

FORMAT OF THE QUESTION PAPER

This paper consists of three sections - Section A, B, C. Candidates are required to answer questions in all three sections.

SECTION A This section is on directed writing. The candidate is required to write a response to a task in clear and accurate Standard English, using a style and tone appropriate to the task. The task requires the student to write a letter to the teacher to inform him/her of the choice made by the class with regards to a trip. The student is also to provide the teacher with some information about the trip.

SECTION B This section tests the candidate's ability to select and organize information from a given text source; and be able to paraphrase effectively and concisely. In this case the candidate is required to summarise the problems and dangers faced by two hikers.

SECTION C This section tests the writing skills. It tests the candidate's ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It also tests the candidate's ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a number of alternatives. The candidate has to choose one of the 5 titles to write a composition of at least 350 words in length.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

On the whole, candidates did not fare well in this paper. A big proportion scored below the median while not many belonged to the top range. This shows that the majority of the candidates have yet to master the writing skills in English.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS

Candidates in the High Achievement Group

Candidates displayed very good linguistic ability and were able to address the task accurately and clearly. Few grammatical mistakes were made and a flair for the language was shown. Vocabulary was precise and varied. Varied sentence types and structures were employed to achieve intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation and paragraphing.

Candidates in the Average Achievement Group

Candidates in this group understood the task before them but lacked the linguistic ability to write effectively. They were unable to sustain accuracy throughout. Vocabulary was limited and sentence structures repetitive. Answers generally displayed a lack of organization and coherence.

Candidates in the Low Achievement Group

Candidates lacked the language competence and gave Sections A and C the minimum treatment. There was high density of serious errors which caused blurring in meaning and in some places, meaning was hardly comprehensible. In extreme cases, candidates merely copied the rubric or the summary passage or did not attempt the question. However, Section B did offer some opportunity for the candidates to answer because the content was provided, but this was merely a reproduction of the text without displaying the summary skills of selection and synthesizing.

DETAILED PERFORMANCE

QUESTION 1: DIRECTED WRITING

Strength

1. The candidates demonstrated good understanding of the task through:
 - Correct formal letter format (all elements were included)
 - Appropriate toneExamples:
 - *I would like to inform you*
 - *On behalf of the class, I would like to inform you that the trip to the seaside is our choice*
 - *We would like to make a trip to the city.*
 - *I look forward to a favourable reply/answer*
2. Points given were appropriately written in candidates' own language.
Examples:
 - *During the three-day and two-night stay by the seaside, various activities ...*
 - *We will be camping by the seaside.*
 - *Activities such as ... can help foster ...*
3. Most candidates managed to get all 10 content points, even the weak ones. The better candidates were able to elaborate on the points while the weaker ones merely used the points without giving further details.
4. They were able to compare both venues to strengthen their argument/support their choice
Examples:
 - *We have chosen the trip to the seaside because it is cheaper than the trip to the city.*
 - *Compared to the 15th – 17th December trip, which is in the middle of the month, the 2nd – 4th December trip is surely a better choice as we can have more than enough time to prepare for our new school year.*
5. Good candidates showed a good command of language structures, but with occasional slips.

Weakness

1. Poor understanding of the task.
 - a. Many weak candidates did not use the formal letter format in their answers. They either used the informal letter format or did not have any letter format at all.
 - b. Inappropriate
 - c. Some candidates wrote as though they were writing to a friend.
Examples:
 - *Hi. How are things going on with you?*
 - *We miss you very much. Bye, Bye!*
2. Choice not made
 - a. Some wrote on both venues without clearly stating their choice.
 - b. Others wrote about one place only without stating that it was their choice.
 - c. Some gave all the information to the teacher and asked the teacher to make the choice.
3. Some wrote as though the trip was over (consistent use of the past tense), describing to their teacher what activities etc. were carried out during the trip.
4. Some high-proficiency candidates missed some of the content points because they focused more on elaboration without mentioning the main points given in the rubric.
Examples:
 - *The date is suitable because the trip will be during the holidays. (Date of the chosen trip not mentioned)*
 - *The date for the trip to the seaside is more suitable as some students will not be available from 15th to 17th December. (Date of the chosen trip not mentioned)*
 - *The cost is reasonable / lower than the first trip. (Cost of the chosen trip not mentioned)*
 - *The choice of accommodation was agreed upon. (Kind of accommodation not mentioned)*
5. Many weak candidates merely strung the content points together, mainly the points on the activities during the trip. There was no elaboration whatsoever.
Example:
 - *Activities swimming, boat rides, games on the beach, jungle trekking, campfires.*
 - *I choose trip to seaside because activities like swimming, boat rides, games on the beach, jungle trekking and campfires. Accommodation is camps and cost is RM80.*
6. Language
For the low-proficiency candidates, the requirements of the question were usually sufficiently fulfilled. However, the errors in the language were frequent and serious: subject-verb agreement, prepositions, missing articles, omission of verbs, sentence separation, etc. Fragmented sentences were also quite common.
Examples:
 - *I choice the trip to the seaside.*
 - *I as the monitor want to choice the trip to the city.*
 - *We hope you understand why my class choice this trip.*

