

GCSE French, German, & Spanish Paper 2: Speaking

Additional marking guidance for the Unprepared conversation

Autumn 2025



Part 3: Photo card – unprepared conversation

- The second part of the Photo card task requires each student to take part in an unprepared conversation on any or all of the three topics within the specified theme of the Photo card.
- Marking stops for each individual student's test at a total time of 9 minutes for Foundation tier or 12 minutes for Higher tier.
- If a student is speaking when the maximum amount of time is reached, teachers should bring the test to an end sensitively, especially if the student is speaking at this point.
- If at the maximum time the student or teacher is talking, marking will stop at the end of the student's answer to that question.
- No requirements to cover a specific number of topics or spend a specific amount of time on a topic.

Key points for the conduct of the unprepared conversation

- Lower-attaining students may need to move through more topics to sustain the conversation. Higher-attaining students may be able to sustain a more in-depth conversation around a particular aspect of the theme.
- Teachers should tailor their questions to the interests and ability of the student they're testing to maximise potential.
- Teachers may wish to have a range of 'starter' questions per topic which cover different aspects and are of different levels of demand and use a selection of these in the test for individual learners.
- A range of 'starter' questions can be practised as part of teaching and learning activities, but learners must **not** know in advance which questions will be asked in the exam itself, or which topics/themes will be discussed. You must **not** exclusively use the same list of questions with every student.
- You know your students best, so use your discretion to decide which aspects of the topics to focus on, eg potentially more topics for lower-attaining students to maintain the conversation.
- Avoid any sensitive topics with individual students.

Rationale for the additional guidance on marking of the unprepared conversation

- An approach which promotes consistent application of the assessment criteria across all three languages which has been fully trialled with a range of different sorts of performances
- Clear marking guidance which teachers and examiners can understand and apply
- There is clear differentiation between students of different attainment levels to ensure the full range of marks is awarded.
- The guidance ensures we meet the requirement for an unprepared conversation as specified in the DfE Subject Content
- The approach promotes a genuine conversation rather than over-reliance on long pre-learnt monologues

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – assessment criteria

Foundation tier

Marks for AO1 and for AO3 are awarded based on the conversation following the student's response to the content of the photos.

Level	Mark	AO1
5	13–15	• Quite a lot of information is conveyed. • Regular good development of responses. • Information may lack clarity from time to time.
4	10–12	• Some information is conveyed. • Some good development and regular minimal development of responses. • Information lacks clarity from time to time.
3	7–9	• Some information is conveyed. • Regular minimal development of responses. • Information lacks clarity from time to time and occasionally messages break down.
2	4–6	• Little information is conveyed. • Limited responses with occasional minimal development. • Messages regularly break down.
1	1–3	• Very little information is conveyed. • Limited responses. • Messages regularly break down or hardly anything is said.
0	0	Does not meet the standard required for Level 1 at this tier.

Foundation tier

Level	Mark	AO3
5	5	• Good variety of vocabulary and structures, but with some repetition. • There may be frequent minor errors. Some major errors may occur even in basic language.
4	4	• Some variety of vocabulary and structures, but with regular repetition. • Frequent minor errors and some major errors in most responses to questions.
3	3	• Limited variety of vocabulary and structures with regular repetition. • Very frequent minor and frequent major errors in most responses to questions.
2	2	• Very limited variety of vocabulary and structures with regular repetition. • Very frequent minor and very frequent major errors in nearly all responses to questions.
1	1	• Hardly any variety of vocabulary and structures. • Minor and major errors in all responses to questions.
0	0	The language does not meet the standard required for Level 1 at this tier.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – assessment criteria

Higher tier

Marks for AO1 and for AO3 are awarded based on the conversation following the student's response to the content of the photos.

Level	Mark	AO1
5	13–15	- A lot of information is conveyed. - Consistent good development with regular extended responses. - Information is always or nearly always conveyed clearly.
4	10–12	- A lot of information is conveyed. - Consistent good development with some extended responses. - Information is conveyed clearly, but with occasional lapses.
3	7–9	- Quite a lot of information is conveyed. - Consistent good development with occasional extended responses. - Information is generally conveyed clearly.
2	4–6	- Quite a lot of information is conveyed. - Regular good development of responses. - Information may lack clarity from time to time.
1	1–3	- Some information is conveyed. - Some good development and regular minimal development of responses. - Information lacks clarity from time to time.
0	0	Does not meet the standard required for Level 1 at this tier.

Higher tier

Level	Mark	AO3
5	5	- Wide variety of vocabulary and structures. - There may be a few minor errors. Few or no major errors when more complex language is attempted.
4	4	- Very good variety of vocabulary and structures. - Some minor errors. Some major errors when more complex language is attempted.
3	3	- Good variety of vocabulary and structures, but with occasional repetition. - Quite a lot of minor errors. Occasional major errors, not only in attempts at more complex language.
2	2	Good variety of vocabulary and structures, but with some repetition.
		Frequent minor errors. Some major errors which occur even in basic language.
1	1	- Some variety of vocabulary and structures, but with regular repetition. - Frequent minor errors and some major errors in most responses to questions.
0	0	The language does not meet the standard required for Level 1 at this tier.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – marking guidance

Marking guidance – Foundation tier

As regards development of answers:

Good development	A response which contains two clauses (a piece of information that includes an appropriate verb): - What do you think about social media? - I don't like social media because it's boring.
Minimal development	A response which adds a piece or pieces of information, for example in the form of a noun or adjective: - What do you eat in order to stay healthy? - (I eat) vegetables and fruit.
Limited response	A response which answers the question without any extra information: - How many subjects do you study? - (I study) ten (subjects).

