

## Exam technique: Fluency

**Exam tip:** Fluency, together with coherence, makes up a quarter of your mark. The examiners will judge you to be 'fluent' if you:

- speak continuously – that is, you do not leave big pauses or hesitate too often
- speak at a good rate – that is, not too slowly.

Improving fluency takes time. The most important thing is to **speak as much as possible**. Doing all the speaking activities in this book will certainly make you more fluent. Here are some other ideas:

- Having good pronunciation improves your fluency because it allows you to speak more quickly without making you unclear. The pronunciation of single sounds and single words, word and sentence stress, and connected speech are all crucial. Study the pronunciation points in this book carefully.
- Having a wide-ranging vocabulary allows you to be more fluent because you do not have to hesitate, trying to find the right word. Having good grammar has a similar effect. If your grammar and vocabulary are good, you can focus more on your ideas.
- Find out if there is an English conversation class in your local area. If one exists, join it. Speaking English regularly, and in front of other people, will improve your confidence as well as your grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and, of course, your fluency.
- Meet up with an English-speaking friend and study this book with them. In addition, agree that for one hour every week you will speak only in English. Be strict with yourselves: do not speak even one word of your mother tongue or any other language, and do not consult your dictionaries. This will force you to express yourself in English even if it is sometimes difficult.
- As you do daily tasks, talk to yourself in English (aloud or in your head). Think, *How do you say that in English?* This will give you extra practice in thinking in English, and will make speaking it less of an effort. The examiner will also judge how much *effort* it takes you to speak in English. If you seem to be unpractised at using English to express yourself, you will not score well for fluency.

Fluency is largely a matter of **confidence**. A confident speaker is more fluent because they are less self-conscious. Practising speaking English will make you more confident. In addition, think about your **body language** and ensure you *look* confident:

- Smile when you first meet the examiner and when you introduce yourself.
- Look the examiner in the eye as you speak. Do not look down.
- Do not sit with your arms crossed as this will make you look defensive and nervous.
- Do not fidget.
- Ask a friend to interview you. Do they think you appear confident and relaxed? Why or why not?