

SPEAKING PART 1: PLACES OF RESIDENCE



Another common topic in Part 1 of the Speaking test is personal circumstances – the place where you live, your family and your daily life. As with your occupation, it's a good idea to prepare some ideas to talk about. What can you say about these topics that is interesting or unexpected? Can you give some opinions as well as the basic information?

Try it first!

Try talking about the place where you live as if you were doing Speaking Part 1. If you are working with a partner, take it in turns to play the roles of examiner and candidate. Here are some typical questions.

Examiner: I'd like to talk about the place where you live.

- Can you describe the building you live in?
- Is it similar to other buildings in the area?
- Is it a convenient location for you?
- What do you like about living there?
- What changes would improve the area where you live?



Spotlight 2

Useful language for talking about your place of residence

Grammar: present perfect or present perfect continuous?

Your choice of grammar should reflect whether your living situation is permanent, long term or temporary.

Present perfect (permanent or long term)

I've lived in this city all my life.

My family has lived in this area since my grandparents moved here in about 1950.

I've lived in the same house for 15 years. I think it's time to move.

Present perfect continuous (temporary)

I've been staying with friends for the last few weeks.

I've only been living here since last Tuesday.

I've been looking for somewhere to live which is closer to work.

However, with *live* for longer-term but non-permanent situations, often both forms are possible.

I've lived in university accommodation for the last two years.

I've been living in university accommodation for the last two years.

The second version emphasises that the situation is not permanent, but these two versions could be interchangeable in many situations.

Natural English: *be* instead of *live*

It's common to use a form of the verb *to be* to imply *live*.

I'm in rented accommodation at the moment.

I've been in a college residence since I started my course.

We're on the seventh floor.

1 Look at these pairs of sentences. Which version is better? Or are both good?

- 1 a I've lived here since I was two years old.
b I've been living here since I was two years old.
- 2 a I've lived here for quite a long time.
b I've been living here for quite a long time.
- 3 a I've lived with my parents since I graduated last year.
b I've been living with my parents since I graduated last year.
- 4 a I live very near the city centre.
b I'm very near the city centre.
- 5 a I've lived in several different places.
b I've been living in several different places.

2 Present perfect or present perfect continuous? Complete each gap with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

- 1 It's the nicest place I've ever (*live*)
- 2 I haven't very many other places. (*see*)
- 3 We've of moving for a few months now. (*think*)
- 4 I've never in rented accommodation. (*live*)
- 5 I haven't a new place for very long. (*look for*)
- 6 I've never in a university residence before. (*stay*)
- 7 I've just a really nice apartment. (*find*)
- 8 We still haven't found the kind of place we've to find. (*hope*)

Vocabulary: places of residence

3 Do these adjectives usually describe houses/flats or areas/neighbourhoods? Write them in the correct column of the table below.

commercial fourth-floor multicultural rented
 residential rural shared spacious
 suburban three-storey two-bedroom urban

Tip
 Write down new vocabulary in a special notebook, organized into categories. Words can go into more than one category. For example, *commercial* can be used as an adjective to describe a district in a city, but also a film, book, etc. which has been produced with the aim of making as much money as possible.

house/flat	area/neighbourhood

4 Complete these sentences with words/phrases from Exercise 3.

- 1 This part of the city is very There are wonderful shops and cafés from all around the world.
- 2 You wouldn't call my flat It's like living in a cupboard.
- 3 Not many people live in the district. It's mostly shops and offices.
- 4 It's very where I live. We're at least 30 kilometres from the nearest town.
- 5 It's nice to have your own place, but it's usually much cheaper to live in a house or flat.
- 6 To get to the city centre, you go past kilometre after kilometre of dull housing.

British or American English?

5 Both British and American English are acceptable in the exam, but it is best to be consistent. In each pair, which term is American English (AE) and which is British English (BE)?

- 1 lift / elevator
- 2 apartment / flat
- 3 ground floor / first floor
- 4 sidewalk / pavement
- 5 crossroads / intersection
- 6 main road / highway
- 7 downtown / town centre



Combining details to give complex answers

The examiner can direct the conversation into related areas. So for example, a first question about the place where you live could lead to questions about the people you live with and your daily routine at home. You should include plenty of information and your feelings/opinions. For example:

I share a small flat with two other students. It's not very convenient for the city centre, but it's cheap and it's near the university where I'm studying at the moment.

- 1** Write notes for each of these topics, then expand them to give your feelings/opinions about them.

your home (flat, house, etc.)	family and/or people you live with	daily routine at home
small flat	share with two other students	

Prepare and practise

- 2** On a separate piece of paper, write a complex answer to each of the questions below, combining at least three pieces of information for each one. (This includes questions which could be answered with just Yes/No.)

