

Exercise walk-through

Conversation and interview ■ 10.1

eXercise

You must be able to

- extend an answer beyond one sentence without rambling
- use the language of opinion, comparison and hesitation naturally
- keep going when you do not know a word

Method — The length problem

- **Too short:** *“Do you enjoy sport?” — “Yes.”* The examiner now has to do all the work.
- **Too long:** four minutes on your cousin's football team, and the examiner cannot ask what they planned to.
- **Right:** answer, reason, and one extension.

“Yes, I do — I swim three times a week. It's the only exercise I've found that I actually look forward to, probably because you can't check your phone in a pool.”

Method — The three-part habit

- 1 **Answer** the question directly.
- 2 **Give a reason** — *because, the main reason is, what I like about it is*
- 3 **Extend** — an example, a comparison, or a contrast with the past.

Practise this until it is automatic. It converts a one-word answer into a scoreable one.

Method — Language worth having ready

- **Opinion:** *I'd say, personally, what I find is, in my experience*
- **Comparing:** *whereas, compared with, the difference is*
- **Hesitating naturally:** *Let me think... / That's a good question... / I suppose the main thing is...*
- **Not knowing a word:** *I don't know the word in English, but it's the thing you use for...*

That last one matters. Stopping dead loses far more than a paraphrase does; describing the word you lack is itself a skill being assessed.

Method — What lowers the mark

- One-word answers, or answers that stop as soon as the question is answered
- Repeating the examiner's words back instead of adding
- Long silences with no attempt to fill them
- A memorised speech that does not answer the question asked

Practice 2.1 ■ 3 marks

Extend each answer using answer, reason, extension.

- (a) “Do you like where you live?” — “Yes.”
- (b) “Is homework useful?” — “Sometimes.”
- (c) “Would you like to travel?” — “Yes, a lot.”

Solution 2.1

Method: The three-part habit

Worked steps

One mark each for an extended answer with a reason and an extension **B3**, e.g. (a) “Yes, more than I expected to. It’s quiet, and I can walk to school in ten minutes — when we lived in the city that same journey took forty.”

Practice 2.2 ■ 1 mark

Write a natural way to fill a pause while you think.

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

Any natural filler **B1**, e.g. “That’s a good question — let me think for a second.”

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

You need the word “screwdriver” and cannot remember it. Write what you would say instead.

Solution 2.3

Method: What lowers the mark

Worked steps

Any workable paraphrase **B1**, e.g. “I don’t know the English word, but it’s the small tool you use to turn a screw.”

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 2 marks

A student answers every question with one sentence and then stops. Explain **two** effects this has on the mark.

Solution 3.1

Method: What lowers the mark

Worked steps

Any two **B1** *each*: the examiner cannot assess a range of vocabulary and structures from a single short sentence, so the language mark is capped; the conversation does not develop, so the student cannot show they can extend or explain; the examiner has to ask more questions, leaving less time for the topics that would suit the student.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 3 marks

Write a full three-part answer to: “What is the best thing about your school?”

Solution 3.2

Method: The three-part habit

Worked steps

One mark each for answer, reason and extension **B3**.

Exam-style 3.3 ■ 3 marks

Write a full three-part answer to: “How has the way people spend their free time changed since your parents were young?”

Solution 3.3

Method: The three-part habit

Worked steps

One mark each for answer, reason and extension **B3**. *A strong answer here uses a comparison structure — “whereas my parents...”, “compared with...” — which is exactly what the question invites.*