

Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE)

Guide for Teachers

Grade 7 | SELT B2



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About Trinity College London

Trinity College London, established in 1872, is a leading internationally recognised awarding organisation (exam board), publisher and independent education charity. We specialise in the assessment of communicative and performance skills covering music, drama, combined arts and English language. With over 850,000 candidates a year in more than 60 countries worldwide, Trinity qualifications are specifically designed to help people progress. We inspire teachers and learners through the creation of assessments that are enjoyable to prepare for, rewarding to teach and that develop the skills needed in real life.

At the heart of Trinity's work is the belief that effective communicative and performance skills are life enhancing, know no boundaries and should be within reach of us all. We exist to promote and foster the best possible communicative and performance skills through assessment, content and training that is innovative, personal and authentic.

Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE)

Trinity's Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE) are designed for all learners of English. There are 12 grades in total, providing a continuous measure of linguistic competence from absolute beginner (Grade 1) to full mastery (Grade 12). This represents progression on the CEFR (2020) from Level pre-A1 through to Level C2. There is a Graded Examination of Spoken English exam appropriate for every learner, regardless of their ability to communicate in English. GESE may be taken as a formal proficiency test and also serves to complement general English language courses by evidencing progression across levels.

GESE SELT

A SELT is a Secure English Language Test. Candidates take SELT tests to get a family visa, work visa or study visa to be able to live in the UK. Candidates take GESE SELT at Grade 2 (SELT A1), Grade 3 (SELT A2), Grade 5 (SELT B1) and Grade 7 (SELT B2).

The Trinity approach: A personalised exam experience

The GESE suite represents a contemporary approach to assessment that recognises a candidate's abilities in the interpersonal and presentational modes of communication. GESE focuses on performance and each exam assesses the candidate's communicative competences – both in spoken production and interaction – along with their interactive listening skills. Preparation for GESE exams is intended to develop authentic communicative skills and build learner confidence in using English for real-life communication.

The exam is a responsive test design rather than a predetermined scripted experience. The various phases in each exam are designed to honour the candidate's contributions and offer appropriate scaffolding depending on their individual needs so that each candidate can perform at their best. The exam balances rigour, expressed in the graded communicative skills and language of the grade, with authenticity which allows candidates to express their identity and have some agency over the process. This approach is reflected in the phases where, depending on the level, candidates are given opportunities to shape the discourse and express their opinions freely, to present topics that connect with their lives, cultures and experiences and to engage in an authentic exchange of ideas to resolve problems.

Resources

This guide is intended to support teachers by giving a detailed description of Trinity's Graded Examinations in Spoken English (GESE) and guidance on preparation.

Please refer to these essential resources:

- ▶ [GESE Specifications](#), which gives information about the exams together with age and entry requirements and certificate information.
- ▶ [Sample exam videos](#).

GESE Exam Format Grade 7 (SELT B2)

The GESE exam format is a one-to-one conversation with a Trinity examiner. GESE exams are conducted face-to-face, either in person or via video conference. All Trinity examiners are trained, standardised and monitored regularly to ensure impartiality and consistent assessment. Depending on the grade, the test takes approximately five to 25 minutes to complete.

The 12 GESE grades are divided into four stages: Initial, Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced.

Each stage comprises three grades. The format, including corresponding CEFR levels, is shown below:

Initial Grades 1–3 pre-A1–A2.1 5–7 minutes	Elementary Grades 4–6 A2.2–B1.2 10 minutes	Intermediate Grades 7–9 B2.1–B2.3 15 minutes	Advanced Grades 10–12 C1–C2 25 minutes
			Topic presentation
			Topic discussion
		Topic	Interactive
	Topic	Interactive	Listening
Conversation	Conversation	Conversation	Conversation

The four stages are designed to provide a framework for teaching, learning and assessing candidates' language abilities and communicative skills. The stepped progression within each stage allows learners to demonstrate their increasing ability as they advance through the CEFR levels. For example, while Level B2 in the CEFR is a very broad band of ability, the stepped GESE Grades from 7 to 9 allow learners and teachers to acknowledge and certificate achievement as learners progress through this level.

The exam phases at Grade 7 (SELT B2)

Each graded exam consists of between one and five phases, depending on the stage. The number of phases and the linguistic challenge of the exam increase by stage and grade. This reflects the fact that, as learners make progress in their language learning, their linguistic range and skills develop. Therefore, different task types are needed to evidence the developments in their language proficiency. At Grade 7, there are three phases – the Topic phase, the Interactive phase and the Conversation phase.

