

Specimen Paper Answers – Paper 1

Cambridge IGCSE™ / Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language 0510 / 0511 / 0993 / 0991

For examination from 2024



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Introduction

These specimen answers have been produced by Cambridge ahead of the examination in 2024 to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge IGCSE English as a Second Language 0510 / 0511 and Cambridge IGCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language 0993 / 0991. We have selected questions from Specimen Paper 1.

The marks given are for guidance only and are accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could be obtained.

The mark schemes for the Specimen Papers are available to download from the [School Support Hub](#).

2024 Specimen Paper 01

2024 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 01

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the [School Support Hub](#).

Details of assessment

All candidates take three components. Candidates will be eligible for grades A* to G.

All candidates take:

Paper 1 2 hours
 Reading and Writing 70%
 60 marks
 Candidates respond to six exercises: four reading and two writing
 Structured and essay style questions
 Externally assessed

and:

Paper 2 Approximately 50 minutes
 Listening 30%
 40 marks
 Candidates listen to five exercises of short and longer texts
 Multiple-choice style questions
 Externally assessed

Marks for the Speaking component do not contribute to the overall grade candidates receive for the written components. Instead, where candidates perform to an appropriate standard, certificates record separately the achievements of candidates, with grades 1 (high) to 5 (low) for speaking.

Candidates must also take:

Paper 3 Approximately 10–15 minutes
 Speaking Separately endorsed
 40 marks
 Candidates take part in an interview, short talk and discussion
 Internally assessed and externally moderated

Exercise 1

Read the article about an unusual type of plant called the living stone plant, and then answer the questions.

All about living stone plants



Living stone plants don't really look much like typical plants, but resemble instead small stones lying on the surface of the ground. Their scientific name, Lithops, comes from a word in the language of Ancient Greece meaning 'stone'. These interesting plants are common in the wild in South Africa, but they are sold in garden centres all over the world.

So what does a living stone plant look like? It has two thick leaves in the shape of an oval with a gap between them, which creates the impression of a couple of stones lying closely together. This part of the plant is called the head. The leaves store a large amount of water, which make them potentially useful for a variety of wildlife. A fat layer of outer skin prevents insect attacks, however. Also, the grey or green colour of the leaves helps to emphasise their stone-like appearance, which reduces the chances of them being eaten by small animals.

They are popular houseplants as they grow fairly easily indoors and are quite unusual. Although they sometimes grow in grass in their natural habitat, these tiny plants are generally found in deserts, so it is best to grow them in sandy soil. They are also often found growing naturally on and around different types of rocks, which provide shade for part of the day. It is therefore important to protect the plants from strong sunlight when they are not in their native environment.

The majority of living stone plants use a long root, called a tap root, to reach down into the ground to locate water. There are also some types of living stone plants which don't have a tap root and these plants rely on absorbing mist through their leaves to get the majority of the water they need. Although the tap roots can be up to 15 centimetres in length, the section of plant that is visible generally grows to a height of only two centimetres. It's crucial for home gardeners to use a container of sufficient depth, as most of the plant is located under the ground.

Living stone plants grow incredibly slowly both in the wild and at home, so it is essential to be patient. The good news is that healthy plants can live for up to fifty years. The plants flower annually, producing seeds which, in their natural environment, survive in the ground for months while they wait for suitable growing conditions. As soon as rain begins to fall, new plants start to grow.

Question 1

In which country can you find living stone plants growing naturally?

Specimen answer

South Africa

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The candidate selects the correct detail from the text and answers briefly.

Question 2

What is each plant's pair of leaves known as?

Specimen answer

The head

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The candidate selects the correct detail from the text and answers briefly.

Question 3

How does the thick skin of the leaves protect the plant?

Specimen answer

Prevents insect attacks

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The candidate selects the correct detail from the text including the verb. Verbs are not always required in brief answers, but candidates should be prepared to use them when the wording of the question demands.

Question 4

What is the main source of water for living stone plants without a long root?

Specimen answer

mist

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The candidate selects the correct detail from the text and answers briefly.

