



The Oral Exam for the German Leaving Certificate

The oral exam constitutes 25% of the total marks at the higher level, amounting to 100 marks. It is designed to assess your spoken German skills and lasts approximately 15–20 minutes. The exam is divided into the following components:

1. **General Conversation**
2. **Picture Sequences**
3. **Project**
4. **Role Play**

General Conversation

This is the most critical part of the oral exam, accounting for 40 out of the 100 marks. To excel in this section, it is essential to prepare thoroughly for key topics such as school, your local area, hobbies, German culture, and future plans.

Here are some tips for success:

- Practice speaking about these topics fluently and naturally.
- Prepare and memorize a few colloquial phrases or sayings to make your responses more engaging.
- Familiarize yourself with how to ask the examiner to repeat or rephrase a question if needed—this shows confidence and composure.
- Be ready to discuss a German film or text, as this question is always included.

Picture Sequences

This section involves describing and narrating a story based on a set of images provided. You will:

- Be presented with a sequence of pictures (often depicting a storyline).
- Describe what is happening in each picture, demonstrating a good command of vocabulary and grammar.
- Answer follow-up questions related to the storyline, which may include hypothesizing about what happens next or explaining why certain actions occurred.

Preparation Tips:

- Practice with past exam picture sequences to familiarize yourself with the format.
 - Focus on using the past tense (e.g., Perfekt or Präteritum) and future tense when appropriate.
 - Expand your answers by adding details, such as emotions, actions, or surroundings, to showcase your fluency.
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Project

The project section allows you to present a topic of your choice. This can be a unique opportunity to discuss something you are passionate about, such as a hobby, a trip to Germany, a cultural aspect of German-speaking countries, or a research topic.

- The project typically lasts a few minutes, followed by questions from the examiner.
- Choose a topic you know well and can speak about confidently.
- Aim to include interesting facts or personal anecdotes to make your presentation engaging.

Preparation Tips:

- Write out and memorize key points for your project. Practice speaking naturally without sounding rehearsed.
 - Use a variety of sentence structures and vocabulary to demonstrate your language skills.
 - Be prepared to answer follow-up questions about your project, even those that might go beyond your prepared material.
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Role Play

The role play section tests your ability to interact in everyday scenarios in German. Common scenarios include:

- Booking a hotel room or making a reservation.
- Asking for directions.
- Shopping or ordering food at a restaurant.

What to Expect:

- The examiner will play the role of another person (e.g., a shopkeeper or a hotel receptionist).
- You will be required to respond appropriately to prompts, ask questions, and handle unexpected situations.

Preparation Tips:

- Practice common role-play scenarios using sample dialogues.

- Focus on polite and conversational language, such as greetings, requests, and expressions of gratitude.
 - Learn how to handle misunderstandings, such as asking someone to repeat or clarify something.
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Key Advice for Success

- **Don't Panic:** Feeling nervous is normal, but staying calm is crucial to performing well.
 - **Have a Backup Plan:** Build a solid bank of vocabulary and phrases to rely on in case you momentarily forget something.
 - **Learn from Mistakes:** Minor errors won't prevent you from achieving a high grade. The examiner understands that mistakes are part of the learning process.
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Important Tips to Remember

- Expand your answers: Avoid replying with just "yes" or "no." For instance, if asked whether you like German, take the opportunity to discuss what you enjoy doing in class or how you find the subject interesting.
 - Engage with the examiner: Show enthusiasm, provide thoughtful responses, and make the most of your preparation.
 - Prepare for all sections: Balance your preparation time across all parts of the exam to ensure consistent performance.
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Structure Recap

The oral exam is **worth 25% of your overall grade** (100 marks) and typically lasts **15–20 minutes**. It's divided into three main parts:

1. **Picture Sequences or Project (30 marks)**
 - Choose either a **picture sequence** or a **project** to present.
 - The **picture sequence** involves storytelling based on a series of images, requiring descriptive vocabulary and sequencing phrases.
 - The **project** is an individual presentation on a topic you've prepared in advance (e.g., a German-speaking city, a personal interest). You'll need to answer follow-up questions, so rehearse beyond just your script.
2. **Role Plays (30 marks)**
 - These are conversational scenarios, like ordering food, asking for directions, or dealing with a problem in a hotel.
 - Practice typical scenarios and pay attention to tone and politeness. For example, use **formal forms of address** (Sie) unless otherwise specified.
 - Be ready for follow-up questions, and don't panic if the examiner improvises slightly.

