

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9 TO 1)

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Paper 0627/01  
Reading Passages

## Key messages

Candidates should ensure that they read all questions carefully and take careful note of specific instructions, such as 'using your own words' or 'select **one** word'.

Candidates should take note of the number of marks available for each question – if there are two marks they should look for two discrete points.

Candidates should check their work carefully to avoid unnecessary errors, especially in **Question 2** where there are fifteen marks awarded for Writing.

In **Question 1(f)** candidates should only select language choices from the lines of the passage specified in the question.

In **Question 2** candidates should read the question carefully to ensure that they adopt an appropriate style and register.

In **Question 2** candidates should select relevant ideas from Passage B and evaluate them in response to the task set, using the specified format and voice.

In **Question 3(c)** the candidates should use the bullet points to ensure that the response covers all the assessment objectives but may choose to interweave their comments on language, structure and techniques throughout the response.

## General comments

There was a small entry for this November session. Examiners noted that most candidates made some attempt to write a relevant response to every question on the paper, although a minority did not attempt all of the tasks. Although most candidates had clearly been appraised of the specific requirements of each task, a few candidates misunderstood what they were required to do. This was often simply the result of not reading the question carefully enough.

The texts used on this paper proved effective and elicited positive responses from candidates. Although Passage A, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, was written in the nineteenth century, almost all candidates were able to respond with some understanding to **Questions 1(a) – 1(f)**. Passage B, *Aviation is fast approaching the post-pilot era*, and Passage C, *London sees the R101*, were drawn from the twenty-first century and twentieth century respectively and proved more accessible for many candidates who appreciated the contrasting ways in which the writers conveyed their views and ideas about the future developments of transport.

Examiners reported seeing some impressive work on this paper, especially in **Question 1(f)** where there was some perceptive analysis of Hardy's language, and in **Question 3(c)** where some candidates exhibited mature control of the comparison of the writers' views and ideas in Passages B and C.

Most candidates used their time effectively so that they could spend more time on the questions which are worth more marks. The length of their responses to some of the lower tariff questions suggests, however, that a minority of candidates may be spending too much time on these questions in **Question 1**. Centres are advised to ensure their candidates have plenty of practice in effective use of time so that candidates spend time on each question commensurate with the marks available.

The majority of candidates seem to have followed the order of the questions on the paper. The low tariff questions in **Section A** are designed to build on one another and provide a solid foundation for the analysis required in **Question 1(f)**, and **Questions 3(a) – 3(b)** are designed to lead in to the evaluation and comparison of Passages B and C in **Question 3(c)**.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

**Question 1** was based on Passage A, an extract from *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy. Most candidates found it accessible and were able to understand and follow the narrative.

**Question 1** is broken down into several low tariff questions, **(a) – (e)**, worth between one and four marks up to a total of fifteen. These questions test a candidate's ability to select relevant details from the text and interpret them, as well as commenting on the writer's use of language in specific lines. **Question 1(f)** is a more extended response to the writer's effects and is again based on specified sections of the text.

**(a) (i) Using your own words, explain what was unusual about the weather.**

Most candidates gained the one mark available for this question and were able to explain that the weather was unseasonably sunny. Where a candidate did not get the mark for this question, it was usually due to a failure to use own words, instead copying out 'exceptionally bright for that time of year'. Candidates could get the mark for a partial lift of the word 'bright' but needed to use their own words to demonstrate clear understanding of the whole phrase.

**(ii) Using your own words, explain why Lucetta and Elizabeth looked out of the window.**

The majority of candidates gained the one mark available for this question by explaining that they heard a noise, or that they noticed strange patterns/shadows on the ceiling. Where a candidate did not get the mark for this question, it was usually due to a failure to use own words.

**(b) Using your own words, explain what impression of the machine you get from paragraph 2, 'It was the new-fashioned ... Charing Cross Railway Station.'**

Most candidates were able to gain at least one mark or the full two marks on this question by offering impressions of the machine being modern, unusual or attracting attention. Occasionally candidates only offered one discrete point for this two mark question.

**(c) Using your own words, explain the meaning of the following phrases as they are used in the passage:**

**(i) 'agricultural implement' (line 7)**

This was another high scoring question. Most candidates were able to explain both parts of the phrase correctly as a tool or machine used for farming. Where a candidate explained part of the phrase they were able to access one mark. A few candidates misinterpreted the term 'agricultural' in the passage as being linked to 'culture'.

**(ii) 'magnified enormously' (line 12)**

Candidates found this part of the question slightly more challenging. Many were able to offer a meaning for 'magnified' and gain one mark, but a number of candidates did not address the whole phrase. Some candidates referred to other phrases in the passage to attempt to explain the meaning, such as 'grasshopper and shrimp' but this was rarely helpful.