Question 5

How tall is the part of the plant that is above ground?

Specimen answer

Two centimetres

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The candidate selects the correct detail from the text and answers briefly.

Question 6

What advice does the writer give to people who want to grow living stone plants?

Give **three** details.

Specimen answer

in sandy soil

protect plants from strong sunlight

be patient

Mark awarded = 2 out of 3

Examiner comment

The wording of the question demands that the first three options on the mark scheme must contain a verb. The candidate selects the correct detail from the text for the first response, but it is incomplete without 'grow' or a suitable synonym and cannot be credited. The second and third responses are accurately lifted and presented.

Total marks awarded = 7 out of 8

Common mistakes and general guidance for Exercise 1

In the first five questions of Exercise 1, candidates need to give brief answers but must ensure that key words are included, in particular adjectives and comparatives, which often convey essential information.

Candidates should not include too much information from the text in addition to the brief answer required as this may contain detail which could make the response incorrect.

Candidates should be aware of distracting information used in the text. It is advisable to look at the whole paragraph in which the key detail is located and not just the single phrase or sentence which appears to contain the answer.

In the final question, candidates should be prepared to review the article or text as a whole because key information may be found anywhere in the text. Candidates sometimes paraphrase the wording in the text and lose the precise meaning. In addition, it is essential to read the question carefully and use a verb if required.

Answers should be written briefly; full sentences are generally not required.

Exercise 2

Read the article about four young people (A–D) who enjoy cooking. Then answer Question 7(a)–(i).

My hobby: cooking

A Zac

It was my grandmother who got me into cooking. She taught me all the basics, and even told me about some of her favourite old recipes – it was quite funny hearing about the things they used to eat back in her day. She got a lot of pleasure from being able to share this with me. I never imagined I would discover so much about social history – you know, how people's tastes have really changed over the generations. Some of the things that were common back then actually sounded unpleasant, if I'm honest! If you don't happen to have a grandmother with suitable cookery skills, and you want to get into cooking, then food blogs can identify things that are fun to make as well as eat. They can be particularly helpful if you're attempting something a bit tricky or complicated.

B Shelly

The first time you make a new recipe, you'll most likely stick to the instructions pretty exactly and avoid any unnecessary stress. For beginners, after all, even the most basic things can be confusing, with lots of techniques and specialist cooking terms – there's a lot to take in! But once you are more confident, then like me you'll start to discover how easy it is to substitute ingredients, using milder or stronger spices according to taste, for example. There are all sorts of things you can do, and who knows – it might end up being better than the original! Of course, that's not always going to be the case, but when a dish doesn't come together as I'd expected, I've generally found there's still something to be learned from the process. And if not, well, put it down to experience and move on!

C Mustafa

I've been cooking for a while now, and while I enjoy it, I admit to having had quite a few disasters! I'd wrongly assumed that because my dad's a chef, it would be something I'd pick up in no time. But over time I've realised that although being a good cook isn't something you're born with, it is definitely a rewarding skill that can be acquired. The added bonus for me has been getting to try some interesting food along the way. Some of my favourite things to cook are exotic dishes I've had the chance to try elsewhere, and I sometimes look for recipes for those dishes. When I read them, however, I often have the feeling that all the stages involved, or the long list of ingredients, means it's just not practical to have a go myself. Occasionally I do, but even if the end result is something to be proud of, I'm never sure it's worth the hard work, to be honest.

D Becca

I've got a typically busy teenage lifestyle, and most of my day-to-day activities require concentration, or a degree of careful thought. However, when it comes to cooking, it's the repeated actions, especially simple ones like chopping or peeling, that offer me a complete contrast. I have a supermarket near my home, which has whatever I need when I decide to make something special. But of course, being able to create your own original dishes just based on what's available at home – that's something else altogether, and it's what I'm aiming to be able to do. One of my favourite recipes is for an unusual sweet-and-sour salad I tried on a family holiday in Thailand. I make it quite regularly, and then it's like I'm back in a beach-side café, in the sun – perfect!

