



Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) First Language English 0500 / 0990

Writing a summary

Overview

Paper 1, Question 1(f) is a selective summary task in response to Text B

The purpose of a selective summary task is to inform the reader of the key information and ideas they need to understand from the text in relation to the specific focus of the question as set. Writing an effective selective summary involves gathering **only those ideas from the text that are relevant** to answer the question and then organising, reworking and condensing those points to offer a succinct overview. The reader needs to understand key ideas from the text quickly and efficiently, just by reading the answer.

Selective summary task – Paper 1, Question 1(f)

This task assesses skills in **both Reading and Writing** as follows:

Reading:

- **explicit meaning** – show understanding of the information as it is presented in the text and avoid adding personal comments or extending explanations
- **implicit meanings and attitudes** – consider details and hints in the text to work out the meaning they suggest
- **range** – aim to show understanding of a wide range of relevant ideas taken from the whole passage
- **relevance** – pay attention to the focus of the question and make sure that the points written are relevant to that focus
- **selection** – select only the information needed to answer the question and avoid using excess examples or repeating points
- **use** – use the information selected to help the reader understand the central ideas rather than simply repeating or copying sections from the text.

Writing:

- **organisation** – organise the answer logically and helpfully for the reader so that it efficiently communicates the ideas they need to understand
- **appropriate use of a range of own words and structures** – help the reader to understand the points selected by reworking the language of the original text to communicate ideas clearly and concisely.

Tips for writing a selective summary

Before writing a response:

- read the question carefully to highlight the **focus** of the selective summary – for example, the question may ask for only **disadvantages** of a topic being discussed in the text
- revisit the text to underline and/or make notes of all the potentially relevant ideas
- review the ideas selected to check that they are relevant, complete and distinct. For example, aim to identify any repeated points or examples of the same thing that could be covered in one over-arching, 'umbrella' point
- organise content to decide on the best way to group and/or order relevant ideas. Numbering the points will help to highlight the most efficient route through the answer and cover all of the relevant ideas within the 120-word guidance.

After writing a response:

- read back through the answer to check that the ideas would be clear to anyone who had not read the text
- check that sections have not been copied from the text
- look back at the plan to check all relevant ideas have been included.

Example task

The question below is annotated with some guidance for candidates to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This information is not given to candidates in the examination.

Once you have read through **Text B**, read the instructions for **Question 1(f)**.

The **purpose** of the response is to identify and outline only the information you need to answer the question.

The **audience** for the response is an adult who has not read this text.

The response to this question needs to be in the **form** of a summary so the register required should be **formal** and the style **concise**.

Question 1(f) is the **selective summary**. You will answer this factually and concisely.

Read **Text B**, and then answer **Question 1(f)** on the question paper.

Question 1

(f) According to Text B, what are the various attractions of cycle touring?

You must **use continuous writing** (not note form) and **use your own words** as far as possible.

Your summary should not be more than 120 words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 5 marks for the quality of your writing

Paying attention to the guidance for word number will help learners to plan their time in the examination and target the requirements of the question more effectively.

The response to Question 1(f) is marked for content and for the quality of your writing, so you will need to check that your ideas would make sense to someone who had not read **Text B**.

Once you have completed your answer, skim read it to make sure that you have followed the guidance to **use your own words where you can** (without changing the meaning).

The guidance will help you to remember that you should **aim to complete your response in 120 words or fewer**.

Text B: Is cycle touring right for you?

Riding around the world seems like a romantic way to travel – just you, your bike, and the open road, tackling whatever comes your way. However true that is, there’s a flip side to cycle touring: the dark, cold, wet side, where misery lurks.

Even sitting in your office beforehand, dreaming about getting out and seeing the world, that rough side can seem scary. Before I left home, I wasn’t sure I’d last more than a couple of weeks on the road. I nearly didn’t go.

5

Instead of looking forward to those cosy campsites in the middle of unspoilt forests, I pictured myself at the side of the highway in the rain, with a broken bike and no way to fix it. Rather than those perfect rest days spent lounging on quiet beaches, I imagined terrifying nights in the tent and bandits in the hills. Not realising I’d be talking about life, love, and politics with welcoming locals, I had worried about loneliness.

10

Perhaps, like me, you find it impossible to imagine that your regular old body, the one that struggles just walking up a steep hill, could handle riding the vast distances involved in a bike trip. Truth is, we discover that we’re capable of so much more than we ever thought possible.

15

At the end of a long day, I was often tired, sore and dreading getting back on the bike the next morning. But after a night’s sleep, I’d feel excited and ready to climb back in the saddle to see what the day would bring.

Before leaving on tour, I’d often wondered if cycle touring might turn out to be boring – all that pedalling. I turned out to be right on this one: some days on the bike are dull. But the boredom is far outweighed by the excitement of seeing flowers and animals that you’d never notice from a car.

20

Cycle touring’s not for you if you want to check off every famous sight in your guidebook. A typical cycle tour is about the small things: the tiny villages you pass through, other cyclists who help you along the way, the incredible (sometimes incredibly bad) meals you eat in a roadside shack in the middle of nowhere.

25

Cycle touring does have its ups and downs (pun intended), but the triumphs of travelling by bicycle far outweigh the inconveniences.

Example Candidate Response – high

Examiner comments

Question 1(f)

Want to know more about the attractions of cycle touring? If so, read on.

1

Firstly, cycle touring is a peaceful and calm way to clear your mind. You get the chance to go to an adventure and explore the world. It offers you magical experiences such as enjoying your time in cosy campsites of forests and resting on tranquil beaches.

2

In addition, it's a great way to meet people and have conversations with friendly locals or cyclist that assist you during the journey.