- (d) **Re-read lines 19–22, ‘Elizabeth left the window, went to the back of the room, and stood as if absorbed in the panelling of the wall. She hardly knew she had done this until Lucetta, animated by the sight of Farfrae, spoke out: “Let us go and look at the instrument, whatever it is.”’**

**Using your own words, explain how the writer uses language to show how Elizabeth and Lucetta respond to Donald Farfrae.**

In this question, candidates were to explain the differing responses of Elizabeth and Lucetta to Donald Farfrae. They could gain up to four marks for relevant explanations, or two marks for explanations and two marks for supporting quotations. They could not gain marks for quotations unless they supported a relevant explanation. Where candidates lost marks, it was because they picked out relevant quotations without offering any explanations, or described the content of the passage rather than interpreting the effects. A significant number of candidates were unable to explain that Elizabeth reacts shyly while Lucetta is clearly excited.

- (e) **Re-read lines 32–38, “‘Stupid? O no!’ ... added apologetically.’**

**What impression does the writer give of Donald Farfrae at this point?**

The majority of candidates found this question challenging and were unable to offer impressions of Donald Farfrae’s character beyond his interest in modern methods and machinery. Few candidates were able to read more deeply into this section of the text to appreciate his serious nature, his regret for the loss of traditions or his courteous behaviour towards the two women. As this was a three mark question, candidates should have attempted to offer three discrete impressions.

- (f) **Re-read paragraph 3, ‘The farmers crowded ... agricultural piano,’ she said’ and paragraph 7, ‘They examined it ... hummed song went on.’**

**Explain how the writer uses language to show:**

**what the machine looks like  
how people respond to it.**

**In your answer you should select powerful words and phrases and explain how the writer has created effects by using this language.**

Fifteen marks were available for this extended response on the writer’s effects. The specified sections of the text offered candidates a wide range of language choices and techniques to explore. Any choices and comments which focused on the bullet points in the question and offered explanations of their use were rewarded. It was gratifying to see that, for the vast majority of candidates, this nineteenth century passage proved accessible and interesting with even the weakest responses offering some relevant comments.

The strongest responses made wide-ranging and judicious language choices focusing on the descriptions of the machine using musical instruments, or familiar household objects, such as ‘salt-spoons’. Many candidates offered perceptive analysis exploring the use of ‘hornet, grasshopper and shrimp magnified enormously’ as emphasising the intricate and detailed design of the machine. This was then linked to the description of it as ‘an upright musical instrument with the front gone’ as indicating that the workings of the machine were in full view. Many candidates commented on Hardy’s use of familiar objects, such as ‘agricultural piano’ and ‘revolving salt-spoons’, to describe the ‘strange’ machine allowing the reader to fully understand its unfamiliarity to those inspecting it so closely. Candidates also commented perceptively on the second bullet point, citing the use of the triplet ‘farmers crowded around it, women drew near it, children crept under and into it’ as evidence that it was fascinating to everyone, regardless of age or gender. The curiosity engendered was further explored through analysis of phrases such as ‘examined it curiously’, ‘to master their simple secrets’ and ‘pushing his head into the internal works’. Common weaknesses included selecting language choices but offering very limited explanations for their use. To access marks in the top band candidates needed to analyse a selection of choices offering explanations of effects as well as meanings. Responses in the middle range tended to offer more meanings than effects, or a more limited number of language choices, sometimes commenting on them in far too much detail. Weaker responses tended to offer a single explanation for a group of

language choices or keep repeating the same explanations of everyone being fascinated by the strange machine. Some candidates selected quotations but made no attempt to explain them, instead embedding them in their own paraphrase of what happens in the passage. To access marks above the lowest bands candidates must offer some meanings.

A small but significant number of candidates did not follow the instructions in the question and selected language choices that were not in the specified sections of the passage. Any quotations outside the specified area of the passage could not be credited. Candidates are advised to read the question very carefully.

## Question 2

**Write the words of a speech for your class raising awareness of the dangers of unmanned aircraft. Base your argument on the views expressed in Passage B.**

This question was based on Passage B, *Aviation is fast approaching the post-pilot era*, and offered up to fifteen marks for Writing and ten marks for Reading. For the Reading marks candidates were expected to demonstrate understanding of explicit and implicit meanings and attitudes and critically evaluate the facts, ideas and opinions expressed in Passage B. For the Writing marks candidates were expected to write in an appropriate voice and register, write accurately and use a range of sentence structures and vocabulary for effect.

In terms of reading, candidates clearly found the passage accessible and interesting with many expressing strong views about the possible dangers posed by the further development of pilotless aircraft, skilfully inverting the opinions of the writer while using the same factual information. Many cited the public's lack of awareness of the numbers of automated aircraft flying presently, or the involvement of the military implying secrecy, or they argued that highly trained pilots would lose their jobs if further developments ensued. Many argued that computerised flying systems could not be expected to act rationally in the face of a terrorist threat or an unexpected situation and therefore pilots were essential as far as they were concerned. Weaker responses only used the most obvious ideas in the passage and did not take opportunities to include the finer detail. Some candidates did not read the question carefully enough and wrote about the advantages of pilotless aircraft; this clearly limited their opportunities for evaluation, as they tended to simply repeat the points made in the passage.