For each statement, write the correct letter A, B, C or D on the line.

Question 7

Which person gives the following information?

(a) the idea that attempting complex-looking recipes is too much effort

Specimen answer

C

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to look for the key words in the question. There are two separate ideas here to focus on for a correct answer, namely 'complex looking' and 'too much effort'. Candidates need to read the text and find wording that matches these expressions. In this question they are spread over lines 7 to 9 in text C. The complex idea is conveyed by 'all the stages involved...long list of ingredients', and the effort idea by 'I'm never sure it's worth the hard work'. It is important not to 'word spot' – matching individual words from both the question and text. The obvious distractor in this question is 'attempting something a bit tricky or complicated' in text A. This is incomplete and incorrect because there is no idea of 'too much effort'.

(b) a recommendation for a good source of inspiration

Specimen answer

A

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The key words in the question are 'a recommendation' and 'good source of inspiration'. These most accurately match the expression in the text 'food blogs can identify things that are fun to make'. The answer which fits with a recommendation is in text A with 'food blogs' and the second idea of 'good source' is an opinion best matched with 'are particularly helpful'. This exercise tests the candidates' ability not only to select factual detail, but also to recognise opinions and attitudes, which are assessment objectives in the syllabus.

(c) a description of the effect on the writer of eating a certain dish

Specimen answer

D

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates should identify the two ideas – firstly to select a particular dish and secondly to find the effect of it on the writer. Both these ideas are covered in text D by 'unusual sweet and sour salad' and 'it's like I'm back in a beachside café'. There are distractors in text C, 'exotic dishes', which contains the word spot 'dish(es)' and 'using milder or stronger spices' in text B. But neither choice covers the description of the effect on the writer and, therefore, are incorrect choices.

(d) a suggestion of how to adapt a recipe to individual preferences

Specimen answer

B

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to be prepared to look for suggestions in the texts as well as factual detail. The other key words in the question are 'adapt a recipe' which has its match in text B with 'substitute ingredients using milder or stronger spices', and also 'individual preferences' which is paraphrased as 'according to taste'. There is a distractor in text B with the wording 'create your own original dishes just based on what's available at home'. This could match the idea of 'adapting a recipe' but there is no idea of 'individual preferences'.

(e) an understanding that made the writer enjoy cooking more

Specimen answer

C

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The key words in the question are 'an understanding' and 'enjoy'. Candidates should then read to identify synonyms or a paraphrase which conveys both ideas. The answer here is text C with the expressions 'I've realised' which covers the first idea of understanding and 'rewarding skill' which conveys the idea of enjoyment. There are distractors which imply the enjoyment of cooking in texts A 'food blogs can identify things that are fun to make as well as eat' and in text B 'it might end up being better than the original'. However, neither text conveys the idea of an 'understanding' that the writer had.

(f) the wish to be able to cook without having to follow recipes

Specimen answer

D

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to read the texts very carefully here because the word 'recipes' also appears in texts A and B. The emphasis has to be on recognising the writer's 'wish' that they can cook without the need to 'follow recipes'. Both these ideas are conveyed in text D with the wording 'what I'm aiming to be able to do' and 'create your own original dishes'. The word 'recipe' is an obvious distractor together with the expressions 'make a new recipe' in text B and 'look for recipes' in text C, but neither are correct without the 'wish' idea.

(g) some advice about how to benefit from a negative situation

Specimen answer

B

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to look for a piece of advice. This needs to convey the idea of how something positive has been gained from a negative situation and must include both ideas. This is paraphrased in text B with the wording 'something to be learned from the process' and 'when a dish doesn't come together'. There is a strong distractor in text C with 'I admit to having had quite a few disasters' but there is no detail to convey the 'benefit' idea and so candidates need to look elsewhere for the correct answer.

(h) something unexpected the writer learned from some recipes

Specimen answer

A

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The question contains two ideas. From the texts, candidates have to find information which means 'something unexpected' and what the writer 'learned'. The paraphrasing which matches these details is in text A – 'something I never imagined' and 'discover so much about social history...how much people's tastes have really changed over the generations'. There is a distractor in text B with the expression 'it might end up being better than the original' which could convey an unexpected benefit, but is incomplete because there is no idea of what that is.

