

FORMAT OF THE QUESTION PAPER

This paper consists of two sections - Section A and Section B. Candidates are required to answer questions in both 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. For SPM 2005, the task requires the student to write a letter to a friend to tell him/her about a camp that he/she has attended. The student is expected to provide the teacher with information about the camp with regards to the date, place, duration, number of participants, mode of transport to the campsite, the activities and problems faced at the camp, as well as the benefits obtained. This section is allocated 35 marks.

SECTION B – This section tests 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 topics to write a composition of about 350 words in length. This section is allocated 50 marks.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

On the whole, candidates did not fare as well in this paper as in Paper 2. 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 who scored high marks 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 the intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation and paragraphing. An appropriate tone was also employed.

Candidates with average performance 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 who scored low marks lacked the language competence and gave Sections A and B the minimal treatment. There was a 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 did not attempt the question. However, Section A did offer some opportunity for the candidates to answer because some guidance/key points/words were provided.

DETAILED PERFORMANCE

QUESTION 1: DIRECTED WRITING

Strength

1. This question was attempted by almost all the candidates. Proportionately, candidates scored higher marks compared to continuous writing, being helped by the content points.
2. The candidates demonstrated good understanding of the task through:
 - Correct informal letter format (all elements were included)
 - Tone and style appropriate for a letter to a friend.

Example:

Dear Summer,
Greetings from Kuala Lumpur! How are you?
Has your mother recovered from the operation that
she just had? I hope you and your family are all
well.

3. Points given were appropriately expressed in candidates' own language.
4. Most candidates managed to get all 10 content points. The better candidates were able to elaborate on the points while the weaker ones merely used the points without giving further details.
5. Many candidates were able to use the past tense to describe the camping trip and their experiences during the trip.

Example:

After a quick lunch, we were divided into two groups of 15 people. Soon after, we were provided with numerous building materials such as ropes, giant plastic water tanks and a few plants. With all these items, we were then instructed to build a raft. It was a rather challenging task as none of us had ever built a raft before! Luckily, Juniko from Japan, a former girl-guide member, taught us how to tie different knots to secure our raft. When the rafts were ready, the two teams then had a friendly competition. All team members were asked to board their raft and manoeuvre their raft through the river. It was indeed a comical experience as the other teams' raft fell apart halfway through the race!

6. Precise and varied vocabulary employed. Good candidates showed the ability to use a variety of sentence length and types.

Example:

Throughout the three days, many different activities were held, ranging from team-building activities to physical ones. We were also taught a lot of leadership skills and were also given a workshop on etiquette! But perhaps the activity I enjoyed the most was the ~~orienteering~~ one called 'orienteering' and 'flying fox'. In 'orienteering', the facilitators led us to an unknown location and using only a compass and given bearings, we were to make our way back to our campsite. Our geography skills were put to the test here, just when I thought the holidays were here! I'm sure you have heard of the 'flying fox' activity. I enjoyed it so much and even did it three times because the feeling of 'flying' in the air was exhilarating!

Comment: This candidate has not only used a variety of sentence structures but also precise vocabulary to give a vivid picture.

WEAKNESS

1. Poor understanding of the task.
Weak candidates did not use the informal letter format in their answers. They either used the formal letter format or did not have any letter format at all.
2. Some wrote as though the trip would be in the future (consistent use of future tense), describing to their friend the date, transport, activities, benefits and problems relating to the 3 – day camp.

