

SPEAKING · PHOTO DESCRIPTION

In a Photo Description task you might be asked to either talk on your own about one picture or compare and contrast two or more pictures. In the first case, you will be expected to talk about the picture for 2–3 minutes, without being interrupted by the examiner or your partner, who, however, might ask you a question or two after you have finished. Bear in mind that your task is not so much to describe the picture in detail as reflect on the situation and the problem that is shown there. When describing a picture, it is useful to remember three basic questions that your description should provide answers to: *Who is in the picture? Where are they? What are they doing?* You can develop your description further by adding information about the general atmosphere of the picture or by speculating about the relationships between the people and their feelings. Sometimes, you are also asked to give your opinion on the depicted issue. If you are to compare and contrast the pictures, remember that you are essentially supposed to do two things: describe the pictures and talk about the differences and similarities between the situations shown there. Thus, there must be some common theme that links the pictures, you just need to find it and reflect on it.

EXAM STRATEGIES:

- Read the instructions carefully so that you know what issues you are supposed to mention.
- Remember to use the Present Continuous when you describe what is happening in the picture.
- Do not describe the picture in great detail. Outline the situation and don't forget to reflect on the depicted problem.
- If you are at a loss for words, talk about your own feelings concerning the problem shown in the picture.
- If you compare and contrast the pictures, focus on similarities and differences between them. Do not spend too much time on one picture.
- Remember to include in your description all the information required by the exam task.
- If you are asked to give your opinion, support your arguments with examples and explain your point of view.

DESCRIBING THE PICTURE

The picture shows...
In this picture I can see...
There is... in this picture.
On the right there are...
In the left hand corner...
In the foreground, there is...
There are... in the background.
In the bottom part of the picture there is...
There are... in the top part of the picture.
The people in the picture are...
The people in the picture look happy because...
The people in the picture seem sad because...
The general atmosphere in the picture is positive because...
The picture was taken in...
The weather in the picture is...
The atmosphere in the picture is depressing because...

SPECULATING ABOUT THE SITUATION

It may be...
They could be...
Perhaps...
It is probably...
Another idea is that...
It is also possible that...
It seems to me that the people in the picture...
I get the impression that the people are not very happy here...
They don't seem to be enjoying themselves...

EXPRESSING YOUR OPINION

I think that...
It's quite obvious that...
The situation in the picture is unusual because...
I don't think this situation is very common, because...
In my opinion...
It seems to me that...
On the one hand/On the other hand...
All in all,...
I wouldn't feel comfortable in this situation...
I would love to be there!
Personally, I'd prefer...
I'd rather...

COMPARING AND CONTRASTING

Both photos show...
In both pictures the people are...
One similarity is that...
What both these pictures have in common is...
However, there are also some differences between the pictures.
The picture on the left is more... than the other one.
The situation shown in Picture A is more... than the situation in Picture B.
The people in the first picture are less... than the people in the other one.
This man looks... while the other one is rather...
The main difference is (that)...
Another important difference is that...
In contrast,...

4 Look at pictures A and B. Consider the following questions:

- 1 What kind of situation does each picture show?
- 2 Try to determine the relationship between the people in each picture:
 - Do these people often spend time together?
 - Are they friends?
 - Do they like each other?
- 3 Which of these two situations do you prefer?

A



5 Look at the expressions in the box. Match each phrase to the correct picture, A or B. Write the expressions in the boxes next to the pictures.

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| check if it fits | close to nature |
| designer shops | exhausted |
| look for a map | seasonal sales |
| shopping bags | take a break |
| shopping mall | sports clothes |
| sunny weather | teenagers |
| try on clothes | keep fit |
| hunt for bargains | helmets |
| fashionable brands | shades |
| environmentally friendly | cyclist |
| wonder where to go next | accessories |
| professional equipment | receipt |
| wait in long queues | good condition |
| they have been on a spending spree | |
| they have just stopped cycling | |

Picture A

Picture B



B