The Topic phase

The purpose of the Topic phase is to assess a candidate's ability to demonstrate their linguistic competence by talking about a personally relevant topic they have had time to prepare for.

By selecting a topic of personal interest, the candidate can draw on their cultural background experiences to contribute actively to knowledge construction. It also means the candidate has a degree of control over the interaction, which can help reduce anxiety and allow them to feel more confident in their contributions.

- ▶ This phase is included from Grade 4 onwards and is the initial phase in the exam.
- ▶ Candidates prepare a topic in advance to discuss with the examiner. The candidate chooses the topic based on their interests and experiences. It gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their language abilities when they are given the time to prepare thoroughly, both in planning their topic and in anticipating typical questions.
- ▶ **Grades 4–6:** the candidate completes a topic form to help them structure and plan for their topic. The examiner uses this as a basis for the discussion.
- ▶ **Grades 7–9:** the candidate can bring in notes and materials to help them structure the discussion. Forms and notes are shared with the examiner but are not assessed. The examiner uses the notes to shape the ensuing conversation with the candidate.
- ▶ **Grades 10–12:** the candidate gives an uninterrupted topic presentation before opening a discussion with the examiner based on their chosen topic. This gives candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their command of the language in an uninterrupted and formal situation. Candidates are expected to present abstract concepts clearly and concisely over a series of connected long turns. The examiner asks the candidate questions relevant to the topic they presented.

The Interactive phase

The purpose of the Interactive phase is to assess candidates' ability to participate in a spontaneous and authentic exchange of information and opinions and to take control over and maintain an interaction.

- ▶ This phase is introduced from Grade 7 onwards.
- ▶ The phase begins with a prompt from the examiner, which describes a specific situation or issue that the candidate should address by asking the examiner questions and expressing their own opinions and ideas. The candidate is expected to initiate turns in the conversation and manage the direction of the interaction.
- ▶ The candidate is expected to demonstrate control over the use of relevant language functions and to do so in an integrated and meaningful way.
- ▶ The prompt, provided by Trinity, is not known to the candidate in advance and is designed to elicit sociolinguistic, strategic and linguistic skills.

The Conversation phase

The purpose of the Conversation phase is to assess a candidate's ability to participate in an exchange of information, ideas and opinions through authentic interaction and collaboration. In order to demonstrate their interactive competences, the candidate is expected to take some responsibility for maintaining and sustaining a conversation.

- ▶ This phase is common to all GESE grades.
- ▶ The phase is an informal discussion on two of the Subject Areas listed in the syllabus for each grade.
- ▶ **Grades 1–3:** exchanging basic personal information; discussing familiar topics.
- ▶ **Grades 4–11:** the Subject Areas are selected by the examiner.
- ▶ **Grade 12:** no list of Subject Areas. Candidates are expected to be able to discuss a wide range of topics, so the examiner selects two current affairs topics for discussion.
- ▶ The candidate is expected to take responsibility for initiating and maintaining the conversation appropriate to the grade.

Assessment

The candidate's performance in the exam is assessed using one overall criterion, task fulfilment. Task fulfilment measures competence in the following elements:

- ▶ grade-specific communicative skills
- ▶ grade-specific functions
- ▶ grade-specific recommended grammar, lexis and phonology
- ▶ appropriateness in the use of grammar, lexis and phonology
- ▶ fluency and promptness of responses appropriate for the grade.

Examiners use this criterion when assessing candidate performance on each phase in the exam. The examiner assesses the candidate's performance in each phase of the exam by awarding a letter grade A, B, C or D. The combination of all letter grades, ie the letter grade for each phase, provides the overall level of achievement.

Grade-specific performance at each letter grade can be described as follows:

A – Distinction (reflects an excellent performance)

B – Merit (reflects a good performance)

C – Pass (reflects a satisfactory performance)

D – Fail (reflects an unsatisfactory performance).

To be awarded an 'A', a candidate must demonstrate overall excellent ability for the grade. For example, the candidate may use a wide range of grade-specific lexis with accuracy and/or engage in spontaneous discussion about their topic.

To be awarded a 'B', a candidate must perform well at the grade. For example, the candidate may provide clear information about their topic but make some errors in complex language.

To be awarded a 'C', a candidate must meet the requirements of the grade. For example, a candidate may provide brief information about their topic but may need support from the examiner to answer questions appropriately.

To be awarded a 'D', a candidate must fail to meet the requirements of the grade. For example, the candidate may struggle to present their topic, producing little or no meaningful speech, and fail to use appropriate grammatical structures and lexis to express the functions of the grade.