Examples

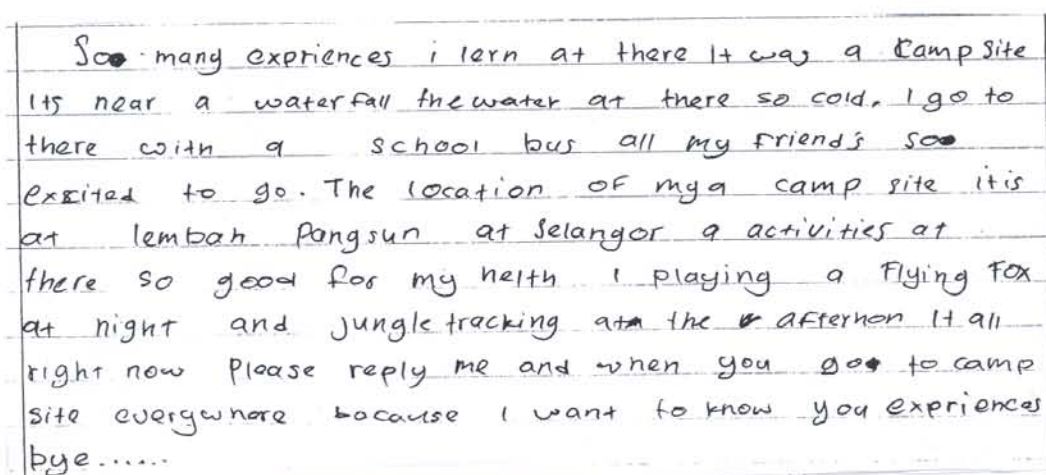
- ◆ *We will go on the 3 – 5 April 2007*
 - ◆ *We will be accompanied by five teachers*
 - ◆ *The activities that will be carried out are swimming and jungle trekking*
3. Some candidates misinterpreted some of the content points.
Content 4 (number of participants) – candidates interpreted this content point as a number on a roll.

Example

◆ 'My number of participant is number one'

- Content 6 (accommodation) – this word was misinterpreted as 'facilities', many candidates failed to get this point.
 - Content 9 and 10 (benefits) – weak and average candidates failed to put forth the idea of 'gained' or 'learnt' something in order to be awarded these two points. Some candidates were so carried away with the 'activity' that they forgot to mention the benefits of the camp.
 - Content 11 and 12 (problems) – these content points were sometimes not awarded as the candidates mentioned the problems before and after the camp. Some candidates were not aware that it was compulsory for them to write about the problems. They wrote about facing no problem while at the camp.
4. Many weak candidates strung the content points together, thus making meaning incomprehensible. There was no elaboration whatsoever.
5. For the low-proficiency candidates, there were serious errors in:
- subject-verb agreement,
 - prepositions,
 - omission,
 - sentence separation,
 - missing articles,
 - word order
 - redundant words

Example:



So many experiences i learn at there It was a Camp site
Its near a waterfall the water at there so cold. I go to
there with a school bus all my friends so
excited to go. The location of my a camp site it is
at lembah Pangsun at Selangor a activities at
there so good for my health. I playing a Flying Fox
at night and jungle tracking at the afternoon It all
right now Please reply me and when you go to camp
site everywhere because I want to know you experiences
bye.....

Comments: There are frequent serious errors of various kinds.

6. Spelling errors

Some of the candidates spelt words according to their pronunciation.

Examples:

- other – *ather*
- release tension – *relis tensyen*
- accommodation – *accommodation*

- definitely – *difinitly*
- flying fox – *flying fock*
- jungle – *janggal*
- swimming – *swimming*

7. Direct translation from Bahasa Melayu to English

Examples:

- *I and my family*
- *tent big*

8. Use of slang

Examples:

- *The guys are cool.*
- *My classmate wanna go to the camp.*

9. No attempt

Quite a number of candidates did not attempt this question or merely copied the rubric and presented it as their answer.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS

1. Expose students to the different formats (letter, speech, article and report) that they are required to know.
2. Devote more time to grammar and sentence structures so that the students will be able to write grammatically correct sentences of various structures.
3. Teach students to use the different types of structures appropriate to 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 and follow the instructions/rubric carefully – be sure of the task before writing.
2. Ensure all content points are used.
3. Elaborate on content points, but do not get carried away.
4. Improve spelling – use a dictionary when necessary.
5. Do not take punctuation lightly. Punctuation errors can be serious errors.
6. Answer all the questions in the examination. Any attempt, however weak, will merit some marks. No attempt = '0' mark.
7. Read widely to improve general knowledge and vocabulary.
8. Organise time well. Candidates tend to provide too lengthy answers for Section A (Directed Writing) at the expense of the other section. Often, irrelevant elaborations are included.

