

SAMPLE ORAL EXAM

THIS HANDOUT HAS 3 SECTIONS:

S1: overview of the oral exam, tips for part 2 and 3.

S2: sample questions for parts 2, 3 and 4.

S3: useful language and tips for parts 2,3 and 4.

SECTION 1

Part 1: General introduction.

Part 2: Picture description. (3 minutes).

Part 3: Debate. (3 minutes).

Part 4: Additional questions from the examiner (4 minutes).

In all the parts of the oral exam the following is assessed:

Task completion	-clear, correct, extensive (- interaction with the partner) - relevant, not repetitive - independent
Vocabulary	- correctness and extent - phrases
Grammar	- correctness and extent - conjunctions, complex sentences
Pronunciation	- pronunciation - intonation

TASK 1 Picture description – tips. In pairs decide whether following tips are useful for successful exam performance.

1 It is a problem if you do not know all the vocabulary to describe every aspect of the picture.

2 Look at your picture carefully and take a few moments to think before you start talking.

3 Use present simple to describe what is happening in the picture.

4 Be very specific and concentrate on details.

5 If you don't know what to talk about, ask yourself: What/Where/Why is (it) happening? With whom? What preceded the situation shown in the picture and what will follow?

6 It is a good idea to speculate (It seems to me that..., It could be...) and give your own opinion (from my point of view).

7 You should not paraphrase if you don't know a word or an expression.

TASK 2 Debate – tips. In pairs decide whether following tips are useful for successful exam performance.

- 1 Interrupt your colleague frequently.
- 2 Expect additional hints from the examiner if you are lost.
- 3 If you do not understand the question, raise your voice.
- 4 Try to take as much talking time for yourself to demonstrate to the teacher how much you know.
- 5 Ask for a new question if you do not like/ understand the topic.
- 6 Try to look calm, even if you are nervous inside.

SECTION 2

Oral exam PART 2

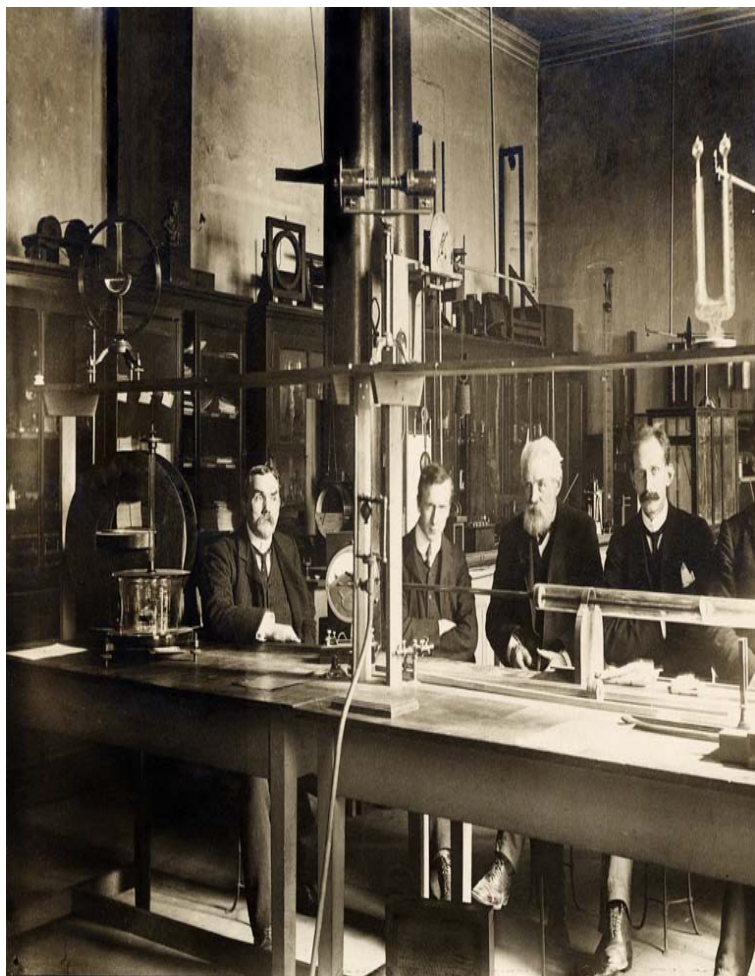
EXAMINER SCRIPT: In the second part of the exam, you'll be given two pictures. I'd like you to describe your pictures and also answer a question about your partner's pictures. (To STUDENT A) here are your pictures. They show women in labs. I'd like you to describe and compare the pictures and say whether you think progress has been made regarding the number of women scientists.