For further information on how GESE is assessed, please refer to the [GESE Specifications](#).

GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2)

Candidate profile

The candidate can:

- ▶ understand complex and extended speech used in the discussion of reasonably familiar subjects
- ▶ communicate with some spontaneity and engage in extended conversation by giving clear descriptions and expressing and explaining views on most general subjects
- ▶ initiate, maintain and end the discourse with effective turn-taking
- ▶ demonstrate a sufficient range of language to produce stretches of discourse, using some complex sentence forms and without much searching for words, while correcting most of his or her mistakes.

This profile is based on the level B2, Independent User, on the Common European Framework of Reference.

GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2) exam format

	Assessed	Not assessed
1 Greetings and setting at ease		✓
2 Topic phase	✓	
3 Interactive phase	✓	
4 Conversation on two subject areas	✓	
5 End of conversation and leave-taking		✓

Overview of GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2)

The exam lasts up to 15 minutes.

- ▶ Topic phase (up to 5 minutes)
- ▶ Interactive phase (up to 4 minutes)
- ▶ Conversation phase (up to 5 minutes)

The Topic phase

Assessment purpose

The purpose of the Topic phase is to give the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to use the language of the grade while talking about a personally relevant topic.

The format

Before the exam, the candidate chooses and prepares a topic of his/her own choice. The topic is then used as a basis for the candidate-led discussion. The Topic discussion phase lasts no more than five minutes.

The Topic phase provides candidates with the opportunity to:

- ▶ talk about a topic from their lives, cultures and experiences
- ▶ understand and use the language functions of the grade
- ▶ develop explanations and descriptions
- ▶ participate in an authentic exchange of information and opinions on a topic of their choice.

Choosing the topic

A good choice of topic is very important. Candidates should make sure that:

1. it is of **personal interest**,
2. it allows them to use the **communicative skills of the grade** and
3. it allows them to use the **language of the grade**.

1. Personal interest

Candidates can choose any topic they like, but it is best to choose a topic that they are interested in and have some personal involvement with, for example, their career plans or extracurricular activities. Talking about a subject they are familiar with helps to increase their confidence and perform at their best.

Candidates should not choose their topic directly from the list of subject areas listed in the Conversation phase. However, they can talk about a personal aspect of one of the subject areas, for example:

	Subject area	Personal aspect
Grade 7	Education	A particular course or subject the candidate has studied

2. The communicative skills of the grade

Communication skills are very important in a conversation and this is reflected in all phases in the GESE exams. The candidates are expected to take part in the topic discussion by answering and asking questions about their chosen topic.

3. The language of the grade

When choosing a topic, make sure candidates look carefully at the language of the grade that they need to demonstrate using. It is important that the topic allows them to naturally use the functions, lexis and phonological features of the Grade as they talk and discuss. Candidates may use recommended grammatical structures as well as alternative forms.

Preparing the Topic

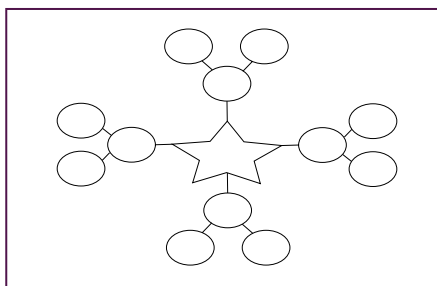
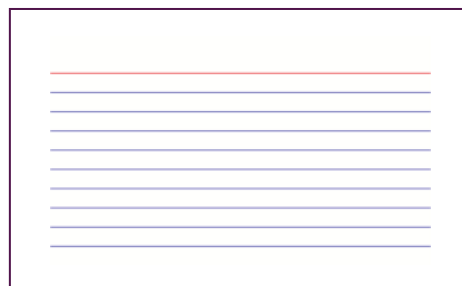
It is very important to prepare the topic before the exam. Candidates are advised to:

- plan and prepare the areas of the topic they would like to inform the examiner about and discuss
- prepare enough material to sustain a discussion of the topic for up to five minutes (but no more)
- make sure the topic allows them to use the communicative skills of the grade (for example, engaging the examiner in a discussion of the topic)
- make sure the topic allows them to use the functions and language requirements of the grade
- think of questions the examiner may ask, as well as questions they can ask the examiner.

Candidate notes to support the topic

Candidates should produce some brief notes to help them remember what they want to discuss with the examiner in the Topic task. The notes will also help the candidate and examiner to make relevant contributions. Candidates should bring their notes to the exam room and give a copy to the examiner. The notes do not form part of the assessment.

