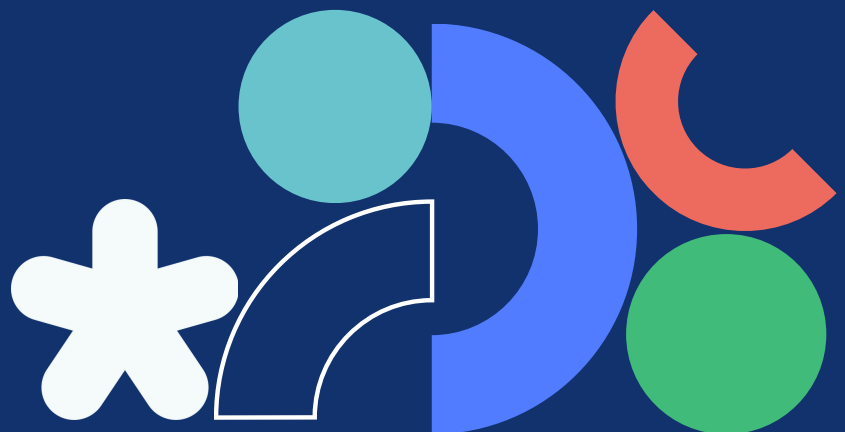




THE PTE SPEAKING CONFIDENCE PACK

*Bonus download for Video 3: Describe Image & Retell Lecture
2026*

Updated for the **PTE Academic 2026** format 0 including the
November 2024 human content review system for Describe
Image and Retell Lecture.





HOW TO USE THIS PACK

1. Read the scoring reality check so you know what counts in 2026.
2. Learn the **Describe Image Flex Frame** - 8 image-type variations inside.
3. Learn the **Retell Lecture Flex Frame** - with rotating linking-phrase bank.
4. Drill the **keyword banks** for the 12 most common PTE topics.
5. Use the **40-second rhythm trainer** daily for delivery control.



1. THE 2026 SCORING REALITY

What's different in 2026

- **Nov 4, 2024:** human review of *content* added for Describe Image and Retell Lecture
- **Aug 2025:** hybrid AI + human scoring formalised across flagged responses
- **2026:** memorised templates now detectable - "rhythmic monotony" flagged
- Fluency and pronunciation still weighted heavily

What the AI + human team check

What they check	Why it matters
Continuous speech (AI)	No long pauses, no restarts
Pronunciation clarity (AI)	Understandable, consistent
Natural rhythm (AI)	Not a flat-toned recitation
Content relevance (Human)	Actually about <i>this</i> image/lecture
Originality (Human)	Built from the prompt, not generic
Keyword fit (Human)	Key words from the prompt appear naturally

The takeaway

Use **flexible shapes** (Flex Frames) not fixed scripts. Rotate your openers. Use real content from what you see or hear. Speak continuously - fluency > content perfection.



2. DESCRIBE IMAGE: THE FLEX FRAME

The 4-block shape (40 seconds total)

Block	Time	Content
1. Overview	~8 sec	Name the image type + topic + timeframe
2. Standout feature	~10 sec	The most striking data point or visual element
3. Comparison / trend	~15 sec	Compare values or describe changes
4. Implication	~7 sec	One short takeaway sentence

Vocabulary reference for Block 1

Opener	When to use it
<i>The visual illustrates...</i>	Any image
<i>This chart presents...</i>	Bar/line/pie charts
<i>The graph depicts...</i>	Line graphs, trends
<i>We can see from this diagram that...</i>	Process diagrams, flow charts
<i>The map shows...</i>	Geographical images
<i>The image displays...</i>	Photographs with data
<i>This table summarises...</i>	Data tables

RULE: Rotate these across your practice sessions so your openers aren't identical across responses



2. DESCRIBE IMAGE: THE FLEX FRAME

Level up: Content-led variants

The openers above are good. Content-led openers are *better* - they make the topic the grammatical subject of your sentence, which the human reviewer reads as more genuine engagement with what's on screen. Both score well; content-led scores higher.

- **Standard:** *"The bar chart illustrates global smartphone ownership across four regions..."*
- **Content-led:** *"Global smartphone ownership across four regions has changed dramatically between 2015 and 2023, as shown in this bar chart..."*

The chart-type reference is still there - it just sits inside the sentence rather than commanding it. If you can do this comfortably under time pressure, it's a free upgrade. If not, the standard openers are fine.