SECTION B

QUESTION 2: CONTINUOUS WRITING

This section tests candidates' ability to produce a piece of continuous prose in accurate Standard English. It also tests candidates' ability to respond relevantly and creatively to a task chosen from a given number of alternatives. Candidates are advised to write about 350 words on one of the five topics chosen. Candidates are also advised to spend about one hour on this section.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE

On the whole, candidates did not perform well in this paper. A significant percentage of the candidates did not have the writing skills required to produce a reasonable good piece of writing.

GENERAL PERFORMANCE OF CANDIDATES ACCORDING TO THEIR GROUPS

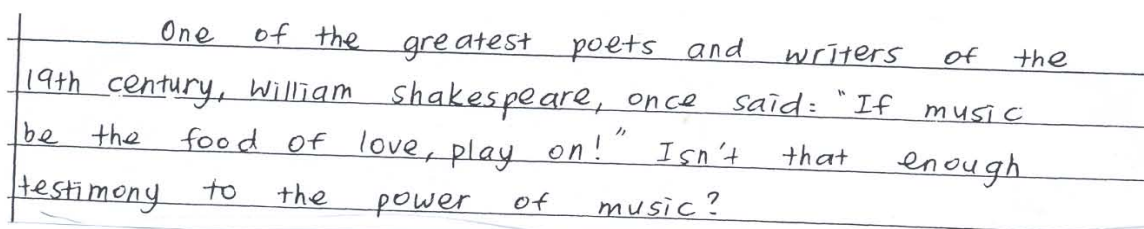
Candidates who scored high marks were able to produce an accomplished piece of writing. Such candidates were at ease with the language and were able to use the language confidently. The candidates displayed very good linguistic ability and were able to address the task accurately and clearly. There was a very high level of accuracy. Vocabulary was precise and some showed sophistication. Candidates were able to use various types of sentences to achieve the intended effect. The writing was coherent with appropriate use of punctuation such as hyphen, colon and semi-colon. Paragraphs were well-planned.

Candidates with average performance tried to respond to the task but lacked the linguistic ability to write effectively. Meaning was generally not in doubt. Candidates were unable to sustain accuracy. Serious errors of various kinds were more frequent. Vocabulary was limited and sentence structures were simple and at times repetitive. Generally, the responses lacked organization, showing lack of planning.

Candidates who scored low marks clearly lacked the language competence to respond clearly. Reading was impeded by a high density of serious errors. Blurring occurred and at times meaning was hardly comprehensible. Subject matter was not well-developed. Very weak candidates did not attempt the question and some merely copied the rubric.

Strength

1. Good candidates were usually able to start with an interesting and accurate opening paragraph.



One of the greatest poets and writers of the 19th century, William Shakespeare, once said: "If music be the food of love, play on!" Isn't that enough testimony to the power of music?

Comments: This is an interesting way to introduce the chosen topic. It engages the reader.

2. Candidates were able to use a variety of sentence structures.

My mother, God bless her soul, was a daughter of a mistress. Grandfather, a wealthy entrepreneur owned a shipping business in Guangzhou, China. He was a flamboyant man with three wives and many mistresses. Even though grandmother was not a member of the Chin family, my mother was treated like a princess. She was named Kuan Yin, after the Goddess of Mercy, and grandfather loved her with utmost affection.

Comments: The candidate has used a variety of sentence structures to make the writing lively

3. Good candidates were able to use precise words to convey the intended meaning.

'What are you doing here?' he repeated, blocking the doorway with his bulk and crossing his arms across his chest.

