



Pearson  
PTE Academic

# The Official Guide to PTE Academic

SAMPLE

for Test Takers

David Hill & Simon Cotterill



NEW EDITION



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# Contents



	<b>How to use the Official Guide</b>	4
	<b>About PTE Academic</b>	6
	<b>Getting to know the test</b>	8
	<b>Preparing for your test</b>	10
	<b>On test day</b>	13
	<b>Score reports</b>	15
<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Speaking and writing</b>	19
	<b>Speaking</b>	20
	Personal introduction	23
	Read aloud	25
	Repeat sentence	29
	Describe image	33
	Re-tell lecture	37
	Answer short question	41
	Building confidence: speaking	45
	<b>Writing</b>	48
	Summarize written text	51
	Write essay	55
	Building confidence: writing	59
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Reading</b>	62
	Fill in the blanks: reading and writing	65
	Multiple-choice: Choose multiple answers	69
	Re-order paragraphs	73
	Fill in the blanks: reading	77
	Multiple-choice: Choose single answer	81
	Building confidence: reading	85
<b>Part 3</b>	<b>Listening</b>	88
	Summarize spoken text	91
	Multiple-choice: Choose multiple answers	95
	Fill in the blanks: listening and writing	99
	Highlight correct summary	103
	Multiple-choice: Choose single answer	107
	Select missing word	111
	Highlight incorrect words	115
	Write from dictation	119
	Building confidence: listening	123
	Glossary	126

# How to Use the Official Guide



## › Introduction

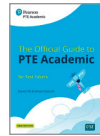
*The Official Guide to PTE Academic*, provides a complete overview of the test structure. It includes everything you need to know in order to become familiar with the task types, as well as guidance on managing a computer-based test and preparation strategies. *The Official Guide* and its support resources can also help you to practice real-world English skills in order to prepare for the PTE Academic test. It is an excellent starting point for evaluating your reading, writing, speaking and listening skills, and planning your test preparation.

## › Resources

The Official Guide is divided into 3 main Resources:

1

The Official Guide Book



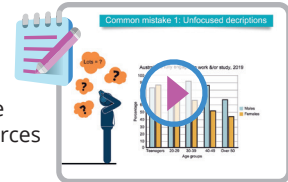
2

Online Question Bank



3

Online Resources



## › The Book

*The Official Guide to PTE Academic*:

- is suitable for anyone who wants to become familiar with the test;
- is designed to be used as a self-study tool, in addition to other preparation courseware or as part of classroom preparation;
- includes paper-based study and practice (with practice exercises included in the book and downloadable resources for printing) as well as online practice of all the task types;
- is a useful resource to help test takers plan their study and preparation for the test;
- is divided into clear sections to make information easy to find.

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### Information about PTE Academic

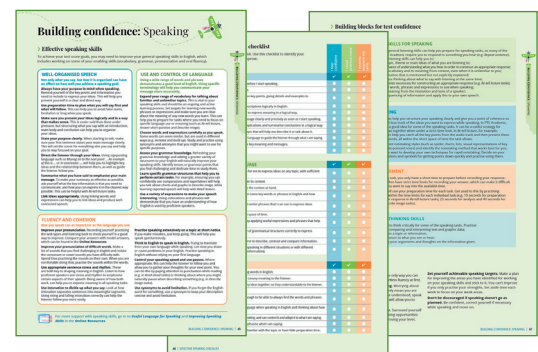
The pages at the front of the book give useful information on the test and what to expect, such as:

- guidance on how to prepare for your test
- information on how PTE A is scored and score reports
- complete overview of the test structure and detailed information on each Section

### Skill building pages

These can be found at the end of each the speaking, writing, reading and listening task type sections and provide:

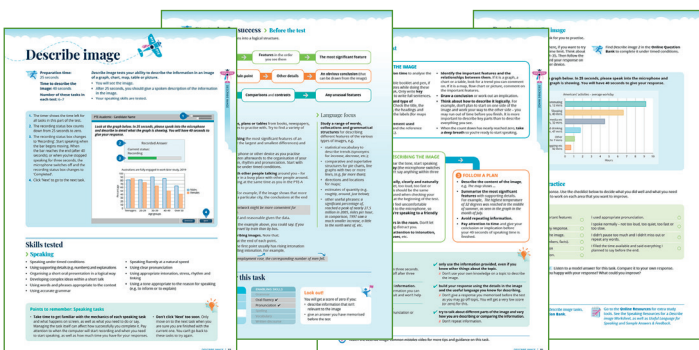
- guidance on how to build different skills
- checklists for checking skill development
- tips for building test confidence



### Task type pages

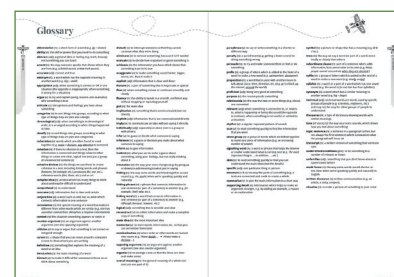
These pages give a detailed walkthrough of each task type and what is expected in the test. They also offer:

- **in depth** and **fast track** signposting to help you study in detail or prepare for your test quickly
- strategies for applying before and during the test
- suggestions for online resources and practice for each task type
- reminders to watch the videos



### Glossary

This handy section details useful words and phrases related to PTE Academic and their meanings.





## › The Digital Resources

You can access these resources using the code for the **Pearson English Portal** printed in the front of your book.

Resource	Description	How to use it
General	<b>Answer keys</b> for all tasks in the book, including model answers for speaking and writing tasks	Check your answers and see model responses to tasks.
	<b>Academic Collocations List</b>	Use this list to improve your academic vocabulary.
	<b>Am I ready? checklist</b>	You can use this before you start studying to identify areas for improvement. Use it during your preparation for the test to measure your skill progress.
Audio	<b>Audio tracks</b> for both practice tasks in the book, as well as model answers	Use these while practising the tasks in the book.
	<b>Speaking Sample Answer</b> audio tracks	Use these with the speaking sample answer and feedback downloadable material.
Video	<b>20 Videos</b> , focusing on the common mistakes people make when approaching each task type.	Watch the videos after studying the task type information in the <i>Official Guide</i> .
Speaking	<b>Worksheets for Speaking tasks:</b> <i>Personal Introduction</i> <i>Read aloud</i> <i>Repeat sentence</i> <i>Describe image</i> <i>Re-tell lecture</i>	Choose which worksheets you want to do in order to improve specific speaking skills or practice a particular task type in more detail.
	<b>Speaking Sample Answers and Feedback</b> <i>Personal Introduction</i> <i>Describe image</i> <i>Repeat sentence</i> <i>Re-tell lecture</i> <i>Summarise spoken text</i>	The sample answers and feedback will give you some examples of typical test taker responses at different levels. Use these to reflect on your own speaking practice and reflect on where you can improve.
	<b>Useful Language for Speaking</b>	This resource can help you to develop language skills for speaking.
Writing	<b>Worksheets for Writing tasks:</b> <i>Write essay</i> <i>Summarize written text</i>	Choose which worksheets you want to do in order to improve specific writing skills or practice a particular task type in more detail.
	<b>Written Sample Answers and Feedback</b> <i>Write essay</i> <i>Summarize written text</i>	The sample answers and expert feedback will give you some examples of typical written test taker responses. Compare them to your own responses and reflect on where you can improve.
	<b>How to Structure Academic Writing: essays</b> <b>How to Structure Academic Writing: summarising texts</b>	Use these resources if you want to improve your writing skills for academic purposes.
	<b>Useful Language for Writing</b>	This resource can help you to develop language skills for writing.
General Skill Development	<b>How to Improve Speaking Skills</b> <b>How to Improve Writing Skills</b> <b>How to Improve Listening Skills</b> <b>How to Improve Reading Skills</b>	General information divided by speaking, writing, listening and reading. Includes some general guidance and some specific tips on how to improve your communicative skills for PTE Academic.
Online Question Bank	<b>300 PTE Academic practice questions</b> , covering all 20 scored task types and Personal introduction	Use the bank to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practise the tasks that are included the book online, timed as you do them in the test</li> <li>• Listen to sample answers for speaking and writing tasks after you have given your responses and compare them to your own</li> <li>• Get additional tips per task type</li> </ul>

