42 TRIAL-TOPIC ANSWER BLUEPRINTS

Your standard folder contains a large collection of trial speaking *questions* with no answers. These blueprints cover the topic families those questions keep coming back to. Each one is a route, not a script: a 60-second plan, an opening line you can say as it is, model body sentences to fill with your own life, a closing line, and the phrases that fit this topic. Learn five routes well and almost any trial topic becomes one you have already practised.

BLUEPRINT 1 · PART 2

A person you admire

Your 60-second plan:

- Who: name, how you know them, one word that sums them up
- What they do that impresses you — one concrete habit, not a list
- One short story where you saw that habit in action
- How they changed the way you behave now

> **Open:** The person I really look up to is my aunt, and honestly she's the reason I even try in school.

- What I admire most about her isn't anything big — it's that she keeps her word, even about small things.
- For example, she promised she'd help me with my Add Maths every Sunday, and she showed up every single week for almost a year.
- I think that kind of quiet consistency is harder than being talented, because nobody claps for it.
- Because of her, I've started finishing what I start instead of dropping it halfway.

> **Close:** So that's the person I admire — not famous at all, but she taught me more than any celebrity could.

Phrases: The person I really look up to is … · What impresses me most about … is … · She's the kind of person who … · Because of her, I've started to …

BLUEPRINT 2 · PART 2

A teacher who made a difference to you

Your 60-second plan:

- Which teacher, which subject, which year
- What was different about the way they taught
- A specific moment — something they said or did to you
- The result: a mark, a habit or a change in confidence

> **Open:** I'd like to talk about my Form Four English teacher, because she completely changed how I feel about speaking.

- Most teachers just went through the textbook, but she made us talk in front of the class every single Friday.
- At first I hated it, to be honest — I used to sit at the back and pray she wouldn't call my name.

- Then one day she told me my ideas were good and I only needed to slow down, and that one sentence stuck with me.
- Now I can speak up in class without my hands shaking, which I never thought would happen.

> **Close:** So she didn't just teach me English, she taught me that being nervous doesn't mean being bad at something.

Phrases: What was different about her was … · I used to … but now I … · One thing she always said was … · Looking back, I realise that …

BLUEPRINT 3 · PART 2

A meal or dish you really enjoy

Your 60-second plan:

- The dish and where you usually eat it
- Describe it with the senses — smell, texture, heat
- Who you eat it with and when
- Why it means more than just food

> **Open:** If I had to pick one dish, it would be my grandmother's curry mee, no competition.

- It's got this thick coconut gravy that's a bit too spicy for most people, and the smell fills the whole house.
- We usually eat it on Sunday mornings, when everyone's still in their pyjamas and nobody's rushing anywhere.
- Actually, I've tried the same dish at food courts and it's never quite right, which I think is the point.
- For me it isn't really about the taste — it's the one hour a week when the whole family sits down together.

> **Close:** So that's my favourite dish, and I hope I can learn to cook it properly before I leave home.

Phrases: If I had to pick one dish, it would be … · It's got this … that … · We usually have it when … · It isn't really about the food, it's about …

BLUEPRINT 4 · PART 2

A place in your neighbourhood you like going to

Your 60-second plan:

- Where it is and how you get there
- What it looks like, sounds like, who's there
- What you usually do there and how often
- Why you'd miss it if it closed

> **Open:** There's a small field behind my housing area, and that's probably my favourite spot in the whole neighbourhood.

- It's nothing fancy — just grass, two old goalposts and a row of trees along one side.
- I go there most evenings, usually around six, when it's cooler and the uncles are already doing their walking rounds.
- Sometimes I play football with friends, but honestly half the time I just sit there and let my head empty out.
- If they ever built shops on it, I think a lot of us would have nowhere free to go.

> **Close:** So it's not a tourist place at all, but for me it's the most important corner of my area.

Phrases: There's a small … near my house · It's nothing fancy — just … · I usually go there when … · If it ever closed, I'd really miss …

BLUEPRINT 5 · PART 2

A book, story or article you enjoyed

Your 60-second plan:

- Title, type of book, how you found it
- What it's about in two sentences — no long plot dump
- The part that stayed in your head
- What it made you think or do differently

> **Open:** The one book I actually finished twice is a novel my cousin passed to me last year.

- It's about a boy who has to move to a new town and pretend he's fine when he really isn't.
- There's one chapter where he finally tells his father the truth, and I remember reading it three times.
- I think it hit me because I'd just changed schools, so I understood that feeling of smiling and lying.
- After that I started writing a bit in my phone notes, just to get things out of my head.

> **Close:** So it wasn't a school book at all, but it's the one that actually did something to me.

