

GAC001 Academic English I: Listening and Speaking Skills

GAC Academic English

What this module is, and how it is marked

GAC001 is the listening and speaking half of Academic English at Level I. Its six units are **themes** 主题 — communicating, countries and cultures, modern lifestyles, journeys and travel, living things, technology — and the theme is only the material. What is assessed is the skill you practise on it.

Assessment is spoken and continuous. A typical set is a **listening test** 听力测试, a **short formal presentation** 正式演讲, participation in **discussion** 讨论 tasks, and **coursework** 平时作业. Nothing is a written examination, so the marks come from what you say and from what you understood.

- You are marked on **communication**, not on accent. Being understood, and repairing a misunderstanding, is the skill.
- △ A presentation read word for word from a script scores badly however good the English is. Prepare notes, not a text.

Communicating: text types and purpose

The first unit sorts spoken English into kinds, because the kind tells you how to listen.

A **spoken text type** 口语语篇类型 is a recognisable form of talk: a conversation, an announcement, a lecture, an interview. Each has a **purpose** 目的 (to inform, to persuade, to entertain), an **audience** 听众, and a level of **formality** 正式程度.

- **Formal** 正式 English avoids contractions and slang, and uses full sentences: *We will begin by considering...*
- **Informal** 非正式 English is what a conversation actually sounds like: *So, first up...*
- Neither is better. Using the wrong one for the audience is the error.
- Listen for the **signposts** 提示语 that mark structure — *first, however, to sum up*. They tell you what is coming, which is more useful than any single word.

Worked example. Two openings on the same content.

Announcement: “The library will close at four o’clock on Friday for maintenance.”

Conversation: “Oh, by the way, don’t go to the library Friday afternoon — they’re shutting early.”

Same facts, different type. The first has no listener addressed and no reaction expected; the second has both. Naming the type is a marked skill, so practise saying which one you heard and why.

Countries and cultures: listening for meaning

You will never catch every word, and you do not need to. Listening is selection.

- **Listening for gist** 泛听 is understanding the overall point on one pass. Ask "what is this mainly about?" and ignore the rest.
- **Listening for detail** 精听 is hunting for specific information — a date, a price, a name. Read the question first so you know what you are hunting for.
- **Predict** 预测 before you listen. Knowing the topic tells you which words are likely, and a word you expect is far easier to hear.
- Do not stop at a word you missed. **Keep going** — the sentence after it usually explains it, and stopping costs you the next three sentences too.
- **Context clues** 上下文线索 give you an unknown word's meaning: what came before, what the speaker does next, the tone of voice.

Modern lifestyles: responding and following instructions

The unit turns listening into doing, which is the hardest listening to fake.

- **Following instructions** 遵循指令 means acting on a sequence, in order. Listen for the ordering words (*first, then, once you have*) rather than trying to hold every noun.
- **Note-taking** 记笔记 while listening is selective: symbols and abbreviations, nouns and numbers, never full sentences. You cannot write and listen at the same speed.
- **Clarifying** 澄清 is a marked skill, not an admission of weakness. *Sorry, did you say fifteen or fifty?* is exactly the right move.
- **Restating** 转述 what you heard proves you understood: *So the deadline moved to Thursday, and we submit online.*

Worked example. You hear: "Take the second exit, go past the bank, and it's opposite the post office — but if you reach the bridge you've gone too far."

Useful notes: 2nd exit → past bank → opp. post office (X bridge = too far). Eight words and an arrow. Writing the sentence out would have lost the second half of it.

Journeys and travel: preparing a short presentation

The Level I presentation is short and formal, and it is built rather than improvised.

- A presentation has three parts: **introduction** 引言 (what you will cover), **body** 主体 (two or three points), **conclusion** 结论 (what to remember).
- **Structure it out loud**: “I’ll cover three things. First... Second... Finally...” The audience cannot see your plan, so you say it.
- Use **notes**, cards or a slide with keywords. Never a full script.
- **Rehearse with a timer**. A four-minute talk written as text will run to seven when spoken.
- Prepare the **transitions** 过渡: moving between points is where an unrehearsed talk stalls.

Living things: accuracy in interaction

This unit is about being accurate while you are actually speaking, which is harder than being accurate on paper.

- **Fluency** 流利度 is keeping going; **accuracy** 准确性 is getting the form right. Both are marked, and you improve them separately — a fluency drill should not stop for grammar.
- **Word stress** 重音 changes meaning: *REcord* the noun, re**CORD** the verb. Getting the stress wrong makes a correct word unrecognisable.
- **Intonation** 语调 carries the question. English rises at the end of a yes-no question, and a flat delivery can turn a question into a statement.
- **Self-correction** 自我纠正 is credited. *He go — he goes to the lab on Tuesdays.*
- **Turn-taking** 话轮转换 phrases keep a discussion moving: *Can I add something?, That’s a good point, but...*

Technology: the formal discussion

The last unit puts everything into a group task, where you are marked for what you contribute.

- **Agree and disagree politely**. *I see what you mean, though I’d argue...* The disagreement is fine; the bluntness is what costs marks.
- **Support a claim** 支持观点 with a reason and an example. An opinion with neither is not an argument.
- **Bring others in** 邀请他人发言: *Wei, you’ve used that app — what did you think?* Listening is visible in a discussion, and examiners look for it.

- Work towards a **consensus** 共识 when the task asks for one. Reaching a decision is the task, not winning the argument.
- △ Dominating a discussion loses marks as surely as silence. The skill is interaction.

Worked example. A group must agree on one technology that most changed student life.

Weak contribution: “I think the phone. It is very useful and everyone has one.”

Strong contribution: “I’d argue for the phone, mainly because it replaced four devices at once — camera, dictionary, timetable, bank. Anna, you said the laptop earlier: does the laptop do anything students actually do every hour?”

The second gives a reason, a concrete example, and hands the turn on with a real question. That is what the mark scheme means by contributing to a discussion.