

Cambridge IGCSE / IGCSE (9–1) English as a Second Language 0510/0511 \ 0993/0991 (for examination from 2024)

Writing a review

Overview

The main purpose of a review is to give your opinion about something (e.g. a film, website, video game, product, restaurant, concert, etc.) and to say whether you would recommend it to the readers and why. The review needs to engage the audience from the beginning to the end and there should be a conclusion. Unlike in a 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:

- Task fulfilment (i.e. whether the piece fulfills the task, how relevant the content is and an awareness of style, register, purpose and audience).
- Development of ideas (i.e. the detail/explanation provided).

Language

Language covers:

- Range (i.e. complexity of grammatical and lexical structures).
- Accuracy (i.e. the level of grammatical and lexical accuracy, the type of errors and whether these impede communication).
- Organisation (i.e. whether ideas are organised and sequenced effectively, the range of linking words/phrases and other cohesive devices).

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
- your review should be informative, persuasive, and engaging
- a review should include functional language to express the following:
 - to inform (give details about, e.g. the location, the author, what something looks like, etc.)
 - to analyse (give opinions about the positive and/or negative points)
 - to advise (make a final judgement and provide recommendations to the reader).
- the review should also include topic related vocabulary (e.g. films, restaurants, concerts, etc.)
- avoid writing very simple sentences with simple repetitive vocabulary (e.g. nice).

Organisation

A review should be divided into paragraphs. Link the ideas in each paragraph using a range of linking words/phrases appropriate for this style (e.g. what's more, that's why, as well as, etc.).

One way to structure your review is to:

- provide information about what is being reviewed (e.g. a course, something you've bought, a museum, an event you went to, etc.)
- give your opinions and/or highlight interesting points about some aspects (e.g. the facilities of a museum, the special effects in a film, the quality of food/service in a restaurant, etc.)
- give your final opinion and recommendations.

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 **task** and all the **instructions**, you should also read the **comments**. Before you start writing, **plan** how many paragraphs you will need and what ideas you want to include in each paragraph.

The **purpose** of this review is to write about a new shopping centre. The reader should be informed about what you think the positive and negative points are and whether you would recommend the shopping centre.

You recently visited a new shopping centre in your town. You have decided to write a review of the centre for your school magazine.

Here are some comments about the new shopping centre from other young people:

It's easy to get to.

Everything seems quite expensive.

It's a good place to meet friends.

We couldn't find a good sports shop.

Other students from your school are the intended **audience** for this the review.

You can use some of the ideas from the **comments** in your review, but you should expand on them and/or include other **ideas of your own**.

Now write a review of the new shopping centre for your school magazine, giving your views.

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 review, and up to 9 marks for the language used.

The response to this question needs to be in the form of a **review** for a school magazine, so the **register** should be **informal to semi-formal** but should avoid language that is too idiomatic and colloquial.

The number of words is for guidance: write **about 120 to 160 words**. Paying attention to the guidance for word limits will help you to plan your time in the examination more effectively.

Example candidate response and examiner comments

Example Candidate Response – middle	Examiner comments
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>A new shopping centre</i></p> <p>1 A shopping centre is a place where people visit to buy clothes, food as well as furnitures. 2 It is not only used to purchase things, others can go there to meet friends as well as to get fresh air.</p> <p>The new shopping centre in our town that was recently opened overcame many problems that we had at the beginning. 3 We do not need to travel to other towns to purchase things as a result this saves time and money. Moreover it is a good place to meet friends as we will have a variety of shops that we can buy food to eat as well as to do 4 window shopping.</p> <p>5 However everything that is sold there seems quite expensive therefore people don't usually go there as the spending takes them out of budget. 6 Moreover many shops that we also need they are not yet there, as a result people are forced to change their plans of purchasing.</p> <p>7 In a nutshell the shopping centre really helped us, although there are some loopholes, which we belive they will be fixed as time goes on.</p>	<p>1 The candidate begins their review with an introduction highlighting the role that supermarkets play for local residents in general.</p> <p>2 The candidate attempts some more complex structures with a varied level of success.</p> <p>3 The candidate shows a good sense of purpose in this paragraph. The candidate also tries to engage the reader by introducing the idea of overcoming problems, which are later listed in the same paragraph. However, the candidate merely lifts the ideas from the prompts and there is little expansion here.</p> <p>4 There are some attempts at less common vocabulary (e.g. 'window shopping.', 'In a nutshell' etc.)</p> <p>5 The candidate introduces the negative points in this paragraph by using 'however'. The ideas are again mostly lifted from the prompts with little development.</p> <p>6 The candidate uses a range of linking words to link their ideas within paragraphs (e.g. 'as well as', 'therefore'), but also to introduce a new idea at the start of the paragraphs (e.g. 'However'). Some of these linking words are rather formal for this style however (e.g. 'Moreover') and this may also have a negative effect on the reader.</p> <p>7 The review is clearly structured and ends with a concise conclusion. However, it is not very persuasive and lacks a clear recommendation from the candidate.</p> <p>Mark for Content = 4 out of 6</p> <p>Mark for Language = 6 out of 9</p> <p>Total mark awarded = 10 out of 15</p>