(i) the idea that the writer finds the process of cooking relaxing

Specimen answer

D

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to focus on the word 'idea', which signifies that there is implication in the answer. Candidates should remember that recognition of implication along with suggestions, opinions and attitudes is tested in this exercise. The answer is found over two sentences in lines 1–3. The key word is 'relaxing' but to find the exact idea requires extended reading from 'most of my day-to-day activities require concentration' through 'repeated actions' to 'offer me a complete contrast'. Candidates may be tempted to match the wording 'find...cooking relaxing' in the statement with the first sentence in text B which has 'avoid any unnecessary stress'. However, the earlier part of the sentence specifically refers to the 'first time you make a new recipe' and not to cooking in general.

Total marks awarded = 9 out of 9

General guidance for Exercise 2

For each question candidates should

- underline key words in the question. It is particularly important to recognise those words which indicate that the answer could be in the form of an opinion, attitude or implied meaning.
- search for synonyms and paraphrasing in the text which match the wording in the question but avoid 'word-spotting' in both question and text.
- read more than one sentence around the potential answer. Errors occur when a section of the text is selected which refers to only one part of the question.

Exercise 3

Read the article about a recent lifestyle trend in which people choose to live in very small houses, and then complete the notes.



Tiny homes

Around the world, people live in all sorts of homes, from palaces to tents. But have you heard of something called the 'tiny homes trend'? If you're unfamiliar with the term, it refers to the choice that some people make to live in a particularly small home. Although tiny homes are too small to suit everyone, the idea of living in one is growing in appeal. This is partly due to the fact that tiny homes can be easily moved from place to place by truck, although of course, people should consider the potentially high cost of the fuel needed to transport them. This cost will vary depending on the distance that has to be travelled to reach the new destination.

Living in a small space can mean that people may want to make some changes. For example, it encourages you to get rid of unnecessary possessions, and that is actually a big part of the attraction for many. And when you take into account the fact that there has been increased media interest in the idea, you can see why more and more people are considering this way of life, and are planning to move into one.

In the past, tiny homes tended to be built by individuals, with varying degrees of experience, rather than by professional builders. In recent years, though, this has changed, because many companies now specialise in building them. Something that may be an issue, however, is that when it comes to tiny home construction, not every region has building regulations. No one wants to end up with problems that have to be fixed, or a number of parts that need replacing, after the builders have finished!

When thinking about moving a tiny home to a new destination, it is not always straightforward to connect to a range of services. Homes of any size generally need to have access to things like power and water, and making sure that these are available will naturally be a priority for a lot of people. It is also worth taking into account something that may have persuaded many people to invest in a tiny home in the first place – the desire to leave a smaller carbon footprint. One way of achieving this is for owners to install solar panels to provide at least some of their power needs. Depending on the local climate, owners may require some sort of air conditioning equipment, which is a sensible idea as it can be tricky to control the temperature inside these properties. As with all types of building, getting a balance between keeping warm and having enough fresh air is important. It creates a comfortable space to live in while maintaining a healthy environment.

Imagine you are going to give a talk about tiny homes to your classmates.

Use words from the article to help you write some notes.

Make short notes under each heading.

Question 8

Disadvantages of tiny homes:

Specimen answer

- *high cost of fuel to transport*

- *not every region has building regulations*

- *not straightforward to link of services*

Mark awarded = 3 out of 3

Examiner comment

The candidate has selected and written three correct answers. In the first response, the pronoun 'them' is not included but it is not necessary because the expression 'tiny homes' is in the heading and the answer follows on accurately from this. The second response is correct as per the mark scheme. The final response does not include the expression 'a range of' but it is bracketed in the mark scheme and so is not required. The candidate is credited with full marks for this question. The omission of 'them' and 'a range of' does not affect the marks here, but it is recommended that candidates should not routinely leave out words and expressions in case they are a key element of the answer.

