

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/01  
Reading

## Key messages

- **Question 1:** Candidates must read the questions carefully and make sure they answer them correctly and clearly by picking the relevant information from the text and not just quoting the text. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of the number of ideas or points that need to be included in order to gain full marks. Candidates should not give more details than requested by the question as marks will be deducted for any additional incorrect information. When an explanation or a justification is required, keeping to the words of the text is seldom enough to provide a full response. When the question requires the candidate to support the answer with an example from the text, the example should be written in full; candidates who just give the line number where the example can be found will not be rewarded.
- **Question 2:** A few candidates did not read the rubric and compared the two texts instead of answering the question. Others either wrote an unbalanced summary as they focused only on **section 2a** or **2b**. Some summaries were too long as candidates spent too much time on 2a and the answers to 2b came after the cut-off point for the word count. Candidates should produce a structured response, stating each point briefly, rather than developing each point at length. There should not be any comments on the style of the texts and there is no need to write a lengthy introduction and conclusion.
- **Language:** Candidates need to allow time at the end of the exam to proof read their work so as to avoid careless grammatical and spelling errors.

## General comments

Most candidates responded positively to the topic of plastic pollution and many have performed well in **Question 2**.

In **Question 1** some candidates did not answer the most challenging questions and had difficulties with the questions on style and tone.

In **Question 2** the candidates who performed well were those who took the time to write a plan in order to ensure they stayed within the prescribed 250 words limit. They used a varied vocabulary and a good range of linking words which indicated that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination. However, many candidates still need further guidance and training on how to write a good summary as this required an ability to identify valid points and to group them into concise and well written paragraphs. Candidates who write their plan on the exam paper before the summary must remember to cross it off.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

Candidates generally understood the text but occasionally struggled to answer the questions purposefully.

The range of questions provided opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability.

The easiest questions were **(a)**, **(b)**, **(e)**, **(g)**, and the most challenging ones were **(c)**, **(d)**, **(f)**, **(h)**, **(i)**. The rest of the questions fitted in the middle band, where, as long as the text was well understood, the questions presented no major difficulty. Marks are awarded for each specific relevant point made by the candidate.

When a question is worth more than one mark, it means that more than one relevant point must be identified and when a justification or explanation is required it is important that it is provided.

- (a) This was generally well answered and most candidates scored at least one mark. Candidates usually conveyed the idea that plastic was found everywhere but did not often mention that we could no longer do without it. Those who answered that it was used in cosmetics, wrapping or clothes did not get a mark, but if that information was added to the correct answers they were considered as harmless additions.
- (b) Candidates had no problem with this question but some lost marks for adding incorrect information such as 'it is cheap', 'it is practical'. The question required the candidates to focus on '*les qualités utilitaires*'. This is why *pas cher* was not accepted. And *pratique* in this context is a synonym of *utilitaire* in the question. But if they added *ce qui le rend pratique* to the correct answer that was accepted.
- (c) In this question candidates had to show that they had understood *premier* and *prédateur* and they often failed to explain the former.
- (d) Many candidates gave an incorrect answer e.g. *la nature/l'océan/le CO2/le pétrole*. Others lost their mark by adding to the correct answer several other incorrect answers.
- (e) This question was generally well answered. Some candidates had difficulties rendering *dénoncer* and gave incorrect answers like *réduire la consommation de plastique/pour que les citoyens réalisent la consommation abusive du plastique*.
- (f) Not many candidates managed to explain the phrase. They had to convey the idea of spreading and speed and in their explanation, they often failed to provide both elements.
- (g) This was the easiest question and most candidates scored 1 mark. Candidates who answered *sur les réseaux* or *sur internet* did not get a mark.
- (h) This question was better answered than in past sessions but there are still some candidates who have problems answering that type of questions correctly. They failed to identify the techniques or did not match each technique with the appropriate example from the text. A few just listed examples from the text without mentioning the technique. Some candidates explain the purpose of the technique or the intention of the author, which is not necessary. They only need to identify the techniques and match them with examples from the text. Candidates often identified correctly rhetorical questions, metaphor and personification. Hyperbole was also identified, but often matched with an incorrect example from the text.
- (i) (i) This was not a very well answered question as many candidates can not differentiate between tone and techniques, or failed to match the tone with an appropriate example from the text.  
(ii) Candidates often provided answers which were not forceful enough (e.g. *pour montrer son mécontentement/pour faire réfléchir le lecteur/pour qu'on l'écoute...*)
- (j) This question was generally well answered.
- (k) This question was well understood but some candidates only scored 1, as all their answers referred to actions to be taken and failed to include the other parts of the author's message like the impact on the environment.