# About PTE Academic



## About the test

**Pearson Test of English Academic** (or PTE Academic) is a computer-based English proficiency test, which is widely recognised around the world as an accurate and reliable measure of English skills. Academic institutions, professional organisations and government bodies in many countries use PTE Academic results to make decisions on student admissions and visa applications. With approved test centres in over 50 countries and regions of the world, the test is widely recognised for its straightforward registration process and quick delivery of scores.

PTE Academic is an unbiased, authentic, and entirely digital test which uses artificial intelligence to score responses in an impartial way. Its integrated skills tasks mean that you must combine your language skills (reading and writing or listening and speaking) in a variety of ways. This is at the same time as performing real-life tasks such as summarising an authentic text or retelling information from a lecture. The result is a comprehensive assessment of your proficiency in English. As you will need to perform authentic academic tasks, preparing for the PTE Academic, also means preparing to successfully use English in real-life academic situations.

The test's detailed Score Report provides information that helps you clearly identify specific areas for improvement. Scores are reported according to the **Global Scale of English (GSE)**, which is aligned to the **Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)**.

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## How the test works

PTE Academic can be taken at any of the authorised test centres around the world. The whole test lasts approximately three hours. The test has three parts: Speaking and Writing, Reading, and Listening. There are 20 different types of scored tasks in the test and one more that is not scored. However, this doesn't mean that there are only 20 questions. You will complete each task type a number of times. The task types all have names (e.g. *Re-tell Lecture*, *Repeat sentence*, etc.) which makes it easier to identify each one and remember what you need to do.

Task types focus on English as it is used in real-life academic situations. They feature authentic texts: audio and video recordings from academic disciplines in Arts, Humanities, Sciences and Social Sciences. Each task is based on a topic (e.g. the climate change or marketing strategies) and although you do not need detailed knowledge of the topics to complete the tasks, you will need sufficient language skills to be able to analyse the information and respond successfully.

In everyday life, we don't use language skills (such as reading and listening) in isolation. So, PTE Academic uses integrated skills tasks (i.e. tasks that require you to use multiple skills at once) in a similar way that these skills are used in real life. For example, *Summarize written text* involves reading an academic text and writing a summary of it. This is something students regularly do in higher education or apply as a skill in professional life.

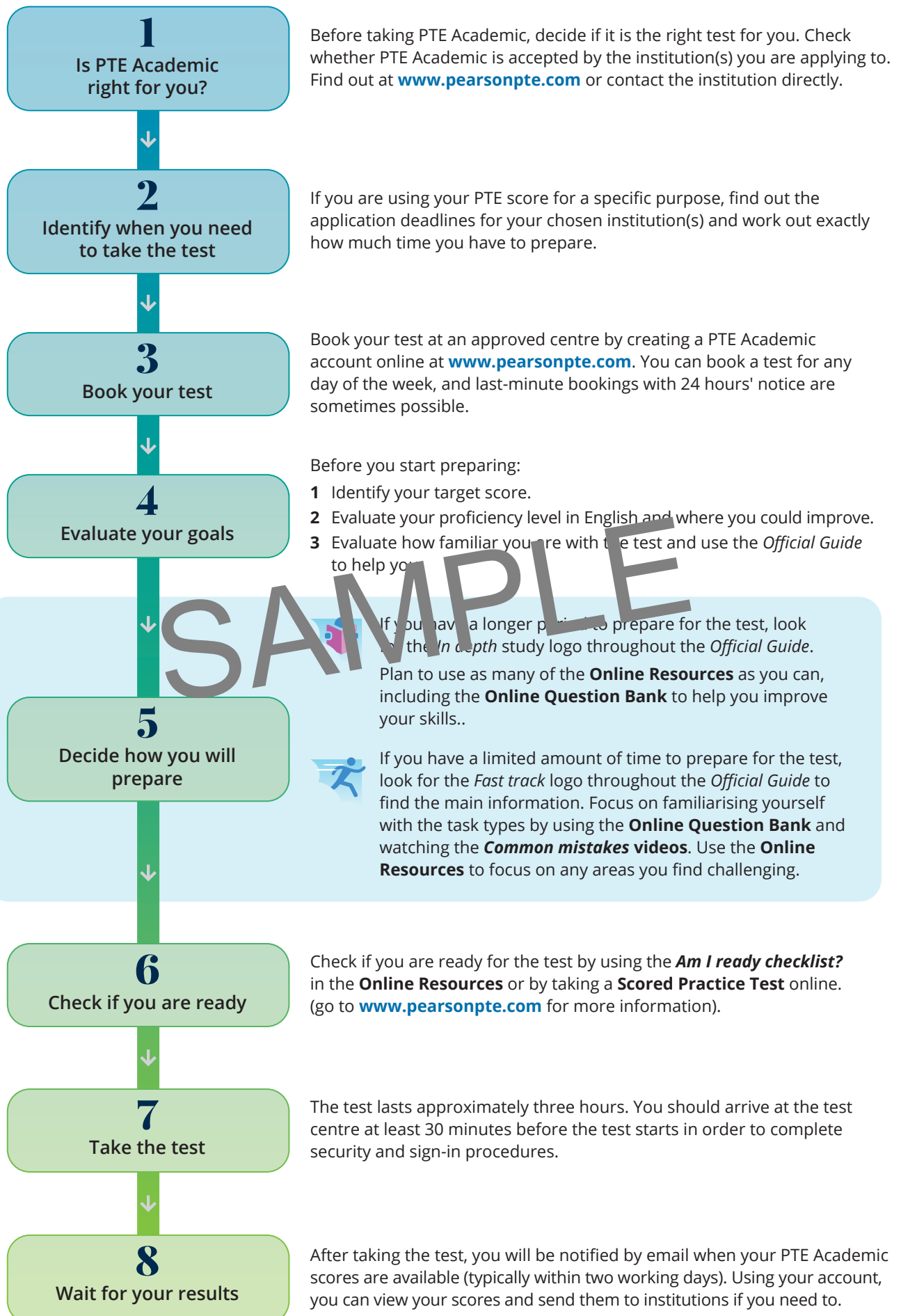
All tasks are scored using PTE Academic's automated scoring system. Test results are usually delivered within just a couple of days of taking the test. And the use of artificial intelligence means that scores are awarded reliably by a computer without risk of human error or bias. The scoring system, which has been developed based on the responses of thousands of test takers, produces accurate scores, is consistent, objective, and fair.