Question 9

Reasons why tiny homes are popular:

Specimen answer

- *moved from place to place by truck*

- *encourages you to get rid of unnecessary possessions*

- *desire to leave a smaller carbon footprint*

- *many companies now specialise in building them*

Mark awarded = 3 out of 4

Examiner comment

The candidate has selected and written three correct answers, namely responses two, three and four. The first response has not been credited because the key word 'easily' is not included.

Total marks awarded = 6 out of 7

Common mistakes and general guidance for Exercise 3

The exercise requires brief notes as answers. However, candidates often provide answers that are **too** brief and omit key words. Special care is needed to include these key words, especially verbs, comparatives, adjectives and expressions such as 'lots of', which are often essential to match the precise meaning in the text.

By contrast, some candidates exceed the space provided on the question paper by answering with a full sentence. This is not a mistake in itself, but the more words written means that there is a greater chance of an error.

In their answers, some candidates tend to change the wording in the text and risk losing the exact meaning. There is no requirement to paraphrase the expressions from the original text in this exercise.

Occasionally, candidates are unable to separate two different answers and supply two on the same line. If this is the case, a maximum of one mark can be awarded.

There are two questions with two different headings in Exercise 3, both testing understanding of the same text. Candidates need to ensure that answers are placed under the correct heading.

Exercise 4

Read the blog written by someone who studies wildlife in cities, and then answer the questions.

Urban ecology

by Josh Taylor

I work as an 'urban ecologist', which involves studying how wildlife is affected by rapid, widespread urban development. This knowledge is used to advise planners on how to develop our cities in a way that allows wildlife to exist alongside the human population. It's perhaps not something you've heard of, after all, urban areas are the last places most people connect with animal conservation. That's certainly the impression I regularly get from those I speak to, at any rate. So I'm always happy to talk to anyone who shows an interest in the species that share our parks and public spaces. The variety of wildlife that can be found on our doorsteps is amazing!

Unlike many conservationists or ecologists, I've always felt comfortable in urban environments. Growing up in the suburbs meant my friends and I got to know every part of our city. Of equal importance to me, however, was having access to the extensive woods just a bike ride from my neighbourhood. My parents often took me there so I could burn off some energy and have the freedom to explore. As I got older, having easy access to these quite different environments helped inspire me when I was thinking about my future. Then I found a college that offered an urban ecology degree course and it seemed like the perfect combination. My decision was made!

I thoroughly enjoyed my course, and am lucky to have been involved in a range of interesting projects ever since – working with giraffes in Tanzania, or urban populations of butterflies in the United States, for example. But it's also the colleagues on any project who make it special. Many I've worked with have made important contributions to the world of animal conservation. Some are even experts whose research findings were covered in my degree textbooks! When I started my first project, as you might expect, I was constantly seeking second opinions, but the encouragement I received means I now trust my own judgement. And that's important if I'm going to be valued by other members of the team.

I'm now at the stage where I run my own projects, but that hasn't always been the case. In fact, like many graduates, I started out by taking on the role of technician, doing the routine and less interesting parts of project work. Having a fairly low salary is a bit of a disadvantage, but it gives you great opportunities for improving the techniques you've been taught. Before too long, you'll be in a position to start taking on more responsibility. In the beginning though, you'll do things like data entry, and checking and setting up equipment, which almost everyone's bound to have done already.

I love my job, but I appreciate that it might not be for everyone. For instance, every project is a new puzzle, with a ton of information to collect and read, often on paper. And it's important – you could well be looking at ways to protect a species that might otherwise be threatened by a new construction project, for example. And some things can't be rushed, despite the pressure you could be under from a building company, for example, or even a local authority. Some of the resources we have include satellite images and pretty advanced IT packages, but the majority of the work can only be done by someone outside, often standing around in all weathers. But for me, that's fine. Spending the day stuck in an office in front of a computer, on the other hand – now that's what I'd call a nightmare!

26

Question 10

How do people usually react when Josh explains his job to them?