Candidates can present their notes in a variety of ways. Some ideas are given below:



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When using notes, advise candidates:

- not to include too much information – write down only key words and phrases, not paragraphs of text
- to include any quotes, statistics or lists that are needed
- to use pictures, diagrams and visual aids to help the candidate remember what they want to say
- to practise speaking from notes.

Recitation

Candidates must not prepare their topic as a written script to memorise and recite. Remember that the topic discussion is a conversation between the examiner and candidate, not a monologue.

Please note that if a candidate recites information on a topic:

- it is clear to the examiner that it is not natural spoken English
- it can make a candidate nervous as they try to remember what to say

- ▶ the intonation and speed of speaking are different
- ▶ the examiner will gently interrupt the candidate
- ▶ it is taken into account in the assessment.

Exam procedure

- ▶ The examiner invites the candidate to introduce his/her topic by saying:

We'll start with the topic. What are we going to talk about?

- ▶ The examiner will ask for a copy of the candidate's notes.
- ▶ The candidate initiates the discussion by giving information on their topic.
- ▶ The discussion is led by the candidate. He/She provides most of the input in the form of long turns.
- ▶ The candidate needs to engage the examiner in the discussion, ask and answer questions, handle interruptions and respond to requests for clarification.
- ▶ After five minutes, the examiner will end the Topic phase by saying:

Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Interactive phase.

The Interactive phase

Assessment purpose

The purpose of the Interactive phase is for the candidate to demonstrate their ability to control and maintain an interaction based on an exchange of ideas and problem solving.

The format

The examiner provides an oral prompt to the candidate. The candidate responds by asking questions to find out more information and making comments. Once the examiner has set up the situation, it is the candidate's responsibility to maintain the interaction. The interaction takes the form of multiple turns, with the examiner's turns being shorter than those of the candidate. The discussion may involve some role-play, but the candidate is free to be themselves. The Interactive phase lasts up to four minutes.

The Interactive phase provides candidates with the opportunity to:

- ▶ demonstrate their independence as users of English
- ▶ understand and use the language functions of the grade
- ▶ take control over and maintain an interaction
- ▶ participate in an authentic exchange of information and opinions.

Preparing for the Interactive phase

Candidates are advised to:

- ▶ practise different question forms and techniques
- ▶ learn how to express the language functions of the grade in a variety of ways
- ▶ develop strategies to maintain a conversation
- ▶ practise taking the initiative and controlling the direction of a conversation
- ▶ hold conversations which allow them to use language functions of the grade.

In this phase, the candidate's ability to use the functional language of the grade is more important than grammatical accuracy.

Strategies for the Interactive phase

Do	Don't
Ask the examiner to repeat the prompt if necessary	Interrupt the examiner when he/she is reading the prompt
Ask questions to find out more about the situation	Immediately make comments before asking questions
Ask questions and make comments about the whole situation	Ask questions and make comments about one small part of the prompt
Use multiple, longer turns	Use short questions and comments
Focus on the language functions of the grade	Focus on the grammar of the grade
Engage the examiner by inviting opinions and comments	Provide a four-minute monologue response to the prompt

Exam procedure

- ▶ The examiner introduces the Interactive phase by saying:

For the next part, I'll tell you something. Then you have to ask me questions to find out more information and make comments. You need to keep the conversation going. After four minutes, I'll end the conversation. Are you ready?

- ▶ The examiner provides the candidate with an oral prompt.
- ▶ The candidate may ask the examiner to repeat the oral prompt if necessary.
- ▶ The candidate responds to the prompt by asking questions to find out more information and making comments.
- ▶ The candidate controls and maintains the interaction. If he/she does not, the task will not last the full four minutes.
- ▶ After four minutes, the examiner will end the Interactive task by saying:

Thank you. Now we'll move on to the Conversation phase.

The Conversation phase

Assessment purpose

The purpose of the Conversation phase is for the candidate to participate in a collaborative exchange of information, ideas and opinions while using the language of the grade. It is not a formal question and answer interview.

The format

The Conversation phase consists of a discussion of two subject areas listed for the grade and chosen by the examiner. The Conversation phase lasts up to five minutes.

The Conversation phase provides candidates with the opportunity to:

- ▶ exchange information, ideas and opinions with the examiner
- ▶ take more responsibility for maintaining and sustaining a conversation
- ▶ display their ability to use the communicative skills and language of the grade.