The main problem, when addressing the Reading assessment objectives, was the failure to identify and evaluate a *range* of ideas. Many candidates chose a few ideas from the passage, the most popular being the number of pilotless aircraft already in the skies, the notion of passenger jets operating without a pilot on board, instead being flown remotely, or the danger of terrorists hijacking the computerised systems and taking control of the plane. Even where these were clearly evaluated, a greater range of ideas was required to access marks in the top three bands. Often responses lacked a sense of overview or acknowledgement of the less obvious ideas in the passage. The strongest responses offered a much more comprehensive evaluation of the writer's ideas and were able to turn them around, citing dangers where the writer did not. Some questioned the safety of remote satellites controlling aeroplanes in terms of terrorist threats, or the human need for the reassurance of a trained expert in the form of a pilot. Many argued that the development of pilotless planes was putting profit before safety by cutting out expensive flight crews and that many people would simply refuse to fly. Some responses used short quotations from the original, which worked well provided the comment or evaluation offered was able to reveal clear understanding, and appreciation of the writer's points.

As a writing task, this proved largely successful, most candidates convincingly adopting an appropriate register and tone for a speech to their class. Examiners reported seeing very few responses in the lower bands for Writing. Most adopted a convincing voice for a speech to their class and used rhetorical devices intended to raise and sustain audience interest. Some responses did not use even the more basic features of a speech, instead writing a rather bland response which lacked awareness of purpose and audience. Stronger responses were highly accurate using a wide range of suitable vocabulary, often inspired by, but not copied from, the passage. Others were less convincing but still maintained a reasonably consistent voice and communicated clearly. Weaker candidates tended to produce repetitive sentence structures, and mistakes of spelling, punctuation and grammar were sometimes evident, occasionally impeding communication. However, candidates had no problems writing a speech and the majority organised it carefully and addressed the audience appropriately.

### Question 3

**Question 3** was based on both Passage B and Passage C. **Questions 3(a)** and **3(b)** were low tariff questions on both passages, designed to lead candidates to the extended **Question 3(c)** where they are asked to compare how the writers' views and ideas are conveyed.

**(a) Re-read paragraph 1, 'Every day, dozens of ... remotely piloted aircraft.'**

- (i) Give an example of how the writer shows that unmanned aircraft are safe.**

There were three possible responses to this question and most candidates were able to gain the mark by citing the number already flying, or the reassurance that they change course to avoid danger.

- (ii) Pick out one phrase from this paragraph that tells you that unmanned aircraft take off from many different parts of the world.**

Most candidates picked out the phrase 'scattered around the globe'. Some responses did not follow the instructions and copied the whole sentence or paragraph.

**(b) Re-read paragraphs 1 and 2, 'London saw ... throngs of people.'**

- (i) What does the writer mean by, 'a very fine spectacle', in line 1?**

The majority of candidates gained mark on this question. Some responses did not go beyond it is 'amazing' or 'wonderful' to include the idea of the sight/seeing it.

- (ii) Give two different ways that the writer conveys how impressive the airship is in paragraph 2, 'Aeroplanes which escorted ... throngs of people.'**

Many candidates gained the full two marks for this question. Where only one mark was gained, it was usually because they repeated the point that many people wanted to see the R101 by quoting 'every eye in London was turned towards the skies' and 'people ran from shops and houses'. To get the full two marks the second point needed to be based on the airship's enormous size.

- (c) Compare and contrast how the writers of Passage B, Aviation is fast approaching the post-pilot era, and Passage C, London sees the R101, convey their views and ideas about developments in transport.**

**In your response you should compare and contrast:**

- the views and ideas each writer presents to the reader
- the evidence that the writers use to support their ideas and views and how reliable it is
- the language, structure and techniques used by the writers and why they are effective.

It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates were able to make a meaningful response to the task. At its heart this task requires candidates to think independently, making judgements about both texts, evaluating the 'power' of the language, structure and techniques the writers have used, and comparing the way they have presented their views and ideas.

Examiners reported seeing some impressive responses to this question where candidates were able to compare both passages at length with comments on language and structure skilfully interwoven with the juxtaposition of ideas and views. Better responses made good use of information given; they recognised neither writer acknowledged opposing views, but suggested that Passage B was more factual and informative. Many candidates cited the different purposes of the passages: that Passage B sought to raise awareness and interest in the development of automated, pilotless aircraft and argue the safety of such development, while passage C was an article celebrating a great step in aviation as the R101 took a test flight over London. Many candidates acknowledged the different eras in which the articles were written, citing the general awe and disbelief generated by the R101 and the rather more suspicious and cynical attitudes expected by the writer of Passage B. Most could say something about Passage B's use of factual and statistical evidence, but only the best responses explored this in the context of a biased approach, and analysed the effects. There was some good analysis of the more figurative

language used in Passage C to describe the airship, and the way that people's responses were quoted in direct speech to make the passage more immediate. There were also a number of good points made about the lack of technical information offered in Passage C when compared to Passage B. In the weaker responses there was some misunderstanding of the passages. Candidates need to be aware that analysis of use of language must have short, relevant textual support, and a clear explanation of the effect on the reader: device spotting, use of simile/metaphor, rhetorical questions or statistical evidence, counts at best as 'identification' if purpose and effect are not present.