Specimen answer

A

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

At the start of the first paragraph, Josh gives some detail about his job, beginning with 'I work as an urban ecologist'. The key details which precisely fit the ideas in the text about people's reactions to Josh's job are 'It's perhaps not something you've heard of' and 'Urban areas are the last places most people connect with animal conservation' with 'That's certainly the impression I get from those I regularly speak to...'. All these details are linked even though they are separated over 5 lines. Candidates should identify the key words from the question and be prepared to search for the answers at various points throughout the paragraph. In the incorrect option B, although the wording 'occupation' does match the idea of 'career' in the question, there is nothing to indicate that people think it is not worthwhile. In the statement in option C and in the first paragraph, the word 'share' appears. Candidates need to be aware that making a quick judgement based solely on 'word spotting' may not be effective. The statement 'species that share our parks and public spaces' is written from the point of view of Josh and contains no idea of people's reaction.

Question 11

What does Josh say influenced his choice of career?

Specimen answer

C

Mark for = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates should identify key words from the question, namely 'influenced' and 'career'. The correct answer is option C. In the text, Josh twice mentions that where he lived gave him 'access' to 'extensive woods' and 'different environments'. These details are linked to the idea of his career with the accompanying observation 'helped inspire me when I was thinking about my future', which is a paraphrase of the wording of the question. Option A is not correct because, although he had 'early adventures' in 'every part of the city' with his friends, there is no mention that they were an influence on his choice of career. In option B, there is no indication that his family loved the natural world, simply that they went there with him 'to burn off some energy'.

Question 12

In paragraph 3, Josh mentions some colleagues to demonstrate how...

Specimen answer

B

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

The key expression in option B for candidates to identify is 'gain some confidence' and the paraphrase in the text which matches that is 'the encouragement I received means I now trust my own judgement'. The statement in option A is not accurate in that the colleagues did make contributions, but rather 'to the world of animal conservation' generally and not specifically to Josh. The final sentence in the third paragraph supports the view that the encouragement from the colleagues was important but not that they worked together well as a group, which is the statement in option C.

Question 13

What does 'it' refer to in line 26?

Specimen answer

A

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

In this type of question, candidates may have to read both before and after the pronoun given in the question. It may help if they try to substitute each option for 'it' in the text and see whether the replacement makes sense. Option C does not follow grammatically and the whole sentence is a repetition of the same idea. In option B, in the text there is no sensible or logical connection between 'a low salary' and 'improving techniques', although from the wording of the text, 'it' could grammatically refer to the salary. Candidates need to look more towards the earlier part of the paragraph in order to find the phrase 'taking on the role of technician' in option A, which makes sense and is grammatically correct when replacing 'it' in the text.

Question 14

Josh suggests that his job suits ...

Specimen answer

B

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

This is a more challenging item and candidates should be aware of the key word 'suggests' in the question. This signifies that the candidate needs to be aware of implied rather than factual detail. This is also an example where reading the whole paragraph is important to appreciate the distinction between the options. In option C, technology is mentioned 'some of the resources we have include satellite images...' but that sentence concludes with a 'but' clause which means that option C is not correct. There is also no suggestion of anyone preferring to work with technology. Close reading of the text is required to eliminate option A with the expression 'Some things can't be rushed, despite the pressure you could be under' implying that a lack of patience could be counter-productive. Candidates need to join two separate statements in the text to arrive at the correct answer, which is option B. The first sentence in the paragraph combines the detail 'I love my job but I appreciate that it might not be for everyone' with the final sentence 'Spending the day stuck in an office...that's what I call a nightmare'. This is reinforced by the detail 'the majority of the work can only be done by someone outside, often standing around in all weathers'. There is the implication through all this that the job would suit a physically active person.

Question 15

What was Josh's main reason for writing this blog?