A question to student A: **Why do you think there are fewer women in science than men?**

EXAMINER SCRIPT: In the second part of the exam, you'll be given two pictures. I'd like you to describe your pictures and also answer a question about your partner's

pictures. (To STUDENT B) here are your pictures. They show a historical lab and a state-of-the art chemistry lab. I'd like you to describe and compare the pictures and say how lab the quality of lab equipment has improved over the over the last 100 years.



A question to student A: **How different will be labs 20 years from now from the current labs?**

Oral exam PART 3

EXAMINER SCRIPT: *In the third part of the exam, I'd like you to talk to each other for about three minutes.*

Imagine that you and your partner have been sent by your boss to a high-school where you should promote your studies.
Here are some pictures to help you get ready for your discussion.
Please talk to your partner about how best to introduce your programme to high-school students and motivate them to apply for university.
You have only about three minutes so do not worry if I interrupt you.



Oral exam PART 4

EXAMINER SCRIPT: In the last part of the exam, I'm going to ask you a few questions.

Why do you want to be a laboratory technician? Where would you like to work?

Do you like working in a team or do you prefer working alone?

Are there any ethical issues which a laboratory technician has to deal with?

What is your view on using animals or animal testing in laboratory experiments?

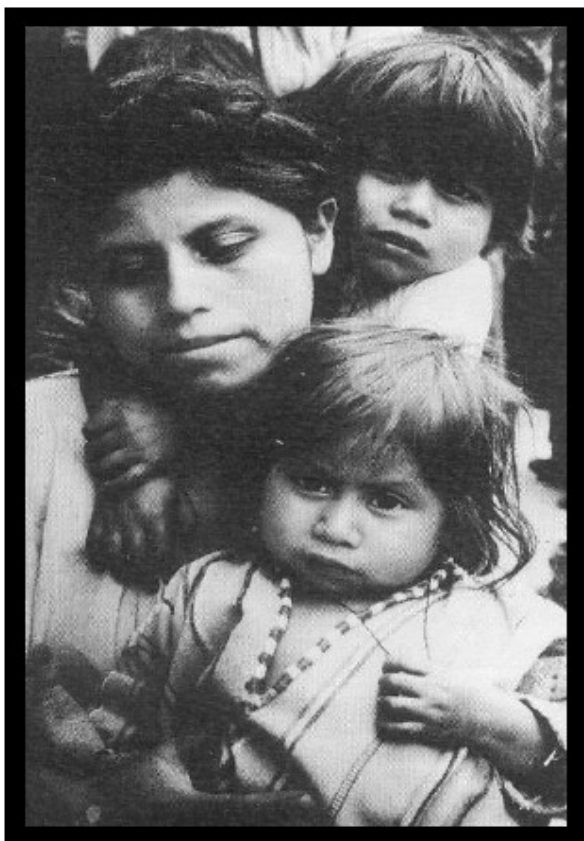
Are there guidelines for animal testing?

What other alternatives are there to animal testing?

SECTION 3 USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR PARTS 2,3 AND 4

TASK 1 Complete the text which describes the picture with the expressions from the box.

Takes after Might Could be Shows	To tell The background Make it out Perhaps	She has got Would say It looks as though Looks like	Looks Can't be Maybe
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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 crucifix¹.

