Interpersonal Speaking

The AP Spanish Exam has an Interpersonal Speaking section. The Interpersonal Speaking section is designed for you to participate in simulated conversation.

Text directions will be provided in English and Spanish. Below the directions, there are two items – (a) and (b). The first one will describe the context of the conversation. The second one is the script outline for the conversation. You will have 30 seconds to read the script outline. You will then hear a message, followed by one more minute to review the script.

After the one minute has passed, the conversation will start and continue without any pauses. For each part of the conversation there is a very general description of the kind of information or response that is appropriate. After each time the other person speaks, you will hear a beep, and then 20 seconds of silence for you to record your response. There will be five or six places for you to participate in the conversation. You might be asked to initiate the conversation in response to a stimulus, such as a telephone ringing, a knock at a door, or entering a room.

Suggestions

1. The conversations will allow for a wide range of appropriate responses; there is not only one correct answer in any case. It will be helpful to memorize a set of expressions that are common in conversations at different points.

For example, if you are asked to give a greeting, you should know a number of greetings appropriate for different situations. If you are greeting a friend on the phone, you could simply say Oye, ¿qué pasa?. If you are greeting the director of a university admissions department, it would be more appropriate to say something like Encantado de conocerlo. Choose an appropriate response for the conditions given.

If you are to end the conversation, choose an appropriate phrase as well. Hasta luego would be fine for talking to a classmate, but other circumstances might require a more polite phrase, such as Ha sido un placer, or Le agradezco mucho los consejos.

2. Common open-ended prompts to practice responses for include:
   - Express reaction to an idea
   - Issue an invitation
   - Make a suggestion
   - Ask a question for clarification or additional information
   - Make an observation about a familiar topic

3. In a normal conversation, some pauses are acceptable. However, long pauses while you translate from English to Spanish are going to be obvious. To maintain a natural flow, think
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ahead. Since you only have 20 seconds to respond, you won’t have time to write full sentences down. If you need to, you can use expressions like A ver… or Bueno, pues… to buy a little time to formulate a response and still sound natural.

4. When you look at the script before the conversation, make some quick mental notes about the following:
   - Where does this conversation take place?
   - Who am I talking to?
   - What is the main topic?
   - What kind of information do I need to supply in the conversation?

Sometimes a prompt says something like (Hágale una pregunta.) This seems open ended, but you may have to look deeper in the conversation to see that you should be asking for, say, directions to your hotel, for example. A handful of mental notes that set the scene can go a long way, since you will only have to speak five or six times during the conversation.

5. Once you know how to begin and end conversations naturally (a few formal and informal greetings and closings), you can focus on the middle of the conversation. The topics are generally about things that every teenager might have in common, so you can anticipate a few possible topics if you think about your own experiences and possible experiences of people you know. Sample topics to think about include:
   - A friend left you a message and wants you to call back
   - You get lost while traveling and need to ask for directions
   - You visit a university that you are considering attending
   - You move to a new school and need to make new friends
   - You are applying for a summer job
   - You interview someone for an article in the school paper
   - You call a friend to discuss plans on a class project you’re working on together
   - You are buying something at the mall
   - You are a waiter/waitress at a restaurant attending to a client / customer
   - You feel sick and call the doctor’s office for an appointment
   - You talk with a friend after an exciting sporting event

6. Here are some general strategies for success during the Informal Speaking section:
   - Read the outline carefully (especially point (a) for context) and take a few mental notes.
   - Do not waste time reviewing the directions. You should know them by heart. This will give you extra time to review the outline or prepare mental notes.
   - Decide immediately whether you are going to use Tú or Usted in the conversation.
   - Jot down only a few words you might want to use next to the prompts in the test booklet. For example, if the prompt tells you to ask a question, and you see in the outline that you should be asking for directions, you could write ¿Dónde está? Next to the prompt to remind yourself what kind of question to ask.
• Try to visualize the person you are to have a conversation with.
• If you don’t understand a sentence you hear, pick a word that you did understand and talk about it. Try to make it fit into the context of the conversation.
• Rephrase a sentence if you get stuck.
• Use as much of the 20 seconds you can. Don’t leave long pauses. Providing details and specifics is great, even if the prompts are very basic.
• Correct yourself if you realize that you have made a mistake.
• Relax, don’t be in a rush, and say something. If you say nothing, there will be nothing to evaluate.

Interpersonal Speaking Example

Directions: You will now take part in a conversation. First, you will have 30 seconds to read the script for both parts. The conversation will begin and will follow the script. When the speaker finishes, you will hear a tone and then have 20 seconds to respond. The tone will sound at the end of 20 seconds, indicating that you should end speaking and listen to the next part. You should engage in the conversation as much as possible.

1. You now have 30 seconds to review the script for both parts.

Imagine que Usted trabaja en un restaurante. Una cliente entra para cenar. Parece que es la primera vez que esta persona ha venido a este restaurante.

(a) La cliente que entra es una mujer vestida de manera formal. Parece ser muy simpática.
(b) Usted es el mesero que debe servirle. Usted inicia la conversación cuando ella se sienta a la mesa.

Ud.: (Se dirige apropiadamente a la cliente.)
(Le hace una pregunta.)
Cliente: (Responde.)
(Pide más información.)
Ud.: (Responde.)
(Le hace otra pregunta.)
Cliente: (Le pide información.)
Ud.: (Nombra unos platos.)
Cliente: (Le pide a Ud. una sugerencia.)
Ud.: (Sugiere uno de los platos que acaba de mencionar.)
Cliente: (Acepta su sugerencia.)
(Le hace una pregunta.)
Ud.: (Le nombra la selección.)
Cliente: (Completa su selección.)
Ud.: (Termina la conversación.)
Sample Conversation Responses

Ud.: Buenas noches, señora. Me llamo Jorge y estoy aquí para servirle. ¿Querría usted algo de beber?
Clienta: Buenas noches. Sí, un vaso de agua, por favor.
Ud.: Puedo ver el menú?
Clienta: Claro. Aquí lo tiene. Puedo darle a usted unos minutos para decidir, si prefiere. ¿Necesita unos minutos?
Ud.: Las especialidades hoy son: paella con mariscos, ensalada de atún, y jamón.
Clienta: Todo me parece muy bueno. ¿Qué sugiere usted?
Ud.: La ensalada de atún es muy rica. Es nuestro plato más famoso.
Clienta: Sí, creo que eso me apetece mucho. ¿Hay sopa también?
Ud.: Sí, hoy tenemos sopa de garbanzos.
Clienta: Entonces quiero la sopa también. Gracias.
Ud.: De nada. Volveré pronto con su ensalada y sopa. Ávíseme si usted necesita algo más.

Notes

1. After looking over the outline, it is clear that you should use Usted to address the client.
2. Since the woman is coming in to eat dinner, it is clear that you could use buenas noches, rather than buenos días or buenas tardes to greet her.
3. Quick thoughts about foods could have been jotted down next to the prompts about naming plates or offering suggestions.
4. While you can’t tell exactly which questions the client is going to ask before you hear the audio, you can try to visualize yourself in the situation, and then most questions and answers will seem more natural. For example, even though the script says that the client will ask for information after she greets you, you can imagine that it has something to do with her possible order, so you should expect questions about drinks, menu items, and your suggestions.