'We will talk about it over tea,' she snapped back and pushed him aside roughly. He scowled at her back as she carefully dusted the snow off her coat and hung it in the closet. She turned and caught his eye. She grinned teasingly at him and lifted an eloquent eyebrow. 'The usual, then?'

Comments: The candidate has used precise vocabulary like 'bulk', 'snapped', 'scowled', 'grinned teasingly' and 'eloquent' to convey the intended meaning.

4. Candidates were able to address the subject matter relevantly and the reader's interest was aroused and sustained throughout the writing.

Music has evolved since the olden days where classical music was what everyone talked about. Classical music which made Ludwig van Beethoven famous, Johann Sebastian Bach, Joseph Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn and a lot of other composers famous. Then came music of the 60's, 70's, 80's, 90's and now, the 00's. Soft ballads by the Beatles, the Bee Gees and the Carpenters were all the rage during the 70's and 80's and pop music made history during the 90's. Now, rock music is taking the world by storm and bands like Simple Plan, My Chemical Romance, Good Charlotte, Nickelback and Incubus are raking in the millions in terms of record sales.

Comments: Even though there are errors, the candidate is clearly at ease with the language. Candidate has a good knowledge of the subject matter (music). Expressions used are precise.

Weakness

1. There was a high density of serious errors which caused blurring in meaning and in some places, meaning was hardly comprehensible. Responses were mostly disorganized and incoherent.

So, we must keep healthy since young again. Well, a matter that must we know ~~are~~ example are make any work that have benefit is ~~are~~ exercise, planting a plant is vegetables, flowers and many more. Besides that, we must eating that have nutrients for good body. Examples are eat more vegetable, fruit and we must also less eating that have oily, fat, sugar and other. Encourage fruit are orange, for cover fat, and can get a beautiful skin. Papaya for cleans a stomach. Carrot also give vitamin A that kind for eyes and other.

Comments: There is some obscurity. We need to do some reworking before meaning becomes clear. There are various types of serious errors, for example, subject-verb agreement, tense, spelling, etc.

2. There was interference of the first language (Bahasa Melayu) structures.

Healthy body is dreaming everyone else in world but many people not have healthy body. Many people when old, many sickness come back. So, when we old, we must more keep healthy because if we old, the body not strong fighting sickness.

Comments: The structures used show the interference of first language.

3. Weak candidates produced writing that showed limited vocabulary. Some words were imperfectly understood, e.g. *health / healthy, visit / visitor, accommodation / facilities*. Some students resorted to their first language (Bahasa Melayu) when they did not know the English equivalent or spelled them as they would sound in Bahasa Melayu, e.g. *stails, releks, karbohidrat, kolesterol*, etc.

She buy me ~~and~~ a ~~late~~ camera for me and I so happy with this give. At this one week, we speed together with happy ~~by~~ and it was so nice to me because my sister was here. But we didn't fine why she was here and the true is. One day, my sister ask to take a thing ~~from~~ from her bag. I go to get the thing for her and her bag I was see a paper. The paper like an hospital paper and I take and what it was contains about. I was so shocked when I find that sister Jivitha was ~~have~~ ^{have} an brain tumors and I cry when I find it. My family was find it since a ~~ago~~ before this but I didn't ~~find~~ ^{find} it. I go down and ask if it true ^{to my sister} and my sister said it was true that she has brain tumor. I cry when I heard from her mouth and for me my best sister in world is her.

Comments: The candidate is confused with some words, for example "give", "speed", "fine", "went", etc.

4. There were candidates who had problems with sentence separation. Lack of punctuation made reading the script difficult.

at the tomorrow night at 12.00am the robber came again in the time i asleep at the room; but i hear something at down i go down and i see a robber went in my house an steal my mother gold beck i pick up the hand fone and i call my father and my father call the poice, ~~the~~ police came to my house and ~~the~~ the robber cannot ran and the robber has been catch by a poice and my father go back home immediety because ~~he~~ his saw a anything happend to me. ~~to my father~~ Promies to me don want to me alone and when his go to out station.