Specimen answer

B

Mark awarded = 1 out of 1

Examiner comment

Candidates need to be prepared to consider the whole text for this type of global reading question. The key word here is 'main' as there are elements of all three options in the text. In the first paragraph, Josh states 'I'm always happy to talk to anyone who shows an interest in the species that share our parks and public spaces', implying that option A could be a possibility. Similarly, with option C, there is mention of conservation projects in a positive light but more from the point of view of Josh's involvement rather than encouraging others. However, the **main** reason is option B, because throughout the text, Josh writes about his growing up and going to college, his projects abroad, relationships with his colleagues, present career and his overall opinion of the job. All these details support the statement that the main reason for writing the blog is to offer a personal account of his experiences.

Common mistakes and general guidance for Exercise 4

Candidates should be reminded that as well as factual details, ideas, opinions and implied meaning can also be tested.

For each statement, candidates should identify key words from the question. These are often helpful in deciding what type of information to look for.

Candidates should avoid 'word spotting' and understand that correct answers may often be found over separate lines and not from matching individual words. Key information can be a paraphrase of the wording of the question.

Candidates should not decide on an answer from reading just one sentence. It may be necessary to study a larger section of the text to check whether original statements are qualified or even contradicted.

Exercise 5

Question 16



You recently bought an item online. There was a problem with it.

Write an email to a friend about the problem.

In your email you should:

- explain why you bought the item
- describe the problem with the item
- say what you are going to do about it.

Write about 120 to 160 words.

You will receive up to 6 marks for the content of your email, and up to 9 marks for the language used.

Specimen answer

Hello Pedro

How are you? I'm sorry that I haven't written, I had studied for my exams and also had a problem with an item that I bought.

I needed to buy a headphones for my games console because my little brother broke my old pair. It wasn't really his fault as I had left them lying around. I always love to buy my things online because the ordering and delivery are so easy...in fact, they arrived good and early the next day!

I was really excited to open them and they looked fantastic. But guess what? I tested them and I couldn't hear anything. I tried again but still no sound. It was then I noticed that a cable was not properly connected. I was so disappointed!

I guess I'll have to contact the company to send me a different headphones.

I hope that you never have a problem like that! Really looking forward to seeing you soon!

Your pal

Luc

Mark awarded for Content = 5 out of 6

Mark awarded for Language = 7 out of 9

Total marks awarded = 12 out of 15

Examiner comment

Content: The task is clearly fulfilled and the candidate has covered the three bullet points in the question. There is complete focus on the task with no irrelevant detail. The candidate has achieved a very good sense of audience with the reader of the email by addressing the friend directly with the brief greeting and apology in the opening paragraph and again with the personal note at the end. Similarly, the rhetorical question 'But guess what?' strengthens the writer's relationship with the recipient of the email.

The style is consistently informal and appropriate, with expressions of genuine emotion, and there is a clear change of feelings from the positive to the negative in the third paragraph. Initially there is enthusiasm at the idea of opening the purchase, 'really excited', which changes to despair, 'so disappointed', when the headphones do not work properly.

Overall, the content is well developed with additional depth of material in the descriptions of how the headphones had been broken and what the exact nature of the problem was with the new pair. The final bullet point is addressed, albeit briefly. In order to obtain full marks for Content for this email, the candidate needed to supply a little more detail, for example, by explaining how they would contact the company or providing an alternative solution, such as a refund of the money.

Language: The content is communicated throughout with a high level of language accuracy. There are very occasional errors, such as the incorrect tense 'had studied' in the first paragraph and the repeated 'a headphones' but they do not impede communication. The candidate has made good use of cohesive devices and a variety of sentence length is achieved through the use of 'as' and 'because' which helps to offer extended explanation. The candidate has used a wide range of vocabulary with 'not his fault', 'lying around', 'good and early' and 'not properly connected', but the whole piece would have benefited perhaps from more attempts at less common expressions. There is also a tendency to start a new idea with the repetition of the pronoun 'I' and the email would have been improved by using a wider range of complex structures.

Exercise 6

Question 17

Your class recently took part in a one-day sports festival for local schools. The organisers want students' opinions about the sports festival, and you have been asked to write a report.

In your report, say what was enjoyable about the sports festival, and suggest how it could be improved.

Here are some comments from students in your class:

It was a chance to meet students from other schools

There weren't many new sports to try.