As regards clarity of response:

Lacks clarity	Something is understood from the response, but there is a lack of clarity caused by a grammatical error or mispronunciation which affects communication.
Messages break down	Errors of grammar, pronunciation and/or inappropriate vocabulary mean that the intended message is not conveyed.

Marking guidance – Higher tier

As regards development of answers:

Extended response	A response which contains at least three clauses (a piece of information that includes an appropriate verb): - What do you do at the weekend? - I go to the cinema with my friends and we watch action films. I love action films.
Good development	A response which contains two clauses (a piece of information that includes an appropriate verb): - What do you think about social media? - I don't like social media because it's boring.
Minimal development	A response which adds a piece or pieces of information, for example in the form of a noun or adjective: - What do you eat in order to stay healthy? - (I eat) vegetables and fruit.

As regards clarity of response:

Conveyed clearly	The intended message is clear. There may be minor errors, for example of gender or adjectival agreement, but they have no effect on communication.
Lacks clarity	Something is understood from the response, but there is a lack of clarity caused by a grammatical error or mispronunciation which affects communication.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – marking guidance (AO1)

- When awarding marks for AO1, examiners will use the tables on the next slide to determine the ‘information band’ by considering:
 - how many responses to questions contain clear information (NB: responses including ‘yes’ or ‘no’ alone will not count towards this figure)
 - how many ‘extended’ responses, responses showing ‘good’ development and responses developed ‘minimally’ there are.
- Examiners will then use the overall clarity of the information as well as the extent to which the performance exceeds the band requirements (number of questions answered clearly / development of responses) to determine the overall AO1 mark.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – marking guidance (A01)

The ‘information band’ is the highest band where both the number of questions answered clearly and the requirements for development of responses are fulfilled.

FOUNDATION TIER

Band	Questions answered clearly	Development of responses
13-15	12+	At least ‘Good’ development in 8 answers.
10-12	12+	At least ‘Good’ development in 5 answers. At least ‘Minimal’ development in 3 other answers.
7-9	10-11	At least ‘Minimal’ development in 7 answers.
4-6	8-9	At least ‘Minimal’ development in 4 answers.
1-3	1-7	At least ‘Limited’ responses

HIGHER TIER

Band	Questions answered clearly	Development of responses
13-15	17+	10 or more answers are ‘Extended’. At least ‘Good’ development in 3 other answers.
10-12	15-16	7 or more answers are ‘Extended’. At least ‘Good’ development in 4 other answers.
7-9	13-14	4 or more answers are ‘Extended’. At least ‘Good’ development in 6 other answers.
4-6	12	At least ‘Good’ development in 8 answers.
1-3	12	At least ‘Good’ development in 5 answers. At least ‘Minimal’ development in 3 other answers.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – marking guidance

- Where the overall clarity of the information fits a band below the ‘information band’, the mark for AO1 may be awarded the lower mark in the ‘information band’. When lapses in clarity are more extreme, a mark may be awarded in the band below the ‘information band’.
- The mark for AO1 cannot be in a band higher than the maximum mark in the ‘information band’ and cannot be lower than the middle mark of the band below the ‘information band’.

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – worked FT example

Step 1 -Work out how many questions have been answered clearly (remember Yes/No don't count).

Step 2 -Decide how many responses are 'good development', 'minimal development' or 'limited response'.

Step 3 -Use the grid below to work out which information band this fits into. So a conversation where a student answers 12 questions in total, 5 of the answers have good development and there is minimal development in the other 7 answers, this would fit into the 10-12 band.

Band	Questions answered clearly	Development of responses
13-15	12+	At least 'Good' development in 8 answers.
10-12	12+	At least 'Good' development in 5 answers. At least 'Minimal' development in 3 other answers.
7-9	10-11	At least 'Minimal' development in 7 answers.
4-6	8-9	At least 'Minimal' development in 4 answers.
1-3	1-7	At least 'Limited' responses

Part 3: Unprepared conversation – worked FT example

Step 4 -Make a judgement on how clear the information was.

Start with the same band as the ‘information band’	Which mark to award ...
The clarity exceeds the requirements of the information band.	Award the top mark in the information band.
The clarity meets the requirements of the information band.	Award the middle mark in the information band.
The clarity meets the requirements of the band below the information band.	Award the bottom mark in the information band.
The clarity meets the requirements of a band two below the information band.	Award the top mark in the band below the information band.
The clarity meets the requirements of a band more than two bands below the information band.	Award the middle mark in the band below the information band.

So a performance which is in the 10-12 band for ‘information’ but the clarity strand fits the descriptor in the 13-15 band would be awarded 12 marks for AO1 (the top mark in the band).