The weaker responses tended to concentrate on Passage B instead of making time to fully understand Passage C, hence comparisons, if drawn, tended to be superficial. These responses failed to take an overview of the passages and what the writers were saying. Some responses included misreading, for example, not all realised that Passage C was about an airship rather than a modern aircraft, and some thought that it was a pilotless plane. Some failed to give textual support for the comparison of views, only for use of language that was treated separately; conversely others lifted whole chunks of quotation to make the points for them. The best responses demonstrated the art of embedding neat snippets of quotation within their analysis. Some failed to explore the differences in views, focusing more on describing the content of the passages.

A small number of candidates made little or no use of subject terminology and some of those who did so used a limited range of terminology and were unsure about the difference between a metaphor and a simile. The very best candidates were able to use a wide range of terminology to support their discussion of how the passages worked to convey the writers' views and opinions to influence the reader. However, it is not necessary to import the kind of linguistic analysis more appropriate for A Level English Language into this discussion as it can lead to an obsession with naming of parts rather than understanding meaning. There was also considerable repetition in weaker responses to this question. A small minority of candidates ran out of time and didn't attempt **Question 3(c)** or offered a brief, undeveloped response, sometimes only referring to Passage B.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9 TO 1)

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Paper 0627/02  
Directed Writing and Composition

## Key messages

This paper was mainly assessed for writing, although there were fifteen marks available for reading in **Question 1**.

In order to achieve high marks, candidates were required to:

- articulate and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- use a range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures
- use register appropriate to audience and purpose
- make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- analyse and critically evaluate facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- select and synthesise information for specific purposes
- use an appropriate form and style, adapted for the intended audience and genre
- produce detailed and evocative descriptions and engaging, credible narratives.

## General comments

Most scripts showed a good grasp of what was expected in both the Directed Writing and Composition sections of the paper. Responses were substantial and purposeful, overall, with relatively few brief or undeveloped answers. There was evidence in many scripts of a clear awareness of how marks were awarded in the different questions and writing genres and most candidates followed the rubric.

Most responses showed an understanding of the topic in **Question 1** and made sensible use of the reading passages in their responses. Responses clearly engaged with the question and the reading material; they were able to identify the various reasons why a young person would, or would not, want to learn to drive at 17. Most responses in the middle mark range tended to select a range of evidence from the passages. Weaker answers drifted away from the material or listed some points simply.

In the Composition section of the paper, better responses showed a clear understanding of the features of descriptive or narrative writing and in both genres there was developed and structured writing. Some weaker descriptive writing tended to slip into narrative or, in some cases, was entirely narrative in character; these responses would have benefited from a clearer grasp of the features of good descriptive style, such as a focus on detail and a more limited time span.

The best responses in both questions were characterised by the careful selection of precise vocabulary and sentence structures to create specific effects. The reader was often intrigued in the early stages of compositions and the writing was consciously shaped in both genres to engage and sustain the reader's interest. In weaker responses, an appropriate register and effective style was more difficult to achieve. In **Question 1**, for example, the required formal tone was sometimes forgotten. In this question and in the compositions, there was insufficient attention paid to basic punctuation in weaker answers. Capital letters were sometimes used rather indiscriminately, appearing frequently where not required but not used for proper nouns, in speech or at the beginnings of sentences. Semi-colons were much in evidence but only rarely used accurately.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section 1 – Directed Writing**

#### **Question 1**

**Write an article for your school or college magazine advising young people whether or not to learn to drive at 17.**

**In your article you should:**

- consider the arguments in both passages**
- give your advice to young people, based on what you have read.**

**You should give evidence from the two passages you have read to help you answer the question. Remember to write your article using your own words.**

**Give reasons and examples to support what you say.**

**Write about 250 to 350 words.**

[40 marks]

Forty marks were available for this question, of which twenty five were for the quality of writing and fifteen for the use of the content in the passages.

Most responses adhered to the structure for writing an article; some were mindful that that they were asked to give advice to young people and that the article was to be published in their own school or college magazine. In better responses both passages' content was scrutinised, synthesised and evaluated purposefully. They also wrote fluently and used vocabulary to good effect and adopted an effective register. Many, however, simply listed reasons why it is advantageous, or not, to learn to drive at 17.

#### **The marks for reading**

Good responses followed the bullet points but also synthesised the evidence and adopted the evaluative stance required for marks above Band 3. Better responses identified and explored the subtleties of the passage, for example not all young people are reckless/live in cities, learning to drive has become the reserve of young people from more well-off families and there are other 'rites of passage' these days, such as going to university, which are more significant. They were able to evaluate both sides of the arguments to build a compelling case giving reasons why passing the driving test would or would not be advised. The best responses considered and countered the alternative position, deriving evidence from the ideas and examples in both passages for example, when not in favour of learning to drive that young people already have the freedom that driving used to provide, young people lack maturity and there are more important financial considerations for families; when in favour of learning to drive acknowledging that this can be a powerful motivator and public transport in many areas is inadequate. These better responses weighed up and evaluated views in both passages on learning to drive. The advice given was balanced and well-reasoned. Evidence was derived from the ideas and examples in both passages, developing claims and assessing their implications with clear and persuasive arguments.