I learned a lot about fitness.

We spent too much time listening to instructions.

Now write a report for the organisers of the sports festival.

The comments above may give you some ideas, and you should also use some ideas of your own.

Write about 120 to 160 words.

You will receive up to 6 marks for the content of your report and up to 9 marks for the language used.

Specimen answer

A one-day sports festival was held recently for all our local schools.

The aim of the organisers was to involve as many children as possible and they certainly achieved this with a large variety of activities on offer. There were team games as well as individual competitions. At the end, the students could sign up for local clubs and continue to practise what they had learned. Many students gratefully seized this opportunity.

There was food and drink provided not only for the competitors but also for the many parents and friends who came to watch. The refreshments was excellent and the seating at the tables was well planned so that the competitors could become acquainted with students from other schools.

The only negative part was the speeches which were a little long and boring, something which could be improved in the future.

Overall, the festival was a great success and the organisers hope to repeat it next year.

Mark awarded for Content = 6 out of 6

Mark awarded for Language = 8 out of 9

Total marks awarded = 14 out of 15

Examiner comment

Content: The task is fulfilled, and the content is fully relevant throughout with a report which covers a variety of key areas of the day including the activities, the refreshments and the socialising possibilities as well as a comment on the speeches. There is an excellent sense of purpose throughout and the candidate is very aware of writing for an audience that comprises of mainly students but also adults. There is a strong and definite judgement on the whole day in the concluding paragraph and this appropriately summarises the overall impression of the festival. There is only a slight reference to the ideas expressed in the prompts with the negative aspect of ‘too much time listening’ but, overall, the candidate has supplied their own independent thoughts. The style is suitably formal and is consistently appropriate for report writing with factual observation on many different aspects combined with the writer’s own opinions and thoughts. For each aspect covered, the candidate has added detail to explain why the initial comment has been made and, overall, the content is well developed. The concluding paragraph neatly summarises the overall impression of the writer with an optimistic thought on the future of the event

Language: The content is communicated clearly, and the candidate has used a range of common vocabulary but has also attempted a wider range with less common expressions such as ‘gratefully seized this opportunity’, ‘become acquainted with’ and the passive ‘could be improved’. The report contains a greater range of structures, such as ‘the aim of’ and the linking words ‘not only ...but also’ and ‘as well as’. The level of accuracy is very good with only occasional spelling errors ‘varity’, ‘competetions’ and ‘well planed’. None of these, however, impede communication and the report details are clearly conveyed.

The organisation is effective with a brief but appropriate introductory sentence to outline the subject of the report.

Common mistakes and general guidance for Exercise 5 and Exercise 6

Content: In Exercise 5, there are three bullet point prompts and candidates should address all of them in order to fulfil the task. If one or two bullet points are not addressed, then the range of marks available for Content is restricted.

Some candidates tend to introduce too many different ideas in their writing when it would be better to concentrate on fewer and develop them in greater depth.

Candidates should avoid overlong introductions and conclusions, which are usually pre-learnt, and have no relevance to the requirements of the task.

Candidates may like to plan their work, perhaps just noting a few simple ideas, to avoid crossings out and alterations which often affect cohesion and result in unclear development.

There should be a very clear distinction between the informal style and register of the email in Exercise 5 and the more formal writing for the article, report or review in Exercise 6.

In Exercise 6, candidates are asked to express their own views and so should try and avoid copying the wording in the four prompts without developing them with independent thought and ideas.

Language:

Candidates should demonstrate their language ability using a range of simple and complex grammatical structures and a range of vocabulary. Their response should be well organised and clearly sequenced. The use of linking words and cohesive devices must be appropriate to the task type.

The main language errors tend to be incorrect use of verbs. The most common errors are where the candidate is not accurate in their use of tenses, especially between the past and present, as well as non-agreement of subject and verb.

Candidates should ensure that their ideas are clearly separated and well organised overall. This is particularly important in Exercise 5, where each bullet point requires separate detail and, in Exercise 6, where there are often different viewpoints to express on the topic.

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