

You can improve your performance on the exam by using the following strategies.

Questions

1. Understand the format You will be asked to participate in a conversation. You will read a brief introduction and an outline of the conversation. You will then have 20 seconds to record your part in each conversational exchange.

2. Get ready to speak You will have 1 minute to preview the conversation. You will then have:

- 5 opportunities to speak. You must respond to what the other person says.
- 20 seconds per response. You must fill the whole 20 seconds.

3. Read the *Tema curricular* and the introduction Make sure you have a clear understanding of who will be talking and what the conversation will be about.

- Underline or circle key words and jot down ideas to help guide and focus your thought process once the conversation begins.
- Pay attention to cultural references and respond or comment as appropriate.

4. Preview the outline The outline will give you specific details about what your role in the conversation will be. As you read the prompts, start to visualize the conversation.

- Where and when is the conversation taking place?
- With whom are you speaking, and what is your relationship to him or her?

5. Use prior knowledge Your prior knowledge of the topic and of any vocabulary associated with it will help you speak with greater fluidity and accuracy.

6. Determine the appropriate register The introductory text will provide the key to which register you should use. Make sure you understand the context of the conversation and with whom you will be talking.

- A conversation with a teacher, an unknown adult, or an authority figure will require a more formal register.
- A conversation with a friend, classmate, or someone your own age allows for a more informal register.

7. Learn the prompts Become familiar with prompting verbs so you can respond as directed. Common terms are:

acepta	finaliza	pregunta
aconseja	haz	propón
cuenta	incluye	reacciona
describe	insiste	recomienda
despide de	menciona	saluda
explica	ofrece	sugiere
expresa	pide	trata de

8. Listen carefully As the conversation begins, listen carefully to each prompt, statement, or question. Even if you don't understand every word, make sure you get the general idea so you can formulate appropriate responses.

9. Speak for at least 20 seconds Make sure to fill the time allotted for each one of your exchanges.

- Using "filler" phrases and words is normal in conversation in any language.
- You can repeat or rephrase something you have said before, if appropriate.
- In order to clarify your understanding, you can paraphrase, or repeat in different words, what the other person has said or asked.

10. Respond to every prompt Always say something when prompted. Do not allow long pauses in your responses or leave any "blanks."

11. Learn how to stall Make sure to memorize language to indicate you are thinking, such as *Déjeme pensarlo un momento*, or other language used for stalling.

12. Answer completely Respond as fully as possible in accordance with the prompt provided. Make sure to answer the question and to comment or react to what is said.

13. Vary your language Use a variety of words and expressions when responding to prompts, even if those expressions are equivalent or have similar meanings. Variety reflects fluency.

- Concentrate on using rich vocabulary and culturally-appropriate idiomatic expressions.
- Avoid overuse of elementary, common vocabulary. "Reach outside the box" to impress the listener or scorer.

14. Correct your errors If you notice you have made an error as you speak, correct it by rephrasing your response.

15. Clarify your meaning In a conversation, it is acceptable to repeat an idea in order to clarify its meaning. If you are trying to communicate a complex idea, you can express it more than once in different ways to ensure understanding.

16. Focus on language The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate your knowledge and command of the language, not your knowledge of a specific topic.

- In your responses, you are free to tell fictional stories or state as factual events that never happened. Be creative.
- Make sure that, whatever the content of your reply, you use proper grammar, an appropriate register, and adequate modes of address.

17. Stay on topic Do not push the conversation in a different direction or introduce unprompted topics. Staying on topic will demonstrate your understanding.

18. Use a loud and clear voice The point of participating in a conversation is to be heard and understood. Make sure to always enunciate clearly and to speak in an audible voice.

19. Practice recording yourself Don't be caught off-guard. Use activities in this book to practice recording your part in the conversations.

20. Memorize the direction lines!