



Cambridge Assessment  
English

# Critical Thinking and Communication

In Cambridge English Examinations





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# What's critical thinking?

The short answer:

Reflect on our assumptions

Question our reasoning

Not necessarily concerned with the truth value of the individual premises



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## Example

In 2014, Donuts and Co. had an annual turnover of \$300K.

Andrea King became the Director of Donuts and Co. in 2014.

In 2015, Donuts and Co. had an annual turnover of \$600K.

So: Andrea King doubled the turnover of Donuts and Co.

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## The claim we are asked to believe:

Andrea King doubled the turnover of Donuts and Co.

What reasons were we given for believing it?

1. \$600K is double \$300K
2. King was appointed in 2014 and a year later turnover doubled
3. King introduced changes in her first year in the post that increased sales

14%

32%

54%



# Reflect on assumptions, question our reasoning

**Claim:** Andrea King doubled the turnover of Donut and Co.

**Reason:** King was appointed in 2014 and a year later turnover doubled.

**Flaw 1 (speaker's): Assuming** that A caused B just because event B happens after event A.

- **Example:** 'There was a knock at the door after the phone rang.' Was the phone ringing responsible for the person knocking on the door?

**Flaw 2 (listener's): Assuming** there must be an implied though not stated reason to support the statement

- **Example:** Andrea must have taken some effective measures



# What's critical thinking?

The longer answer:

A mental  
enquiry  
process

Identify positions,  
arguments & conclusions



Evaluate evidence



Identify false assumptions



Present position in a  
structured, clear, well-  
reasoned and convincing way



# In an academic setting especially...

Identify and separate key points

Locate (e.g. in a text) the best evidence for your answer or position

Evaluate the evidence for alternative arguments

Construct a line of reasoning answering the question set

Select the best examples

Provide evidence to support your argument



# Cambridge English Exams and...

## ...identify and separate key points

- 1 the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling
- 2 the belief that the market will not sustain the present number of mobile phone retailers
- 3 the use of mobile phones no longer being restricted to a specific group of people
- 4 the relationship between charges and the number of mobile phone users
- 5 a negative view of competing mobile phone retailers
- 6 a comparison between change in the mobile phone industry and that in a different sector
- 7 those services available at mobile phone outlets that are not provided by other retailers





A

Market awareness of the mobile telephone has exploded and the retailer who specialises in mobile phones is seeing growth like never before. Admittedly, some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist. There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players. Undoubtedly, customer service is the factor that differentiates operators and I think this year we will probably see rationalisation in the sector.

B

When I first started in the industry, mobile phones were retailing at a thousand pounds and were as large as box files. Now, prices are constantly being driven down and handsets are considerably more compact. There is intense competition between the network providers, and every time they lower their tariffs, more	people come into the market. This will continue, and while retail dealers' profits will be affected dramatically, network providers will have to generate more revenue by offering internet provision and data services to the mobile user.
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

C

Over a few years, prices have dropped sharply and technological advances have meant products have changed – and are changing. Successful retailers must try to keep on top of these developments and invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers. E-commerce is taking off but this won't necessarily replace traditional retail outlets. In order to stand out, you need innovative ideas on customer service. We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.

D

The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation, and it's important not to be left behind. We must continue to innovate in	but clearly all the main mobile phone retailers have succeeded in taking the industry forward. Growth has accelerated rapidly and the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a
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# Cambridge English Exams and...

...identify and separate key points

- 1 the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling
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# Cambridge English Exams and...

...identify and separate key points



*Here are your pictures. They show people together in different situations. I'd like you to compare two of them, saying why the people might be doing these things together, and how the people might be feeling.*



# Cambridge English Exams and...

...locate best evidence & evaluate alternative evidence

## Kombat Kate

*James Stanton meets 'Kombat Kate' Waters, who trains theatre actors in how to 'fight' on stage.*

There must be few occasions when it would be really rude to refuse an invitation to head-butt someone you've just met! But I'm in one of these right now. I'm in a rehearsal room in a theatre with a group of actors, facing up to stage fighting director Kate Waters. I've already dragged her around the room and slapped her on the arm. Now she wants me to head-butt her. But fear not, this is all strictly pretend!