The most successful responses assimilated the details of the passage into a whole new piece: being able to drive is still an important life skill, environmental concerns show a level of responsibility not seen in previous generations, modern driving conditions make driving less appealing.

This kind of evaluative approach to the material in the passage was required for marks in Band 5 and above. Where responses simply selected evidence from the passages, Examiners could not award marks above Band 4.

Responses in the middle range tended to list a range of evidence to support their view. Other responses at this level tended to focus on one passage only. Where there was some commentary on evidence, these remarks were just beginning to evaluate or consider mainly the explicit ideas from the passages.



Weaker responses didn't seem to understand the need to draw on information from the texts or present any evaluation of the arguments presented. These responses were vague; misconception here seemed to be that the texts were merely a prompt to help generate ideas rather than a source to be used.

Some weaker responses showed an over-dependence on some key phrases in the texts and obvious words and phrases such as 'passport to the adult world', 'liberated life', 'more important pressures on time and money' and 'child's university education' appeared frequently.

### **The marks for writing**

Twenty five marks were available for register and audience, choice of vocabulary, the structure of the answer, appropriate use of sentence structures and technical accuracy of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

### **Register and audience**

Most, across the mark range, wrote an introductory paragraph making clear the purpose of their article.

The majority of responses adopted an appropriate register, addressed their fellow students in their responses and continued to do so throughout, keeping an appropriate and lively tone of voice; these responses structured answers according to the requirements of an article. Numerous however, often wrote in the format of a letter which had an impact on the register used as they failed to recognise that the article was for their own school or college magazine, advising young people.

### **Structure**

Some accomplished responses, awarded high marks for writing, handled the material confidently and presented their arguments, cogently. The issues addressed were combined into a response which was clearly derived from the ideas in both passages but was not dependent on their structure and sequence. Some stronger responses did not base their structure around the bullet points. At the highest level, an overview of the issues involved was given rather than a list of reasons for learning, or not, to drive. Some fluent responses with effective sentences did not give full attention to sequencing, so ideas within and between paragraphs were not linked as smoothly as they could be. Moreover, there was some tendency, even among stronger responses, to neglect the use of paragraphs. Many middle Band responses used discursive markers which provided effective structure. Some responses were structured according to the bullet points, occasionally devoting one long paragraph to each. Weaker responses lacked a clear introduction and conclusion and ideas were presented in a jumbled way, often without paragraphs. Responses given marks below Band 3 were characterised by brief or no introductions and a simple list of evidence from one, or both passages, in sequence.

### **Accuracy**

Accomplished writing which was accurate and controlled was given a writing mark in Band 6. These responses were not only authoritative in style and convincing in their arguments but fluent and virtually free of error. Responses in Band 4 were usually purposeful and clear, though not as ambitious and wide ranging in vocabulary and style as those given higher marks. Responses given marks in Band 3 sometimes showed some clarity in conveying meaning but there was a wide range of quite basic punctuation errors which precluded Examiners from awarding Band 4 marks and in addition, there was sometimes a simplicity of language and style. Sentence separation errors also appeared at this level and the frequency of errors became self-penalising, as did insecure grammar and awkward phrasing.

### **Ways in which this type of answer could be improved**

Use material from both passages and offer an overview.

Try to develop ideas from the passages concisely, using inferences that are suggested, but without drifting beyond.

Be aware of the genre you are using for your answer. Think carefully about the right style for a letter or an article and the register appropriate to audience.

Use paragraphs to structure responses.

Check your writing for basic punctuation errors that will inevitably reduce your mark.

## Section 2: Composition

Write about 350 to 450 words on one of the following questions.

**There are up to 16 marks available for the content and structure of your answer, and up to 24 marks for the style and accuracy of your writing.**

### **Descriptive Writing**

**2** Imagine it is your first day in a new school or college. Describe your first impressions and your thoughts and feelings in the first few minutes as you enter the school or college. [40 marks]

**OR**

**3** Describe going on an exciting ride at a fairground or theme park. [40 marks]

The second question was the most popular of the two options.

The first question provided a great variety of responses across the range. The best responses not only demonstrated linguistic and stylistic skills but used a variety of devices to create atmosphere. Complex atmospheres, relating to thoughts and feelings experienced, were developed. There were some outstanding responses with a wide range of vocabulary and imagery evident.

Most responses chose to write from the perspective of a first day at secondary school or post-16 establishment, though some focused on memories of the first day at primary school. Higher Band responses gave well defined and convincing details of surroundings: the approach to the school, the building and particularly the entrance hall; they also reflected on excitement, fears and concerns. These responses used figurative language with success, for example the sofa in reception 'hugging' the writer and the school 'blowing its own trumpet'. The writer's own vulnerability was often explored.

Middle Band responses tended to list who and what they encountered during the day in a routine and perfunctory way which didn't allow for detail, creativity or development.