How the candidate could have improved their answer

The example task shows a reasonable attempt at a review. The response is clearly organised into paragraphs and generally fulfills the task. The introduction could have been more closely linked to the shopping centre being reviewed and included more factual information (e.g. the location, when it was opened). The conclusion is engaging because of the candidate's choice of vocabulary but lacks a clear persuasive recommendation. Instead, the reader is left to make their own decision about whether it is a good idea, or not, to visit the shopping centre.

The candidate makes a good attempt at the appropriate style and register. However, some of the choice of linking words and other vocabulary makes the review sound a bit too formal at times (e.g. 'moreover', 'purchasing') and this may have a negative effect on the target audience (i.e. other students). Also, the candidate does not introduce any ideas of their own and relies heavily on the ideas from the prompts, with little expansion.

The candidate tends to list the positive and negative points, but the whole review could be more persuasive and does not always engage the reader. The candidate could have included a personal experience that happened while they were visiting the centre, focused on fewer aspects (e.g. the suitability of opening hours, the quality of other facilities, the attraction for young shoppers, etc.), and expanded on those. The use of rhetorical questions and the inclusion of emphasis would have achieved the desired effect (e.g. But do shoppers really want to..., The last thing anyone needs is to..., But it was the outstanding service that made us...).

The candidate attempts some more complex vocabulary suitable for this style (e.g. 'In a nutshell', 'as time goes on.') and includes some topic related vocabulary (e.g. 'window shopping.', 'budget.'). but, on the whole, the vocabulary used tends to be rather common (e.g. 'buy', 'food to eat', 'shops'). The structures also lack complexity. There is a good level of accuracy and the meaning remains clear throughout despite the occasional awkwardness in expression (e.g. 'the spending takes them out of budget.', 'which we believe they will be fixed').

Common mistakes

When writing a review, candidates sometimes forget that they should go beyond just saying that something is 'good' or 'boring'.

Candidates will often decide to write a review which is a mere description rather than an evaluation and they, therefore, don't always consider the reasons why they like(d) or dislike(d) something.

Candidates should attempt to select a specific aspect that they liked or disliked and make sure that they provide a justification for this.

Similarly, candidates will sometimes forget that a review is about providing a recommendation and is also designed to be read by people who aren't familiar with the place, product, or film that is being reviewed.

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.

Classroom activities

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
AO2 Writing W1 communicate information, ideas and opinions	Writing strategies: Writing a review Learners are able to plan and draft writing. Learners are able to understand the purpose,	Starter: Write the title of the film you want learners to review on the board. <i>For time constraints, it might be advisable to show a trailer of the film rather than the whole film.</i> Learners mind-map ideas about: <ul style="list-style-type: none">what they think the film might be about and why

Assessment objectives (AOs)	Learning objectives	Suggested teaching activities
<p>W2 organise ideas into coherent text using a range of linking devices</p> <p>W3 use a range of appropriate grammatical structures and vocabulary</p> <p>W4 use appropriate register and style for the given purpose and audience</p>	<p>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 film.</p> <p>Learners are able to organise their writing into a coherent structure that matches the appropriate style and format of writing a review.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what genre this might be • what characters they might expect to find in the film. <p>Play the trailer and ask learners to check their predictions in pairs before checking with the whole class.</p> <p>Extension activity: Learners can watch the whole film for homework and check if their opinion of the film has changed, or not.</p> <p>Development: Matching activity. Learners match the correct words to the correct definition. Learners can use this vocabulary in their reviews to develop the complexity of their language.</p> <p>Main task: Play the trailer again and remind learners that they will be writing a review of the film for a school magazine where they will give their views.</p> <p>Learners summarise the plot in 25 words. Remind them that they should not give away the ending or too much detail.</p> <p>Learners 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 120 to 160 word count.</p> <p>Extension (optional): Play two different trailers/music video clips and ask learners to evaluate which one they prefer, providing reasons for their opinions.</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 other structures.</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 and learning resources (for examination from 2024)

- Scheme of Work
- Writing a report
- Writing a review
- Writing an article
- Writing skills lesson plans
- Specimen Paper Answers
- Example Candidate Responses (January 2025)

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.

[B2 First](#) is a handbook for teachers preparing candidates for *Cambridge English Qualifications: B2 First*. Pdf and digital versions are available.

[Writing a review](#) This *BBC Bitesize* 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.

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