

S.1-4 · Preliminary speaking: description, decision and discussion

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

What this topic covers

The B1 Preliminary Speaking test: 10–12 minutes, with a partner, in **four parts**: the interview, the **long turn** (a photo description), the **collaborative task** (a decision with your partner), and the discussion.

- **Part 1**: interview questions about you – the A2 sandwich still applies.
- **Part 2**: each of you describes a photo, alone, for about a minute.
- **Part 3**: you and your partner discuss options and reach a decision .
- **Part 4**: a discussion about the Part 3 topic, with the examiner joining in.
- Memory hook: the four parts are a **meal** : the appetiser (interview), the solo (photo), the cooking together (the decision), and the conversation over coffee (discussion).

Part 2: the photo minute

A colour photo of people doing something. Describe it for about a minute.

- The recipe : **place** → **people** → **action** → **detail** → **guess**. “*In this photo, there’s a kitchen. A woman and a girl are cooking. The girl is mixing something in a bowl. They’re both smiling – they look like they’re having fun.*”
- Use the present continuous for the action (A2’s camera), and *look like* / *seem* / *maybe* / *probably* for your guesses. The photo can’t confirm; you **speculate** .
- △ Don’t just list objects. “*There is a table. There is a bowl.*” is an inventory , not a description. The recipe moves from scene to people to feeling.
- △ Finish with a guess or an opinion. “*I think they’re enjoying it*” is the sentence that turns description into English.

Part 3: the decision

Five or six options (pictures or words) and a task: “*Which two should the school choose?*” – discuss with your partner and decide.

- The machinery: suggest (*How about...?*), respond (*Good idea, but...*), compare (*The library is more useful than...*), decide (*So, we agree on...*).
- △ **The decision must be mutual** . Steamrolling your partner scores worse than a friendly compromise . “*OK, let’s choose yours – the library makes sense.*”

- △ **Don’t agree to everything**. “*Yes, yes, yes*” shows no English. “*I see what you mean, but...*” shows all of it.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- △ **The photo description has no template**. “*This is a picture of...*” then silence is a lost minute. The recipe: place, people, action, detail, guess.
- △ **In Part 3, silence is the only failure**. Anything grammatical beats quiet. When stuck: “*What do you think about this one?*” – the question machine restarts the conversation.
- △ **Part 4 widens the topic: give reasons**. *Do you like cooking?* – *Yes, I do.* is thin. *Yes – I cook at weekends, because it’s relaxing and the results are edible* . The sandwich again, one level up.
- △ **Watch your partner’s signals**. If they haven’t spoken, invite them: “*What do you think?*” Inviting your partner is itself marked – it shows **interaction management** .

Say it aloud

Run a full practice round with a partner.

- Interview: *What do you like doing after school?* – sandwich answers.
- Photo minute: find any photo on your phone (a meal, a street, a game) and describe it for sixty seconds: place, people, action, detail, guess.
- The decision: your class can start one club – music, coding, cooking, basketball, drama. Choose one together. Disagree politely. The drama club overhears everything.
- Discussion: *Do you prefer learning in groups or alone?* – answer, detail, reason.

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. The photo recipe – **place** → **people** → **action** → **detail** → **guess**.
2. Guessing language – **look like** / **seem** / **maybe** / **probably**. The photo can’t confirm; you speculate.
3. Part 3: your partner is silent – **invite them**: *What do you think about this one?* Interaction management is marked.
4. “*Yes, yes, yes*” to everything – × → **I see what you mean, but...** Disagreement shows the English.
5. Part 4 answers – **the sandwich, one level up**: answer, detail, reason.