31 In the first paragraph, the writer is aware of

- A a critical attitude from Kate.
- B the concern of the other actors.
- C the need to reassure his readers.
- D having been in a similar situation before.



# Cambridge English Exams and...

## ...construct a line of reasoning answering the question set

Your class has attended a panel discussion on facilities which should receive money from local authorities. You have made the notes below:

### Which facilities should receive money from local authorities?

- museums
- sports centres
- public gardens

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

"Museums aren't popular with everybody!"

"Sports centres mean healthier people."

"A town needs green spaces – parks are great for everybody."

Write an essay discussing **two** of the facilities in your notes. You should **explain which facility it is more important** for local authorities to give money to, **giving reasons** in support of your answer.

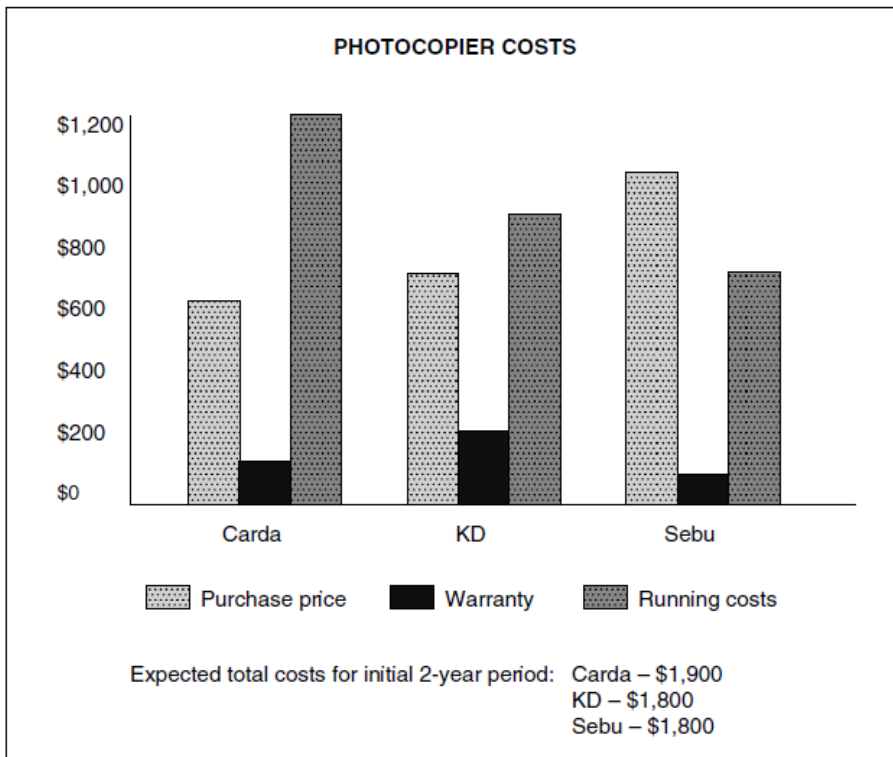
C1 Advanced  
Writing



# Cambridge English Exams and...

## ...construct a line of reasoning answering the question set

- The bar chart below shows the cost of buying three different photocopiers, the cost of a warranty on each machine, and their expected running costs for the first two years.
- Using the information from the chart, write a short **report** comparing the costs for the three machines.
- Write **120 – 140** words on page 3.



C1 Business  
Higher Writing





# Cambridge English Exams and...

## ...answer the question set

- Contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and detailed.
  - Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied.
    - Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas.
      - Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition.
        - Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition.

B1 to C2+ Speaking:  
Discourse Management



# Cambridge English Exams and...

...select best examples, provide evidence

Writing:

Write an essay discussing **two** of the facilities in your notes. You should **explain which facility it is more important** for local authorities to give money to, **giving reasons** in support of your answer.

Reading &  
Listening:  
multiple choice,  
matching

Why?

Use the following questions, in order, as appropriate:

Speaking:

Do you think you have to spend a lot of money to have a good holiday? .... (Why? / Why not?)

Some people say we travel too much these days and shouldn't go on so many holidays. What do you think?