Why the bar isn't as high here as in Retell Lecture:

Describe Image inherently requires you to reference the visual - that's literally the task. Saying "the bar chart illustrates X" isn't template filler in the same way "the lecturer introduced X" is, because the chart-type reference genuinely orients the listener. Retell Lecture is different - there, you're conveying ideas from a lecture, and constantly narrating "the lecturer said this, the speaker explained that" reads as scripted because the speaker isn't actually the subject of the lecture's content.



2. DESCRIBE IMAGE: THE FLEX FRAME

Vocabulary bank for each image type

Bar chart / Column chart

- **high/low:** highest, peak, topped the chart; lowest, smallest, least
- **comparisons:** substantially higher than, nearly double, slightly below, on par with
- **change:** rose from... to..., fell from... to..., increased by... percentage points

Line graph

- **trend direction:** steadily climbed, rose sharply, plateaued, dipped, gradually declined
- **speed:** dramatic rise, gentle decline, modest increase, sharp drop
- **patterns:** upward trajectory, downward trend, fluctuating pattern, relatively stable

Pie chart

- **proportions:** accounts for, represents, makes up, constitutes
- **dominance:** the largest share, dominant segment, smallest portion, accounts for over half
- **description:** a clear majority, a minor share, roughly equal, nearly equivalent

Process diagram / Flow chart

- **sequence:** the first stage, followed by, subsequently, in the next step, finally
- **relationships:** leads to, triggers, feeds into, results in, produces
- **structure:** cyclical process, linear progression, branching pathway



2. DESCRIBE IMAGE: THE FLEX FRAME

Vocabulary bank for each image type

Map

- **regions:** northern / southern / coastal / central / interior
- **distribution:** concentrated in, spread across, sparsely populated, densely clustered
- **comparison:** higher in the east than the west, uniform across, uneven distribution

Table

- **scanning:** looking at the data, examining the figures, comparing the rows
- **extremes:** the highest value, the lowest recorded, the outlier
- **patterns:** across the categories, consistently, with one exception

Photograph with caption

- **description:** depicts, shows, captures
- **elements:** in the foreground, in the background, to the left of
- **interpretation:** suggests, indicates, illustrates

Double / Combination chart

- **relationships:** while [A] rose, [B] fell; [A] and [B] moved in opposite directions
- **comparisons:** in contrast, conversely, meanwhile, by comparison



2. DESCRIBE IMAGE: THE FLEX FRAME

Filler-safe extension phrases (when you need to keep speaking)

- "...which suggests that..."
- "...reflecting a broader pattern of..."
- "...consistent with what we see in..."
- "...notably different from..."
- "...representing a substantial share of..."
- "...indicating a shift towards..."

Use sparingly! These help you keep speaking if you blank, but overusing them reads as filler.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

These are NOT scripts to recite. They're vocabulary toolkits, organised by image type. The 4-block shape is the same for every image - what changes is the *vocabulary you reach for* depending on what's in front of you.

How to use these:

- Read each one before practice sessions
- Build the vocabulary into your active speech (use the words when you describe images at home)
- On test day, your Flex Frame supplies the structure - the right vocabulary surfaces because you've practised it.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 1: Bar chart

What to scan for: The tallest and shortest bars, comparisons between categories, change between time points (if temporal).

Vocabulary for the standout:

- *the tallest column, the highest bar, the lowest figure, the smallest share*
- *stood at, reached, came in at, registered, totalled approximately*

Vocabulary for comparison:

- *substantially higher than, nearly double, a fraction of, on par with, marginally above, only slightly behind*

Vocabulary for change (if temporal):

- *rose from X to Y, climbed from X to Y, fell from X to Y, grew by X percentage points, more than tripled*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name what's measured + categories + timeframe
- Block 2: pick the most striking value, give a rough number
- Block 3: at least one comparison; if temporal, describe the trend
- Block 4: what overall pattern the data points to

Watch out for: Percentages vs absolute numbers - read the y-axis label before you speak.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 2: Line graph

What to scan for: Trend direction, peaks and troughs, rate of change, turning points.

Vocabulary for trend direction:

- *climbed, rose, declined, plateaued, dipped, fluctuated, recovered, stabilised*

Vocabulary for speed and intensity:

- *dramatically, sharply, gradually, gently, modestly, steeply, abruptly*

Vocabulary for patterns:

- *upward trajectory, downward trend, fluctuating pattern, stable plateau, sustained recovery, sudden surge*

Vocabulary for time markers:

- *between X and Y, by Z, prior to, following, at the start of the period, towards the end*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name the variable + the time period
- Block 2: the most dramatic change (peak, trough, or turning point) + roughly when
- Block 3: describe the overall trend with intensity language
- Block 4: what the trend implies about the variable's direction.

