to go on.

TOEIC

CONTINUE

Please make sure your headset is on. Follow the instructions on each screen. Be sure that your microphone is properly positioned and adjusted to allow for the best possible recording. Speak directly into the microphone and in your normal speaking voice.



Click on **Continue** when you are ready to go on.

TOEIC Speaking

CONTINUE

SPEAK

Changing the Volume

To change the **volume**, click on the Volume icon at the top of the screen. The volume control will appear. Move the volume indicator to the left or to the right to change the volume.

To close the volume control, click on the volume icon again.

You will be able to change the volume during the test if you need to.

*You may now change the volume.
When you are finished, click on Continue.*

Adjusting the Microphone

In order to adjust your **microphone volume**, please answer the practice question below, using your normal tone and volume. The microphone volume will be automatically adjusted as you speak.

Begin speaking after the beep. Continue speaking until a message appears.

"Describe the city you live in".

In order to adjust your microphone volume, please answer the practice question below, using your normal tone and volume. The microphone volume will be automatically adjusted as you speak.

Begin speaking after the beep. Continue speaking until a message appears.



In order to adjust your microphone volume, please answer the practice question below, using your normal tone and volume. The microphone volume will be automatically adjusted as you speak.

In order to adjust your microphone volume, please answer the practice question below, using your normal tone and volume. The microphone volume will be automatically adjusted as you speak.

Begin speaking after the beep. Continue speaking until a message appears.



In order to adjust your microphone volume, please answer the practice question below, using your normal tone and volume. The microphone volume will be automatically adjusted as you speak.

Sample TOEIC® Speaking Test

TOEIC Speaking Test Directions

TOEIC Speaking

CONTINUE

VOLUME

Speaking Test Directions

This is the TOEIC Speaking Test. This test includes eleven questions that measure different aspects of your speaking ability. The test lasts approximately 20 minutes.

Question	Task	Evaluation Criteria
1–2	Read a text aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pronunciation• intonation and stress
3	Describe a picture	all of the above, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• grammar• vocabulary• cohesion
4–6	Respond to questions	all of the above, plus <ul style="list-style-type: none">• relevance of content• completeness of content
7–9	Respond to questions using information provided	all of the above
10	Propose a solution	all of the above
11	Express an opinion	all of the above

For each type of question, you will be given specific directions, including the time allowed for preparation and speaking.

It is to your advantage to say as much as you can in the time allowed. It is also important that you speak clearly and that you answer each question according to the directions.

Click on **Continue** to go on.

Question 1: Read a text aloud

TOEIC Speaking

Questions 1–2: Read a text aloud

Directions: In this part of the test, you will read aloud the text on the screen. You will have 45 seconds to prepare. Then you will have 45 seconds to read the text aloud.


TOEIC Speaking

Question 1 of 11

Few spots in the city are as beloved as City Park. Over ten million visitors play, relax, or enjoy outings with their friends and families in the park every year. Each spring and summer the park offers a wide variety of activities. This weekend there will be an outdoor jazz concert, a nature program, and special events for children. Most visitors explore the park on foot, although it can also be explored by bike or on horseback. Maps and information on park activities are available at the visitor's center, which is open daily from nine to five o'clock.

PREPARATION TIME

00:00:37

 Listen to Speaker 1–3 responses.

Pronunciation

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	The speaker's pronunciation is always intelligible. The speaker delivers the passage fluently.
Speaker 2	02	Pronunciation is generally intelligible, with some lapses ("park", "visitors").
Speaker 3	01	The speaker's pronunciation is often unintelligible.

Intonation & Stress

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	The speaker's use of emphases, pauses, and rising and falling pitch is appropriate to the text.
Speaker 2	03	The speaker's intonation and stress are appropriate to the text.
Speaker 3	02	The speaker's use of emphases, pauses, and rising and falling pitch is generally appropriate; the response includes other language influence.

Question 2: Read a text aloud

TOEIC Speaking

Question 2 of 11



If you're shopping, sightseeing and running around every minute, your vacation can seem like hard work. To avoid vacation stress, come to the Blue Valley Inn on beautiful Lake Meed. While staying at our inn, you'll breathe clean country air as you view spectacular sights. With its spacious rooms, swimming pool, and many outdoor activities, the Inn is in the perfect place for a vacation you won't forget. The Blue Valley Inn prides itself on the personal attention it provides to every guest. The Blue Valley motto has always been "A happy guest is our greatest treasure."

PREPARATION TIME

00:00:44

Listen to Speaker 1–3 responses.