- Do you think people have enough time for holidays these days? .... (Why? / Why not?)

Select any of the following prompts, as appropriate:

- What do you think?
- Do you agree?
- And you?





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# Critical thinking is essential to effective communication

Think of situations when...


Your complaint got a response that did not address the question you raised

An example you provided for an idea was distorted to represent another idea

User manual instructions assumed you already knew the basics

Your performance was judged on the basis of irrelevant aspects

A student's position was (probably) justified, but their examples were unconvincing

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## Final check: is this reasoning correct?

*(if it is true that)* Critical thinking is essential to real-life effective communication

*(AND if it is true that)* Cambridge English Exams assess real-life effective communication skills

Then: Cambridge English Exams integrate critical thinking skills by design



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**Thank you!**

## Reading, B2 Business Vantage

- Look at the statements below and the comments given on the opposite page by mobile phone retailers.
- Which section (A, B, C or D) does each statement 1 – 7 refer to?
- For each statement 1 – 7, mark one letter (A, B, C or D) on your Answer Sheet.
- You will need to use some of these letters more than once.

### Example:

0 the extent to which mobile phones have changed in size

0	A	B	C	D
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- the need for retail staff to stay informed about the mobile phones they are selling
- the belief that the market will not sustain the present number of mobile phone retailers
- the use of mobile phones no longer being restricted to a specific group of people
- the relationship between charges and the number of mobile phone users
- a negative view of competing mobile phone retailers
- a comparison between change in the mobile phone industry and that in a different sector
- those services available at mobile phone outlets that are not provided by other retailers

### A

Market awareness of the mobile telephone has exploded and the retailer who specialises in mobile phones is seeing growth like never before. Admittedly, some customers buy their first mobile phone in the supermarket, but for advice, add-ons and particular services they turn to the specialist. There are a large number of mobile phone retailers and I can't help but feel the market only has room for four players. Undoubtedly, customer service is the factor that differentiates operators and I think this year we will probably see rationalisation in the sector.

### B

When I first started in the industry, mobile phones were retailing at a thousand pounds and were as large as box files. Now, prices are constantly being driven down and handsets are considerably more compact. There is intense competition between the network providers, and every time they lower their tariffs, more people come into the market. This will continue, and while retail dealers' profits will be affected dramatically, network providers will have to generate more revenue by offering internet provision and data services to the mobile user.

### C

Over a few years, prices have dropped sharply and technological advances have meant products have changed – and are changing. Successful retailers must try to keep on top of these developments and invest in the training of employees so they are able to offer impartial advice to customers. E-commerce is taking off but this won't necessarily replace traditional retail outlets. In order to stand out, you need innovative ideas on customer service. We don't believe in criticising other retailers, but there's nothing particularly exciting out there at present.

### D

The mobile phone business is behaving like the internet industry in take-up and the pace of innovation, and it's important not to be left behind. We must continue to innovate in delivering the product to the customer. In terms of service provision, you can draw comparisons between us and our closest rival, but clearly all the main mobile phone retailers have succeeded in taking the industry forward. Growth has accelerated rapidly and the mobile telephone has changed from simply being a business tool, to being a means of communication for everyone.

C1 Advanced Speaking

*Here are your pictures. They show people together in different situations.  
I'd like you to compare two of them, saying why the people might be doing  
these things together, and how the people might be feeling.*



## B2 First Reading

You are going to read an article about a woman who trains actors in fighting skills. For questions 31 – 36, choose the answer (A, B, C or D) which you think fits best according to the text.

Mark your answers on the separate answer sheet.

### Kombat Kate

*James Stanton meets 'Kombat Kate' Waters, who trains theatre actors in how to 'fight' on stage.*

There must be few occasions when it would be really rude to refuse an invitation to head-butt someone you've just met! But I'm in one of those right now. I'm in a rehearsal room in a theatre with a group of actors, facing up to stage fighting director Kate Waters. I've already dragged her around the room and slapped her on the arm. Now she wants me to head-butt her. But fear not, this is all strictly pretend!

'Imagine there's a tin can on my shoulder,' she says. 'Now try to knock it off.' I lower my head as instructed, then lift it sharply, aiming for the imaginary can, hoping desperately that I don't miscalculate the angle and end up doing damage to her face. To my amazement, I get it right. 'That was good,' says Waters. 'Now maybe try it again without smiling.'

