

Respond to a Situation



Length of situation description:
3–4 sentences

Preparation time: 10 seconds

Time to give response: 40 seconds

Type of recording: description of a situation

Number of these tasks in each test: 2–3

Respond to a Situation tasks test your ability to use functional language appropriate to the context and situation.

- You will see instructions, a description of a situation, an audio status box and a recording status box.
- You will hear the description of the situation read out, so you can listen and read at the same time.
- You will have ten seconds to prepare before you have to start talking.
- This task tests your Speaking skills.



RESPOND TO A SITUATION

1. The timer shows the time left for all tasks in this part of the test.
2. Read the instructions.
3. The audio status box counts down from 15 seconds to zero. Then the recording starts to play.
4. Read and listen to the description of the situation.
5. After the beep, the recording status box changes to 'Recording'. Start speaking when the bar begins moving. When the bar reaches the end, the microphone switches off and the recording status box changes to 'Completed'.
6. Click 'Next' to go to the next task as soon as you've finished speaking.

PTE Academic - Candidate Name

1 Time Remaining 00:29:59
1 of 2 (186786.2)

Listen and read a description of a situation. You have 10 seconds to think about your answer. Then you will hear a beep. You will have 40 seconds to answer the question. Please answer as completely as you can.

2

4 You booked a meeting room at the library from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. to work on a group project. Now it's just after 2 p.m. and your classmates will arrive soon but some other students are sitting in the meeting room. What would you say to them?

3 00:00 Complete

5 00:03 Recording

6

Previous Next

Skills tested

› Speaking

- Using appropriate functional language, e.g. apologising, making a request, persuading, etc.
- Using appropriate register, e.g. formal or informal, depending on the situation
- Using appropriate words, phrases and grammar
- Speaking fluently at a natural speed with correct intonation
- Using clear pronunciation
- Using an appropriate tone for the situation

Points to remember: Speaking tasks

Some speaking tasks require you to use language appropriate to the situation or context it is used in. In some tasks you may need to decide whether you need to use more formal or less formal language. It's important to remember the register (formal or informal) of new words and grammar structures you learn, to make sure you use them appropriately.





Strategies for success > Before the test

RESPOND TO A SITUATION

1

INTRODUCTION

Start by addressing the person you would be speaking to in a direct way, e.g. *Hi, sorry to bother you, but ...*

2

STATE YOUR PURPOSE

Explain why you are talking. Use the context from the description of the situation, e.g. *I booked this room from two to three to work on a project with my classmates.*

3

GIVE DETAILS

Add details, which are not included in the description of the situation, to show you communicate effectively, e.g. *I saw on my way here that room 2 is free if you still need a room.*

4

CALL TO ACTION

Finish your response with a call to action (e.g. make a request, ask for advice, apologise, etc.), which the description of the situation requires, e.g. *Would you mind ...?*

5

TIME MANAGEMENT

Make sure your response is up to 40 seconds long.

> Practice tips

Generate ideas. Work with a friend to brainstorm situations and contexts in which you could ask for information, apologise, make requests, ask for advice, etc. Try to think of formal and informal contexts. What would you say in such situations?

Record yourself. Set a 40-second timer and record your answer. Check afterwards the structure, your pronunciation, intonation and rhythm and general fluency. Check that you have included all important information and additional details and are comfortable completing the task within the 40-second time limit.

Practise changing generic terms into specific examples as quickly as you can. The situation description will often include generic terms, like *group project* or *summer job*. In your response, you should change them to specific examples, e.g. *presentation on 19th century sculpture* or *lifeguard at a swimming pool* rather than repeat words from the description. To help you come up with ideas quickly, try spotting generic terms in any content you see and then quickly coming up with a specific example.

Practise functional language. Whenever you read somewhere or hear someone asking for information, apologising, making a suggestion, etc., try to think of a different way to say the same thing. This will help you remember better a wider variety of expressions.

> Language focus

Create useful functional language lists. Practise repeating those phrases as this will help you to quickly think of the right language to use for the situation.

- Make lists of language phrases for various purposes: asking for information, apologising, making suggestions, making requests, thanking, etc.
- Group the expressions on each language list under formal or informal.

Practise using synonyms. Your response will be better if you do not repeat word-for-word the words from the description of the situation.