## The test taking process

Every test taker will need to give some consideration to the following.



# Getting to know the test



## How the test is structured



PTE Academic consists of three main parts: Speaking and Writing, Reading, and Listening. The entire test takes approximately three hours to complete and is taken on a computer at an approved test centre. Questions are always randomly generated by the computer, which means that no two PTE Academic tests are the same. You will complete all scored 20 task types, but the number of times each one appears will vary between tests. For example, you might have to complete *Describe image* six times, but another test-taker may do it seven times. This means that timings will vary too. The computer creates the test in this way in order to rigorously assess a wide range of language skills.

### Part 1: Speaking and writing

Part 1 takes **77–93 minutes to complete**. Although this part requires you to demonstrate your speaking and writing skills, some integrated tasks assess reading or listening skills, too.

Part 1 also assesses your ability to use six enabling skills: grammar, oral fluency, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary and written discourse.

Part 1 is divided into **six sections, each with a separate time limit**. Sections 1 and 2 focus on speaking and Sections 3–6 on writing. There are **six different kinds of speaking task** in Sections 1 and 2, as well as **two different kinds of writing task** in sections 3–6.

- **Section 1** is an unscored task which requires you to start speaking, give a brief description of yourself and your goals, and allow the system to identify your voice. This task is a good opportunity to introduce yourself, relax and get used to the equipment and the test environment.

- **Section 2** task types all require spoken responses. In this section you complete 33–42 tasks in total.

- In **Sections 3–6** you complete one writing task per section, four writing tasks in total. These individual tasks take longer to complete than those in Sections 1 and 2, and each task has its own strict time limit.

### Part 2: Reading

Part 2 takes **32–41 minutes to complete**.

All tasks in Part 2 contribute to the reading score, and one task type (*Reading & writing: Fill in the blanks*) also contributes to the writing score.

There are **five task types**, which involve reading about a range of authentic academic topics, answering multiple-choice questions and completing texts by filling in gaps or re-ordering sentences.

There is a **single time limit** for completing this part of the test and you must complete **15–20 tasks** in total.

### Part 3: Listening

Part 3 takes **45–57 minutes** and features a range of audio and video recordings. In each task, the **audio or video recording is only played once**.

Part 3 is divided into **two Sections which both focus on listening**. There is **one task type** in Section 1 and **six kinds of speaking task** in Section two. All tasks contribute to the listening score, while some also contribute to scores for reading and writing.

There are **two sections in Part 3**.

- In section 1 you complete 2–3 *Summarize spoken texts* tasks. These tasks assess listening and writing, as well as grammar, spelling and vocabulary.
- In section 2 you complete **15–22 tasks** in total.



## Test overview

This table shows the test structure.

Parts of test	Section	Task type	Number of tasks in the test	Time allowed
Introduction				Not timed
<b>Part 1: Speaking and writing</b>	Section 1	Personal introduction	1	1 minute
	Section 2	Read aloud	6-7	30-35 minutes
		Repeat sentence	10-12	
		Describe image	6-7	
		Re-tell lecture	3-4	
		Answer short question	10-12	
	Sections 3-4	Summarize written text	2	20 minutes
	Section 5	Summarize written text or Write essay	1	10 or 20 minutes
Section 6	Write essay	1	20 minutes	
<b>Part 2: Reading</b>		Fill in the blanks: reading and writing	5-6	32-41 minutes
		Multiple-choice, choose multiple answers	2-3	
		Re-order paragraphs	2-3	
		Fill in the blanks: reading	4-5	
		Multiple-choice, choose single answer	2-3	
<b>Part 3: Listening</b>	Section 1	Summarize spoken text	2-3	20 or 30 minutes
	Section 2	Multiple-choice, choose multiple answers	2-3	23-28 minutes
		Fill in the blanks: listening	2-3	
		Highlight correct summary	2-3	
		Multiple-choice, choose single answer	2-3	
		Select missing word	2-3	
		Highlight incorrect words	2-3	
		Write from dictation	3-4	





## Deciding how to prepare



PTE Academic is used for a range of purposes, by a wide variety of test takers. For this reason, preparation time can vary a lot between test takers. Some may prepare for their test quickly in a short period of time, while others may need to improve their level of proficiency and take a longer route to preparing for their test. The *Official Guide* offers advice on how to approach the test, whatever your situation.





If you have a reduced amount of time to prepare for your test, look for the **fast track preparation** symbol, for concise guidance and the main information you need to know.



If you have longer to prepare, follow the **in depth study** symbol for advice on how to study for the test in more detail.

## Following a study plan

However long you have to prepare for the test, it is important to create a study plan to make sure you cover everything you need. See the chart below for suggested steps for creating a **fast track** or an **in depth** study plan.

