

TIPS FOR ECC TEST EXAMINEES

PLEASE READ EVERYTHING IN THIS DOCUMENT. EACH OF THE ITEMS IS VITAL FOR YOUR PERFORMING YOUR BEST DURING THE ECC TEST.

Keep in mind the purpose and priorities of the test. **The ECC Test measures your ability to communicate in English with undergraduates in a classroom context; this particular speech act is called teaching speech.** Specifically, the ECC Test measures the following abilities:

1. Ability to speak fluent, comprehensible English (oral competence)
2. Ability to understand and answer questions (listening competence)
3. Ability to interact successfully in the performance context (i.e., teaching at university; interactional and strategic competence)
4. Ability to coherently and cohesively sequence language (discourse competence)

I. Planning for the Test

1. **Be realistic in the amount of material you can cover in 15 minutes.** If the topic provided by your department is very long and complicated, you may want to discuss only part of it.
2. **Plan and organize your material before your test time.** Even the most experienced teacher must organize a lesson's content beforehand. Decide the specific information you want to communicate and what will come first, second, etc.
3. **Do not spend a lot of time preparing visual aids. Powerpoints, Prezis, handouts and other visual aids are not permitted,** although you can draw succinct figures and key words/outlines on the board. You will have a few minutes before the beginning of your lesson to write any important information on the board, or you can write as you teach. The best way to prepare for this test is not to make complicated handouts, but to plan what you will say and practice presenting it clearly.
4. **Make simple, easy-to-read notes -** just a few cards or one piece of paper with large, clear writing are allowed. Your notes should remind you of your main points. **Do not write every word of your lesson on paper.** You can glance down quickly at your notes during the lesson, but **you should not be reading parts of your lesson.** *Avoid memorizing extensive chunks of your lesson material.* The panelists may interrupt you and ask you questions which will take you away from your planned material. If you practice and have helpful notes available, you can dialogue with the panelists and then smoothly transition back to your prepared lesson, just as a university teacher would. Questions and interruptions should be expected, and these allow the panel to assess your ability to spontaneously communicate.

5. **Design your lesson for beginner undergraduates, and assume your listeners have no prior knowledge of your field of study.** Remember that the purpose of this test is to see how well you can communicate in English with undergraduate students. Do not make your lesson overly complicated, and do not use this lesson as an opportunity to impress the faculty panelist. *Also, the panelists will not have read any materials provided with your topic. Those materials are to aid your preparation.*
6. **Prepare a lecture-based lesson. Do not try to create a discussion by asking the panelists many content-based questions or planning a classroom activity for them.** Because the purpose of this test is to evaluate your English communicative competence, the panel needs to hear you speak and interact. Although having students discuss with you or each other at length is an excellent teaching technique, the panel is not evaluating your teaching skills but your ability to communicate content in English both deliberately and spontaneously in response to questions/comments. *You may ask simple yes/no questions, clarification questions, or basic content questions only.*
7. **Avoid doing extensive research on the test topic;** concentrate instead on a clear presentation of the basic information about your topic. Remember that the panelists are not judging your knowledge in your field. If no background materials are given by the department for the test topic, this means your department either assumes that information is readily available to you or that you do not need any background information. If the test topics are completely unfamiliar to you, so that you absolutely cannot speak about any of them for ten to fifteen minutes, then contact the ETCS Office immediately.
8. **Be prepared to support your general statements with specific examples.** Even though this lecture lesson is short, have examples prepared for terms and/or processes that might be helpful for the panelists. Depending on your topic, you may find it most practical to use one large example and keep referring to it, or you may need different examples for different parts of your lesson.
9. **Think about possible questions students might ask** - are there any words, concepts, or processes that might be unfamiliar? Define and/or illustrate those items in your lesson, if possible.
10. **If there are difficult vocabularies, make sure you practice how to pronounce and spell these words before the test. You might plan to write these words on the board as well.**

