

ESL speaking rubric

Four dimensions. One observed task. A useful next step.

For teen/adult pair work. These original bands describe classroom task performance; they are not CEFR levels or a validated placement scale. Share the criteria before speaking.

Dimension	4 / Secure	3 / Mostly independent	2 / With support	1 / Substantial support
Message and organisation	Completes the task, gives relevant reasons and connects ideas so the listener can follow the message.	Communicates the main answer in a mostly clear order; a reason or connection sometimes needs clarification.	Communicates part of the answer; needs a prompt to add a reason or put ideas in order.	Gives little relevant information; the main message remains unclear even after a supportive prompt.
Language resources	Uses varied, relevant words and sentence patterns. Errors do not obscure the intended message.	Uses enough words and basic sentence patterns for the task. Some errors occur, but meaning is usually clear.	Relies on a small set of words and patterns. Errors sometimes obscure meaning; asks for or needs language help.	Frequently cannot express the intended meaning with available words or sentence patterns, even with support.
Delivery and intelligibility	Is understood throughout. Pace, pauses and emphasis help the listener; repairs a difficulty without losing the message.	Is usually understood. Occasional pauses or repetition are needed, but the speaker can continue the message.	Frequent pauses or repetition interrupt understanding; the listener can still recover some key information.	Much of the message remains difficult to understand after repetition; sustained listener support is needed.
Interaction	Initiates and responds, asks a relevant follow-up question, and helps the pair reach a shared decision.	Responds relevantly and takes turns. Asks a question or checks a point with little prompting.	Responds to direct questions but needs prompting to take a turn, ask a question or check meaning.	Rarely responds to or builds on a partner's contribution, even when given an invitation and time.

N/O = not observed. If the task or conditions did not provide adequate evidence, write N/O and why. Collect another sample. N/O is not zero; band 1 requires actual evidence after a fair opportunity.

Optional total: add 4-16 only when all dimensions have scores. Leave the total blank if any are N/O. Keep the profile and evidence; do not convert it into a CEFR level or pass mark.

Fairness: judge intelligibility, not accent imitation. Do not score personality, eye contact or speed alone. Record support and access arrangements. A monologue alone cannot show interaction.

Choose one speaking task

Prepare keywords for 2 minutes. Discuss for about 4 minutes. Both partners propose, respond and ask a question.

1. Choose a class event

Your class has 40 minutes for an end-of-course event. Choose a quiz, a board-game session or a short film discussion. Tell your partner your choice and give two reasons. Ask which option they prefer. Agree on one plan and explain how everyone can take part.

Follow-up: If your partner prefers another option, ask: What would make that option work for everyone?

2. Solve a timetable problem

You and a partner need 30 minutes to finish a class project. You are both free on Tuesday at 16:00 and Thursday at 12:30. Tuesday has a quiet room but no internet. Thursday has internet but the room is shared with another group. Choose a time and place, explain one advantage and one drawback, and agree what to prepare first.

Follow-up: Ask one question about what your partner needs to finish the project.

3. Recommend a useful change

A learning centre can make one change: add a quiet study corner, lend headphones or start a conversation club. Explain which change you recommend and who it would help. Your partner proposes a different change. Ask a follow-up question, compare the two ideas and make a joint recommendation.

Follow-up: Explain what you would do if the centre could not provide your first choice.

Optional language support

I suggest ____ because ____.

What do you think about ____?

Do you mean ____?

I see your point, but ____.

Shall we agree on ____?

Teacher: record which support was used. For progress comparisons, keep preparation, task demands and support similar. Observe the individual contribution, not just the pair's final decision.

Speaking observer sheet

Write brief evidence first, then choose the best-supported band in each dimension.

Learner/code: _____ Date: _____

Task: _____ Preparation: _____

Support / access arrangements

Message and organisation Band 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / N/O

Words or actions observed (or why not observed)

Language resources Band 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / N/O

Words or actions observed (or why not observed)

Delivery and intelligibility Band 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / N/O

Words or actions observed (or why not observed)

Interaction Band 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / N/O

Words or actions observed (or why not observed)

Optional total: ____ / 16 (only if all four dimensions were observed)

One successful action

One next step and the next comparable task/date

Store identifiable learner notes in your usual secure school system. This sheet is for teacher judgement, not automated platform scoring.

Same total, different needs

Two fictional examples. The delivery observations are invented listening notes, not conclusions drawn from transcripts.

Maya / class event task

Two minutes of preparation; keyword notes; no frames. Maya recommends a quiz, gives two relevant reasons and connects them clearly. Basic language is sufficient; she says "everyone can answers". The observer hears two word-search pauses but understands her. She answers her partner, then needs a reminder to ask a question.

Message	Language	Delivery	Interaction	Total
4	3	3	2	12 / 16

Why: clear organisation is a strength; the prompted question places interaction at 2. Language and delivery are mostly independent.

Next step: ask a follow-up without a reminder, then respond to the partner's reason.

Leo / timetable task

The same preparation and note policy. Leo selects Thursday for internet access but needs a prompt to explain the shared-room drawback. His basic language conveys the plan; occasional pauses do not hide meaning. He asks what his partner needs online, checks an unclear answer and proposes preparing files first.

Message	Language	Delivery	Interaction	Total
2	3	3	4	12 / 16

Why: the recommendation is only partly explained initially; interaction independently moves the task forward.

Next step: present the choice, reason and drawback before waiting for a prompt.

Use the profile, not just the total

A total of 12 does not imply the same learning need or a CEFR level. If a partner takes every turn, mark interaction N/O and arrange a fair second opportunity rather than treating lack of opportunity as low ability.

Sources and reuse

Council of Europe: CEFR Descriptors and 2020 Companion Volume (spoken interaction and phonological control). Official guidance informed the separate dimensions; all bands, prompts and examples here are original. No endorsement or classroom testing is claimed.

[Official CEFR descriptor guidance | 2020 Companion Volume](#)

Full HTML, source links and related lesson:

thekingdomofenglish.com/articles/esl-speaking-assessment-rubric.php

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