Preparing for the Conversation phase

Candidates are advised to:

- ▶ prepare to talk about all the subject areas listed for the grade
- ▶ develop strategies to maintain a conversation
- ▶ practise using the communicative skills of the grade
- ▶ practise using the language functions and items of the grade
- ▶ think of questions the examiner may ask, as well as questions they can ask the examiner.

Please note candidates should not recite information they have learnt about the subject areas (see [guidance notes](#)).

Exam procedure

- ▶ The examiner chooses one subject area listed for the grade and says:

Let's talk about...

- ▶ The candidate and examiner exchange ideas, opinions and information about the subject area. After approximately 2–2.5 minutes the examiner changes the subject for discussion by saying:

Thank you. Now let's talk about...

- ▶ The candidate and examiner exchange ideas, opinions and information about the second subject area. After about 2–2.5 minutes the examiner brings the Conversation phase and the exam to an end.

GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2)

Communicative skills and Language

At Grade 7 (SELT B2), candidates are independent communicators in English. They can start and maintain a conversation in English and are able to ask questions and exchange opinions on a range of subjects.

The Grade 7 (SELT B2) exam is a stimulating and interactive experience. The examiner and candidate have real conversations and discussions, where they listen and respond to each other's questions, ideas and opinions and requests for clarification.

Communicative skills

In the Topic phase

- ▶ Show understanding by responding appropriately to the examiner
- ▶ Communicate a variety of facts, ideas and opinions, and account for these, about a chosen topic linked across a series of extended turns
- ▶ Engage the examiner in discussion of the topic
- ▶ Be prepared to ask and answer questions about the content of the topic
- ▶ Handle interruptions or requests for clarification throughout the discussion of the topic

In the Interactive phase

- ▶ Take control of the interaction
- ▶ Maintain the discourse by asking for information and making comments
- ▶ Help the discussion along by inviting comment from the examiner
- ▶ Take and give up turns when appropriate to do so
- ▶ Where appropriate to the individual task, make use of the [language functions](#)

In the Conversation phase

- ▶ Show understanding by responding appropriately to the examiner
- ▶ Share responsibility for the maintenance of the interaction with the examiner
- ▶ In case of a breakdown in communication, show awareness and take basic steps to remedy it

Language of the grade

Functions

- ▶ Giving advice and highlighting advantages and disadvantages
- ▶ Making suggestions
- ▶ Describing past habits
- ▶ Expressing possibility and uncertainty
- ▶ Eliciting further information and expansion of ideas and opinions
- ▶ Expressing agreement and disagreement

Recommended grammar

- ▶ Second conditional
- ▶ Simple passive
- ▶ *Used to*
- ▶ Relative clauses
- ▶ Modals and phrases used to give advice and make suggestions, eg *should/ought to, could, you'd better*
- ▶ Modals and phrases used to express possibility and uncertainty, eg *may, might, I'm not sure*
- ▶ Discourse connectors, eg *because of, due to*

Lexis

- ▶ Vocabulary specific to the topic area
- ▶ Vocabulary specific to the subject areas
- ▶ Appropriate words and expressions to indicate interest and show awareness of the speaker, eg *Really? Oh dear! Did you?*
- ▶ Simple fillers to give time for thought, eg *well..., um...*
- ▶ Phrases and expressions relating to the language functions listed above

Phonology

- ▶ The clear pronunciation of vocabulary specific to the topic and subject areas
- ▶ Rising intonation to indicate interest and surprise as appropriate
- ▶ Falling intonation to indicate the end of a turn
- ▶ Intonation and features of connected speech beyond sentence level

Subject areas for the Conversation phase

Two subject areas will be selected by the examiner from the list below:

- ▶ Education
- ▶ National customs
- ▶ Village and city life
- ▶ National and local produce and products
- ▶ Early memories
- ▶ Pollution and recycling

Please note Grade 7 candidates should not select their topic directly from the list of subject areas above (see [guidance notes](#)).

GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2)

Suggested classroom activities

The suggested classroom activities provided in this section are designed to demonstrate how teachers can prepare students for a GESE Grade 7 (SELT B2) exam.