Watch out for: Multiple lines on one graph - you don't need to describe every line; pick the most distinctive ones.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 3: Pie chart

What to scan for: The dominant segment, the smallest segment, whether a few segments dominate or shares are roughly equal.

Vocabulary for proportions:

- *accounts for, represents, makes up, constitutes, comprises*

Vocabulary for size:

- *the dominant segment, the largest share, the smallest portion, a clear majority, a minor share, roughly equal portions*

Vocabulary for quantifying:

- *just over, just under, approximately, around, slightly more than half, close to a third*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name what's being divided (the total) and how many segments
- Block 2: the largest segment, with rough percentage
- Block 3: the next largest + the smallest, for contrast
- Block 4: what the distribution suggests.

Watch out for: Very small segments - group them as "the remaining segments" rather than naming each one.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 4: Process diagram / Flow chart

What to scan for: The starting point, the ending point, key transformations, whether the process is linear or cyclical.

Vocabulary for sequence:

- *the first stage, initially, the next step, subsequently, this is followed by, finally, ultimately*

Vocabulary for causation:

- *leads to, triggers, produces, results in, feeds into, gives rise to*

Vocabulary for structure:

- *a multi-stage process, a cyclical pattern, a linear progression, a branching pathway, an iterative cycle*

Vocabulary for critical points:

- *the central transformation, the key step, the tipping point, the crucial stage*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name the variable + the time period
- Block 2: the most dramatic change (peak, trough, or turning point) + roughly when
- Block 3: describe the overall trend with intensity language
- Block 4: what the trend implies about the variable's direction.

Watch out for: Cyclical diagrams - don't treat them as linear; mention the loop explicitly.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 6: Table

What to scan for: The highest and lowest values, patterns across rows or columns, outliers, total or average rows if present.

Vocabulary for reading the table:

- *a quick scan reveals, the figures show, the data indicates, the table records*

Vocabulary for extremes:

- *the highest figure, the lowest entry, the standout value, the clear outlier*

Vocabulary for patterns:

- *a consistent pattern, a clear trend, with one notable exception, broadly similar across*

Vocabulary for comparison:

- *nearly identical, in stark contrast, comparable to, more than double*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name what the table records + the categories shown
- Block 2: the standout figure (highest, lowest, or outlier)
- Block 3: a pattern across rows or columns + a contrast
- Block 4: what the table suggests overall.

Watch out for: Tables can hide trends because numbers don't form a visual shape - speak the comparisons aloud as you'd say them.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 7: Photograph with caption

What to scan for: Main subject, foreground/background elements, the caption (always read it carefully - it carries critical information).

Vocabulary for spatial description:

- *in the foreground, in the background, to the left of, to the right of, in the centre, at the top, at the bottom*

Vocabulary for description:

- *depicts, captures, shows, presents, illustrates*

Vocabulary for the caption:

- *the caption notes, according to the caption, the caption explains, the caption identifies*

Vocabulary for interpretation:

- *suggests, illustrates, reflects, indicates, points to*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: what the photograph shows + the setting (if visible or in the caption)
- Block 2: the main subject, described in detail
- Block 3: secondary elements + use the caption for context
- Block 4: what the photograph illustrates about the broader topic.

Watch out for: Don't ignore the caption - it often contains data or context the photo alone can't convey.



3. DESCRIBE IMAGE: 8 IMAGE-TYPE WORKSHEETS

TYPE 8: Combination chart (bar + line)

What to scan for: What the bars represent, what the line represents, whether the two move together or in opposite directions.

Vocabulary for relationship:

- *move in tandem, move in opposite directions, correlate with, diverge from, mirror each other, run counter to*

Vocabulary for combined description:

- *tracked alongside, plotted against, overlaid with, shown together*

Vocabulary for patterns:

- *as X rose, Y also climbed; while X remained stable, Y declined; the two variables peaked at different times*

Block reminders:

- Block 1: name both variables + what each visual element represents (bars = X, line = Y)
- Block 2: the standout point on whichever variable shows it most clearly
- Block 3: describe the relationship between the two variables
- Block 4: what the combined data suggests.

Watch out for: Two y-axes - combination charts often have a left and right y-axis with different scales; check both before describing values.



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

The 4-block shape (40 seconds total)

Block	Time	Content
1. Topic statement	~8 sec	Name what the lecture was about
2. Key point 1	~12 sec	First major idea from the lecture
3. Key point 2	~12 sec	Second major idea
4. Takeaway	~8 sec	The lecturer's conclusion or central argument



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

How to fill the blocks: The content-first rule

Most PTE candidates fall into the same trap with Retell Lecture: they structurally narrate the lecturer instead of conveying the lecture's content. After the November 2024 human-review rule, this gets flagged.