Phrases: It's basically about … · The part that stayed with me was … · I think it hit me because … · Ever since I read it, I've …

BLUEPRINT 6 · PART 2

A skill you have learned recently

Your 60-second plan:

- The skill and what made you start
- How you learned it — who or what taught you
- The hardest part and how you got past it
- Where you use it now

> **Open:** Something I picked up quite recently is basic video editing, and it started completely by accident.

- My class needed a video for a school project and nobody else wanted to do it, so I said okay.

- I learned the whole thing from free videos online, mostly at night after homework, which took me about a month.
- The hardest part was matching the sound to the cuts — my first version sounded like a broken radio.
- Now I edit clips for my school's club account, and it's turned into something I actually enjoy.

> **Close:** So one boring project ended up giving me a skill I'll probably use for years.

Phrases: Something I picked up recently is … · I taught myself by … · The tricky part was … · It's turned into something I actually …

BLUEPRINT 7 · PART 2

A time you helped someone

Your 60-second plan:

- Who needed help and what the situation was
- What exactly you did — actions, not adjectives
- How the person reacted
- How you felt afterwards and what you learned

> **Open:** Last year my neighbour's son was struggling badly with his reading in primary school, and I ended up helping him.

- His mother works two shifts, so there was nobody at home in the evening to sit with him.
- I started going over three times a week for about half an hour, mostly just reading storybooks out loud together.
- After two months he read a whole page by himself, and his face when he finished was the best part.
- I learned that helping doesn't need money or talent — it mostly needs you to show up regularly.

> **Close:** So it was a small thing, but it's the thing I'm proudest of from last year.

Phrases: The situation was that … · What I did was pretty simple — I just … · The best part was when … · It taught me that …

BLUEPRINT 8 · PART 2

A hobby you spend a lot of time on

Your 60-second plan:

- The hobby, how you got into it and how long ago
- When and where you actually do it in a normal week
- What you like about it — the feeling, not the facts
- How you keep it from eating your revision time

> **Open:** My main hobby is playing the guitar — nothing serious, just me, three chords and a lot of patience.

- I started about three years ago with a second-hand guitar my cousin was going to throw away.

- You mentioned reporting instead of arguing — I'd add that taking a screenshot first makes reporting much stronger.
- If we had to pick one rule for the whole school, I'd go with 'tell an adult early, not after it gets bad'.

> **Close:** So we're agreed then — the habits matter more than the warnings, and telling someone early comes first.

Phrases: I think we should focus on … · The first thing I'd suggest is … · You mentioned … — I'd add that … · So we're agreed then — …

BLUEPRINT 21 · PART 3

Is public transport good enough for students?

Your 60-second plan:

- Set the scope: your own town or city first
- One thing that works, one thing that doesn't
- Invite your partner's experience, since it differs by area
- Agree on the single improvement that would help most

> **Open:** Before we decide, maybe we should separate the city from the smaller towns, because the answer isn't the same.

- In the city, honestly the MRT and buses are decent — I can get to tuition without troubling my parents.
- The problem is the last bit, the walk from the station, especially when it rains or it's already dark.
- How is it where you live? I've heard that outside the main lines the waiting time gets pretty unpredictable.
- So the fix isn't more trains, it's better connections and shelters at the small stops.

> **Close:** Let's conclude that it's good enough in the centre but not yet fair to students further out.

Phrases: Before we decide, maybe we should … · The problem is the last bit — … · How is it where you live? · Let's conclude that …

BLUEPRINT 22 · PART 3

How can schools reduce food waste in the canteen?

Your 60-second plan:

- State why it's worth fixing in one line
- Suggest one change to how food is served
- Ask your partner for a change to student habits
- Agree on which one to try first and why

> **Open:** Food waste is a small problem that adds up, so I think there are easy wins here before we talk about anything expensive.

- One simple change is letting students choose portion size, because a lot of rice ends up in the bin untouched.
- Another idea is for the canteen to cook in smaller batches later in the break instead of everything at once.
- What would you change on the student side — would something like a 'take what you'll finish' campaign work?
- I like that, but I'd say the poster campaign only works if the portion choice comes first.

> **Close:** So our conclusion is: fix the serving system first, then run the campaign to support it.

Phrases: There are easy wins here, like … · One simple change would be … · What would you change on the … side? · I like that, but I'd say …

BLUEPRINT 23 · PART 3

Should teenagers do volunteer work?

Your 60-second plan:

- Agree quickly that it's good, then argue about how
- Give a benefit that isn't the obvious one
- Raise the time problem honestly
- Agree on a realistic amount

> **Open:** I don't think we'll disagree that it's a good thing, so maybe the real question is how much is realistic.

