

## What do we test?

Picture description tests fluency, vocabulary, stress, pronunciation and rhythms of speech, ability to communicate, grammatical accuracy and interactive communication.

## GUIDELINES

| <b>DO</b>  | <b>DON'T</b>  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Look carefully at the photos. Think how to describe what you can see. Take your time to do it.</li><li>➤ Be as precise as you can when you describe the photo itself. Use some 'position' language if it helps.</li><li>➤ Use present continuous verbs to describe what is happening.</li><li>➤ If there is a person or people in the photo, you will need to describe their appearance.</li><li>➤ Answer questions as fully as possible. Keep talking, give details, explain your point, ask questions, paraphrase, don't get stuck on words.... Any device that demonstrates that you can carry a topic through will help your performance.</li><li>➤ Try to direct the conversation towards something you are interested in and can talk about easily.</li><li>➤ Speak naturally and be animated! Keep eye contact with the examiner, be friendly and show a positive attitude.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Don't worry if you don't understand immediately what is going on in the picture.</li><li>➤ Don't worry if you don't know the precise words for what you can see; use alternatives.</li><li>➤ Don't use the present simple to describe what is happening.</li><li>➤ Don't use general language to describe people. You should use vocabulary of the level required.</li><li>➤ Don't give too many one - or two - word answers. Avoid answers which are single words or lists. Silence is your enemy! If you are not a talkative person by nature, you must make an extra effort for the test.</li><li>➤ Don't feel you have to stick rigidly to the subject. Don't give complicated explanations if you are not sure.</li><li>➤ Don't be shy! This is your chance to show how well you can speak. Smile and relax!</li></ul> |

# 1. Describe where things are in the picture

## a) Preparation

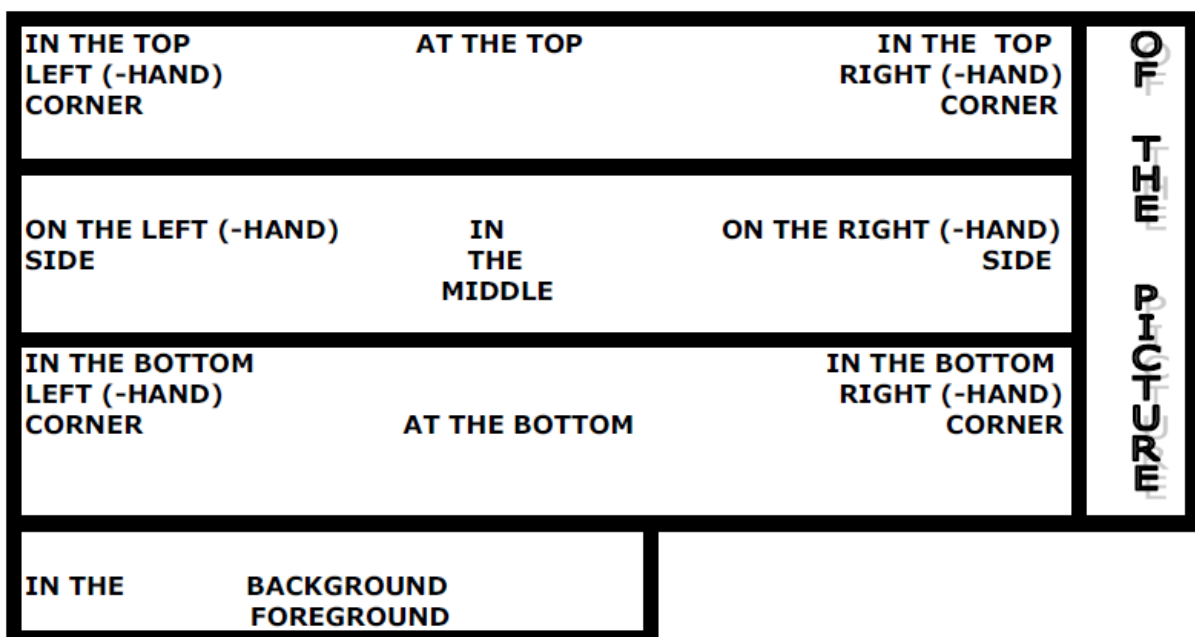
Have a close look at the picture and decide on how to structure your picture description. What is important or special? What should the viewer pay attention to?