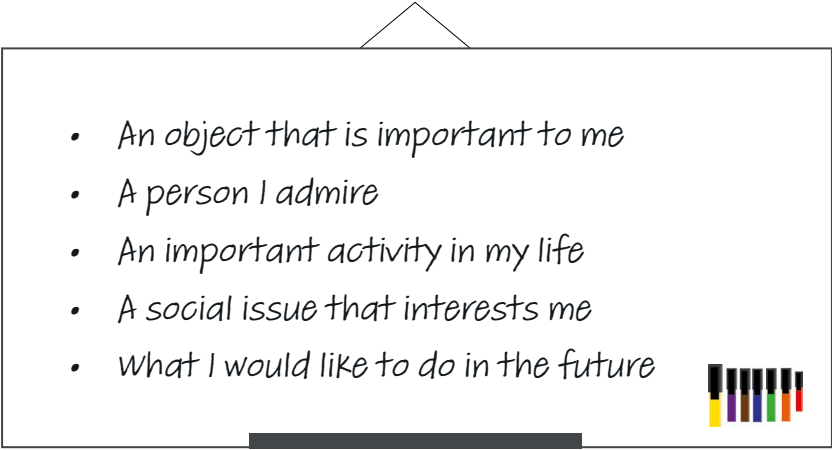
Please note the suggestions given in this guide are only examples of some of the many ways of practising for the real exam. The suggestions are not models to be memorised. Examiners will use a range of methods and questions to help the candidates demonstrate the language of Grade 7.

Choosing a topic

It is important for candidates to choose a topic of personal interest that allows them to demonstrate using Grade 7 communicative skills and language.

Activity 1 Thinking of ideas for the topic

- ▶ Show your students some objects or large pictures of things that interest you, for example, a person you admire, a place that is important to you, a personal achievement.
- ▶ In pairs or small groups, ask students to come up with questions they would like to ask you about the objects or pictures.
- ▶ Invite students to ask you questions about the objects or pictures.
- ▶ Ask students to think about at least five topics that they are interested in. You can write some ideas on the board to help them get started, as shown below:

- 
- *An object that is important to me*
 - *A person I admire*
 - *An important activity in my life*
 - *A social issue that interests me*
 - *What I would like to do in the future*



- ▶ In pairs or small groups, students ask each other questions about their own topic ideas.