## Question 2

A few candidates (though less than in the previous session) still do not seem to be aware of the change to **Question 2** where candidates are no longer required to compare the two texts but are asked to sum up a certain number of points across the two texts.

Those who compared the two texts did less well than those who followed the rubric and summed up the reasons why plastic waste is dangerous to humans and animals and gave possible solutions to solve the problem.

As this question is a guided summary, it is important that candidates remember that their response should not exceed the word limit, as only the first 250 words are taken into consideration in the assessment. For the best results candidates should read carefully both texts and plan their answer. Planning improves organisation, helps pick relevant points from the text and encourages the use of a more fluent and varied style.

There is no need to make a lengthy introduction and conclusion and to develop each point. There is also no need to mention from which text each point comes from and to mention the title of each text. Quoting from the text or giving line references is equally not necessary. However, it is important to mention the points which are relevant to the question. For instance, mentioning that plastic is used in cosmetics, the making of clothes..., the qualities of plastic, the amounts produced, recycled, burned, etc. were irrelevant to the question. Those who focused on the reasons why plastic wastes are harmful to people and wildlife and the solutions scored highly in the summary content.

It is equally important to be concise, to group ideas in paragraphs and to use linking words so as to enhance the natural flow of language. Candidates should use their own words rather than lifting big chunks of texts, avoid narrating the content of each text and avoid repeating the same ideas or developing each idea at great length. They must be reminded that they are supposed to write a balanced summary and not an essay and that they should only mention information from the text and not mention their own opinions or ideas.

To improve, candidates should:

- Read the question carefully.
- Identify as many relevant points as possible.
- Organise and plan their response so that it is purposeful and fully relevant.
- Include several points in a sentence.
- Use a variety of linking words (e.g. *tout d'abord, ensuite, tandis que, par contre, cependant, alors que, de plus, pourtant, aussi, en effet, par conséquent, de ce fait, d'un côté, d'un autre côté, enfin, aussi, également, toutefois...*)
- Remain focused and avoid mentioning things which are not in the text or giving their personal opinion or extensively developing each point or quoting what the people in the text are saying.
- Avoid excessive switching into narrative or descriptive mode.
- Answer both parts of the question equally.

### Style and Organisation

Organisation is closely linked with content and some of the points mentioned above have a direct impact on it. The better candidates grouped and linked ideas, typically introducing several ideas into one sentence (e.g. this sentence scored 4 marks *Le plastique qui pollue les océans, tue de nombreux poissons qui le prennent pour de la nourriture et il contamine la chaîne alimentaire lorsque ce poisson se retrouve dans notre assiette*).

Many candidates dealt with ideas in a series of short sentences, often following the same pattern, so that the overall effect was somewhat repetitive and at times laboured. A few picked points at random, losing focus now and again, thus making their answer hard to follow.

Style relates to the range and complexity of structures and to the breadth and of lexis used. Few candidates were at the extremes of the scale: stylish or purposeful responses were rare, so were very poor responses with excessive lifting written in a basic and barely adequate language.