Speaker-led (template-flagged):

"The lecturer introduced honeybee communication. She explained that bees use a waggle dance. She then went on to describe research from Würzburg. The talk emphasised that this inspires engineers."

Every sentence has the speaker as the subject. The human reviewer in 2026 spots this within the first ten seconds of your response.

Content-led (passes both AI and human review):

"Honeybee communication, according to today's lecture, involves a complex behaviour called the waggle dance, which encodes direction, distance, food richness, and predator warnings. Research from the University of Würzburg has shown that the angle and duration of the waggle correspond to direction and distance. The lecturer's central argument was that these natural systems are now inspiring engineers in swarm robotics."

Same content. Completely different texture. The lecturer is referenced TWICE - once for source attribution at the start, once for the takeaway. The rest of the time, **the content is the subject of the sentence.**



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

The two-rule system

Rule 1: Lead with content, not the speaker. Make the topic, idea, or finding the grammatical subject of your sentences. Reference the speaker only when attribution genuinely earns its keep.

Rule 2: Attribute surgically. Speaker references aren't banned - they're used purposefully. There are TWO places attribution genuinely belongs:

- **Block 1 opening** - to flag where the content is coming from. One small attribution like *"according to the lecture"* anchors the response.
- **Block 4 takeaway** - to signal that this conclusion belongs to the lecturer, not to you. Otherwise the sentence sounds like your personal opinion.

Attribution phrases - minimal use only

Attribution earns its keep in two specific places: Flagging the source at the start, and marking the conclusion at the end. Don't treat this as a menu to rotate through. Pick what you actually need, and stop there.

The hard cap: TWO attribution moments per response. One in Block 1, one in Block 4. That's the ceiling

If you find yourself needing more, you've slipped back into narrating the lecturer instead of conveying the content.



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

Block 1 - to flag the source (use ONE, embedded mid-sentence):

- *...according to today's lecture...*
- *...as outlined in today's talk...*

Mid-response (Blocks 2–3) - generally unnecessary. The strong default is *zero* attribution mid-response. If a specific finding genuinely needs sourcing because it's a research result you want to flag (rather than your own claim), one brief *"the lecturer noted that"* is acceptable, but if you're reaching for these phrases, that's usually a signal to rephrase content-first instead.

Block 4 - to mark the conclusion as the lecturer's, not yours (use ONE):

- *The lecturer's central argument was that...*
- *The talk's main conclusion was that...*



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

Block-by-block, with worked examples

Block 1 - Topic Statement (~8 sec). Make the topic the subject. Embed brief attribution mid-sentence

-  *"The lecturer introduced the topic of honeybee communication."*
-  *"Honeybee communication, according to today's lecture, involves a behaviour called the waggle dance."*

Block 2 - Point 1 (~12 sec). The first key idea. Make the IDEA the subject. Pack in details.

-  *"She began by explaining that the dance encodes a lot of information."*
-  *"The dance encodes a remarkable amount of information, including direction, distance, food source richness, and even predator warnings."*

Block 3 - Point 2 (~12 sec). The second key idea. Same principle. If attribution is needed, keep it brief.

-  *"She then went on to argue that researchers at Würzburg have studied this."*
-  *"Research from the University of Würzburg has shown that the waggle's angle and duration correspond to direction and distance."*

Block 4 - Takeaway (~8 sec). The conclusion. Attribution genuinely helps here — it signals this is the lecturer's takeaway, not yours.

-  *"The lecturer's central argument was that these natural systems are now inspiring engineers in swarm robotics."*



4. RETELL LECTURE: THE FLEX FRAME

Why this scores higher in 2026

The AI checks fluency and pronunciation - content-led sentences are no harder to deliver fluently than speaker-led ones. The HUMAN reviewer is checking whether you actually engaged with the lecture. Content-led responses prove engagement. Speaker-led narration sounds like a script someone memorised.

A template says *"the speaker explained, the speaker described, the speaker concluded."* A genuine retell says *"[the actual idea], according to the speaker."* Same information. Completely different texture.



5. KEYWORD BANKS FOR 12 COMMON PTE TOPIC AREAS

When you hear a lecture on one of these topics, these are the high-value keywords you want to catch and use.



