

UNIT 2

Leisure interests



SPEAKING PART 1: FREE-TIME ACTIVITIES

In Part 1 of the Speaking test, the examiner may ask questions about your free-time activities and entertainment interests. Questions of this type may begin the interview, or they may follow on from other questions, for example questions about your occupation or the place where you live. It's a good idea to prepare some ideas for speaking about these things and the other typical Part 1 topics which you will meet later in this book.

Try it first!

Try talking about your leisure interests 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 (*perhaps following on from questions on another topic*): Let's talk about your free-time activities.

- What do you do at the weekends?
- What is it that you like about [*one of candidate's leisure activities*]?
- How often do you get the chance to [*one of candidate's leisure activities*]?
- How important a part of your week are your free-time activities?
- Do you enjoy your free time more now than you did when you were a child?
- What free-time activity would you like to try in the future?



Spotlight 1

Useful language for talking about your leisure interests

Grammar: gerunds and infinitives

Gerund

The gerund ends in *-ing*.

I love reading.

I'm not very interested in watching sport on TV.

For activities, the gerund can often follow *go*.

I often go swimming at the weekends.

I'm going fishing next weekend.

Infinitive

The infinitive is the form of the verb found in the dictionary, and is often preceded by *to*.

I don't get much time to listen to music.

I hope to have more free time from next year.

I'm planning to take my children to the zoo next Saturday.

1 Put each of these gerunds and phrases with gerunds into the correct column of the table below.

camping gardening ice skating mountain climbing
 playing computer games playing football reading running
 skiing walking in the countryside walking the dog watching TV

can follow go	do not normally follow go

Tip

Make sure you learn the words in English for all your free-time and leisure interests. Write them in your vocabulary notebook, and use a dictionary or internet search to find out which ones can follow *go*.

2 Choose the correct form (gerund or infinitive) in these sentences.

- I always enjoy *to see* / *seeing* my friends.
- I'm going *to see* / *seeing* it in the cinema as soon as it comes out.
- We try *to go* / *going* to the theatre at least once a year.
- We had a great time *to play* / *playing* silly games on the beach.
- I'm planning *to buy* / *buying* some roller skates.
- I'd like *to have* / *having* more free time, but it's impossible at the moment.

Both forms are possible with *like*, *love* and *prefer*. The second is more commonly used in American English.

I like going to restaurants. / *I like to go to restaurants.*

I don't really like going shopping. / *I don't really like to go shopping.*

We love cooking. / *We love to cook.*

Do you prefer watching sport live or on TV? / *Do you prefer to watch sport live or on TV?*

3 Write two sentences about your free-time activities using a gerund form.

4 Write two sentences about your free-time activities using an infinitive form.

Tip

If you're not sure if a phrase is grammatically correct, enter it into an internet search engine. You'll probably see from the search results whether or not your version is correct. This also works for spelling, of course.

The examiner may ask you to compare your free time now with your free time in the past. In this case, *used to* can be very useful.

I used to play football every weekend, but I haven't done it for a long time now.

I used to go running about once a week.

I used to have a lot more free time than I do now.

Note the negative and question forms (although these are less likely to be useful in the Speaking test).

I didn't use to go swimming very often.

Did you use to go swimming more often than you do now?

5 Complete these sentences with your own ideas.

- 1 I used to, but now I don't.
- 2 I used to less often than I do now.
- 3 I used to more often than I do now.

Vocabulary: adjectives to describe leisure activities

6 Match the words/phrases on the left (1–7) with the words/phrases on the right (a–g) which mean the same thing.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 relaxing | a affordable |
| 2 exciting | b dull |
| 3 fun | c enjoyable |
| 4 boring | d family-friendly |
| 5 expensive | e good for winding down |
| 6 cheap | f high-cost |
| 7 suitable for children | g stimulating |

Tip

It can be a good idea to try to use less-common words and phrases. This shows you have a large vocabulary.

Vocabulary: collocations and expressions connected with leisure activities

7 These expressions can be useful when describing a leisure activity. Use them to complete the sentences below.

go for a have fun have some time off from let my hair down
 relax with sit back taking it easy unwind

- 1 I quite often drink after work with some of my colleagues.
- 2 It's very important to together as a family.
- 3 After a hard day, sometimes it's nice just to and watch some rubbish on TV.
- 4 I find it a really good way to the pressures of work and raising a family.
- 5 People tell me I should try to sometimes. I find it really difficult to relax.
- 6 My idea of a good time is to turn off my phone and a good book for a couple of hours.
- 7 I plan to spend next weekend
- 8 I really like to by having a nice, hot bath. It helps me relax after a hard day in the office.

Giving plenty of detail in descriptions

As you saw in Unit 1, it's a good idea to give plenty of detail in descriptions. For example, don't just say *I like sport* or *I read a lot*. Give more details:

- *I'm very keen on sport and keeping fit in general. I play football for my college team and I go to the gym two or three times a week.*
- *I read a lot and I often have two or three books on the go at the same time. At the moment, I'm reading a collection of Sherlock Holmes short stories and also a book about the history of China.*

Tip

If you have several free-time interests, choose the one which will be most interesting to speak about, and will demonstrate your ability to use a wide range of English structures and vocabulary.

1 Write a suitable description of one of your main leisure interests.

Adding reasons

It's often a good strategy to give reasons for your answers, and sometimes the examiner's question may specifically ask for a reason. In these examples, the candidate explains how a leisure activity improves his/her life.

- *My work is quite stressful, so at the weekends I like to take it really easy.*
- *I like it because it's a very sociable activity. I've made lots of new friends from doing it.*
- *I've always enjoyed being creative and I love music. Also, playing songs you've written to an audience is incredibly satisfying, even if it's only a small audience.*

2 Write a reason why the leisure activity you described in Exercise 1 improves your life.

Language check

3 Look at your answers to Exercises 1 and 2. Have you used gerund and infinitive forms correctly? Can you change the vocabulary to include some more advanced words and phrases?

Prepare and practise

4 Prepare your ideas for speaking about your leisure interests. Write some brief notes on ways to answer these questions. Can you use Spotlight 1 on pages 22–23 and the information above?

- 1 What do you do at the weekends?
- 2 What is it that you like about [one of candidate's leisure activities]?
- 3 How often do you get the chance to [one of candidate's leisure activities]?
- 4 How important a part of your week are your free-time activities?
- 5 Do you enjoy your free time more now than you did when you were a child?
- 6 What free-time activity would you like to try in the future?

5 If you are working with a partner, role-play talking about your free-time activities as if in Part 1 of the Speaking test – one person is the examiner and the other is the candidate. Use the same sample questions, and refer to the notes you made in Exercise 4 if you wish to. When you have finished, reverse roles and repeat.

Tip

Remember that you won't be able to write notes in Part 1 in the test, but doing it now will help you to organise your ideas.