II. During the Test

1. **Speak loudly and clearly.** If you speak softly, panelists may not be able to hear you, even if your speech is produced clearly. If your speaking isn't clearly produced, mumbling or speaking softly makes you even harder to understand. The panelists are not counting how many mistakes you make; they are judging *whether they can understand you as you deliver content*. So even when you do not feel perfectly confident about your speaking, it is better to make a mistake loudly/clearly so that panelists can seek clarification, rather than to mumble, which guarantees that the panelists cannot understand.
2. **Introduce your topic.** Some of the panelists may have no background in your subject; giving a brief overview of your lesson's topic will help to orient your audience.
3. **Do not worry about the time as you teach.** When you are preparing for the test, plan approximately 15 minutes' worth of material, so that you do not run out of content. However, most examinees do not finish what they have prepared due to the questions, comments and requests for clarification from the panelists. **The ETCS Director will stop you around the 15-minute mark, so you don't have to watch the time.**
4. **Do not rush** to cover more material in a short time because speaking very quickly may affect how clearly you speak and how easily you are understood. Plus, the panelists need time to understand and absorb what you are teaching them. If you do not finish your prepared lesson content, this does not affect your score.
5. **Use the board to help you communicate content clearly.** Specifically, use the board to organize your material, highlight main ideas and key terms, and write down new/difficult terms or words a panelist asks you about. If the board gets filled up, erase what you do not need and keep going. When you write on the board, make sure what you write is clear and large.
6. **Do not face the board** for more than a few seconds while you are writing. If you face the board consistently while you talk, you may be more difficult to understand. **If you have a lot of material to write, take a moment or two to write this information down before the test time begins. You have a few minutes to do this before your lesson begins.** However, **avoid writing long sentences or extensive information.**
7. **Look at the panelists' faces when you are talking.** This is expected to show your engagement with the audience and helps you notice if they understand you or not.
8. **Do not use an angry, sharp, or authoritarian tone when communicating with the panelists.** Try to be friendly and pleasant, even though you may be nervous.

9. **If panelists ask you to repeat a word or phrase, or if they tell you they didn't understand what you said, write the word or phrase on the board.** This is usually the quickest way to clarify what you are saying. Check to see if the panelists understand any clarification you give.

III. Question Handling Tips

1. **Make sure you understand panelists' questions BEFORE answering.** If you aren't sure about the question, ask the panelist to repeat or rephrase. If necessary, restate the question in your own words and ask the panelist if your understanding of their question is correct. Do not start answering until you find out specifically what the panelist wants to know.
2. Here are some sample questions and the first few words of the answer. **Note how the first part of the answer depends on how the question is structured.**
 - (a) ***Is the earth round?***
"Yes, because..." (This kind of question needs "Yes" or "No" first. You can follow with more information).
 - (b) ***Why is the earth round?***
"Because..." (This kind of question needs an explanation of cause and effect).
 - (c) ***What shape is the earth?***
"It is round." (This kind of question needs a specific answer first. You can follow with more detailed information, if it seems appropriate).
 - (d) ***Is the earth round or flat?***
"It is round." (This kind of question needs an answer that specifically names one of the two alternatives, or a statement that neither or both of the alternatives is correct. You can follow with more detailed information, if appropriate.)
3. **Be sure that you answer each panelist's questions directly and completely.** Do not just say "yes" or give extensive background information before giving your answer. It is most appropriate to succinctly and directly answer the question first.
4. When you finish answering a question, it is useful to say something like, **"Have I answered your question?"** or, **"Is that clear?"** Listen to what the panelists say in response to determine if you have given a satisfactory answer or if you need to continue dialoguing.

5. **If you do not know the answer to a question, tell the panelist you do not know but that you will find out OR give you best guess.** Do not pretend to know the answer, and do not make up information because giving incorrect information as an instructor hurts your communication effectiveness and relationship with students. If you think you have an idea, give your best guess, but say you are just guessing.
6. **If you need to think about the answer to a question, you can wait before answering.** Several seconds of silence is fine. But it is necessary for you to signal that you understood the question and are thinking about the answer. You can say something like, “Let me think about that a minute.” Or you can use an appropriate non-verbal gesture to indicate you understood, but you are thinking.
7. **There may be some occasions when a question is genuinely unrelated to the topic you are discussing.** If there is a quick answer to such a question, you might want to answer anyway. If the answer is long and complicated, you may prefer to ask the panelist to discuss it with you outside of class. Use your best judgment, here, as you would if you were a teacher of an undergraduate class.
8. **In general, do not answer a question with information that is more complicated than necessary.** When someone is confused, usually the best strategy is to explain something with simple words and basic, clear examples, rather than with high-level terminology and complicated scenarios.

**Contact the [ETCS Office](#) if you have any questions related to the content of this document.
ALL THE BEST ON THE ECC ASSESSMENT!**