Example:

Q: Do you still live there?

A: Yes, I do. Most of my family and friends live in the area, and one reason I chose to study at my local university was so I wouldn't have to find a place to live somewhere else.


- 1 Describe the village, town or city where you grew up.
- 2 Do you still live there?
- 3 Does your family still live there?
- 4 How much has it changed since you were young?
- 5 Do you like living there? (Why? / Why not?)
- 6 Describe the street or area you live in.
- 7 Do you think it's a good place to live? (Why? / Why not?)
- 8 How well do you know the people who live next door to you?
- 9 What are the advantages of knowing your neighbours well?
- 10 What kind of problems can people have with their neighbours?

- 3** Work in pairs. One person is the examiner, the other is the candidate. The examiner asks questions 1–5 from Exercise 2. Then reverse roles and repeat with questions 6–10. Refer to the answers you wrote.

- 4** Repeat, but reverse roles, so that the person who asked questions 1–5 the first time now answers them, and vice versa. This time, don't refer to the questions you wrote – try to include all the information from memory.

Tip

Take an active role in the dialogue, giving extra ideas and information. However, it's not a social conversation. Don't ask the examiner questions.


1  2 Listen to the recording, which is based on Speaking Part 1. Which **THREE** things are true about the candidate?

- 1 She lives on the eighth floor of an apartment block.
- 2 She lives near the city centre.
- 3 She's a student.
- 4 She has to spend a long time travelling every day.
- 5 She thinks the city is a good place to live.
- 6 She thinks the worst thing about her city is the cold weather.

2 Now look at the audio transcript on page 105 and check your answers.

3 Was the recording very different from your role-play (Exercises 3 and 4, page 18)? How was it different? How could you improve further? Discuss your ideas with a partner or in small groups.


Pronunciation focus: connected speech

 2 Listen to the recording again. Notice how many words run into each other, especially the words in frequently used sequences. For example:

I'm studying_at_a college on the_other_side_of_the city centre, so I spend_about two_hours on_the_bus every day.

In this example, the words connected with underscores are said almost as if they were just one word:

*studying_at_a
the_other_side_of_the
spend_about
two_hours
on_the_bus*

4  2 Listen to the recording again while reading the audio transcript on page 105. While you listen, underline examples of connected speech in the candidate's responses. Then practise saying these sentences, copying the connected speech as much as you can.

5 Work in pairs, asking each other the questions below. Again, one person is the examiner, the other is the candidate. When you have finished, reverse roles and repeat. Try to include improvements you noticed when you listened to the recording, and try to improve your use of connected speech.

- Describe your home.
- How long have you lived there?
- Which is your favourite room for relaxing in?
- How do you spend the evenings when you are at home?
- What changes would improve your home?



Talking about your occupation

CHECK Find language in this unit which is another way to say:

- 1 monthly pay cheque
- 2 pleasure that can come from working
- 3 self-employed, working for several different clients

CHALLENGE Write a short description of your occupation in your first language. Include your feelings about it. Then translate it into English. Ideally, use an English–English dictionary.

Talking about your place of residence

CHECK Find language in this unit which is another way to say:

- 1 the opposite of *commercial* (when talking about a building or part of a building)
- 2 ten floors in total
- 3 My flat is on the ground floor, next to the lift.

CHALLENGE Write a short description of your place of residence in your first language. Include your feelings about it. Then translate it into English. Ideally, use an English–English dictionary.

Grammar for talking about your personal circumstances

CHECK In this unit, find an example of:

- 1 the present simple used to talk about personal circumstances.
- 2 the present continuous used to talk about personal circumstances.

CHALLENGE From memory, summarize the rule about when to use the present simple and when to use the present continuous when talking about personal circumstances.

Collocations

CHECK Check or remember the prepositions needed to complete these phrases.

- 1 I'm doing a degree Physics.
- 2 I'm currently working an office cleaner, but it's only temporary.

CHALLENGE Complete these phrases with alternative examples to the ones given in the unit.

- 1 work in (*a trade/profession, e.g. advertising*)
- 2 work for (*a company/organization*)
- 3 working on (*an example of a project*)
- 4 live in (*part of a building*)
- 5 live on (*part of a building*)

Pronunciation

CHECK Look at this sentence. Underline the words which would typically be stressed when saying them.

I live with my parents in a flat on the top floor of a 15-storey building, not far from the city centre.

Now put lines under the words which could typically be run together in connected speech.

CHALLENGE Repeat the task above with sentences from websites or printed material. Blogs can be a good source of informal English about experiences and opinions.