- *The costs is RM80 per person.*
 - *The activities is interesting.*
 - *At there, we can do a lot of activities.*
 - *We can go there at 2-4 December.*
 - *They like to live in camps.*
 - *We felt so boring.*
8. Spelling errors
Some of the candidates spelt words according to their pronunciation e.g. other – *ather*, empty – *emty*, average – *erverage*, release tension - *relis tension*, beach – *beech* etc.
9. Direct translation from bahasa Malaysia to English.
This was very obvious in the opening sentence of the letter.
Example:
 - *I as the name above would like to ...*
10. Use of slang
Example:
 - *Our class wanna go to the city.*
11. No attempt / Blatant irrelevancy
There were many candidates who did not attempt this question or merely copied over the text from Question 2 (Summary) and presented it as their answer.

Suggestions To Teachers

1. Expose students to the different formats (letter, speech etc.) that they are required to know.
2. Devote more time on grammar and sentence structures so that the students will be able to write grammatically correct and varied sentences.
3. Teach students how to use the different types of structures appropriate to the tone required in the task
4. Introduce 'peer-editing' in the classroom so that the students learn to identify and rectify errors, thus improving their own linguistic skills.
5. Encourage reading

Suggestions To Students

1. Read the instructions/rubric carefully before answering any question – be sure of the task/format before writing
2. Elaborate on content points so that more marks can be awarded for language.
3. Improve spelling – use a dictionary when necessary.
4. Do not take punctuation lightly. Punctuation errors can be serious errors.

5. Answer all the questions in the examination. Any attempt, however weak, will merit some marks. No attempt = '0' mark.
6. Read widely to improve general knowledge and vocabulary

QUESTION 2: SUMMARY WRITING

Strength

1. Good candidates understood the exact requirements of the task and were able to select the relevant information to summarize the difficulties and dangers
 - *Warren faced when he fell*
 - *Geert faced in his search for help*
2. They made a sustained attempt/noticeable attempt to re-phrase the text with accurate substitution of appropriate words and phrases. Examples:
 - *Geert had found a branch to move the slab but it did not work.*
 - *His left hand became numb as a result of the cold.*
 - *The rock-strewn gully was slippery for Geert.*
 - *His left hand became numb due to hypothermia.*
 - *Warren shivered with cold, trapped in the middle of a rising stream, eight hours away from a camp-site.*
 - *A huge rock pinned Warren's lower body.*
3. Candidates were able to do intelligent and selective lifting of the relevant sections of the text using single word substitution or suitable conjunctions.
4. Candidates could change the pronoun from the first person to the third person.
5. Candidates showed the ability to discern the similarity of ideas, thus avoiding the overlapping of content points.
6. Answers were organized coherently using the appropriate cohesive devices or linkers.
7. Answers were within the stipulated number of words.

Weakness/Common Mistakes

1. Most weak candidates were too text reliant in the summary writing.
2. Some candidates did not understand the requirement of the task and therefore could not identify the relevant points. Many of them included points on the rescue mission.
3. Most candidates were weak in paraphrasing. There were grammatical errors and distorted meaning:
 - a. Rephrasing which causes distorted meaning
 - *The stream was roaring when it rain.*
 - *We walked eight hours to camp.*