¹ Answer 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

GUIDELINES

DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look carefully at the photos. Think how to describe what you can see. Take your time to do it. ➤ Be as precise as you can when you describe the photo itself. Use some 'position' language if it helps. ➤ Use present continuous verbs to describe what is happening. ➤ If there is a person or people in the photo, you will need to describe their appearance. ➤ 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. ➤ Try to direct the conversation towards something you are interested in and can talk about easily. ➤ Speak naturally and be animated! Keep eye contact with the examiner, be friendly and show a positive attitude. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Don't worry if you don't understand immediately what is going on in the picture. ➤ Don't worry if you don't know the precise words for what you can see; use alternatives. ➤ Don't use the present simple to describe what is happening. ➤ Don't use general language to describe people. You should use vocabulary of the level required. ➤ 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. ➤ Don't feel you have to stick rigidly to the subject. Don't give complicated explanations if you are not sure. ➤ Don't be shy! This is your chance to show how well you can speak. Smile and relax!

TIP 1: Describe where things are in the picture.

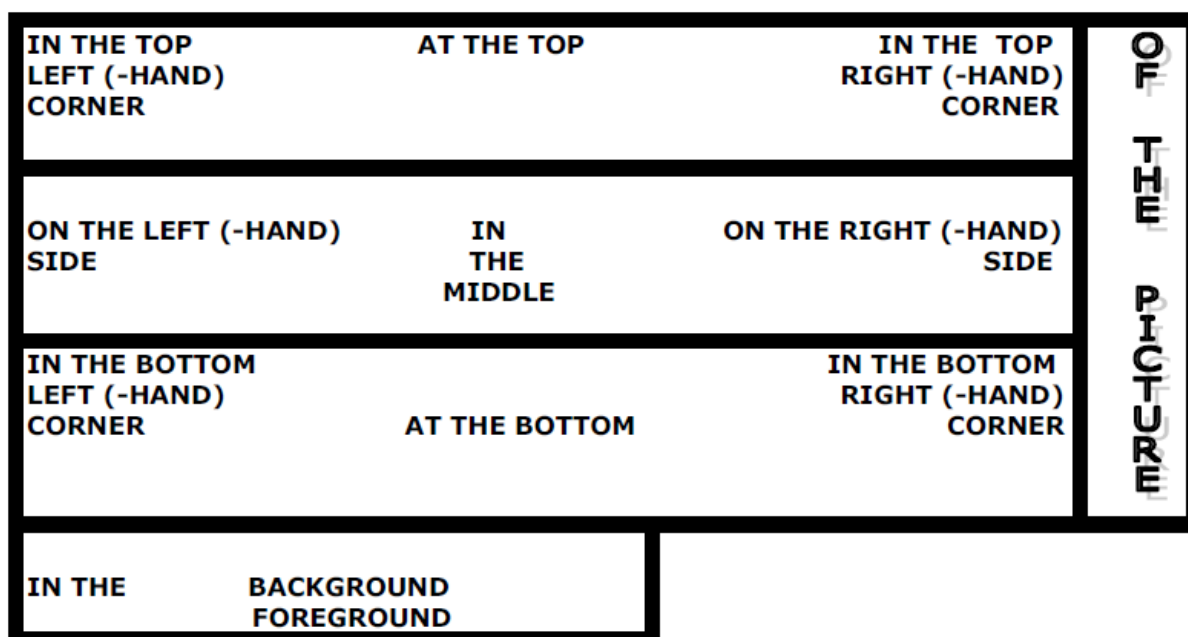
a) Preparation

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 for the examiner and other student to follow a picture description if the speaker 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)



TIP 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.

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

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

Study these constructions using ' look ' :	Where necessary correct these sentences :
<p>1. <i>This looks like the work of a child</i> look like + NOUN (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> look + ADJECTIVE (when it means <i>seem</i>)</p>	
<p>3. <i>The girl looks as though she is in her late 20s</i> look as though/as if + VERB PHRASE (similar to 1, but attention must be paid to the <i>grammatical construction</i>) * <i>As if</i> and <i>As though</i> are interchangeable</p>	

TIP 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

TIP 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 far as I'm concerned
As I see it	I would say that
If you ask me	Personally
I suppose/believe/think/guess	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)

TIP 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...**

TIP 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 talking.