Waters, known in the industry as Kombat Kate, is showing me how actors fight each other without getting hurt, and that includes sword-fighting. (She inspires fierce devotion: when I tweet that I'm meeting Waters, one actress friend responds: 'She's amazing. She taught me how to be a secret service agent in two days.')

Perhaps the most famous play Kate has worked on recently was called *Noises Off*. She taught the cast how to fall down stairs without breaking any bones. One of the fight scenes is fairly close, Kate tells me, to the one we're trying out now. 'I've just slowed it down a bit,' she says tactfully, before inviting me to throw her against the wall. I obey, making sure I let go of her quickly, so she can control her own movement. Push your opponent too hard, and they will hit the wall for real. I watch her hit the wall before falling to the ground. She's fine, of course. 'That's my party trick,' she says with a grin. 'Works every time.'

Once the lesson is over Kate tells me how she became one of only two women on the official register of stage fight directors. Already a keen martial arts expert from childhood, Kate did drama at university, and one module of her course introduced her to stage combat. When she made enquiries about the possibility of teaching it as a career, she was told about the register and the qualifications she'd need to be accepted onto it. It was no small order: as well as a certificate in advanced stage combat, she would need a black belt in karate and proficiency in fencing, a sport she'd never tried before.

But she rose to the challenge and taught the subject for several years at a drama college before going freelance and becoming a fight advisor for the theatrical world. The play she's working on is Shakespeare's *Richard III*. This involves a famous sword fight. With no instructions left by the great playwright other than – Enter Richard and Richmond: they fight, Richard dies – the style and sequence of the fight is down to Kate and the actors.

'I try to get as much information as possible about what a fight would have been like in a particular period,' Kate explains. 'But because what I'm eventually doing is telling a dramatic story, not all of it is useful. The scene has to be exciting and do something for the audience.'

Ultimately, of course, a stage fight is all smoke and mirrors. In our lesson, Kate shows me how an actor will stand with his or her back to the audience ahead of a choreographed slap or punch. When the slap comes it makes contact not with skin but with air: the actor whacks his chest or leg to make the sound of the slap.

In the rehearsal room, I can't resist asking Kate how she thinks she would fare in a real fight. Would she give her attacker a hard time? She laughs, 'Oh, I'd be awful,' she says. 'I only know how to fake it.' I can't help thinking, however, that she's just being rather modest.

31 In the first paragraph, the writer is aware of

- A a critical attitude from Kate.
- B the concern of the other actors.
- C the need to reassure his readers.
- D having been in a similar situation before.

32 How does the writer feel when Kate mentions the tin can?

- A worried about hurting Kate
- B relieved that Kate is just pretending
- C concerned that it may injure his head
- D convinced that he won't take it seriously enough

33 When Kate and the writer repeat the fight scene from *Noises Off*, we learn that

- A the writer isn't sure of his instructions.
- B Kate has adapted it slightly for the writer to try.
- C the writer is initially unwilling to do it.
- D Kate has to react quickly to a mistake the writer makes.

34 What does the phrase 'no small order' (line 22) tell us about stage combat?

- A Kate knew she would love learning about it.
- B It is something very few people ever perfect.
- C Studying it required a lot of obedience and respect.
- D Qualifying to teach it would be a long and difficult process.

35 What does the writer tell us about the sword fight in the play *Richard III*?

- A Its details need to be made up.
- B It's a particularly challenging scene to do.
- C Its action is conveyed through spoken words.
- D It is widely agreed to be the most exciting of its kind.

36 What does 'it' refer to in line 30?

- A information
- B a fight
- C a particular period
- D a dramatic story



## C1 Advanced Writing sample task and extract from assessment scales

Your class has attended a panel discussion on facilities which should receive money from local authorities. You have made the notes below:

**Which facilities should receive money from local authorities?**

- museums
- sports centres
- public gardens

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

"Museums aren't popular with everybody!"

"Sports centres mean healthier people."

"A town needs green spaces – parks are great for everybody."