- b. Poor reorganization – dropping words indiscriminately
 - *A yabby was chewing my foot and a sure sign of hypothermia.*
 - *The entire rock-strewn gully an ice-skating rink.*
 - c. Inconsistency in the change of pronouns
 - *He hit ground, a huge slab of rock fell on he lower body and legs, trapping her.*
 - *A yabby is chewing your foot.*
 - d. Spelling errors
 - *Banch/brach (branch)*
 - *Montain/moutain (mountain)*
 - *Diffcult/difficult (difficult)*
 - e. Grammatical errors in tenses
 - *He hopelessly trapped...*
 - *The rock seem to shift...*
 - *The stream would soon be fill...*
 - f. Apostrophe 's'
 - *Geert difficulties....*
 - *eight hours walk...*
 - *Geert's set about starting a fire...*
 - g. Punctuation
 - *geert*
 - *warren*
 - *He could hear unmistakable sound of a plane, Geert set about starting a fire.*
4. Candidates copied sentences which conveyed the same idea twice or even thrice, causing them to lose the content marks. This was because only one mark could be awarded for similar points.
Example:
The point: *A huge slab of rock fell on his lower body and legs, trapping him.*
- *The stone pinning him covered most of his lower body up to his waist. He was hopelessly trapped under a rock.*
- The point: *The mountain stream could become a roaring torrent*
- *He knew that a mountain stream could quickly become a roaring torrent. The stream could soon be filled with water rushing down the mountain.*
- The point: *The cold was affecting him.*
- *The cold was affecting him more now. He took this as a sure sign of hypothermia.*
5. Weak candidates resorted to do more or less a complete transcript of the text, i.e. they copied sentence after sentence without a clear break.
6. Candidates attempted to reorganize without understanding the meaning of the sentence. Such mindless reorganizing resulted in fractured syntax or distorted details in the answers.
- *....tried to get signal fire but wet bits of wood hissing.*
 - *He fell into churning pool to break his ankles.*

7. Lifting before and after the stated lines (before line 10 or after line 50); lifting of irrelevant lines with no content points; lifting of irrelevant sections, especially from paragraph 6.
8. Omission of key words which were vital to the content points.
 - *The way up had been strenuous. It would be worse.*
9. Candidates were not able to change the pronouns 'I' and 'my' to 'he' and 'his' respectively. Some candidates mistook Warren as a female character and used 'her' 'she'.
10. Imperfect understanding of the text leading to wrong ideas being expressed when paraphrasing, thus distorting the original meaning.
 - *Geert had been ten times worse than the climb.*
 - *They walked eight hours from the camp-site.*
11. Senseless reorganizing after the opening line.

When Warren lost his grip on a stone outcrop, he...

 - *was a loud crack*
 - *split in a second*
 - *was a large stone slab*
 - *covered most of my lower body up to my waist*
12. Candidates included their own ideas and opinions.
13. Absence of cohesive devices – sequence/logical connectors not used or inappropriate linkers used.

Suggestions To Teachers

1. Train the students to read the rubric carefully. Every word in a summary counts, so every sentence in their answer must be geared towards the task required.
2. Teach the students to scan and select the main ideas from the passage.
3. Help them to differentiate key ideas from supporting details.
4. Teach students to use linking words
5. Give sufficient practice in paraphrasing.
6. Emphasizing the textual connections in the passages read especially in the usage of pronouns and other indicators such as sentence connectors.
7. Give more exercises in the usage of pronouns and tenses. Emphasis should be on how to change from one pronoun form to another.
8. Teach students on how to recognize the main clause from the subordinate clause(s) so that they know how to select the main idea while leaving out the unnecessary details. In other words, teachers have to train students to lift intelligently.
9. Train the students to construct different types of sentences like compound and complex sentences using conjunctions such as 'and', 'but', 'so' etc

10. Give short exercises on summarizing a paragraph before proceeding to the whole text.
11. Encourage the use of dictionaries in the classroom and at home. Teacher must instil in the students the habit of referring to the dictionary for difficult words, and at the same time, have a good grasp of synonyms as this helps a lot in rephrasing.

Suggestions To Students

1. Keep in mind the rubric given so that answers do not become irrelevant.
2. Use only text within the stipulated area as stated in the rubric. Draw lines across to indicate the beginning and the ending of the area where the summary should cover.
3. Do not exceed the word limit given.
4. Students should read extensively to improve their vocabulary. With a wide range of vocabulary, students will be able to paraphrase effectively and concisely. Through extensive reading, they can improve in the language and they will be able to express themselves better.
5. Learn to write the summary using a variety of sentence structures. Practise using simple, compound and complex sentences.
6. Learn how to use sequence and logical connectors.
7. Read through what has been written to detect errors made.

QUESTION 3: CONTINUOUS WRITING

Strength

1. The majority of the students attempted this section.
2. Good candidates were able to use the English language with flair and competence. They have the ability to use precise vocabulary and phrases to show intended meaning such as '*envious*', '*taken aback*', '*stumbled upon*' and '*painful effort*.'
3. They attempted to vary the sentences structures as well as the length. There was shaping in the piece of work.
4. Ideas were generated and were well developed.
5. Generally, meaning was conveyed.
6. Candidates were able to use simple structures quite accurately.
7. Students showed some form of planning and were able to write in paragraphs.