Weaker responses lacked focus, gave general impressions of experiences at school or college over an extended period or offered a narrative, recounting specific or unrealistic events.

A common issue for some mid and lower Band responses was that in an attempt to convey the immediacy of the first day at school, these began by employing the present tense but then switched to the past.

The second question produced responses across the range of marks and, also encouraged exploration thoughts and feelings and close observation of detail. This question was approached in many ways. Most who responded to this task wrote about their own visit to a fairground or theme park. Some gave a panoramic view of rides in general or broadened the scope of the task describing a fairground or theme park's complete offering. Successful responses were often clearly focused on the ride and did not necessarily begin at embarkment; one began their description 'at the apex of the ride', moving on to 'the fierce angle' of the ride enabling the writer to see 'a canvas of diamonds and other precious stones' in the night sky. Another gave fleeting observations of fellow riders with whom they 'locked eyes for a moment'.

Middle and Band responses were not able to create a cohesive overall description and often included formulaic use of detail from each of the five senses which led to the details and images being presented in a disjointed way. This approach can weaken the structure and overall picture formed in even the strongest of responses.

Marks for Style and Accuracy were sometimes lower than those for Content and Structure. Better responses chose precise and varied vocabulary and controlled complex sentences with secure punctuation within and between sentences. In weaker responses, tenses were used insecurely, and incomplete or poorly separated sentences adversely affected marks awarded. There were some examples of strings of incomplete, verb less sentences and this limited responses to Band 3. Some responses wrote descriptively through narrated events and, as a result could access the higher marks, whereas weaker responses used narrative alone.

## Ways in which the writing of descriptions can be improved

Avoid narrative and remember to provide descriptive detail.

Try to avoid clichéd scenarios and consider a more individual and original selection of content.

It is good practice to write in the present tense, but do not change tense once you have started your writing.

Write sentences with proper verbs. There are no special sentence structures for a description.

## Narrative Writing

**4 Write a story with the title, 'It's never too late'.** [40 marks]

OR

**5 Write a story which involves an unexpected friendship.** [40 marks]

The first narrative question was the most popular of the two options.

**Question 4** produced a wide range of often thought provoking, reflective written responses. Most chose to focus their plots on some form of life changing event or decision. Higher Band responses were convincing, well balanced and carefully managed for effect. One successful response offered subtle characterisation, outlined a privileged but lonely life of someone who found happiness 'later'; another focused on an exchange between a 'young fifteen year old kid with eyes I can't look in to' and an older man who caused the death of his wife and children in a car accident; the wise youngster 'with a soft glare' giving permission for, 'it's never too late to forgive yourself'.

Some of the most successful responses used subtle twists and turns in the narrative which produced complex and sophisticated writing; appropriate vocabulary was used to set the scene as well as intense character description and well placed dialogue.

Middle Band responses often focused on simple events, for example trying harder at school or not giving up half way through a sporting activity; events here, whilst relevant, were recorded with only brief development.

Lower Band responses tended to focus on unrealistic events and lapsed into plots which were too unwieldy to convey events convincingly. These lower Band responses, used unclear sentence structure, over lengthy dialogue, simple vocabulary and had problems with choosing and staying in the correct tense.

There was a range of approaches in response to **Question 5**. Most responses involved friendships of a different age or background. Higher Band responses often introduced a dramatic scenario which represented a turning point in the unexpected friendship, allowing the narrator to create suspense and a sense of climax. One successful response involved described the aftermath of a battle scene in which the main character was found by an enemy who turned out to be 'an unexpected saviour', the reader being left well aware of the unexpected friend's humanity. The most successful had a clear plot and were cohesive.

Average and weaker responses were characterised by less effective, more contrived endings or by less control over the chronology. Responses given marks in Band 3 were particularly dominated by events, some of them rather unlikely, while Band 2 marks usually reflected very brief accounts with very little to engage the reader in terms of characters and setting. Some stories became a series of events which did not really cohere, and some scenarios lacked credibility and in a few cases, there was little sequencing or clarity overall. Overuse of dialogue was often a characteristic of these weaker narratives.

High marks for Style and Accuracy were given for responses where the writing was lively and varied in vocabulary and where different sentence structures were controlled and used to create particular effects.

Errors in sentence control and separation, as well as lapses in tenses, if persistent, limited even competently told stories to Band 3, as did frequent errors in basic punctuation. Speech was over-used only in weaker responses but there were many responses where the punctuation of direct speech was insecure, even when the story itself was quite well-structured. Basic punctuation errors with capital letters, the spelling of simple words and misused homophones appeared in otherwise competent writing and were sometimes so frequent as to affect the mark for Style and Accuracy.

**Ways in which the writing of narratives can be improved**

Remember that stories need more than events to interest the reader.

Plan the ending before you begin so that you can shape your story appropriately.

Characters' thoughts and feelings help to engage your reader.

Originality is important. Try to think of unusual approaches to your topic, but keep the details credible.

Check your writing for errors, especially missing full stops.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH (9 TO 1)

Paper 0627/03  
Speaking and Listening Test

## Key messages

Most centres were conversant with the required procedures and carried them out professionally and effectively.