	 <b>Fast track preparation</b>	 <b>In depth study</b>
<b>Step 1</b>	Check the test date and count how many weeks you have.	Check the test date and count how many weeks you have.
<b>Step 2</b>	<b>Identify your strengths and areas for improvement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete a <b>Scored Practice Test</b></li> <li>Use the <b>Effective Skills Checklist</b> in this guide, to identify strong and weak points (pages 46, 50, 86 and 124)</li> <li>With the task types in mind, make a list of the specific tasks you want to get more familiar with.</li> </ul>	<b>Identify your strengths and areas for improvement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete the <b>Am I ready? Checklist</b></li> <li>Use the <b>Effective Skills Checklists</b> in this guide, to identify strong and weak points (pages 46, 50, 86 and 124).</li> <li>Make a list of the areas where you want to improve, focusing both on task types and improving your overall English skills.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 3</b>	<b>Pick out the <i>Official Guide</i> resources that you might find most useful or helpful in achieving your goals.</b> These might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the <b>Worksheets</b></li> <li>the <b>Common mistakes videos</b></li> <li>the <b>Sample Answers and Expert Feedback</b></li> </ul>	<b>Use as many of the Online Resources and tools that you can. You will find them helpful in studying the task types in detail and practising with them, as well as improving your skills in academic English.</b>
<b>Step 4</b>	<b>Create a study schedule</b> Identify when you can study and for how long. Divide this time into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>active practice of the specific skills you identified as needing improvement in Step 2 by using targeted online resources</li> <li>active practice of the task types you identified as needing improvement in Step 2 using the <b>Online Question Bank</b></li> <li>taking <b>Scored Practice Tests</b> to check your progress.</li> </ul>	<b>Create a study schedule</b> Identify when you can study and for how long. Divide this time into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practising your speaking and writing as much as possible to build your skills and confidence;</li> <li>practising your listening and reading through exposure to academic texts and audio or video</li> <li>active practice of the specific skills you identified as needing improvement in Step 2</li> <li>active practice of all twenty task types using the <b>Online Question Bank</b>.</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5</b>	<b>Re-assessing</b> A week before your test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take a <b>Scored Practice Test</b>.</li> <li>complete the <b>Am I ready? Checklist</b>.</li> </ul> Are there any areas you still need to work on?	<b>Re-assessing</b> Before your test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>take <b>Scored Practice Tests</b>.</li> <li>complete the <b>Am I ready? Checklist</b>.</li> </ul> Are there any areas you still need to work on?

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# On test day



## Things to do before going to the test centre

- Read your confirmation email carefully.
- Pack the correct ID as requested by the test centre (usually your passport). The details on your ID must match those entered when booking the test. Without the correct ID, you cannot take the test.
- Check the exact test centre address.
- Plan your journey carefully.
- Make sure you leave enough time for potential delays, such as rush hour traffic.
- Arrive at least 30 minutes before your test start time for security and sign-in procedures. If you are late, you won't be allowed to take the test.

## Arriving at the test centre

When you arrive at the test centre, you will be given instructions to follow. You must do what the test centre staff ask you as they need to check who you are carefully for security.

**1** Show your ID.

**2** Read the *PTE Academic Test Taker Rules Agreement*, which details what you must and mustn't do during the test. Ask a member of staff if there is anything you don't understand.

**3** Sign in digitally to accept the agreement. Once you have signed the agreement, you agree to abide by the terms of the test. Failing to follow these terms and instructions may jeopardise your test.

**4** Scan your palm and have your photograph taken. These security measures validate your identity and the authenticity of the test.

**5** You will be asked to leave all personal items in a locker, including any mobile devices, which should be switched off. Store all personal items in the locker provided. The following items are **not** allowed in the test room:

- phones
- electronic devices
- digital watches
- food and drink of any kind
- large items of jewellery (thicker than ¼ inch/ ½ cm)
- wallets or purses
- hats
- coats
- books, notes or paper
- smoking
- talking to other test takers

**6** You will receive a pen and erasable booklet which you can use to make notes during the test if you wish. Do not write on the erasable booklet until the test begins. You can use both sides of the erasable booklet to write on. If you need more pages during the test, the administrator can give you a new one.

**Go!**

# Part 1 | Speaking



## What is assessed in the Speaking sections

**PTE Academic assesses** a range of speaking skills in this part of the test.

- Speaking for a purpose (e.g. repeating, informing and explaining)
- Reading a text aloud
- Summarising the main points of spoken and visual information
- Organising an oral presentation in a logical sequence
- Using vocabulary and expressions appropriate to the context
- Developing complex ideas within speech
- Using correct intonation, stress and pronunciation
- Speaking fluently and clearly

This part of the test assesses how well you can talk about academic topics. Tasks are based on a variety of texts, graphics, and audio and video recordings. For example, in *Read aloud* tasks, you read an academic text. For *Describe image* tasks, you talk about the main aspects of graphic material, such as a graph or a chart showing information about recent trends. For *Repeat sentence*, *Re-tell lecture*, and *Answer short question* tasks, you respond to audio or video input, such as an academic lecture.

You should speak fluently with good intonation, stress and pronunciation. PTE Academic recognises a range of regional and national varieties of English pronunciation, as long as you speak in a consistent way that is easily understandable to most English speakers.

Speaking skills

# SAMPLE

**SPEAKING EFFECTIVELY** begins with having a clear understanding of purpose and context. The way we speak depends on the topic, our goal and the level of formality we need. We speak about what we have heard, watched, seen and read. That's why PTE Academic uses integrated skills tasks: in the real world, speaking involves using and responding to information that we hear or read.

**DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS** starts with using appropriate phrases and sentences to describe everyday topics. As our skills improve, we can give longer, more detailed responses to questions and descriptions about a wider range of topics. The most advanced speakers can talk fluently and easily about complex issues, using idiomatic and colloquial language with appropriate stress and intonation depending on the message they want to give.



## What to expect in the speaking section

In PTE Academic, you speak into a microphone while looking at the screen. At the start of the test, check that the microphone is recording your voice correctly. After checking the recording volume, check that the volume of your voice is the same throughout the test. You can monitor the recording level on the screen.

There will probably be other test takers in the same room at the test centre. However, you should not speak too loudly into the microphone as a result. On the other hand, speaking too loudly can distort the recording, which can reduce your score. Speaking too quietly makes it hard for the computer to pick up what you are saying. Try to use your normal voice, as if you are talking to someone in front of you.

The speaking tasks feature authentic academic texts, graphics, and audio and video recordings. In tasks that involve listening, you will hear people with different accents and dialects. The recordings are extracts of longer authentic audio and video recordings, such as podcasts and academic lectures. This means that the speakers talk in a completely natural way and at a normal speed. This helps to prepare you for using English in real-world situations. You do not need to be familiar with the topic to complete the task successfully.

The total time limit for all speaking tasks is 30–35 minutes.

## Speaking task types

At the start of Part 1, you will be asked to introduce yourself. Your response is not scored, but you can send it, along with your Score Report, to the institutions of your choice. It is also an additional security measure.

You will complete each of the five remaining task types a number of times (exact numbers vary between tests, but between three and twelve times per task type). Each task type has a different format.

- *Read aloud* tests your ability to read a short text with correct pronunciation and intonation.
- *Repeat sentence* requires you to understand, remember and repeat a short sentence exactly as you hear it, while using correct pronunciation.
- *Describe image* tests your ability to describe an image from an academic source.
- *Re-tell lecture* tests your ability to summarise the important information from a lecture.

## Scoring of speaking tasks

Because PTE Academic is an integrated skills test, the speaking tasks in Part 1 contribute to the overall score, speaking score and also to the scores for reading, listening, oral fluency, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Task type	Overall score	Speaking score	Reading score	Listening score	Oral fluency score	Pronunciation score	Vocabulary score
<i>Read aloud</i>	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
<i>Repeat sentence</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
<i>Describe image</i>	✓	✓			✓	✓	
<i>Re-tell lecture</i>	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
<i>Answer short question</i>	✓	✓		✓			✓



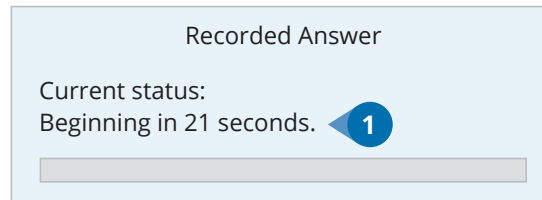
## Managing the information on screen

At the start of the test, you will be able to read and listen to instructions that explain everything you need to do.