Write an essay discussing **two** of the facilities in your notes. You should **explain which facility it is more important** for local authorities to give money to, **giving reasons** in support of your answer.

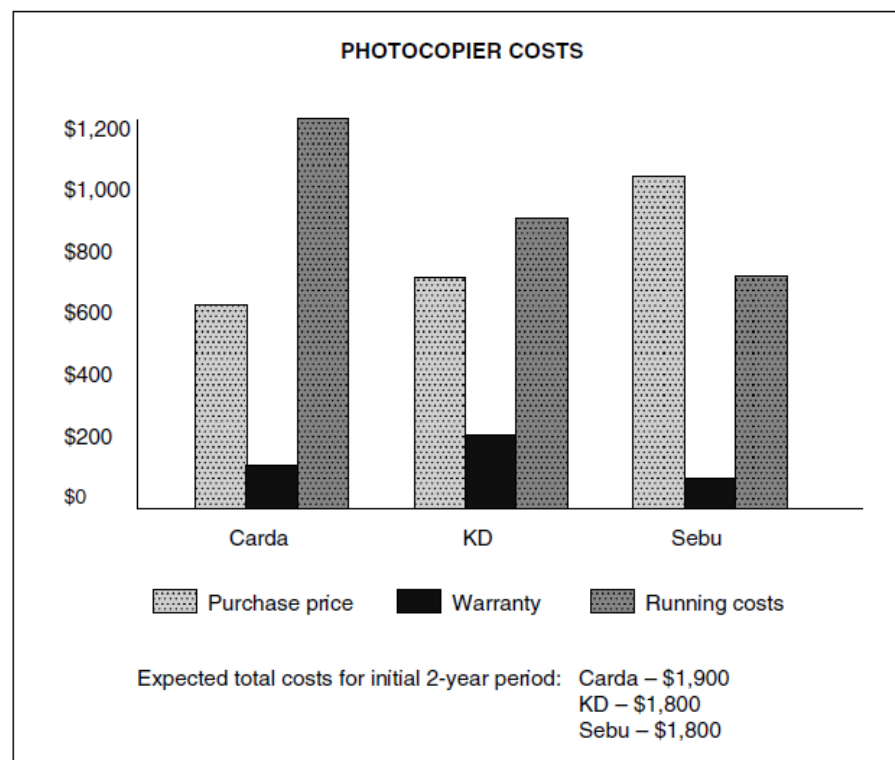
The subscale Content is common to all levels:

Content	
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not informed.

The remaining three subscales (Communicative Achievement, Organisation, and Language) have descriptors specific to each CEFR level:

C1 Business Higher Writing

- The bar chart below shows the cost of buying three different photocopiers, the cost of a warranty on each machine, and their expected running costs for the first two years.
- Using the information from the chart, write a short **report** comparing the costs for the three machines.
- Write **120 – 140** words on page 3.





Speaking assessment scales (here from CEFR level B1 to C2+)

	Grammatical Resource	Lexical Resource	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms and uses them with flexibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary with flexibility to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with flexibility and ease and very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant, coherent, varied and detailed.</li> <li>Makes full and effective use of a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Phonological features are used effectively to convey and enhance meaning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacts with ease by skilfully interweaving his/her contributions into the conversation.</li> <li>Widens the scope of the interaction and develops it fully and effectively towards a negotiated outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>C2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains control of a wide range of grammatical forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on unfamiliar and abstract topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with ease and with very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant, coherent and varied.</li> <li>Uses a wide range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacts with ease, linking contributions to those of other speakers.</li> <li>Widens the scope of the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>C1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar and unfamiliar topics.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas.</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers.</li> <li>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.</li> </ul>
<b>Grammar and Vocabulary</b>					
<b>B2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views, on a range of familiar topics.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition.</li> <li>Uses a range of cohesive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is intelligible.</li> <li>Intonation is generally appropriate.</li> <li>Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed.</li> <li>Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately.</li> <li>Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.</li> </ul>
<b>B1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms.</li> <li>Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation.</li> <li>Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition.</li> <li>Uses basic cohesive devices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiates and responds appropriately.</li> <li>Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.</li> </ul>

Overall Speaking scales