3. General Conversation (40 marks)

- This part covers everyday topics like school, hobbies, travel, and future plans.
 - You might also be asked about a **German film, book, or text** you've studied, so prepare to summarize and share your opinion.
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Key Phrases to Learn

Having a bank of useful phrases can save you if you get stuck. For example:

- **Wenn ich das richtig verstehe...** (If I understand that correctly...)
- **Könnten Sie die Frage bitte wiederholen?** (Could you repeat the question, please?)
- **Das habe ich nicht ganz verstanden. Können Sie es anders formulieren?** (I didn't quite understand that. Could you phrase it differently?)
- **Dazu habe ich keine Meinung, aber...** (I don't have an opinion on that, but...)

These show your willingness to engage and can help you stay calm in tricky moments.

Cultural Knowledge Helps

Incorporating cultural insights can make your answers stand out:

- Mention German festivals (e.g., **Oktoberfest, Karneval**) or traditions if relevant.
 - If asked about travel or preferences, refer to German-speaking cities or landmarks (e.g., **Berlin, Neuschwanstein Castle**).
 - Reference German food (e.g., **Bratwurst, Sauerkraut**) or music.
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Common Topics and Questions

Prepare answers for frequently asked questions:

1. **School Life**
 - What's your favorite subject and why?
 - How does the German school system compare to Ireland's?
2. **Hobbies**
 - What do you do in your free time?
 - How has technology changed hobbies?
3. **Future Plans**
 - What are your plans after school?
 - Do you plan to study or work abroad? Why or why not?
4. **German Connections**
 - Have you ever been to Germany? If so, what did you think?
 - What do you think of the German language or culture?

Pronunciation Matters

- Focus on getting the German “r” and vowel sounds correct. Pronunciation doesn’t have to be perfect, but clarity is key.
 - Practice the **intonation** of questions and statements. Speaking too monotonously can make it harder for the examiner to follow.
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Body Language and Confidence

- Smile, maintain eye contact, and use open body language. Confidence (even if faked!) creates a positive impression.
 - Don’t stress if you make small mistakes—they’re normal and won’t ruin your score. The examiner is there to help you, not trick you.
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Role Play Pro Tips

- Listen carefully to the examiner’s cues—they might throw in a surprise to test your improvisation.
 - Memorize key role-play phrases, like:
 - **Ich möchte bitte...** (I would like...)
 - **Können Sie mir helfen?** (Can you help me?)
 - **Wie viel kostet das?** (How much does that cost?)
 - **Entschuldigen Sie, wo ist...?** (Excuse me, where is...?)
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Film or Text Questions

If you’ve studied a German film or text, make sure you can:

- Summarize the plot or main ideas in a few sentences.
 - Talk about the characters and themes.
 - Share your opinion. For example:
 - **Ich finde den Film sehr interessant, weil...** (I find the film very interesting because...)
 - **Der Hauptcharakter hat mir gefallen, weil...** (I liked the main character because...)
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Exam Day Advice

- **Warm up your German!** Chat with classmates or recite a few phrases before your turn to get into the flow.
- If you freeze, take a deep breath and use filler phrases like “**Das ist eine gute Frage...**” (That’s a good question...) to buy time.
- The oral exam rewards fluency and effort over perfection. Focus on communicating clearly, engaging with the examiner, and showing enthusiasm for the language

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