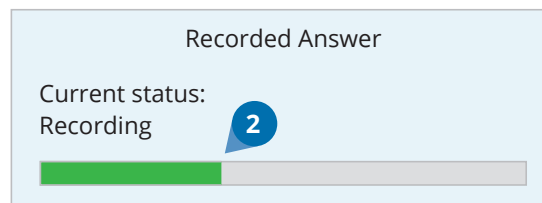
You will be shown how to check your microphone is in the correct position before the test begins. Make sure it stays in this position throughout the Speaking sections of the test.



1 Tasks begin with an instruction. After being presented with information such as a lecture for *Re-tell lecture*, a graphic for *Describe image*, or a written passage for *Read aloud* tasks, you record your spoken response into the microphone. The recording status box shows how much time you have to prepare before recording begins.



2 When recording begins, the recording status will change to 'Recording' and the bar will begin to fill, showing you how much time is left to give your answer.



3 During each task, you can see the timer. This tells you how much time remains for the task and for the section of the test.

PTE Academic - Candidate Name: [REDACTED] Time Remaining: 00:29:59 (1 of 5 (186/786.2))

Look at the graph below. In 5 seconds, please speak into the microphone and describe in your own words what the graph is showing. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.

Recorded Answer

Current status: Recording

Australians are fully engaged in work &/or study, 2019

Age groups	Males (%)	Females (%)
Teenagers	85	88
20-29	82	75
30-39	90	65
40-49	88	50
Over 50	65	40

Previous Next

4 At the end of a task, click 'Next'.

### Points to remember: Speaking tasks

- At the start of the test, the computer will help you to check your headphones and microphone are set up correctly.
- You should speak in a natural voice at a normal speed and volume.
- Speaking too loudly or too quietly can affect your speaking score. A very high volume can distort the recording and a very low volume may not be picked up by the microphone.
- During tasks, it is a good idea to regularly check the timer so you know how much time remains. However, do not stop speaking while checking the time.
- When recording, the microphone will stop recording if you are silent for more than three seconds.
- You can use the erasable booklet and pen to take notes.



# Describe image



**Preparation time:**  
25 seconds

**Time to describe the image:** 40 seconds

**Number of these tasks in each test:** 6–7

*Describe image* tests your ability to describe the information in an image of a graph, chart, map, table or picture.

- You will see the image.
- After 25 seconds, you should give a spoken description of the information in the image.
- Your speaking skills are tested.



DESCRIBE IMAGE

1. The timer shows the time left for all tasks in this part of the test.
2. The recording status box counts down from 25 seconds to zero.
3. The recording status box changes to 'Recording'. Start speaking when the bar begins moving. When the bar reaches the end (after 40 seconds), or when you've stopped speaking for three seconds, the microphone switches off and the recording status box changes to 'Completed'.
4. Click 'Next' to go to the next task.

PTE Academic - Candidate Name 1 Time Remaining 00:29:59  
1 of 5 (186786.2)

**Look at the graph below. In 25 seconds, please speak into the microphone and describe in detail what the graph is showing. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.**

2 Recorded Answer

Current status: Recording

3

Australians are fully engaged in work &/or study, 2019

Age groups	Males (%)	Females (%)
Teenagers	80	85
20-29	85	80
30-39	90	75
40-49	85	70
Over 50	75	65

4 Previous Next

## Skills tested

### › Speaking

- Speaking under timed conditions
- Using supporting details (e.g. numbers) and explanations
- Organising a short oral presentation in a logical way
- Developing complex ideas within a short talk
- Using words and phrases appropriate to the context
- Using accurate grammar
- Speaking fluently at a natural speed
- Using clear pronunciation
- Using appropriate intonation, stress, rhythm and linking
- Using a tone appropriate to the reason for speaking (e.g. to inform or to explain)

### Points to remember: Speaking tasks

- **Take time to get familiar with the mechanics of each speaking task** and what happens on screen, as well as what you need to do or say. Managing the task itself can affect how successfully you complete it. Pay attention to when the computer will start recording and when you need to start speaking, as well as how much time you have for your responses.
- **Don't click 'Next' too soon.** Only move on to the next task when you are sure you are finished with the current one. You can't go back to these tasks to try again.







## Strategies for success > Before the test

Practise organising your descriptions into a logical structure.

**Introduction** (what the image shows in general)



**Features** (in the order you see them)



**The most significant feature**

**Introduction**



**Main point**



**Other details**



**An obvious conclusion** (that can be drawn from the image)

**Introduction**



**Comparisons and contrasts**



**Any unusual features**

### > Practice tips

**Find some graphs, charts, maps, plans or tables** from books, newspapers, academic or government websites to practise with. Try to find a variety of examples of each type of image.

**Practise identifying and describing** the most significant features of an image (e.g. the biggest change or the largest and smallest differences) and the relationships between them.

**Record yourself** on your mobile phone or other device as you practise describing graphs, charts, etc. Listen afterwards to the organisation of your talk, and to your stress, intonation, rhythm and pronunciation. Start with untimed practice and later practise under timed conditions.

**Practise in an environment with other people** talking around you – for example, with the TV / radio on or in a busy place with other people around. There are likely to be people talking at the same time as you in the PTE-A exam room.

**Practise drawing conclusions.** For example, if the image shows that more people take trains than buses in a particular city, the conclusions at the end of your talk might be:

*This suggests that the city's train network might be more convenient for commuters than the bus network.*

The conclusions should be logical and reasonable given the data.

**Practise giving implications.** In the example above, you could say: *If you visit this city, you're more likely to travel by train than by bus.*

**Practise intonation when describing images.** Note that:

- the tone of voice usually falls at the end of each point.
- if two things are contrasted, the first point usually has rising intonation and the second usually has falling intonation. For example,

*While the number of women in employment rose, the corresponding number of men fell.*

### > Language focus

**Study a range of words, collocations and grammatical structures** for describing different features of the various types of images, e.g.

- statistical vocabulary to describe trends (synonyms for *increase, decrease*, etc.);
- comparative and superlative structures for pie charts, line graphs with two or more lines, (e.g. *far more than*);
- directions and locations for maps;
- estimates of quantity (e.g. *roughly, around, just below*);
- other useful phrases: *a significant percentage of, reached a peak of nearly 27.5 million in 2005, miles per hour, in comparison, 1997 saw a much smaller increase, a little to the north west of*, etc.