3

Similarly, it's a great way to boost your self-esteem as you get to understand that you can achieve unthinkable goals. Also, it offers memorable experiences like eating meals in 4 strange places and passing through small villages, and you can enjoy the wildlife and flowers. 5

Whatever its highs and lows, you'll find the advantages of cycle touring far outweigh the disadvantages.

1

The candidate has focused their response on the attractions of cycle touring, reorganising ideas to begin with a useful overview of key attractions drawn from different parts of the text (mark scheme points 8, 3, 4 and 5). Note how some of the points related to those opportunities to escape that cycle touring offers have been combined for concision.

2

Focus has now moved on to the people who cyclists might meet on a tour. In this section, the candidate is helping the reader understand how the social aspects of cycle touring might appeal. (Mark scheme points 6 and 11 have been skilfully combined here and linked logically to point 7).

3

The candidate is beginning to use connecting words to move the reader helpfully through the relevant information.

4

The candidate groups 'memorable experiences' together here, covering mark scheme points 13 and 10 and hinting at point 12, although it is not clear to the reader the particular attraction of the food itself.

5

The candidate does not take the opportunity to identify precisely how 'enjoying wildlife and flowers' would be a particular attraction of cycle touring according to the text.

Reading Level 5: Demonstrates understanding of a fairly wide range of relevant ideas. Points are skilfully selected to demonstrate an overview.

Writing Level 3: Expression is clear, fluent and mostly concise. Some efficient organisation.

How the candidate could have improved their answer

Question 1(f)

The candidate has interpreted the purpose of the task as more persuasive than the task itself requires or invites and as a result includes a redundant introduction and conclusion. Whilst the word guidance has been kept in mind and excess material avoided, the addition of an introductory comment has taken up space in the response that might otherwise have been used to outline or clarify potentially relevant points. The addition of a conclusion mirroring that of the original text also leads to a slight loss of focus. The response is however clear and mostly in the candidate's own words where appropriate, with some useful organisation of ideas.

Common mistakes

Question 1(f)

Candidates can sometimes lose sight of the focus for a question, for example, by offering both what would and would not appeal about cycle touring, when only the attractions have been asked for.

Inefficient planning of an answer leads to some candidates attempting to simply track through the passage chronologically, repeating most of the information offered rather than selecting, recasting and using in their response just that which is relevant to answering the question. Answers approached in this way are often overlong or stop abruptly at 120 words before a range of relevant ideas have been communicated.

Copying sections straight from the text can make a response unclear. For example, there are likely to be times when an explanation taken straight from the text is neither concise nor complete. Recasting the material using their own words and sentence structures as appropriate will help candidates to offer a clear and concise response, showing a secure understanding of both text and task.

Candidates can sometimes lose sight of the text, forgetting that the task is testing their Reading skills, for example, offering their own opinion outside of the text, adding additional detail from their own knowledge and/or drifting into discussion of ideas unconnected to the material in the passage.

Examination preparation

Question 1(f) Selective summary

Candidates should practise selecting only relevant information from a text, as well as explaining it to others who have not read that text. Opportunities to target and develop skills include working with a range of texts – spoken or visual, as well as written – and working with peers to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of example responses – both written and oral.

Candidates should be encouraged to rehearse and extend their summary skills in real life situations, for example by recapping points covered on an aspect of a topic in a previous lesson.

The role of efficient planning and editing in timed conditions should be explored and explained.

Example activities taken from 0500 / 0990 scheme of work (for examination from 2024): Writing summaries.

Assessment objectives (AO)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
<p>AO1 Reading</p> <p>R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings</p> <p>R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes</p> <p>R5 select and use information for specific purposes</p> <p>AO2 Writing</p> <p>W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect</p> <p>AO3 Speaking and Listening</p> <p>SL2 present facts, ideas and opinions in a cohesive order which sustains the audience's interest</p>	<p>Developing logically sequenced summary responses</p>	<p>Learners identify relevant material in a text for a specific question. They extract the material as a list of points (paraphrased). Then they agree on a grouping and order for the points and write a paragraph.</p> <p>Learners change a narrative version of a journey to a summary of its dangers, re-ordering the material to group similar items.</p> <p>Learners are given a paragraph with a jumbled sentence sequence and have to reorder it logically or chronologically.</p> <p>Learners practise reordering jumbled reports so that the logical, chronological order is restored.</p> <p>Useful resources include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • jumbled sentences in paragraphs • jumbled reports, e.g. for science experiments, made by cut and pasting in Word docs • narrative account of a dangerous journey from a course book, media or online source • Paper 1 texts and Paper 2 texts.

Useful resources

The [School Support Hub](#) provides teachers with a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE.

Teaching resources

- Scheme of Work
- Coursework Handbook
- Speaking and Listening Handbook
- Learner Guide
- Writing a Summary
- Example Candidate Responses
- Resource Plus
- Lesson planning
- Teaching Tools
- Writing skills text types and lesson plans

Published resources to support Cambridge IGCSE First Language English is on the Endorsed resources tab of the syllabus page on our public website [here](#).

Please note: The website links listed below are useful resources to help with the study of the Cambridge IGCSE First Language English selective summary task questions. Cambridge International is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained in these sites. The inclusion of a link to an external website should not be understood to be an endorsement of that website or the site's owners (or their products/services). The website pages referenced in this guide were selected when this document was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked and only the particular resources are recommended.

<http://websummarizer.blogspot.com/2013/01/summaries-in-everyday-life.html>

A website giving examples of summaries in everyday life.

www.grammarly.com/blog/how-to-write-a-summary

A website with guidance on how to write a summary, including examples and a step-by-step guide.

www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/gist-summarizing-strategy

A website with lesson plans and summarising strategies.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEwmts9MqGs

A video on summary writing skills, including a step-by-step guide.