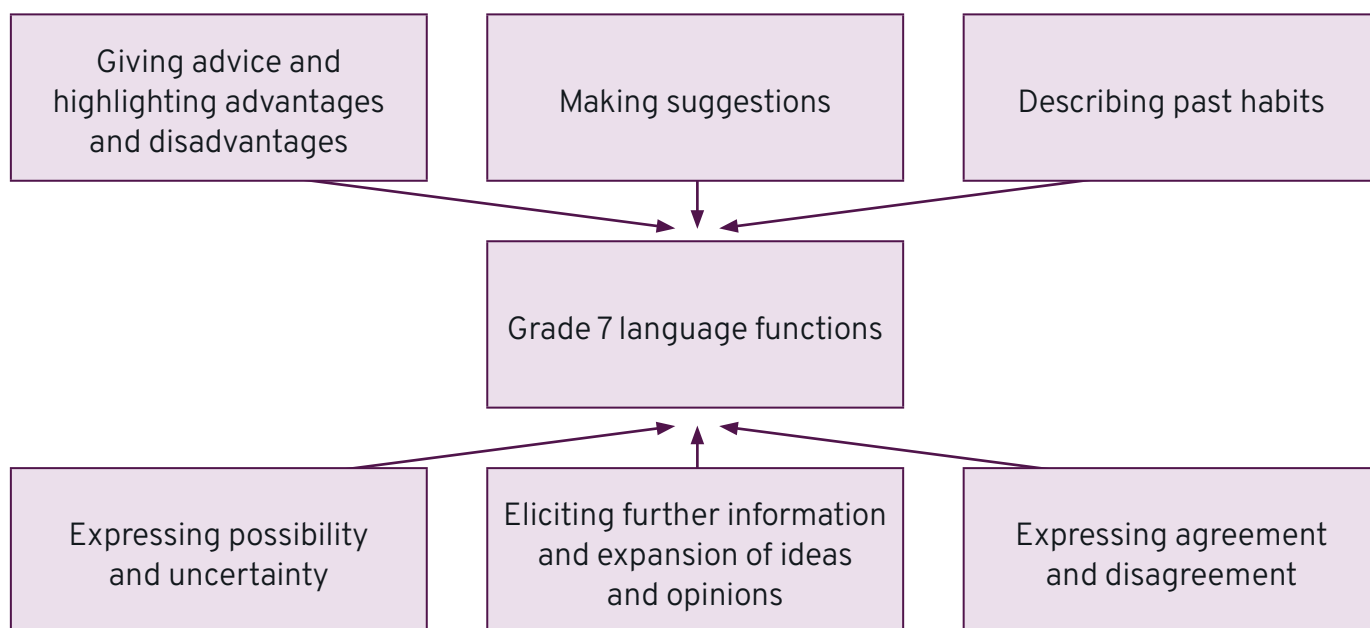
Activity 2 Deciding on the topic

- ▶ After thinking of ideas in Activity 1, your students will have lots of topic ideas, but they only need one for the exam.
- ▶ Trinity recommends that candidates choose a topic that they are personally interested in, knowledgeable about and able to talk about. The topic should not be chosen directly from the list of subject areas for the Conversation phase (see [guidance notes](#)).
- ▶ In order to choose the best topic, tell students to answer the questions below.
- ▶ Students reject the topic ideas which are unsuitable. Give your students some time to choose the best topic for them.

1. Do I enjoy talking about this topic?
2. Am I enthusiastic about this topic?
3. Will the topic be interesting for me?
4. Will the topic be interesting for the examiner?
5. Is the topic of personal interest to me?
6. Is the topic exactly the same as one of the subject areas for conversation?
7. Do I really know anything about this topic?
8. Can I find out anything about this topic?
9. Is the topic too complicated or technical?
10. Is the topic too simple?

Activity 3 Using Grade 7 language functions

- Present students with the language functions for Grade 7 using a diagram like this:



- In pairs or small groups, students suggest language related to the functions. Here are some ideas:

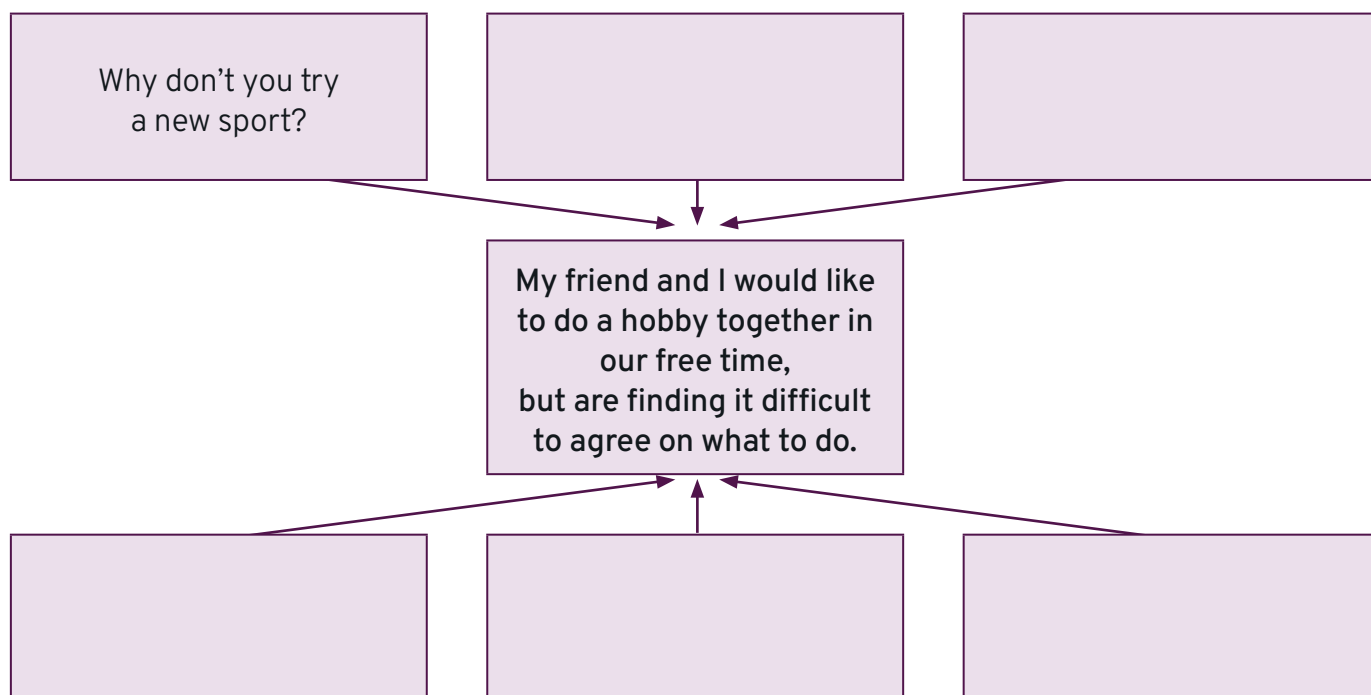
Giving advice and highlighting advantages and disadvantages	You should... If I were you... On the one hand/on the other hand...
Making suggestions	Why don't you...? Have you thought about...?
Describing past habits	What did you use to...? I used to/I would...
Expressing possibility and uncertainty	That might be a good idea. That might help. I'm not sure about that.
Eliciting further information and expansion of ideas and opinions	Can you tell me more about...? What's your opinion on...?
Expressing agreement and disagreement	That's true/I see what you mean. I'm not sure that's right/I'm not sure that I agree.

