

S.1-2 · Key speaking: interview and collaborative discussion

A2 Key and B1 Preliminary (KET, PET) · Cambridge English · A2 Key (KET)

What this topic covers

The A2 Key Speaking test: 8–10 minutes, **with a partner**, and two examiners. It is the friendliest part of the exam – a conversation, not an interrogation.

- **Part 1:** the interview. The examiner asks about you: name, school, hobbies, family, home.
- **Part 2:** the collaborative discussion. You and your partner look at five pictures and talk: which do you like, why, what would you choose.
- Memory hook: Part 1 is a **friendly chat**; Part 2 is **planning a trip with a classmate**. Both are conversations you already have – just in English, with marks.
- The examiners want: clear answers, interaction with your partner, and everyday vocabulary. They do not want speeches.

Part 1: the interview

Answer in **full sentences**, two or three of them per question.

- *Where do you live?* – × “*Beijing.*” → “*I live in Beijing, in an apartment near the park. I like it because it’s quiet.*” Answer + detail + reason.
- Memory hook: every answer is a **sandwich**: the answer, a detail, a reason. *I like football. I play every weekend. It’s fun with my friends.*
- Prepare the classics aloud: your name (spelled), your school, your family, your hobbies, your favourite food, your weekend. These are rehearsed answers – say them until they’re warm.

Part 2: the discussion

Five pictures (e.g. five birthday gifts), a question, and your partner. You must **talk to each other**, not just to the examiner.

- Start: *Which do you like? / I like the camera – what about you?*
- Agree, disagree, add: *I agree. / Really? I think the book is better, because... / That’s true, but...*
- △ **Never give a monologue**. The marks are in the interaction: ask your partner’s opinion, answer theirs, build on it.

- △ **Disagreeing is free marks**. “*I see your point, but I’d choose the bike*” shows more English than yes-saying. The exam is the one place where polite disagreement pays.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **One-word answers are the mark-killer**. “*Yes.*” “*Beijing.*” “*Football.*” – three answers, zero sentences. The sandwich, every time.
- △ **Don’t recite a memorised speech**. Examiners hear it instantly and redirect. Prepare building blocks, not paragraphs.
- △ **Look at your partner in Part 2**, not at the examiner. The discussion is with them; the examiner is just listening in.
- △ **Don’t freeze on an unknown word**. Describe around it: “*It’s a thing for... you use it to...*” – *paraphrasing* is a marked skill, not a failure.
- △ **Pronunciation matters less than audibility**. Speak up. The quiet correct answer and the loud correct answer earn the same mark, but the quiet wrong-mumble earns nothing.

Say it aloud

Rehearse the interview classics, then run a two-minute discussion with a partner.

- Tell me about your family. – There are four of us. My sister is twelve. We fight about the TV, and I usually win.
- What do you do at the weekend? – I play basketball with my classmates. It’s fun, and I’m getting taller. Both matter.
- Part 2 with a partner: five gifts – a book, a bike, a camera, a game, a plant. Which is best for your teacher? Discuss. Disagree politely. The plant has feelings too.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. *Where do you live?* – **Answer + detail + reason**. The sandwich, every time.
2. Part 2: your partner says the book is best. – **Respond to them:** *Really? I think... / I agree, and...* Interaction is the mark.
3. You don’t know the word for – **describe around it:** *a plant – a green thing for your desk*. Paraphrasing is a skill, not a failure.
4. A memorised two-minute speech – **the examiner redirects instantly**. Blocks, not speeches.
5. Quiet mumble vs clear voice – **audibility is free marks**. Speak up.