<p>LOCATION (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>What can you see in the picture?</p> <p>Where are things placed in the picture?</p>
<p>PLACE (mention something about the place)</p>	<p>Where is it?</p> <p>What 's the place / scenery like?</p>
<p>ACTION (describe what is happening)</p>	<p>What are the people doing?</p>
<p>PEOPLE (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>What are the people like?</p> <p>What are they wearing?</p> <p>How are they related?</p>
<p>IDEAS & OTHER DETAILS (speculate about the scene)</p> <p>Give extra information about the scene to add further details to your description.</p>	<p>What has happened?</p> <p>What do you think will happen next?</p> <p>What is the weather like?</p> <p>What else can be interesting in the picture?</p>
<p>IMPRESSION (give some impressions and opinions)</p>	<p>How do they look?</p> <p>What is his/her emotional state?</p> <p>What are they thinking/talking about?</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
background
in the upper/lower part
in the left/right part
in the central part
in front of
behind
next to ...
on the right/left
in the middle
from
front/behind/above/below
the second from left/right

This picture / drawing /
cartoon / photo shows a ...
In this picture ...
This is a picture of...
There's /There're...
I can see...
The ... is / are ...-ing
In the foreground /
background...
In the middle...
On the right (hand side of the
picture)...
At the top / bottom...
In the top / bottom left hand
corner...
Near; next to; beside; above;
under; behind; in front of;
opposite; across from;
between...etc.
I think they are /may be ...(-
ing)
I'm not sure / I can't say for
sure /certain, but it may be.../
it could be.../ it might be...
I can see a ..., so it must be...
I think this photo was taken...
It looks like a...
I'm absolutely sure / certain...
There's no doubt that...
It seems...
It's difficult to make it out
because...

It looks as if / though they
are...
I (can still) remember...-ing...
I've already been in a situation
like this.
That reminds me of...
If I were in a situation like
this..., I would...
If such a thing happened to
me..., I would...
I think /guess...
In my opinion / view...
As far as I'm concerned...
The way I see it...
From my point of view...
It seems to me that...
I'd say...
If you ask me...
To my mind...
Well, to be honest, I don't
think...
Under / In no circumstances,
would I ever...
No way would I...
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...
I'm not sure I'd be capable
of...-ing
The issue of...has now become
the focus of national /
worldwide media attention,
and...
...has focused public attention
on...
I think people / the
government should...
Generally speaking...
Thank God...
Unfortunately...
It is in everyone's best interest
to...
You may have to pay very
dearly for...

It is crucial / extremely
important that... should...
There has been a lot of progress
made in...
The issue has been hotly
debated for some time, and...
There has been a lot of (heated
/ fierce / intense) public debate
on this issue, and...
There are a number of things
we could do about this
problem...
The only way out of this
situation seems to be...-ing...
The only solution to this
problem seems to be...-ing...
We are left with no choice, but
to...
...before it's too late

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>

ORAL EXAM – Useful language for all parts

<p>Expressing opinion I think that/ I would say that ... Why don't we...? It seems to me that ... I'd like to point out... I'm inclined to think that The way I see it is that ... I'm convinced that ... As far as I am concerned I'm fairly certain that ... In my opinion/experience... If you ask me, I would say that ...</p>	<p>Disagreeing I don't think so. But don't you think that...? I see what you mean, but... That's not always the case. I'm not so sure about that. I wouldn't say that. I agree up to a point, but... You can't be serious! Rubbish!/Nonsense!</p>
<p>Getting into a discussion Excuse me, could I just make a point here? Excuse me, could I just say something here? Sorry to interrupt but ... I wonder if I could say something. I'd like to make a point here. I have something I'd like to say. Could I just add something, please.</p>	<p>Clarifying your ideas What I'm talking about is ... In other words .../ What I said was ... What I (really) meant was ... (No) I didn't mean that, what I wanted to say was ... What I was trying to say was ... Sorry, let me explain it again.</p>
<p>Agreeing I totally/fully/partly agree I'd go along with that. I couldn't agree more. / No doubt about it. Exactly. You have a very good point here. I think so too./ Yes, definitely. You're quite right. I suppose so. I guess so. So do I. Neither do I.</p>	<p>Asking for clarification I'm sorry I don't understand what you mean. What you mean is ... In other words ...? I'm sorry, I don't understand what you mean. I'm sorry, but what do you mean by ...? Do you mean that ...? So what you're saying is ...</p>