## Your score for this task

### COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Listening

Reading

Speaking ✓

Writing

### ENABLING SKILLS

Grammar

Oral Fluency ✓

Pronunciation ✓

Spelling

Vocabulary

Written discourse

### Look out!

You will get a score of zero if you:

- describe information that isn't relevant to the image
- give an answer you have memorised before the test



## > During the test

### 1 BEFORE DESCRIBING THE IMAGE

Use the **25 seconds preparation time** to analyse the image carefully.

- **Take notes**, using the erasable booklet and pen, if you have practised taking notes while doing these tasks and they help you speak. Only write **key words**, you won't have time to write full sentences.
- **Identify the general topic and type of information in the image.** Check the title, the axes (for graphs and charts), the headings and sub-headings (for tables) or the labels (for maps and pictures).
- **Check the units of measurement used** (US dollars, kilograms, etc.) and the reference points (years, categories, etc.).
- **Identify the important features and the relationships between them.** If it is a graph, a chart or a table, look for a trend you can comment on. If it is a map, flow chart or picture, comment on the important features.
- **Draw a conclusion** or work out an implication.
- **Think about how to describe it logically.** For example, don't plan to start on one side of the image and work your way to the other side – you may run out of time before you finish. It is more important to describe key parts than to describe everything you see.
- When the count down has nearly reached zero, **take a deep breath** so you're ready to start speaking.



DESCRIBE IMAGE

### 2 WHILE DESCRIBING THE IMAGE

When you hear the tone, start speaking **straight away** (the microphone switches off if you don't say anything within three seconds).

**Speak normally, clearly and naturally** – not too quiet, too loud, too fast or too slow. This should be the same volume you use when checking your microphone at the beginning of the test.

Some people feel uncomfortable speaking just to the microphone, so **imagine you're speaking to a friendly audience.**

**Ignore others in the room.** Don't let their speaking distract you.

**Pay careful attention to intonation, rhythm, pauses**, etc.

### 3 FOLLOW A PLAN

**Describe the content of the image,** e.g. *The map shows...*

**Summarise the most significant features** with supporting details. For example, *The highest temperature of 32 degrees was reached in the middle of summer, as seen in the graph in the month of July.*

**Avoid repeating information.**

**Pay attention to time** and give your conclusion or implication before your 40 seconds of speaking time is finished.

### Make sure you ...

#### ✓ only pause briefly.

- ✗ Don't pause for longer than three seconds. The microphone switches off after three seconds of silence.

#### ✓ focus on the most relevant information.

- ✗ Don't try to give all the information you can think of. It will be too difficult and won't help you achieve your goal.

#### ✓ use natural pronunciation.

- ✗ Don't exaggerate your pronunciation or intonation.

#### ✓ only use the information provided, even if you know other things about the topic.

- ✗ Don't use your own knowledge on a topic to describe the image.

#### ✓ build your response using the details in the image and the useful language you know for describing.

- ✗ Don't give a response you memorised before the test as you may go off topic. You will get a very low score (or zero) for this.

#### ✓ try to talk about different parts of the image and vary how you are describing or comparing the information.

- ✗ Don't repeat information.



Watch the *Describe image: Common mistakes* video for more tips and guidance on this task.

## Practice > Describe image

Here is a sample *Describe image* task for you to practise.

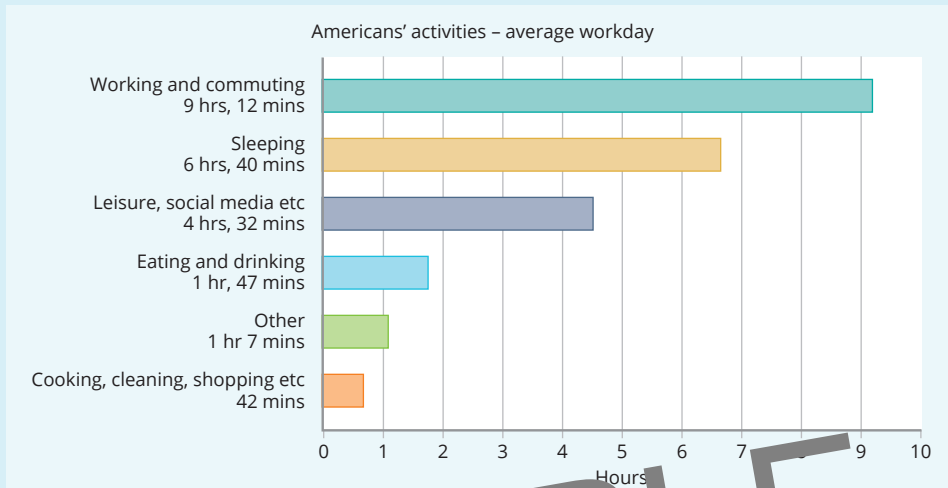


Practise *Describe image 2* here, if you want to try *Describe image* without a time limit. Think about the strategies on pages 34–35. Then follow the task instructions and record your response on your mobile phone or other device.



Find *Describe image 2* in the **Online Question Bank** to complete it under timed conditions.

Look at the graph below. In 25 seconds, please speak into the microphone and describe in detail what the graph is showing. You will have 40 seconds to give your response.



SAMPLE

### > Reflecting on your practice

- 1 Play back and listen to your response. Use the checklist below to decide what you did well and what you need to practise more. Set aside time to work on each area that you want to improve.

#### Describe image checklist

I identified the topic and the important features in the preparation time.

I made a plan and followed it in my response.

I described the main features of the image.

I gave supporting details (e.g. numbers, facts).

I only included relevant information

I gave a conclusion or an implication.

I used appropriate pronunciation.

I spoke normally – not too loud, too quiet, too fast or too slow.

I didn't pause too much and I didn't miss out or repeat any words.

I filled the time available and said everything I planned to say before the end.

- 2 [Describe image 2 model answer](#) Listen to a model answer for this task. Compare it to your own response. What are the differences? Are you happy with your response? What could you improve?



For more practice with *Describe image* tasks, go to the **Online Question Bank**.



Go to the **Online Resources** for extra study tools. See the *Speaking Resources* for a *Describe image Worksheet*, as well as *Useful Language for Speaking* and *Sample Answers & Feedback*.

# Building confidence: Speaking



## › Effective speaking skills

To achieve your test score goals, you may need to improve your general speaking skills in English, which includes working on some of your enabling skills (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and oral fluency).

### WELL-ORGANISED SPEECH

**Not only *what* you say, but *how* it is organised can have an effect on how well you achieve a speaking goal.**

**Always have your purpose in mind when speaking.**

Remind yourself of the key points and information you need to include to express your ideas. This will help you present yourself in a clear and direct way.

**Use preparation time to plan what you will say first and what will follow.** This can help you to avoid false starts, hesitation or long when you speak.

**Make sure you present your ideas logically and in a way that makes sense.** This is easier said than done under pressure, but structuring what you say with an introduction, main body and conclusion can help you to organise your ideas.