Pronunciation

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	Although she makes occasional phonemic errors, the speaker can be understood without listener effort.
Speaker 2	02	The speaker's pronunciation is uneven with some self-correction and inaccuracy that impedes comprehension, so that listener effort is required.
Speaker 3	01	After the first sentence, which is quite comprehensible, pronunciation deteriorates and only occasional words can be easily understood.

Intonation & Stress

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	The speaker's stress and intonation create an accurate oral interpretation of the text.
Speaker 2	03	The speaker's stress and intonation are appropriate at times, but delivery is often flat and rhythm is choppy.
Speaker 3	01	The speaker stumbles over self-correction and multi-syllabic words and while he tries to maintain a breathless pace, his inaccurate stress and flat delivery impede comprehension.

Questions 1–2: Read a text aloud

Analytical Scoring Guidelines

Intonation & Stress

- 3 Speaker's use of emphases, pauses, and rising and falling pitch is appropriate to the text.
- 2 Speaker's use of emphases, pauses, and rising and falling pitch is generally appropriate to the text, though the response includes some lapses and/or moderate other language influence.
- 1 Speaker's use of emphases, pauses, and rising and falling pitch is not appropriate and the response includes significant other language influence.
- 0 No response OR response is completely unconnected to the stimulus.

Pronunciation

- 3 Pronunciation is highly intelligible, though the response may include minor lapses and/or other language influence.
- 2 Pronunciation is generally intelligible, though it includes some lapses and/or other language influence.
- 1 Pronunciation may be intelligible at times, but significant other language influence interferes with appropriate delivery of the text.
- 0 No response OR response is completely unconnected to the stimulus.

Question 3: Describe a picture

TOEIC Speaking



Question 3: Describe a picture

Directions: In this part of the test, you will describe the picture on your screen in as much detail as you can. You will have 30 seconds to prepare your response. Then you will have 45 seconds to speak about the picture.

TOEIC Speaking

Question 3 of 11



PREPARATION TIME

00:00:14

Listen to Speaker 1 response.

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	02	Some listener effort is required. The use of structures occasionally interferes with overall comprehensibility.

Question 3: Describe a picture Scoring Guidelines

- 3 The response is relevant to the picture and includes appropriate details.
- Speaker's delivery is almost always smooth and consistent with almost no listener effort required.
 - Speaker's vocabulary is accurate and relevant to the picture.
 - Speaker's use of structures allows coherent expression of ideas.
- 2 The response is relevant to the picture, but may leave out important content or may dwell on minor details.
- Speaker's delivery is generally smooth, but some listener effort is required.
 - Speaker's vocabulary may be limited or inaccurate at times.
 - Speaker's use of structures may be limited and may interfere with overall comprehensibility.
- 1 The response may be connected to the picture, but ideas conveyed are severely limited.
- Speaker's delivery is marked by long pauses and frequent hesitations and requires significant listener effort.
 - Speaker's choice of vocabulary may interfere with meaning and word choice may be highly repetitive.
 - Speaker's use of structures significantly interferes with comprehensibility.
- 0 No response OR response is completely unconnected to the stimulus.

Question 4: Respond to questions

Questions 4–6: Respond to questions

Directions: In this part of the test, you will answer three questions. For each question, begin responding immediately after you hear a beep. No preparation time is provided. You will have 15 seconds to respond to Questions 4 and 5 and 30 seconds to respond to Question 6.

Imagine that a Canadian marketing firm is doing research in your country. You have agreed to participate in a telephone interview about holiday celebrations.

What is the most important holiday in your country?

RESPONSE TIME

00:00:13

 Listen to Speaker 1–3 responses.

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	The delivery is almost always smooth and consistent. The speaker's use of grammar fulfills the demands of the task.
Speaker 2	02	The content is relevant but significant listening effort is required.
Speaker 3	01	The response is largely unintelligible.

Question 5: Respond to questions

TOEIC Speaking

Question 5 of 11


VOLUME

Imagine that a Canadian marketing firm is doing research in your country. You have agreed to participate in a telephone interview about holiday celebrations.

Why do you think this holiday is so important?

RESPONSE TIME

00:00:13

 Listen to Speaker 1–2 responses.

	Score	Examiner's comments
Speaker 1	03	Very smooth delivery and complete content. Word choice is accurate. Control of grammar fulfills the demands of the task.
Speaker 2	02	Delivery is smooth, but content is very limited, and the use of grammar requires some interpretation.