### Accuracy (Questions 1 and Question 2)

Generally, candidates tended to perform better in **Question 1** than in **Question 2** as their answers were shorter and they had the support of the text whereas in **Question 2** they had to produce their own language. But similar errors appeared in both questions:

- use of the infinitive instead of the past participle or vice versa
- incorrect verb endings
- failure to agree adjectives and past participles
- wrong gender
- omission of *ne* when using the negative form
- failure to use the subjunctive after *pour que, ne pense pas que...*

- incorrect use of pronouns and possessive adjectives
- failure to use the correct prepositions after certain verbs
- use of *par* + infinitive or *en* + infinitive instead of *en* + present participle
- failure to include the accents or apostrophes.

The words *environnement*, *consommer*, *consommation*, *plastique* were often spelt incorrectly.

Many candidates favour the phonetical rendering to the detriment of grammatical accuracy (e.g. *tous sa ce a cauze de plastique*); *c'est* was sometimes spelt *cet/cette/ses/ce*; *est* often spelt *et* or *ai* and vice versa; *ce* spelt *se*; *ceux* spelt *ce/se*; *ça/ç'a* spelt *sa*; *on* used instead of *ont*; *a* instead of *à* and vice versa; *eu* instead of *eux*; *sont* instead of *son* and vice versa; etc.

Candidates should also be aware that a spelling error can change the meaning of a sentence (e.g. the use of *poison* instead of *poisson*, of *sent* instead of *s'en...*)

All these mistakes can be avoided if candidates take the time to proof read their work.

The language was generally appropriate but simple and unsophisticated. In **Question 2** the language was sometimes repetitive as candidates were often more concerned with making valid points than with improving the quality of their language.

To improve the quality of language, candidates should pay particular attention to the following:

- the agreement of adjectives and participles
- the correct verb endings
- the correct use of pronouns and prepositions
- the difference between *a* and *à* ; between *et*, *est*, *ai* and *aie*; between *c'est*, *s'est*, *ses*, *ces*, *sait*; between *ce* and *se*; between *sa* and *ça*; between *été* and *était*; between *on* and *ont*;; between *son* and *sont*
- widening their knowledge and use of linking words and vocabulary
- increasing the use of complex structures
- the importance of accents and apostrophes.

Concentrating on these areas should stand all candidates in good stead.

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/02  
Writing

## Key messages

To be successful in this paper, candidates need to select two titles (one from each section) and write a response that is relevant, well-structured and clear. Essays should be accurate with a use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary as well as be coherent with well-developed ideas.

## General comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of four titles for the discussion and argumentative essay and four titles for the descriptive and narrative essay. Each essay was marked out of 25, comprising a maximum mark of 12 for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 for task achievement. Centres should note that **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** are for discursive essays; **Questions 1(c)** and **1(d)** for argumentative essays; **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** for descriptive essays and **Questions 2(c)** and **2(d)** for narrative essays. The majority of candidates knew how to set about tackling **Section 2** competently, however, a few candidates wrote a descriptive essay despite choosing a narrative question and vice versa. Whilst most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words used (350–500 words per essay), some scripts were significantly shorter than required and offered limited mark worthy content.

This paper generated some truly excellent work which demonstrated not only accurate and fluent linguistic production, but also good understanding of the issues requested in **Section 1** and contained some well selected examples to illustrate the various points being made. Some candidates still need to be reminded of the formal structure of a discursive/narrative essay ensuring they start their essay with an introduction rather than simply agree or disagree with the question straight away. It is also important to break the writing into paragraphs and avoid simply repeating the introduction instead of providing a proper conclusion. For **Section 2** some descriptive essays were exceptional and a pleasure to read producing a vivid experience for the reader. There are still too many descriptive essays offered which provide only a simple description of objects and lack continuity. A few candidates who chose the narrative essay were unable to develop a good story; either the story was too predictable, or in which nothing really happened. Taking a few minutes to plan a rough plotline as a draft is the key to achieving a higher mark.