**State your purpose clearly.** When starting to talk, make sure your first sentence states your main message clearly. This will set the scene for everything else you say and help you to stay focused on your goal.

**Direct the listener through your ideas.** Using signposting language such as *Moving on to the next point ... An example of this is ... or In conclusion ...*, will help you to highlight key ideas and the relationship between them, as well as guide the listener to follow you.

**Summarise what you have said to emphasise your main message.** To make your summaries as effective as possible, ask yourself what the key information is that you need to communicate, and how you can express it in the clearest way possible. This can be helpful with *Re-tell lecture* tasks.

**Link ideas appropriately.** Using linking words and expressions can help you to link ideas and produce well-connected speech.

### USE AND CONTROL OF LANGUAGE

**Using a wide range of words and phrases demonstrates a good level of English. Using specific terminology will help you communicate your message more accurately.**

**Expand your range of vocabulary for talking about familiar and unfamiliar topics.** This is vital to your speaking skills and should be an ongoing and active learning process. Set targets for learning new words, phrases or expressions and make sure you are clear about the meaning of any new words you learn. This can help you to prepare for tasks where you need to focus on specific language use or meaning (such as *Re-tell lecture*, *Answer short question* and *Describe image*).

**Choose words and expressions carefully as you speak.** Some words can seem similar, but are used in different ways (e.g. *increase* and *build up*). Study and practise using synonyms and antonyms that you might want to use for specific purposes.

**Assess your grammar knowledge.** Refreshing your grammar knowledge and adding a greater variety of structures to your English will naturally improve your speaking skills. Identify tenses or grammar points that you find challenging and dedicate time to study them.

**Learn specific grammar structures that help you to perform certain tasks.** For example, ensuring you can confidently use comparatives and superlatives will help you talk about charts and graphs in *Describe image*, while learning reported speech will help with *Retell lecture*.

**Use a variety of expressions to make your speech interesting.** Using collocations and phrases will demonstrate that you have an understanding of how English is used by proficient speakers.

### FLUENCY AND COHESION

**How you speak can be as important as the language you use.**

**Improve your pronunciation.** Recording yourself practising the task types and listening back to check yourself is a good way to improve. Compare your answers with model answers, which can be found in the **Online Resources**.

**Improve your pronunciation of difficult words.** Make a list of sounds that you find challenging in English and isolate the consonant or vowel sounds you have difficulty with. Spend time practising the sounds on their own. When you are comfortable doing that, practise the sounds within the words.

**Use appropriate sentence stress and rhythm.** These are both key to shaping meaning in English. Listen to how proficient speakers use stress and rhythm to emphasise certain aspects of their speech. Being aware of how both work, can help you to express meaning in all speaking tasks.

**Use intonation to divide up what you say.** Look at how intonation separates sentences into meaningful segments. Using rising and falling intonation correctly can help the listener follow you more easily.

**Practise speaking extensively on a topic at short notice.**

If you make mistakes, just keep going. This will help you speak spontaneously.

**Think in English to speak in English.** Trying to translate from your own language while speaking, can slow you down or cause problems in your English. Practise speaking in English without relying on your first language.

**Control your speaking speed and use pauses.** Where appropriate, this can help the listener to follow you and allow you to gather your thoughts for your next point. You can do this by paying attention to punctuation while reading (e.g. in *Read aloud* tasks) or thinking about where you might naturally pause when describing something (e.g. in *Describe image* tasks).

**Use synonyms to avoid hesitation.** If you forget the English word for something, use a synonym to keep your description concise and avoid hesitation.



For more support with speaking skills, go to [Useful Language for Speaking](#) and [Improving Speaking Skills](#) in the **Online Resources**

## › Effective speaking skills checklist

Think about your speaking skills in English. Use this checklist to identify your strengths and areas where you could improve.

	I feel confident	I could practise more	I need to improve my skills
<b>WELL-ORGANISED SPEECH</b>	✓	✓	✓
I am able to organise my thoughts quickly before I start speaking.	●	●	●
I start speaking by stating my main purpose.	●	●	●
I can organise my speech well by focusing on key points, giving details and examples to support what I say.	●	●	●
I can structure my arguments, ideas and descriptions logically in English.	●	●	●
I can structure sentences correctly in order to express meaning in a logical way.	●	●	●
I can begin to express my main idea or message clearly and precisely as soon as I start speaking.	●	●	●
I can use language efficiently to describe implications and summarise conclusions in a logical way.	●	●	●
I am able to identify key language on any topic that will help me describe it or talk about it.	●	●	●
I am familiar with specific phrases and useful language to guide the listener through what I am saying.	●	●	●
I can summarise an idea, retaining all of the key meaning and messages.	●	●	●
I can link my ideas together effectively.	●	●	●
<b>USE AND CONTROL OF LANGUAGE</b>	✓	✓	✓
My vocabulary knowledge is varied enough for me to express ideas on any topic, with sufficient detail and precision.	●	●	●
I can understand unfamiliar vocabulary from its context.	●	●	●
I can use words and phrases appropriate to the context at hand.	●	●	●
I understand the subtle differences between some key words or phrases in English and how to apply them.	●	●	●
I am familiar with a range of synonyms and similar phrases that I can use to express ideas in a variety of ways.	●	●	●
I can develop a complex idea within a short space of time.	●	●	●
I can demonstrate good control of English by applying useful expressions and phrases that help convey my message.	●	●	●
I have good grammar and can use a variety of grammatical structures correctly to express my ideas well.	●	●	●
I have specific grammatical tools that help me to describe, contrast and compare information.	●	●	●
I can identify a formal or informal tone for speaking in different situations or with different purposes (e.g. to inform, explain or repeat information).	●	●	●
<b>FLUENCY AND COHESION</b>	✓	✓	✓
I can speak clearly and articulate challenging words in English.	●	●	●
I can apply stress and rhythm effectively to convey meaning to the listener.	●	●	●
I can use specific language functions to link my ideas together, so they are understandable to the listener.	●	●	●
I can pronounce most words accurately.	●	●	●
I have practised working with synonyms enough to be able to always find the words and phrases I need to express my ideas.	●	●	●
I try not to translate or think in my own language when speaking in English and thinking about how to express myself.	●	●	●
I am aware of the speed of my voice when speaking, and can control it and adapt it to what I am saying.	●	●	●
I can apply pauses in the right places to emphasise what I am saying.	●	●	●
I can speak confidently, even when I am unfamiliar with the topic or have little preparation time.	●	●	●

SAMPLE



## › Building blocks for test confidence

1

### LISTENING SKILLS FOR SPEAKING

Improving your general listening skills can help you prepare for speaking tasks, as many of the task types in PTE Academic require you to respond to something you hear (e.g. *Repeat sentence*). Improving your listening skills can help you to:

- identify the topic, theme or main ideas of what you are listening to;
- have a good chance of understanding what you hear in order to construct an appropriate response;
- understand vocabulary and its meaning from context, even when it is unfamiliar to you;
- identify information that is mentioned but not explicitly explained;
- learn to balance thinking about what to say with listening at the same time;
- identify key points necessary for constructing an appropriate response (e.g. *Re-tell lecture tasks*);
- pick up useful words, phrases and expressions to use when speaking;
- understand meaning from the intonation and tone of a speaker;
- follow oral sequencing of information and apply this to your own speech.