8. Correct spelling
9. To a certain extent, the candidates were able to stimulate readers' interest and sustain interest with the use of dramatic or intriguing introduction to the paragraphs.
10. Some weak candidates attempted complex structures but failed miserably. However, their initiative is recognised.

Weakness

1. High incidences of errors in most of the weak scripts, for example, errors in spelling, tense, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, pronouns etc. These numerous mistakes impeded the reading of the essay.
2. Sentences were mostly simple sentences and in most cases, basic errors were evident.
3. Complex structures that were attempted generally collapsed or faltered thus blurring meaning.
4. Use of simple vocabulary,
5. Wrong choice of words.
6. Some candidates resorted to the use of Malay words.
7. Subject matter was not dealt with in depth.
8. Ideas might be presented but not well-supported with elaboration /examples.
9. Candidates were not able to create interest in their writing due to lack of proficiency in the language.
10. Many candidates were not able to use punctuation correctly, e.g. using lowercase after a full stop. They also used 'i' for / and u for you'. Use of slang i.e. *guy, cute, gonna, wanna* etc..
11. Direct translation from candidates' mother tongue.
12. Some candidates lifted certain sections from the summary passage and added a few lines of their own or changed the names of the characters.
13. Ideas were not organized
14. Tendency to repeat vocabulary and structures. Sometimes ideas were also repeated.
15. Far short of the required number of words

Common Mistakes And Examples

1. Subject-verb agreement
 - " I have a friend. My friend name is Siti, Ani and Mazura."
 - "Japan have...."
 - "Everyone in this world have friends."
 - "I have a friends."
 - "The places is beautiful."
 - "She also give me a spirit in the all subject."
 - "Friends is good for you."
2. Poor use of pronouns
 - "She's job..."
 - "I love they like my brother."
 - "They know angry but i don't mind about they."
3. Influence of mother tongue
 - "I and Ahmad go to school."
 - "I and my friends..."
 - "...we get knows means life."
 - "I want to story about..."
 - "Other than that, we also same attitude."
 - "My friend really-really likes shopping"
 - "I like Japan because weather khatulistiwa."
4. Tense errors
 - I was a good boy before I am a secondary school student.
 - Every person in this world had friends.
 - Last week I become sick and my father take me to the hospital.
5. Errors with Articles
 - Visit to Malaysia is very nice.
 - She is very beautiful woman.
 - At a midnight, I was sleeping fastly.
 - The good friend is someone who will help when we are in trouble.
6. Errors in Punctuation
 - His hobby is collect stamps he also collect coins.
 - Jessheila father work as a teacher.
 - My friends name is Kevin.
 - I cant go fishing because, my father not allow me to he say its very unsafe.
 - My friends are Siva, Devi, Susi, and Peeta they are my best friends.
7. Spelling errors

Dessition (decision), aggreed, futhermore, beutiful, evry, relex, suprise, massage (message), defanatelly(definitely), bussinessman, change(chance), sucess, went(when), friends, combain(combine), minit, rel ise(re l ease), opputiniti, tripe(trip), swimming pull, complet and etc...

8. Verb / Noun Form
 - *We will spent our time joyfully together.*
 - *We must choice friends well.*
 - *Friends can advice you.*
 - *He may not friend you.*
 - *You work hard you will sucess in future.*

9. Weak sentence structures
 - *It can make sick heart.*
 - *In there, we can make more friends.*
 - *I so very like my friend.*
 - *I no got a sister, In my family, I am a smaller.*
 - *She is a beautiful girls, she has one big eyes, a white face, and her*
 - *I was caught last week under the judgement of drug addiction.*
 - *In conclusion, I cannt imagine that how can I live without television.*
 - *To took a rest, I walked through the window side.*
 - *Malaysia live in peace. People here no war no quarrel and no fight.*
 - *I must love my place that I was born.*

Suggestions To Teachers And Students

1. Teach students to plan their work. E.g. mind mapping, brainstorming.
2. Incorporate different teaching strategies to teach writing especially for weak students e.g. parallel writing, paragraph writing, process writing,
3. Cultivate the reading habit to enrich their vocabulary and improve their command of the language
4. Students should be encouraged to write the required number of words, as some wrote far short of the required number of words.
5. Organize the essay in paragraphs.
6. Edit the essay after completing it.
7. More emphasis on grammar and spelling. Have sufficient grammar practice.
8. Journal writing could be a good way for students to express their ideas and by having more writing practice; they may not encounter writer's block
9. Listen to English songs or news
10. Watch English documentaries
11. Students should try to be more ambitious in terms of :
 - use a variety of sentence structures.
 - sophisticated and extended vocabulary
 - interesting expressions