## b) Structure and Content

It's not easy to follow a picture description if the writer jumps randomly from one point to another. Therefore, make sure that your picture description is logically structured, for example:

- from left to right (or from right to left)
- from the background to the foreground (or from the foreground to the background)
- from the middle to the sides (or from the sides to the middle)
- from details to general impressions (or from general impressions to details)

Which structure you finally choose depends on your taste and the picture you want to describe.



## 2. Don't be too certain

Try to use your imagination to make assumptions.

- Sometimes you cannot be sure what is happening in a photo or picture. Use appropriate language to show that you are **guessing**. Use uncertain and speculative language when you aren't 100% sure.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>I think / guess/suppose</b> it is...           | <b>Maybe / Perhaps</b> they are...         |
| <b>I'm not sure</b> but, they could be...         | <b>They seem to be</b> taking part in...   |
| <b>It's not very clear</b> but, probably...       | <b>It can/could/might</b> be a scene of... |
| <b>I can't quite make it out</b> but, perhaps.... |  |

- We use expressions with '**look**' when we are making guesses and deductions based on (usually visual) evidence:

| Study these constructions using ' <b>look</b> ' :   | Where necessary correct these sentences :   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <i>This looks like the work of a child</i><br/> <b>look like + NOUN</b><br/>           (when it means <i>be similar to</i>)</p>   | <p>1. <i>She looks like hungry</i></p> <p>2. <i>It looks as if it is going to rain</i></p> <p>3. <i>The boys look like breaking into the car</i></p> <p>4. <i>He looks like his father</i></p> <p>5. <i>They look they are in a crowded market</i></p> <p>6. <i>They don't look as if happy</i></p> <p>7. <i>It doesn't look anyone is living here</i></p> <p>8. <i>He looks capable and reliable</i></p> |
| <p>2. <i>The boy looks tired and fed up</i><br/> <b>look + ADJECTIVE</b><br/>           ( when it means <i>seem</i> )</p>   |   |
| <p>3. <i>The girl looks as though she is in her late 20s</i><br/> <b>look as though/as if + VERB PHRASE</b><br/>           (similar to 1, but attention must be paid to the <i>grammatical construction</i>)<br/>           * <i>As if</i> and <i>As though</i> are interchangeable</p> |   |

### 3. Paraphrase if you don't know the word

- Don't worry if there are things in the picture that you don't know the English for. Make sure you know how to talk 'round' words you don't know. These expressions are always useful:

**It's used to open... / It's used for opening... / You use it to open...**

**It's what you do when you..(if you don't know the verb)**

**I don't know what you call it, but...(describe or define it)**

**I don't know what it is called /the word for it, but...**

**It's a kind / sort of... It's like a.... It's stuff /a thing for**

### 4. Give your opinion & Use hesitation words



- Remember you may also be asked to give your opinion on the content of the picture or topics related to it. To start with, here are some expressions you can use:

**In my opinion**

**As I see it**

**If you ask me**

**I suppose/believe/think/guess**

**As far as I'm concerned**

**I would say that**

**Personally**

**From my point of view**

- In order to play for time, to give yourself time to think, you can use hesitation words or sounds ('delaying sounds'). Make sure you don't use them from your own language. They can sound strange in English!

**Well,... Er..., Let me see..., Mmm..., Then..., I mean...,  
You know (what I mean)**

## 5. Ask for clarification & Correct yourself

- Don't be afraid to interrupt and ask if you don't understand what you are being told. It's important to familiarise yourself with the right phrases to ask for clarification or repetition and be able to go on :

**Shall I start?**

**What do you mean?**

**I don't (really) understand...**

**Do you think you could say/explain that again?**

**Would you mind repeating it, please?**

**May/can I ask you a question?**

**I'm not (quite) sure what I have to do...**

**Can I interrupt or say something?**

- Asking the examiner to repeat can actually be the perfect opportunity to show off some complex language - e.g.:

**'I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch the last part...'**

**'I didn't quite get what you said...'**

**'If I can just check what you are saying, you'd like me to...'**

- And, be confident to correct yourself if necessary!

