

Top Tips: FCE Speaking Part Four

Tip 1 This task leads 'naturally' on from the working together task in Part Three. As the interlocutor has been pretending not to listen to the candidates during Part Three, the first question of Part Four will often be 'What have you decided?'. The examiner will then go on to ask the candidates more general questions based on the topic of Part Three. For example, if in Part Three the students had to decide which poster to use for an ad campaign, it might be followed by questions on advertising such as 'Do you think poster campaigns are effective?'.

Tip 2 To help students to anticipate the questions in Part Four, it can be useful to brainstorm possible questions after practising Part Three (see Lesson Plan).

Tip 3 Unlike in Part Three, this is a three-way spoken interaction. As in the other parts of the Speaking exam, it is meant to be as natural as possible. Therefore students can comment on what the other candidate has said, (politely!) interrupt etc. like in a semi-formal situation such as business meeting.

Tip 4 Students often ask whether the questions will be aimed at both of them or specifically to one person. The answer is that it depends- on the examiner and on the candidates. An examiner will often choose to direct the questions if one candidate has been dominating the conversation too much. It is good to tell students this if they are doing the exam with someone they don't know as their partner and they are worried about how much they will be allowed to speak.

Tip 5 Students are often uncertain about is how long they have to talk about each one of the examiner's questions. This part generally lasts 4 minutes, although the examiner has a certain amount of flexibility on when to stop Part Three. The examiner has about 6 or 7 questions to last this time, so two word answers for each one are going to lead to a very unhappy examiner! Not having much to say on one or two questions is no big deal, however. At the other extreme, if the candidates find one of the questions so fascinating that they can talk about it in a natural way for 4 minutes this is a good (if unlikely) thing, as it saves them from any more tricky questions the examiner has on his/ her list.

Tip 6 The functional language of asking for and giving opinions, including some agreement and disagreement language is useful for this part of the exam. Any speaking tasks involving giving opinions can be good, fun practise for this- e.g. debates. See FCE Speaking part 4 Lesson Plan for another example of an opinions game.