5. KEYWORD BANKS FOR 12 COMMON PTE TOPIC AREAS

1. Environment & climate

- emissions, carbon footprint, sustainability, biodiversity
- ecosystem, renewable energy, greenhouse gases, fossil fuels
- conservation, deforestation, species decline, habitat loss
- climate mitigation, climate adaptation, carbon neutrality

2. Health & medicine

- chronic disease, public health, clinical trial, treatment
- epidemiology, immunity, pathogen, wellness, mental health
- lifestyle factors, healthcare system, preventive medicine
- therapy, intervention, diagnosis, prognosis

3. Technology & AI

- artificial intelligence, machine learning, automation, algorithm
- data processing, innovation, digital transformation, cybersecurity
- neural network, predictive analytics, human-AI collaboration
- emerging technology, disruption, efficiency gains

4. Education

- pedagogy, curriculum, learning outcomes, student engagement
- literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, educational equity
- online learning, blended learning, assessment, tertiary education
- skills gap, vocational training, lifelong learning



5. KEYWORD BANKS FOR 12 COMMON PTE TOPIC AREAS

5. Economics & business

- market, supply and demand, investment, consumer behaviour
- economic growth, recession, inflation, productivity
- global trade, competitive advantage, supply chain, stakeholders
- profit margin, revenue, GDP, workforce

6. Psychology & behaviour

- cognition, perception, motivation, bias, decision-making
- mental health, wellbeing, stress, resilience, behaviour change
- social influence, habit formation, reinforcement, emotion regulation

7. Science & research

- hypothesis, experimental method, data analysis, peer review
- findings, research, evidence, scientific consensus
- laboratory, experiment, observation, replication

8. History & culture

- civilisation, era, historical period, cultural exchange
- empire, revolution, tradition, heritage, migration
- social movement, political reform, globalisation



5. KEYWORD BANKS FOR 12 COMMON PTE TOPIC AREAS

9. Biology & nature

- evolution, species, adaptation, genetic diversity
- ecosystem, organism, habitat, food chain, symbiosis
- cellular, molecular, microbiome, reproduction

10. Space & astronomy

- universe, galaxy, solar system, planet, exoplanet
- telescope, observation, astronomical, cosmic
- orbit, spacecraft, mission, gravitational, atmosphere

11. Policy & government

- policy, regulation, legislation, governance, public sector
- reform, compliance, implementation, stakeholders
- democratic, international cooperation, sovereignty

12. Urban development

- urbanisation, infrastructure, public transport, housing
- zoning, density, urban planning, sustainable city
- smart city, transit-oriented development, gentrification



6. THE 40-SECOND RHYTHM TRAINER

Daily practice routine (10 minutes, 5 days a week)

Day 1 - Pace control

1. Read any news article aloud for exactly 40 seconds.
2. Record yourself.
3. Play back. Aim for 130–150 words per minute.
4. Repeat 5 times with different articles.

Day 2 - Rhythm control

1. Pick a an educational video intro (usually 40 seconds).
2. Play once. Listen to the rhythm.
3. Shadow - read aloud in sync with the speaker.
4. Record yourself speaking it solo.
5. Compare.

Day 3 - Fluency control

1. Pick a random Describe Image from the worksheets.
2. 25 seconds prep, 40 seconds speak - no restarts allowed.
3. Record.
4. Play back. Count the pauses >1 second. Aim for zero.

Day 4 - Pronunciation control

1. Pick 10 multi-syllable words from the keyword banks.
2. Say each one 3 times, clearly.
3. Record.
4. Compare to a dictionary audio (Cambridge Dictionary app).



6. THE 40-SECOND RHYTHM TRAINER

Daily practice routine (10 minutes, 5 days a week)

Day 5 - Full simulation

1. Two Describe Image + two Retell Lecture, back-to-back.
2. Full exam timing. No pauses.
3. Record.
4. Play all 4 responses back. Self-assess: fluency, pronunciation, content.



7. THE 4 TEMPLATE TRAPS TO AVOID

-  Generic opener that could apply to any image ("The image shows a lot of information about...")
-  Filler phrases that eat time without adding content
-  Identical opening sentences across multiple responses
-  Pre-written conclusions that don't match the image.



8. PRE-SPEAKING CHECKLIST (in your head, 5 seconds before recording)

- Which Flex Frame block am I starting with?
- What's my opener?
- What's my standout feature or key point?
- What's my implication or takeaway?

If you have answers to those 4 questions - start speaking.



KEEP GOING

Describe Image and Retell Lecture reward **control**. You've got the frames, the vocabulary, the keyword banks, and the rhythm trainer.

Pair this with the other videos in the series (SWT, SST, and Collocations) for your full 2026 preparation set.

You can do this! 💪



Ready for Expert Feedback? *

Take your practice to the next level. Get your writing evaluated by a real E2 Expert who knows the 2026 standards inside and out.



Visit: [E2Language.com](https://www.E2Language.com)

Keep practicing and be brave!