## **Administration – General Points**

Cambridge requires a centre to provide **three different items** in the package sent to the Moderator. These are:

- a **recorded sample** on CD, DVD or USB drive to include all the recordings for all of the candidates entered
- the **Summary Forms** for the whole cohort entered
- a **copy of the marks** that have already been sent to Cambridge.

Each one of these items is very important in the process of assessing a centre's performance. Centres are urged to ensure all these items are included in the package sent to Cambridge as the omission of any of them may cause a delay in the moderation process, or in the worst scenario, an inability on the part of the moderator to complete the process until the relevant items are received.

Centres should generate audio files – transferred to a CD, DVD or USB drive – **in a recognised common audio file format** such as mp3, wav and wma (but not AUP) that can be played by standard computer software. Recordings should be collated onto either one CD, DVD or USB drive unless the cohort's size prevents this.

The Examiner should introduce each candidate by stating the following: the centre's name and number; the candidate's name and number; the name of the Examiner and the date on which the test is being conducted. **The date on which the recording is made must be included to confirm the test has been carried out within the specified window.**

**A separate introduction is required for each candidate's test.** It is not acceptable for one generic introduction covering the whole of the centre's cohort to be included with the sample recordings in the same way it would not be acceptable for a generic coversheet to be provided for every candidate taking a written examination. This is a formal terminal test and the same principles apply.

Where the total marks for a candidate have been altered because of **internal moderation**, please indicate on the Summary Form which of the three marks have been changed.

Where candidates have been entered but fail to take the test they should be recorded as **'absent' and not awarded a mark of zero**. A mark of zero should only be awarded to a candidate who is present for the test but who does not say anything worth awarding marks for when assessed against the marking grids.

Where there were issues, the following applies:

The centre does not have to choose which recordings to send. Recordings **for every candidate in the entered cohort** should be sent as part of the sample.

The Examiner should **introduce each recording** to include the required information.

**Please check the recordings at regular intervals** during the testing process to ensure their quality.

**Please also check the CD, DVD or USB** before despatching to Cambridge. Faulty recordings continue to delay the process of moderating a small minority of centres.

## Conduct of the test

When considering candidates' marks, the importance of **timings** must be appreciated.

**Part 1 should be a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes.** Please note this does not include the Examiner's introduction. Where a Part 1 response is short, please consider whether the **assessment criteria can be adequately met** and assess accordingly. It is more difficult to adequately meet the criteria of the higher bands in a performance lasting significantly less than four minutes.

Equally, a response which is significantly overlong cannot be regarded as fulfilling the criteria for Band 5. It is in the best interests of the candidate that the Examiner steps in to halt any Part 1 talk that exceeds the maximum time allowed. This should not be considered as being in anyway rude to the candidate but as a positive act to prevent the candidate exceeding the time limit. In terms of assessment if an intervention is deemed necessary, it should be considered whether the candidate has successfully fulfilled the criteria for Band 5 if this level is to be awarded.

Given that both Speaking and Listening are assessed in Part 2, it is important that the question and answer session lasts long enough for candidates to clearly demonstrate their strengths in both mediums. **In Part 2 a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes of discussion is expected.** It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure these timings are adhered to.

Candidates can take into the test **one cue card containing prompt notes**. These notes should not be written in full sentences or be read verbatim. A reliance on written material in Part 1 is counter-productive and only leads to a lack of natural fluency which affects performance. Please note that each cue card should include the name of the candidate and be retained by the centre for six months after the date on which the results are published.

**The use of pre-prepared responses to known questions in Part 2 is not permitted.** When they plan and prepare their responses, candidates are encouraged to consider what questions they may be asked during Part 2 but there should be no collusion between the Examiner and candidate. Candidates who prepare long and unnatural monologues in response to anticipated questions only penalise themselves. The discussions should evolve and to do this an element of spontaneity must be apparent.

**The test should only be attempted once** in any examination series. Once the test has begun it should not be re-started or interrupted.

It is important that the tests are undertaken **within the prescribed test window** published by Cambridge for each series. Centres are reminded that as part of the Examiner's introduction to every individual test undertaken the full date should be quoted.

The test may be performed in front of a live audience but **this audience must be passive and silent throughout both parts of the test.** There should be no interaction between the candidate and the audience in either part of the test.

## Accuracy of assessment

In most cases, centres had applied the criteria accurately, appropriately and fairly whilst underpinning this through successful internal moderation procedures. Where there were issues the following applies:

Part 1 should last for a minimum of four minutes and a maximum of five minutes. Examiners should not interrupt or halt candidates within this time. Examiners should only interrupt to move the candidates into Part 2 if they show no signs of reaching a natural conclusion after the maximum time allowed.

One prominent cause of inaccuracy was generosity in the awarding of marks in Part 2 for short responses which were not of sufficient length or challenge to secure the higher bands. As in Part 1, 4 minutes is the minimum length required.

Articulate, confident candidates tended to be over assessed where the content was factual.

