

Tips for speaking

Preparing for your exam

Know exactly what is expected of you in the oral exam, and how long each section is likely to last. Revise different ways of agreeing and disagreeing, giving your opinion, interrupting, enumerating, asking for clarification or repetition, and so on.

If you have to give an oral presentation:

- Choose a topic that you know well, are interested in, and will feel confident talking about.
- Know how long it should be and prepare accordingly.
- Record yourself giving the presentation and make sure it is within the time limits.
- Make sure you have a clear plan, whether on paper or in your head.
- Never write your presentation out fully; always speak from notes.
- Don't learn it by heart: it will sound stilted rather than spontaneous and natural.

Get as much practice as you can outside of the classroom: read aloud, talk to yourself, sing songs, talk with a friend or any speaker of the language, practise in front of the mirror.

If you have the opportunity, record yourself speaking and try and spot your pronunciation mistakes.

Keeping up with current affairs will stand you in good stead in your oral exam as in the other papers, as you are less likely to find yourself discussing a topic you are unfamiliar with.

During the exam

Take your time and do not worry too much about hesitating. For example, in French "Et bien..." at the beginning of a sentence will give you time to think about what you want to say next and is perfectly natural, as are: "alors..", "bon...", "euh...", etc...

Articulate properly and speak out. In order to understand what you are saying, the examiner must first be able to hear it.

If you make a mistake, you can correct it straight away by saying "...". However, if you have already moved on, carry on and do not attempt to correct yourself - in doing so, you will lose the thread of what you are saying.

Always listen carefully to the examiner, and if you do not understand something, politely ask him or her to repeat. Asking for repetition won't cost you anything, whereas giving an inappropriate answer will certainly not go in your favour.

If you are doing a role-play

- Imagine yourself and the examiner in the situation during the preparation time, and see if you can anticipate how the conversation might go.
- Decide whether you will have to address the examiner formally or informally before you start.
- Listen carefully to what the examiner says and respond appropriately.

In the discussion section, you will be rewarded for taking the initiative and expressing your ideas.