2

### NOTETAKING

Notetaking can help you structure your speaking clearly and give you a point of reference so that you don't lose track of the ideas you want to express while speaking. In PTE Academic, notetaking is a good idea for some of the speaking tasks. It can be a useful strategy for gathering ideas together when under a strict time limit. In *Re-tell lecture*, for example, notetaking can help you catch all the key points from the audio track and then present them in your own words, all within the short space of time the task allows.

Try out different notetaking styles (such as spider charts, lists, visual representations of key points or bullet-pointed notes) and identify the notetaking method that works best for you. You may even want to develop your own techniques for rapid notetaking. Decide on your own abbreviations and symbols for getting points down quickly and practise using them.

3

### TIME MANAGEMENT

For each speaking task you only have a short time to prepare before recording your response. And some tasks often have strict time limits for recording your answer, which can make it difficult to fit everything you want to say into the available time.

Decide how you will use your preparation time for each task. Get used to this by practising giving responses within the time limits for each individual task (e.g. 10 seconds for preparation and 40 seconds for response in *Re-tell lecture* tasks; 25 seconds for analysis and 40 seconds for description in *Describe image* tasks).

4

### CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will need to think critically for some of the speaking tasks. Practise:

- analysing, comparing and interpreting text and graphic data;
- reflecting on a topic or information;
- applying reason to what you see or hear;
- structuring your arguments and thoughts on the information given.

## › Keys for confidence

**Embrace your mistakes**, as this is the only way you can improve. Nobody can speak with effortless fluency at first.

**Embrace your own way of speaking.** Worrying about sounding like a native speaker will only mean you are more cautious. As long as you can be understood, speak in a way that is natural for you. This will allow you to express yourself more effectively

**Practice makes for a good speaker.** Surround yourself with English. Look for as many speaking opportunities as possible in order to work on improving your level.

**Set yourself achievable speaking targets.** Make a plan for improving the areas you have identified for working on your speaking skills and stick to it. You can't improve if you only practise your strengths. Set aside time each week to focus on your weak areas.

**Don't be discouraged if speaking doesn't go as planned.** Be confident, correct yourself if necessary while speaking and move on.



# Glossary



GLOSSARY

<b>abbreviation</b> (n):	a short form of a word (e.g. <i>Dr</i> = <i>doctor</i> )	<b>counter-argument</b> (n):	an argument against another argument (see also <i>opposing argument</i> )
<b>ability</b> (n):	the skill or power that you need to do something	<b>criticise</b> (v):	to say or argue that something is not correct or not good enough
<b>abstract</b> (adj):	a general idea or feeling (e.g. truth, beauty); not something you can touch	<b>cursor</b> (n):	a shape that you can move around a computer screen to show where you are working
<b>accent</b> (n):	the way someone speaks that shows where they are from (e.g. <i>a British accent</i> , <i>a New York accent</i> )	<b>definition</b> (n):	something that explains the meaning of a word or an idea
<b>accurate</b> (adj):	correct and true	<b>denotation</b> (n):	the main meaning of a word
<b>antonym</b> (n):	a word which has the opposite meaning to another word (e.g. <i>big</i> – <i>small</i> )	<b>distract</b> (v):	to make it difficult for someone to focus on or think about something
<b>appropriate</b> (adj):	when something is correct or OK in one situation (the opposite is <i>inappropriate</i> , when something is wrong for a situation)	<b>disturb</b> (v):	to interrupt someone so that they cannot continue what they were doing
<b>argue</b> (v):	to try and explain (using reasons and examples) why something is true	<b>eliminate</b> (v):	to remove something, because it isn't needed
<b>attitude</b> (n):	the opinions and feelings you have about something	<b>evaluate</b> (v):	to decide how important or good something is
<b>categorise</b> (v):	to sort things into groups, according to what type of things they are (see also <i>classify</i> )	<b>evidence</b> (n):	the information you have which shows that something is (or isn't) true
<b>chronological</b> (adj):	when something is <i>in chronological order</i> , it is arranged according to when things happened in time	<b>exaggerate</b> (v):	to make something sound better, bigger, worse, etc. than it really is
<b>classify</b> (v):	to sort things into groups, according to what type of things they are (see also <i>categorise</i> )	<b>explicit</b> (adj):	information that is clear and direct
<b>collocation</b> (n):	words which are often found or used together (e.g. <i>make a decision</i> , <i>pay attention to someone</i> )	<b>feature</b> (n):	a part of something that is important or special
<b>cohesion</b> (n):	if there is cohesion in a text, then the information is connected and things relate to other things to create one clear, logical text (not just a group of unconnected sentences)	<b>flow</b> (n):	when something moves or continues smoothly and clearly
<b>cohesive devices</b> (n):	the things we use these to create cohesion in a text, including linking words and phrases ( <i>however</i> , <i>for example</i> , etc.), pronouns ( <i>he</i> , <i>our</i> , etc.), reference words ( <i>this</i> , <i>those</i> , etc.) and so on	<b>fluency</b> (n):	the ability to speak in a smooth, confident way without stopping or repeating yourself
<b>complex idea</b> (n):	an idea which has many things to think about and may be difficult to understand	<b>gist</b> (n):	the main idea
<b>comprehend</b> (v):	to understand	<b>implication</b> (n):	something that is communicated, but not directly
<b>concrete</b> (adj):	information that is clear and certain	<b>implicit</b> (adj):	information that is not communicated directly
<b>conjunction</b> (n):	a word such as <i>and</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>or</i> , <i>while</i> which connects information in one sentence	<b>imply</b> (v):	to communicate an idea without saying it directly
<b>connotation</b> (n):	the special meaning of a word that makes it different from other words which are similar (e.g. <i>slim</i> has a positive connotation, <i>skinny</i> has a negative connotation)	<b>individually</b> (adj):	separately or alone (not in a group or with others)
<b>context</b> (n):	the situation something appears or exists in	<b>infer</b> (v):	to guess or decide what someone is saying
		<b>inference</b> (n):	a guess or decision you make about what someone is saying
		<b>inform</b> (v):	to give information
		<b>instinct</b> (n):	what you use to make a guess about something, using your feelings, but not really thinking about it
		<b>intonation</b> (n):	the way your voice changes (e.g. by going up or down) to add meaning to what you're saying
		<b>linking</b> (n):	the way some words are linked together as one sound (e.g. <i>the_apple</i> ) when we're speaking quickly and naturally