Comments: The candidate is struggling to communicate. The general idea is seen but weakly expressed mainly due to inability to punctuate.

5. There were candidates who intentionally tried to avoid the purpose of the examination by writing a prepared composition and not addressing the topic given.

When I was in primary school a few years ago I was quite active in sports and games. I was the B division long jump champion and an above average sprinter. So I was chosen to represent the school in long jump and relay in the District Sports Meet. The meet was held over two days. On the first day I did not have any event on. So I busied myself watching the others compete. As kids we were not allowed to go near the VIP pavilion so I had to watch ^{the} proceedings from afar.

Comments: The writing is quite accurate and communication is clearly established. But, the subject matter is totally irrelevant. The candidate had chosen the topic "If you were given a chance to be anybody, who would you want to be and why?", but wrote on a sports meet. He/She has intentionally evaded the purpose of the examination by producing a memorized piece.

6. Some of the scripts were far short of the required number of words. Topics were given only partial treatment and ideas were not well-developed, mainly due to the candidates' linguistic shortcomings. Lack of knowledge of the subject matter was another contributing factor.

No. soalan: B(2d)
If i were given a chance to be anybody, I would want to be a Tun Dr Mahathir Because he have a responsible. He is a powerfull man in Malaysia.
Tun Dr Mahathir is a my idol from i standrd
4. he want Malay be a good for any country.
he want all Malay have a responsible for Malaysian country. Tun Dr Mahathir want all the Malay perfect.
he dont want Malay give a resposh to the any problems.
for any concevt, New Year and merdeka, Tun Dr Mahathir want all the Malay go out

Comments: This is the entire answer. Candidate has written a short piece. Ideas are not developed and only a partial treatment is given.

7. Among the short-comings of the weaker candidates included the following:

- a) Poor or no paragraphing at all. This shows a lack of planning as ideas were not organised.
- b) Candidates had problems spelling some common words, e.g. *goverment*, *develope*, *imediately*, *enviroment*, *verry*, etc. Some of their spelling was influenced by Bahasa Melayu, e.g. *beg* (bag), *relevan* (relevance), *idola* (idol), *balada* (ballad), etc.
- c) Problems with pronouns, e.g. *theirself*, *ourself*, *oneself's*, etc.
- d) Word omission errors, e.g. "*She a active girl...*", "*...she still happy*", "*...she wants me become a doctor.*", etc.
- e) Wrong prepositions, e.g. "*...to study in overseas.*", "*...I waited to my driver...*", etc.
- f) Wrong articles, e.g. "*I got a offer...*", "*After a accident...*", "*.. at the night..*"
- g) Errors in verb forms, e.g. "*..can heard many songs..*", "*do not blamed...*", "*.. he have to working..*", etc.
- h) Inability to punctuate correctly, e.g. using lowercase after a full stop, missing commas, etc.
- i) Influence of SMS language, for example the use of '*i*' for "*I*" and "*u*" for "*you*".
- j) Informal language, for example, use of slang, e.g. *wanna*, *gotta*, *gonna*, etc.

SUGGESTIONS TO TEACHERS:

1. Teach students to plan their essays, 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 among students to enrich their vocabulary and improve their command of the language
4. Train students to write the required number of words.
5. Train students to organize the essay in paragraphs.
6. Train students to edit the essay after completing it.
7. Give sufficient grammar practice to students.
8. Train students to write journals. By having more writing practice, they are not likely to encounter writer's block.

SUGGESTIONS TO STUDENTS

1. Remember to indicate the question number of your answer
2. Students should try to be more ambitious in terms of using:
 - a variety of sentence structures.
 - sophisticated and extended vocabulary
 - interesting expressions
3. The use of correction fluid/tape is not encouraged as writing can be smudged or words omitted.
4. Listen to English songs or news.
5. Watch English documentaries.