The importance of clear handwriting cannot be overstated. Where candidates are aware of the limitations in this area, they should be advised to take extra care to ensure that they are not unduly penalised simply for the lack of clarity. In order of popularity this cohort chose: **Section 1: Question (d), Question (a), Question (b), Question (c); Section 2: Question (c), Question (d), Question (a), Question (b).**

As far as the quality of language was concerned, the best essays demonstrated a good level of grammatical accuracy and a wide variety of vocabulary and expression. Linguistically, the quality of the essays varied considerably where weaker candidates tended to use simple language and showed little grammatical or lexical awareness, which meant that ideas were not well communicated. There was a number of recurrent weaknesses and errors with the following seen often:

- Overuse of: chose, ça, cela, il y a, aussi, avec.
- Omission of accents: à et a, où et ou, dû et du.
- Confusion between: ses/ces, son/sont, on/ont, ce/ceux, sa/ça.
- Lapses of register: truc, pote, fringues, bouffer, puer.
- Inappropriate conjunctions at the end of a paragraph: aussi, ensuite, puis, alors, mais.
- Use of the **tu** form instead of the **vous** form.
- Use of **qui** in contexts where **ce qui** was required.
- Past participle agreements: nous sommes **allé** when it should be **allés**; ils ont **joués** when it should be **joué**.

- Preceding direct object agreement: je les ai **vu** when it should be je les ai **vus/vues**.
- Misspelling of common words: la **plus part**, **décennie**, **aggraver**, l'**aire**, les **habilles**.
- Use of **savoir** instead of **connaître**.
- Anglicisms: **atteindre/attendre les** for *assister aux*, le **government**. Les **locaux** for *les habitants*, la **réflexion** for *le reflet*.
- Conjugation of first person singular past historic: '*j'arriva*', je '*parla*' and with irregular verbs: je '*venis*'.
- Confusion between the past tenses.
- Imperfect tense of faire: il '*fesait*'.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Section 1

##### Question (a)

**Discutez les avantages et les inconvénients d'organiser dans son pays des compétitions sportives telles que les Jeux Olympiques.**

Stronger essays gave details of the advantages and disadvantages of hosting sporting events. Some advantages frequently mentioned were as follows: sporting events can boost the economy, as foreign visitors would come and support their team during the event. They would also spend money in the leisure and transport industry. As the event would be watched by millions (even billions) of people, this would be a great opportunity to promote the host country to encourage more visitors to come for a holiday. Prior to a sporting event such as the Olympic Games, there would be considerable demand of employment as better infrastructure would need to be put in place as well as new stadiums and buildings to accommodate the athletes. Sporting events engender a sense of national pride and give more motivation for the home team to perform better and encourage local people to start new sports. Candidates used pertinent examples such as the Olympic Games in Brazil and London and the football World Cup tournaments in South Africa and Brazil. However, the disadvantages outlined included the idea that building new stadiums and new roads can be a financial drain on a host city especially when levels of poverty are high, and money might have been better spent on tackling deprivation. In 2016 the government in Brazil forced residents to move out of their homes without offering appropriate compensation so that they could build a new stadium in preparation for the forthcoming Olympic Games.

Maintaining new buildings costs money and some countries cannot afford to spend additional money after the event and therefore stadiums get abandoned. During these high-profile international events the risk of terrorism is at its highest and more security is needed during the sporting event to protect the public and ensure a safe environment for the competitors.

The general sentiment expressed was that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages. Less successful essays did not give enough detail and struggled to convey the desired message accurately.

##### Question (b)

**« L'uniforme scolaire n'a plus sa place au 21ème siècle. » Discutez.**

This question generated a significant number of thoughtful, well-constructed and cogently argued essays. The question asked whether school uniforms still had a place in the 21st century, most candidates successfully developed the benefits of wearing a school uniform: to prevent bullying, to prepare students for work, to promote equality among pupils, to represent their school, to get ready quicker in the morning. The main disadvantages were also well-developed: school uniforms can be expensive, are not comfortable and can clash with some of the students' cultural practices. However, the best essays developed the importance of individuality amongst pupils which is often reflected through their choice of clothes. More and more youngsters may also suffer from gender dysphoria: a girl's school uniform can be very different from a boy's school uniform and create even more of a dilemma. There were no off topic essays, but some candidates' essays lacked depth and were rather limited in ideas.