It is important that the examiners do not dominate Part 2. Candidates should be allowed to talk and their contribution should be dominant, particularly for those being awarded marks in the higher bands where detailed responses to questions are expected.

## Approaches to Part 1

The most successful tasks attempted were those where the candidates took ownership of a topic, had a strong base knowledge of the subject and were genuinely interested in what they were saying. Well planned and prepared responses are generally more successful but responses do not benefit from an over-reliance on notes or over-rehearsal. Seemingly 'artificial' performances, where a natural fluency is missing, do not benefit the candidates.

The focus for some candidates was just to get the material delivered, with less thought given to how the talk would be received by an audience. Often, this involved candidates memorising and over-rehearsing their talks, to the detriment of the actual performance. A sense of audience was lost leading to less engaging performances. The best candidates often had a passion for their topic so the use of tone came more naturally.

Moderators reported a wide range of topics being undertaken although the tasks generally took the form of an individual presentation. More successful centres allowed candidates to choose their own topics as opposed to dictating a generic theme. It is important to consider that this component allows for differentiation by task setting so the ability of the individual candidate needs to be taken into consideration when choices are made. To achieve the higher bands, the presentations should move beyond the descriptive to include elements of reflection and analysis.

When choosing a suitable topic for Part 1 candidates should also consider whether the subject lends itself to further development in Part 2. Sometimes a topic appears suited to Part 1 but there is limited opportunity for an Examiner to develop a response to Part 2 that will be meaningful and last 4–5 minutes. This often leads to off-topic questioning in Part 2 that is counter-productive and limiting.

Some examples of productive **Part 1** topics include:

- My passion for a personal interest/hobby (that moves beyond the purely descriptive and is reflective and thought-provoking)
- Cultural change and the issues it raises
- Graphology
- Discrimination focusing on a social issue – i.e. disability, gender inequality
- The Human Singing Voice
- Topical events – e.g. Afforestation, Global Currency, Feminism, Space Travel
- Experience of other cultures – moving countries/other education systems compared
- The Fluency of Languages
- An extreme sport (focus on one specific sport)

Some examples of less successful **Part 1** topics include:

- My Family/Friends/Pets (where there is little substance and no attempt to move beyond the descriptive)
- The Celebrity I Admire (where the talk is purely descriptive and a series of regurgitated facts and rumours)
- Footballer's Wages and Social Media (often cliché ridden and lacking depth and development)
- Gaming (where there is limited planning and very little beyond the descriptive)
- Future Plans (where the talk is generic and unfocussed)
- Four Things Which Are Important to You (Too wide-ranging and lacking focus)
- Football/Gaming/Social Media (Where a reliance on general knowledge as opposed to careful planning led to short undeveloped responses)

## Management of Part 2

Most Examiners were supportive in their questioning to encourage and to settle nervousness. This helped students to achieve their best. Most Examiners conducted Part 2 effectively by asking pertinent questions which enabled candidates to extend and develop their Part 1 content.

Many Examiners showed genuine interest and enthusiasm in the candidates' topics and provided appropriate encouragement. This helped to put candidates at ease and subsequently resulted in a better performance in Part 2. Open and challenging questioning gave many candidates opportunities to develop their ideas as fully as they could. Questions that encourage candidates to explore ideas and demonstrate development of explanation with details, providing opportunities for the candidate to extend the subject

matter, always result in better performances. Some appropriate evidence of sensitivity by the listener was also noted when the topic was personal and potentially upsetting. (It should be noted that candidates should be dissuaded from choosing topics which could cause an intense emotional reaction under test conditions.)

Some candidates were hindered through the listener cutting into a response when it may have been more advantageous to allow the candidate to continue. Detailed and developed responses are required if marks in the higher bands are to be awarded for Listening.

Some Part 2 responses were limited because the Examiner ran out of questions to push the discussion to the required minimum length, thus disadvantaging the candidates. **It is the Examiner's responsibility to ensure each candidate is given a minimum of four minutes for Part 2.**

### Advice to Centres

Prepare for this examination as any other – i.e. techniques/research/thought about appropriate topics. Practise methods of presentation and response to questioning in other situations before preparing for this test.

Give the candidates the fullest opportunity to demonstrate their skills through effective questioning in Part 2 and appropriate timings for both parts of the test. Keep to the time limits in the syllabus to avoid candidates being adversely limited in the accurate application of the mark scheme.

Follow the instructions on how to present the recordings and documentation efficiently and concisely. Please check both documentation and recordings before sending to Cambridge.

Encourage candidates to choose topics that they know well through personal experience and are passionate about. Issues and ideas work better than factual topics unless the candidate has an individual flair or interest.

When conducting the discussions in Part 2, Examiners should have plenty of questions to ask to push candidates to use the time allowed effectively. Examiners should ask questions strategically to encourage and help the candidates to think for themselves and show off what they can do. Examiners should avoid saying too much or interrupting too early, which can affect the candidates developing their own ideas.

At the top end of the mark scheme, responses should be the required lengths. This requires the Examiner in Part 2 to ask more challenging questions and keep the content on task throughout.