Your score for this task

COMMUNICATIVE SKILLS

Listening

Reading

Speaking ✓

Writing

TRAITS SCORED

Content The response deals with the situation effectively, expanding beyond the prompt language to achieve the communicative goal.

Pronunciation Vowels and consonants are pronounced clearly and unambiguously. The speaker uses assimilation and linking correctly. The speaker uses correct word stress and sentence stress.

Oral fluency Speech shows smooth rhythm and phrasing.

Look out!

You will get a low score if you only respond with one sentence and not give the context of the situation or additional details.



> During the test

1 WHILE LISTENING AND READING

Identify who you are addressing, the key words and purpose.

- Decide whether you need to use formal or informal language. Who are you talking to: a fellow student, a lecturer, someone you know, someone you don't know?
- Identify the information that you should include in your response.
- Identify the purpose. Do you need to make a request, ask for information, give an apology and an explanation, etc.?

2 BEFORE RESPONDING TO THE SITUATION

Quickly think of the details you need to include.

Remember, there is some information you need to include that may not be written in the prompt. For example, the situation may require you to introduce yourself or give your contact details. Don't give your real details! Make them up. The situation description is also very generic and you need to add details to make it more specific.

There will be **a beep to indicate when the microphone activates**. Start speaking immediately after the beep.

3 WHILE RESPONDING TO THE SITUATION

Imagine the person you're speaking to. This will help you sound more natural.

Structure your response. (See page 50).

In your response:

- use language appropriate to the situation.
- address the key points from the situation description.
- add additional details, not included in the situation description, but relevant to the situation.
- clearly express your purpose.

Check the timer. Make sure you complete your response within 40 seconds.



RESPOND TO A SITUATION

Make sure you ...

✓ **only pause briefly.**

✗ Don't make long pauses.

✓ **use your own words.**

✗ Don't simply repeat the words from the situation description.

✓ **speak with a natural speed. It's fine to finish before the timer gets to zero.**

✗ Don't slow down just to fill the time.

✓ **ignore others in the room.**

✗ Don't let other people speaking distract you.

✓ **use natural pronunciation.**

✗ Don't exaggerate your pronunciation.

✓ **use natural pace and intonation.**

✗ Don't speak too fast or too slow or exaggerate your intonation.



Watch the *Respond to a Situation common mistakes* video for more tips and guidance on this task.

Practice > Respond to a Situation

Here is a sample *Respond to a Situation* question for you to practise.



Practise *Respond to a Situation 2* here if you want to try the task without a time limit. Think about the strategies on pages 50–51. Then follow the task instructions and record your response on your mobile phone or other device.



Find *Respond to a Situation 2* in the online **Question Bank** to complete it under timed conditions.

RESPOND TO A SITUATION

Respond to a Situation 2 Listen and read a description of a situation. You have 10 seconds to think about your answer. Then you will hear a beep. You will have 40 seconds to answer the question. Please answer as completely as you can.

You have applied for a summer job as a research assistant to your professor. You have not heard if your application was successful and need to check with your professor so that you can organise accommodation for the summer if necessary. You want to leave a phone message for your professor. What would you say?

> Reflecting on your practice

- 1 Play back and listen to your response. Use the checklist to decide what you did well and what you need to practise more. Set aside time to work on each area that you want to improve.

Respond to a Situation checklist

I can prepare a response in ten seconds.	<input type="radio"/>	I pronounced most words accurately.	<input type="radio"/>
I knew whether to use formal or informal language.	<input type="radio"/>	I spoke normally – not too loud, not too quiet, not too fast, not too slow.	<input type="radio"/>
I identified what information from the description I should include.	<input type="radio"/>	I didn't pause too much or for too long.	<input type="radio"/>
I knew what additional details I should include, which are not mentioned in the description.	<input type="radio"/>	I filled the time available and said everything I planned to say before the end.	<input type="radio"/>
I used appropriate intonation, rhythm and stress.	<input type="radio"/>		

- 2 **Respond to a Situation 2 model answer** Listen to a model answer for this task. Compare it to your own response. What are the differences? Are you happy with your response? What could you improve?



For more practice with *Respond to a Situation* tasks, go to the online **Question Bank**.



Go to the **Digital Resources** for extra study tools. See the Speaking resources for a *Respond to a Situation* **worksheet** as well as **Useful language for Speaking** and **sample answers and feedback**.