- Students share their ideas with the class.

Practising the interactive phase

Activity 4 Looking at sample Interactive prompts

- Draw a mind map on the board. Write an example Interactive prompt in the middle of the mind map.
- Ask students what questions they could ask and what comments they could make based on the Grade 7 language functions. The first one is an example.



- In pairs or small groups, students draw their own mind maps for the example Interactive prompts below:

About six months ago, some new neighbours moved in next door to us. They're very friendly, but we've had a few problems and I'm not sure what to do.

I've always been on holiday with my family and friends, but now I'm thinking of going by myself.

It's my nephew's seventh birthday next week and he's asked for a mobile phone. I'm not sure if this is a good idea.

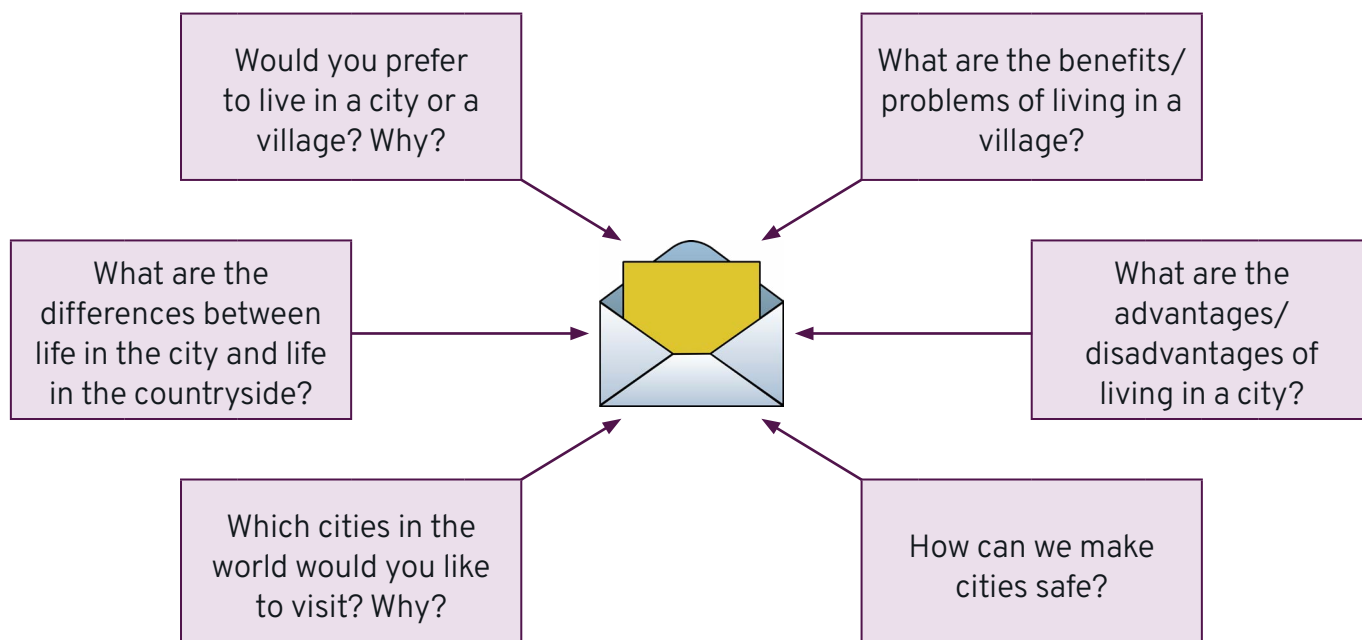
- Students share their ideas with the class.

More sample Grade 7 Interactive prompts can be found at trinitycollege.com/qualifications/SELT.

Practising the Conversation phase

Activity 5 Discussion envelopes for the Conversation phase

- Prepare some envelopes with different discussion questions inside them for each of the Grade 7 conversation subject areas. Here are some examples for 'Village and city life':



- Divide the class into small groups.
- Each group selects an envelope. They work through the discussion questions in their groups, taking it in turns to read the questions out loud and inviting comments and opinions.
- Repeat the activity. Each group chooses a new envelope and topic.