**What I mean... What I'm trying to say...**

**I don't think I explained that very well...**

## 6. What to include

It is best to think about the WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN WHY HOW of each picture.

Think about the subject, environment, time of day, weather, location, culture...this will give you ideas to keep you talking.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>LOCATION</b> (describe where things are in the picture)</p> <p>Remember to use the position language you have learnt so far in order to do it in a proper way.</p>   | <p><b>What</b> can you see in the picture?</p> <p><b>Where</b> are things placed in the picture?</p>  |
| <p><b>PLACE</b> (mention something about the place)</p>  | <p><b>Where</b> is it?</p> <p><b>What</b> 's the place / scenery <b>like</b>?</p>   |
| <p><b>ACTION</b> (describe what is happening )</p>   | <p><b>What</b> are the people <b>doing</b>?</p>   |
| <p><b>PEOPLE</b> (speculate about the characters )</p> <p>Talk about people 's appearance, clothes, relationship. If there is not a main character, focus on the group</p> | <p><b>What</b> are the people <b>like</b>?</p> <p><b>What</b> are they <b>wearing</b>?</p> <p><b>How</b> are they <b>related</b>?</p>   |
| <p><b>IDEAS &amp; OTHER DETAILS</b> (speculate about the scene)</p> <p>Give extra information about the scene to add further details to your description.</p>              | <p><b>What</b> has happened?</p> <p><b>What</b> do you think will happen <b>next</b>?</p> <p><b>What</b> is the weather <b>like</b>?</p> <p><b>What else</b> can be interesting in the picture?</p> |
| <p><b>IMPRESSION</b> (give some impressions and opinions)</p>  | <p><b>How</b> do they <b>look</b>?</p> <p><b>What</b> is his/her emotional state?</p> <p><b>What</b> are they thinking/talking <b>about</b>?</p>  |

## Pictures in General

- short description of the scene (e. g. place, event)
- details (who / what can you see)
- background information (if necessary) on place, important persons or event

### Structure

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| foreground  | I can see a ..., so it must be...                 | I'm not sure I'd be capable of...-ing   |
| background  | I think this photo was taken...                   | The issue of...has now become the focus of national / worldwide media attention, and... |
| in the upper/lower part   | It looks like a...                                | ...has focused public attention on...   |
| in the left/right part  | I'm absolutely sure / certain...                  | I think people / the government should...   |
| in the central part   | There's no doubt that...                          | Generally speaking,...  |
| in front of   | It seems...                                       | Thank God...  |
| behind  | It's difficult to make it out because...          | Unfortunately,...   |
| next to ...   | It looks as if / though they are...               | It is in everyone's best interest to...   |
| on the right/left   | I (can still) remember...-ing...                  | You may have to pay very dearly for...  |
| in the middle   | I've already been in a situation like this.       | It is crucial / extremely important that... should...                                   |
| from front/behind/above/below   | That reminds me of...                             | There has been a lot of progress made in...   |
| the second from left/right  | If I were in a situation like this..., I would... | The issue has been hotly debated for some time, and...                                  |
| This picture / drawing / cartoon / photo shows a ...  | If such a thing happened to me..., I would...     | There has been a lot of (heated / fierce / intense) public debate on this issue, and... |
| In this picture ...   | I think /guess...                                 | There are a number of things we could do about this problem...                          |
| This is a picture of...   | In my opinion / view...                           | The only way out of this situation seems to be...-ing...                                |
| There's /There're...  | As far as I'm concerned...                        | The only solution to this problem seems to be...-ing...                                 |
| I can see...  | The way I see it...                               | We are left with no choice, but to...   |
| The ... is / are ...-ing  | From my point of view...                          | ...before it's too late   |
| In the foreground / background...   | It seems to me that...                            |   |
| In the middle...  | I'd say...  |   |
| On the right (hand side of the picture)...  | If you ask me...                                  |   |
| At the top / bottom...  | To my mind...                                     |   |
| In the top / bottom left hand corner...   | Well, to be honest, I don't think...              |   |
| Near; next to; beside; above; under; behind; in front of; opposite; across from; between...etc. | Under / In no circumstances, would I ever...      |   |
| I think they are /may be ...(-ing)  | No way would I...                                 |   |
| I'm not sure / I can't say for sure /certain, but it may be.../ it could be.../ it might be...  | I wouldn't do it for anything.                    |   |
|   | No, thank you, ...is not for me.                  |   |
|   | ...is not my cup of tea                           |   |
|   | I'd rather not (do something)                     |   |
|   | I don't feel I could...                           |   |

