

Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language 0510 / 0993 (for examination from 2019)

Writing a review

The main purpose of a review is when you want to give your opinion about something, for example, a film, book, game, product, restaurant, concert, etc. The review needs to engage the audience from the beginning to the end and there should be a conclusion. Unlike in a news article or report, candidates can be subjective and give their own opinions in the answer to the exam question – this can include both positive and negative opinions. The review should include all relevant details. The review will include examples and evidence to support the opinions expressed, e.g. give an example of good (or bad) acting.

Content

Content covers:

- **relevance** (i.e. whether the piece fulfils the task and the awareness of purpose / audience / register)
- **development of ideas** (i.e. the detail/explanation provided).

Language

Language covers:

- **range** (i.e. complexity of vocabulary and sentence structure)
- **accuracy** (i.e. grammar, spelling, punctuation and text organisation).

Tips for writing a review

Language

Think about the audience that the review is for. The tone of the review can be personal and informal. If writing for adults the style may be more formal than if writing for teenagers. But in both cases you should sound professional and as if you know about the subject.

A review should:

- inform (give details, e.g. film title, actors, dates),
- describe (e.g. some details of the plot, actors, special effects, music)
- analyse (e.g. give opinions and examples)
- advise (e.g. make a final judgement about what you thought of the film).

It will include vocabulary related to films, acting and performance.

The candidate should use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Organisation

A review should include:

- information about what is being reviewed
- clear opinions and interesting points about the film
- final opinion and possibly provide a rating.

Example task

This is an example of a **Paper 1 Exercise 6** task. We have annotated the question below 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 the question instructions, you will need to **re-read** the comments provided as these may give you some ideas.

The **purpose** of the response is to write about a film. The readers need enough information to inform them about what they can expect to see and what you thought of it, in order to decide if they want to see the film.

The **audience** for the response is the students and possibly their parents.

The comments may give you some ideas or you can use your own ideas.

The response to this question needs to be in the form of a **review** so the register is personal, but it is for a school magazine so do not be too informal.

The number of words suggested is for guidance: write **about** 100–150 words. Paying attention to the guidance for word limits will help learners to plan their time in the examination and target the requirements of each question more effectively.

You recently saw a film. You have now decided to write a review of the film for the school magazine.

Here are some comments from other students who saw the film:

It was too long and boring.

I loved the special effects.

I didn't understand the story.

The actors were really good.

Write a review of the film giving your views.

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

Your review should be between 100 and 150 words long.

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

The 2019 Specimen Paper 1 and Mark Scheme are available at www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Example candidate response and examiner comments

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<p><i>Jurassic World</i></p> <p>You might have heard of Tyrannosaurus Rex, but in this new film, the dinosaurs are bigger, scarier and hungrier than ever! ¹</p> <p>At first, ² I believed that things might work out for the best for the new, updated Jurassic World but it isn't long before the dinosaurs are attacking and people are running for their lives... ³</p> <p>For me, the best part of this movie was the pterodactyl ⁴ attack because I thought the special effects made the dinosaurs look realistic. ⁵ I also thought the actors were really good and made the story believable and exciting. ⁶</p> <p>Overall, ⁷ I would recommend this film because it was a gripping story, had great acting and was fast-paced. If you like films that have amazing special effects, make you jump and have surprise endings, then this is the film for you! ⁸</p>	<p>¹ The candidate uses a wide range of varied sentence structures with punctuation.</p> <p>² The candidate uses linking words throughout the piece to effectively organise the writing.</p> <p>³ An excellent sense of purpose is shown here. The candidate effectively summarises the story but maintains suspense for the audience.</p> <p>⁴ Less common vocabulary used and correctly spelled.</p> <p>⁵ Content is developed but at this point it becomes a bit like a list. This could be developed to be more complex in structure and use of vocabulary.</p> <p>⁶ Some varied vocabulary used here but this could be more complex.</p> <p>⁷ Effectively organised and sequenced. The writing is structured to be clear and easy for the reader to follow.</p> <p>⁸ The candidate uses a wider range of complex sentence structures here which shows a higher level of sophistication.</p> <p>Mark for Content = 5/6 Mark for Language = 5/6</p> <p>Total mark awarded = 10 out of 12</p>

How the candidate could have improved their answer

Overall this was a good answer with some good examples of complex sentence structures and some vocabulary closely linked to the topic of films in general and this specific film, e.g. 'special effects' and 'pterodactyl'. The answer was well-organised and had cohesive linking devices to indicate order and clear structure. The candidate clearly understood the purpose and audience of the piece. The candidate used some varied punctuation which added to the structural features of the writing but to improve this further the candidate could use more complicated punctuation such as semi-colons.

This answer could have been improved, if the candidate has used a wider range of vocabulary consistently. At times the vocabulary could have been more complex to engage the reader more. Similarly, the candidate could have varied the sentence structures throughout the piece as a whole, by placing longer sentences next to shorter sentences for dramatic effect.