- Beyond helping others, I think it's one of the few places we meet people outside our own age group.
- The honest problem is time — in Form Five, giving up a Saturday can genuinely cost you a subject.
- Do you think it should be encouraged or actually required? I'm nervous about making it compulsory.
- Maybe the answer is something regular but small, like once a month, rather than a big one-off project.

> **Close:** So we'd both say yes to volunteering, but little and often, and never forced.

Phrases: I don't think we'll disagree that … · Beyond the obvious, I'd say … · The honest problem is … · Maybe the answer is …

BLUEPRINT 24 · PART 3

Is social media good or bad for friendships?

Your 60-second plan:

- Refuse the either-or in your first line
- Give one way it clearly helps
- Give one way it clearly hurts
- Agree on what makes the difference

> **Open:** I'd say it's neither, really — it depends completely on whether it replaces meeting or just supports it.

PART 1 INTERVIEW QUESTION BANK — 96 QUESTIONS WITH MODEL ANSWERS

Part 1 is the part students prepare least and lose the most easy marks in. Below are the everyday questions the interview keeps coming back to, grouped by topic, each with a model answer and the one language move that answer is showing off. Say every answer out loud in your own words — a two-word reply scores almost nothing, however correct it is.

Daily routine

Examiners use routine questions to check that you can handle the present simple, frequency words and time expressions without stumbling. Aim for a clear habit plus one small detail that makes it yours.

• What time do you usually wake up on a school day?

> I wake up at about half past five, because my bus leaves before seven. It sounds early, but I've got used to it after two years. On weekends I let myself sleep in until nine.

Present simple habit plus a contrast between weekdays and weekends.

• How do you get to school?

> My father drops me off on his way to work most mornings. If he has an early meeting, I take the bus with a friend from my block instead. The whole trip takes around twenty minutes either way.

Adds a first-conditional-style alternative with 'if' instead of a flat one-liner.

• What is the first thing you do after you get home?

> Honestly, the first thing I do is change out of my uniform and eat something. My mother usually leaves lunch on the table for me. After that I rest for half an hour before I open my books.

Sequencing words 'first', 'after that' to order a short narrative.

• Do you have a fixed study time every day?

> Yes, I try to sit down at eight every night and study until about ten. It doesn't always happen, especially when I have tuition, but having a fixed slot helps me stop procrastinating. I keep my phone in another room during that time.

A concession with 'It doesn't always happen, especially when…' shows real fluency.

• How often do you help with housework?

> Almost every day, actually. I'm in charge of the dishes after dinner and I sweep the living room on weekends. It's not much, but my mother works long hours, so I don't mind.

Frequency adverbs plus a reason clause with 'so'.

• What do you usually do before you sleep?

> I pack my bag for the next day so I don't panic in the morning. Then I read something light for ten or fifteen minutes. Scrolling on my phone in bed keeps me awake, so I've been trying to stop.

Purpose clause with 'so that' and a present perfect continuous for a recent change.

• Why is having a routine important to you?

> Because without one I waste the whole evening deciding what to do. When my day has a shape, I get more done and I feel calmer about exams. A routine also means I actually sleep enough, which matters more than people think.

Answers a 'why' with a real reason plus a consequence, not one word.

• Do you prefer mornings or evenings?

> Evenings, definitely. My mind is slow before nine in the morning, but by night I can focus for a long stretch without anyone interrupting me. The only problem is that I end up sleeping late.

A preference stated clearly, then justified by comparison and one honest drawback.

Family and home

This topic tests description: family members, the place you live, and relationships. Examiners listen for varied adjectives and correct possessives rather than a list of ages.

• Who do you live with?

> I live with my parents, my younger brother and my grandmother. It's a full house, so it's never quiet. My grandmother has been staying with us since I was in primary school.

Present perfect with 'since' to show how long something has been true.

• Can you describe your home?

> We stay in a double-storey terrace house near a small park. It's not big, but there's a corner in the kitchen where I do my homework because the light is good. My favourite part is the porch, where my father grows chillies in pots.

Relative clauses with 'where' to describe places instead of listing rooms.

• Who are you closest to in your family?

> Probably my mother. She's the one I tell things to when I've had a bad day at school, and she never makes it a big deal. We also cook together on Sundays, which is when we talk the most.

Identifies a person and supports it with a habit, using 'which' to add information.

• How often does your family eat together?

> On weekdays it's hard because everyone gets home at different times. But on Friday nights we make a point of having dinner together, usually something simple like fried rice. During Raya or CNY, the

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