Adapted from :

<http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/writing/picture-description>

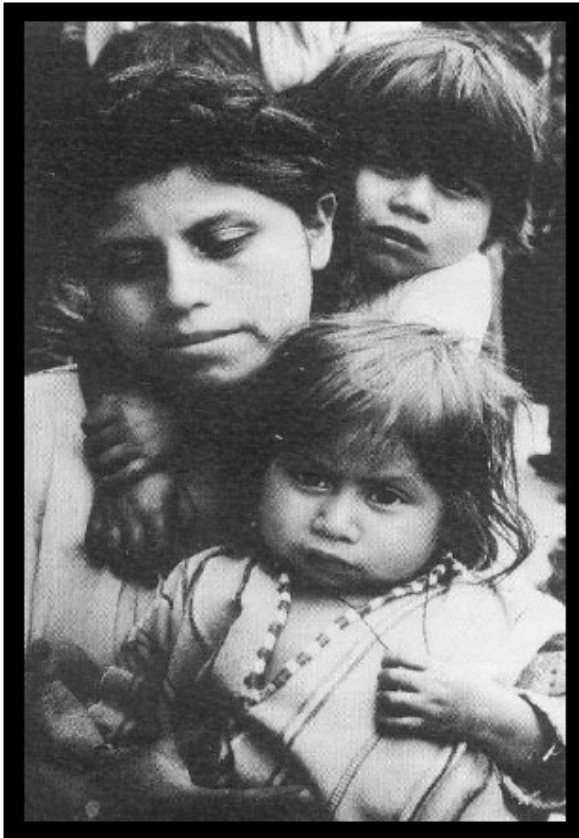
<http://kolmanv.blogspot.cz/2009/09/picture-description-useful-phrases.html>

<http://www.cristinacabal.com/pre-intermediate/description.pdf>

<http://elenec.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/picture-description.pdf>

Practical exercises:

|             |                |                    |          |
|-------------|----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Takes after | To tell        | She has got        | Looks    |
| Might       | The background | Would say          | Can't be |
| Could be    | Make it out    | It looks as though | Maybe    |
| Shows       | Perhaps        | Looks like         |          |



This photo \_\_\_\_\_ 1 a young mother and her two kids. I \_\_\_\_\_ 2 they must be from somewhere in South America. \_\_\_\_\_ 3 they are in a crowded market, although it is difficult \_\_\_\_\_ 4 because you can't see much of \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The mother has her hair up in a bun and a roundish face. She \_\_\_\_\_ 6 fed up, but this \_\_\_\_\_ 7 because she's tired. \_\_\_\_\_ 8 she's had a busy day shopping. The child with its arm around her neck \_\_\_\_\_ 9 a little boy. It seems he's aware of the camera. The little girl \_\_\_\_\_ 10 more than three. She's a little plump, but you can see that she really \_\_\_\_\_ 11 her mother. \_\_\_\_\_ 12 her mother's mouth and the most beautiful almond-shaped eyes. She's holding something in her hand. I can't really \_\_\_\_\_ 13. It \_\_\_\_\_ 14 be a charm or \_\_\_\_\_ 15 it's a crucifix.

Key: shows, 2. would say, 3. It looks as though, 4. to tell, 5. the background, 6. looks 7. could be 8. maybe/perhaps, 9. looks like, 10. can't be, 11. takes after, 12. She has got, 13. make it out, 14. might, 15. perhaps/maybe



1. Describe the pictures.
2. What physical function does the skin perform in each of them?



1. Look at the pictures below and describe them?
2. Why people do these artificial things to their skin?
3. Is there any such practice in your culture?

