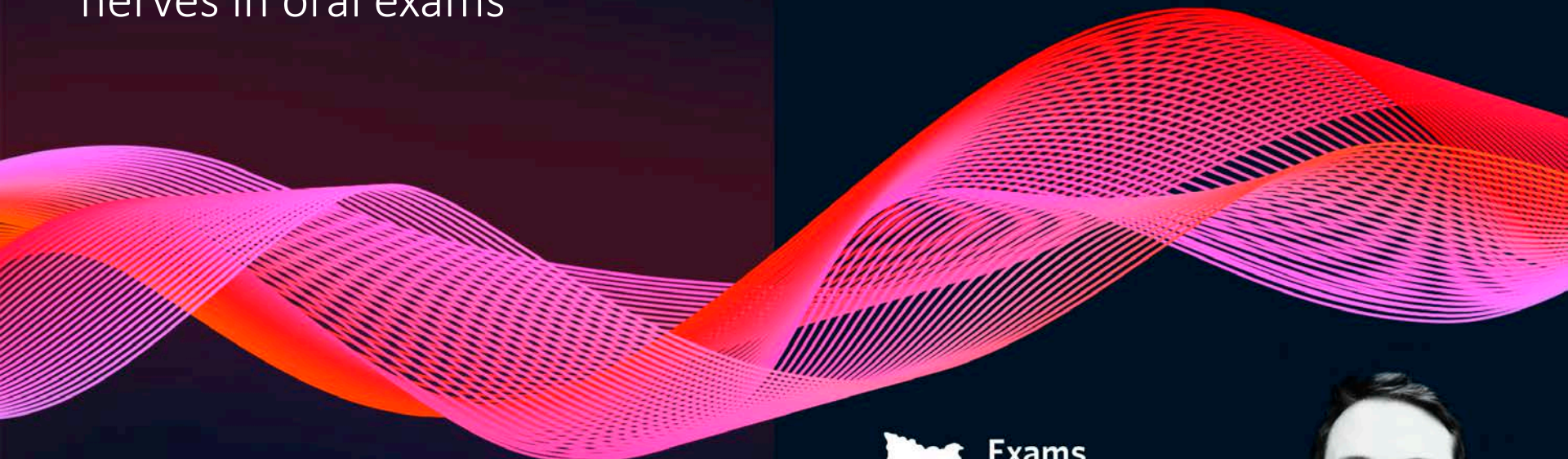


Keeping it together

Helping students manage their nerves in oral exams



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While we wait...

How do you feel in these situations?



Nerves...



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Speak to you partner:

Why do you think people get nervous?

- They doubt their own ability
- They are afraid of what people will think if they fail
- It's the only thing they've been thinking about
- They feel unprepared
- They are worried about making mistakes
- They are doing something out of their comfort zone

These things make people feel anxious.

What is anxiety?

“Anxiety is defined as distress or uneasiness of the mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune. General anxiety is the excessive and exaggerated worry about everyday things. It is an unrealistic, or out of proportion constant worry that dominates and interferes with daily functions like work, school, relationships, and social activities.” (Suleimenova, 2013)



Foreign Language Anxiety



“Foreign language learners often express feelings of stress, nervousness or anxiety while learning to speak the target language and claim to have ‘mental block’ against learning. Campbell and Ortiz (1991) found language anxiety among university students to be ‘alarming’ and estimated that up to one half of all language students experience debilitating levels of speaking anxiety.” (Suleimenova, 2013)



How can you help?

Before the exam:

- Familiarisation
- Visualisation
- Other tips

During the exam:

- Non-verbal communication
- Delay tactics
- Breathing techniques



Familiarisation



Your students should know what to expect

- Make sure they know what they have to do in each part
- Go through the mark scheme
- Practise in class
- Give feedback on performance – the good things too
- Try [Cambridge Speak and Improve](#)
- Watch videos and discuss them (use google glass for a [VR experience](#))
- Have students record themselves doing the exam and listen back
- Organise an official mock exam

Familiarisation



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B2 First: How many parts are in the speaking exam and what do they test?

Part 1: Interview – test the candidates' ability to **use social and interactional language**

Part 3: Collaborative task - test the candidates' ability to **engage in a discussion** and **to work towards a negotiated outcome** of the task set

Part 2: Long turn - test the candidates' ability to **produce extended piece of discourse**

Part 4: Discussion - test the candidates' ability to **engage in a discussion** based on the topic of the collaborative task in Part 3.

Familiarisation



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B2 First: What are the five areas students are assessed on during the oral exam?

1. Grammar and Vocabulary
2. Discourse Management
3. Pronunciation
4. Interactive Communication
5. Global Achievement

Familiarisation

B2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language with very little hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is a clear organisation of ideas. Uses a range of cohesive devices and discourse markers.	Is intelligible. Intonation is appropriate. Sentence and word stress is accurately placed. Individual sounds are articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately, linking contributions to those of other speakers. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a range of familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant and there is very little repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, despite some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

[Cambridge B2 First Handbook](#)

Familiarisation



B2 Global Achievement	
5	Handles communication on a range of familiar topics, with very little hesitation. Uses accurate and appropriate linguistic resources to express ideas and produce extended discourse that is generally coherent.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>
3	Handles communication on familiar topics, despite some hesitation. Organises extended discourse but occasionally produces utterances that lack coherence, and some inaccuracies and inappropriate usage occur.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>
1	Handles communication in everyday situations, despite hesitation. Constructs longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>

[Cambridge B2 First Handbook](#)

Familiarisation



[Watch the video here](#)

[Examiner notes from Cambridge Assessment English](#)

Visualisation



Visualisation



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Discuss with your partner:

- How did you find the activity?
- How could you extend the activity?
- Do you think it would work well with your class?
- How could you adapt the activity for other levels, ages or types of classes?

Visualisation

Example script



Imagine you are sitting outside the exam room. It's your turn next. How do you feel? What do you see? Who is there with you? What are you talking about?

The pair before you leave the room. They look happy. The exam must have gone well.

You enter the exam room. You feel nervous but the examiners welcome you with a smile and invite you to sit down. What do they look like? How are you feeling now? What are they going to ask you first?

How does the exam progress? What goes well? What do you find difficult? What do you wish you'd practiced more?

The time is up. The exam is over. You are free to go. How do you feel as you walk out of the door? How will you celebrate?

Other tips

Talk to them about it!

Recommend that students:

- Go to bed early
- Don't leave everything to the last minute
- Arrive early to the exam
- Choose a partner they know
- Think positively
- Listen to music



During the exam

Non-verbal communication

- Smile
- Make eye-contact
- Have good posture
- Use hand gestures



Try and make it natural!!!

Delay tactics



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If students 'go blank' they can try:

- Using filler words
- Using alternative ways to say something
- Asking for repetition
- Shifting focus to partner (in parts 3 & 4)

If that doesn't work....

Breathing Techniques

Stop and breathe!



Final reminders



Other things to remember:

1. The examiners are listening for things students **CAN do** rather than what they CAN'T.
2. Marks are given on performance of the WHOLE exam and not individual parts.

After the exam...



Resources



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[Teacher Handbooks](#)

[Cambridge English YouTube Channel](#)

[Practice papers – First/Advanced Trainer](#)

Further reading

- [Speaking anxiety in a foreign language classroom in Kazakhstan](#)
- [Cambridge First and Advanced: How to beat oral exam nerves](#)
- [12 Ways to stop freezing up when you try to speak a second language](#)

Thank you for listening! 😊

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