### Question (c)

#### **Selon vous, les fêtes traditionnelles, religieuses ou pas, sont-elles devenues trop commerciales ?**

This was by far the least popular choice. Those who chose this question insisted on the importance of celebrating their traditions as they bring families together and reinforce values such as respect and generosity, but also agreed that businesses were exploiting those celebrations by pushing people to buy more merchandise. Amongst the celebrations mentioned often were Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and Independence Day in Congo. Less successful essays concentrated more on the running of a particular celebration than on the commercial exploitation as required by the question.

### Question (d)

#### **« Internet facilite la communication avec les autres. » Êtes-vous d'accord ?**

This proved to be by far the most popular title. Most essays were in agreement with the statement and were not short of supporting ideas. They suggested that the internet brings people together by making the world smaller; technology allows everyone to stay in touch so rapidly via social networking, you can even have a face-to-face conversation from opposite sides of the globe using video chat. In a working environment, the internet has improved productivity as there is now no need to travel to acquire new business thanks to the email and video-conferencing facilities available on our home computers. Stronger essays mentioned how the internet made communication easier during the pandemic and was a real lifeline for people in isolation during lockdown. Nevertheless, some candidates raised questions as more and more people who seem to spend their lives behind a screen struggle to have real conversations with other individuals. Furthermore, not everyone has access to the internet or may have unsettled connectivity. A few essays were not focused enough on the question and talked too much about the development on the benefit of the internet in general.

## Section 2

### Question (a)

#### **Décrivez un endroit qui n'existe que dans votre imagination. Décrivez ce que vous voyez, et comment vous y réagissez.**

This question generated some extraordinary answers. Some candidates were able to provide a vivid description of the world they sometimes inhabit in their mind when real life becomes too much by using all senses: hearing, touch, smell, taste and feel. A few candidates were also successful in providing two types of scenery: one illustrating happiness with some colourful landscapes and mythical animals in movement and a sudden turn of events expressing sad feelings and describing a darker picture of the place. Weaker work tended to list a series of points without linking each described object.

### Question (b)

#### **Vous vous trouvez dans un village totalement abandonné. Décrivez cette expérience : ce que vous voyez, ce que vous ressentez, etc.**

Candidates who were successful at the task wrote an essay utilising all five senses and successfully managed to provide impressive details of the appearance of the village as they progressed towards it. The feeling expressed was extremely somber with regular strange creaking noises keeping the reader on alert. Unfortunately, some candidates used this title as a narrative task and did not provide enough description to be awarded a good mark.

### Question (c)

#### **« Je venais tout juste de reprendre mes esprits quand soudain... » Incorporez cette phrase dans une courte histoire.**

The given sentence would be more suited if located in the middle of the story rather than at the very beginning in order to build up suspense. Many stories related an exciting pursuit, and some essays were very engaging with effects successfully achieved. Using the past historic and the imperfect/pluperfect tenses is highly recommended when selecting this type of question title; this proved to be challenging for some candidates who tended to mix present and past tenses when writing their story.

**Question (d)**

**L'été dernier vous êtes parti(e) à l'aventure pendant deux mois. Écrivez le début ou une partie de votre aventure.**

This title did not elicit the most interesting narratives. Too many candidates treated this title as a descriptive essay rather than a narrative. Other candidates wrote about summer holidays with their family offering unengaging depictions of everyday scenarios with no climax. More able candidates were able to relate an adventure in the wilderness and the arduous weather conditions they endured. When writing a narrative essay, it is important to engage the reader from the beginning, introduce a challenge and maintain the tension built up.