Common mistakes

When writing a review, candidates sometimes forget that, whilst this is their opinion, they should go beyond saying that a film was 'good' or 'boring'. Candidates will often decide to write a review of a film that they didn't like without fully considering why they didn't like it, or if they have enough to say about what made this film sub-standard. Candidates should attempt to select a specific scene or a specific aspect of the film that they liked or disliked and make sure that they have a justified reason for this.

Similarly, candidates will sometimes forget that a review is about recommendation and is also designed to be read by people who haven't seen the film yet. They will sometimes just retell the story which is not a review but a summary. Candidates should avoid going into lots of detail about the specifics of the story and should instead focus on the main story-line of the film to give a selective overview of this.

Examination preparation

In class learners should practise writing reviews.

After brainstorming for ideas, planning and drafting is completed, learners compose their own work. Final drafts can be shared with each other for help with proof-reading and peer evaluation. Learners can read some good examples aloud to the class for discussion and peer feedback.

Assessment objectives	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
<p>W1 communicate information/ideas/opinions clearly, accurately and effectively</p> <p>W2 organise ideas into coherent paragraphs using a range of appropriate linking devices</p> <p>W3 use a range of grammatical structures accurately and effectively</p> <p>W4 show control of punctuation and spelling</p> <p>W5 use appropriate register and style/format</p>	<p>Writing strategies: Writing a review</p> <p>Learners are able to plan and draft writing.</p> <p>Learners are able to understand the purpose, audience and form of texts and use this in their own writing.</p> <p>Learners are able to use specific vocabulary to give opinions about the game.</p> <p>Learners are able to organise their writing into a coherent structure that matches the appropriate</p>	<p>Starter: Write the title of the short film you will show in this lesson. For example: 'Alma' www.youtube.com/watch?v=irbFBqI0jhM&t=260s 'Francis' www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9xX6lQ_gdY 'Paperman' www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRI2OlyNMuc</p> <p>Please note: The website links in this document provide direct access to internet resources. The website pages were selected when the guide was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked.</p> <p>Ask learners to mind-map ideas about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what they think the film might be about and why• what genre this might be• what characters they might expect to find in the film• what predictions they would make and why.

Assessment objectives	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
<p>for the given purpose and audience</p>	<p>style and format of writing a review.</p>	<p>Extension (optional): Play the learners the soundtrack of ‘Alma’ or ‘Paperman’ without showing them the video, as they have interesting soundtracks. Ask them to add to their original mind-map to see if their ideas have developed or changed. Learners share their ideas with the rest of the class.</p> <p>Play ‘Francis’. Stop at 5 mins. 19 secs and learners predict what they think happened at the end of the story. Record some ideas and then play the rest of the film to see if any of the learners were close to what actually happened.</p> <p>Development: Matching activity. Learners match the correct words to the correct definition. Learners can then use this vocabulary in their reviews to develop the complexity of their language.</p> <p>Main task: Watch the film in class and remind learners that they will be writing a review of the film for the school magazine where they give their views.</p> <p>Ask learners to select three key parts or plot-points in the story and then summarise the story in 25 words. Remind them that they shouldn’t give away the ending or too much detail. They then choose two things that they liked or disliked, e.g. the soundtrack/music, the camera angles, the cinematography, the plot and give a reason for each. They could focus on one moment from the story that they really liked/disliked and give a reason for this judgement.</p> <p>Learners draft their piece, ensuring that they structure this using linking devices such as ‘Firstly’, ‘In my opinion’, ‘Similarly’, ‘In conclusion’, ‘Overall’. Ensure that learners understand the target audience and the formality that this requires.</p> <p>Encourage learners to stay within the word count of 100–150 words for Core candidates or 150–200 words for Extended candidates.</p> <p>Extension (optional): Play two of the videos and ask learners to evaluate which one they prefer, providing reasons for their opinions throughout.</p> <p>Plenary: Learners read each other’s writing to help with proof-reading and suggestions for improvement. They could specifically focus on improving vocabulary and structure.</p>

Useful resources

The **School Support Hub** at www.cambridgeinternational/support 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 (for examination from 2019)

- Scheme of Work
- Speaking test video
- Writing a report
- Writing a review
- Writing an article
- Learner guide
- Specimen Answers Paper 2
- Speaking Test Handbook and audios
- Example Candidate Responses

Cambridge First is a handbook for teachers preparing candidates for Cambridge English: First (also known as First Certificate in English (FCE)).

www.bbc.com/education/guides/zqr2xnb/revision

This website provides revision and exam preparation for students to help develop their skills and build their confidence in writing different forms of non-fiction writing.

Please note: The website links listed provide direct access to internet resources. Cambridge Assessment International Education 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 were selected when this document was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked.

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