

FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

Paper 0505/01
Reading

Key messages

This paper tests reading comprehension and summary skills.

In **Question 1**, candidates should attempt to use their own words as far as possible in order to demonstrate their understanding of the German language.

In **Question 2**, candidates must write within the specified word limit of 200 – 250 words.

One challenge faced by many candidates this year was using the correct spelling for words. Many candidates used phonetic spelling and/or outdated spelling rules (e.g. *daß*). This had a negative impact on the mark awarded for Accuracy of Language.

General comments

Overall, candidates coped very well with this paper. There were a number of very good performances and the majority of candidates' linguistic abilities were mostly good or above, and appropriate to the level of the question paper.

Most candidates managed to summarise the main points in **Question 2** and some candidates achieved full marks in this task. It is important to note that this is a summary task – too many candidates still include a textual analysis and/or their own opinion, neither of which can be credited.

It is also important to take careful note of the word limit given in the rubric for the summary task. Marks were not awarded for any valid points made after the upper limit of 250 words. A summary is an exercise in writing in a precise and succinct style – overlong answers do not fulfil this task.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) This was a straightforward question and most candidates achieved full marks.
- (b) Again, this was a straightforward question, which most candidates answered successfully.
- (c) Many candidates coped well with this question. However, some answers were too specific by stating, for example, that 'fast food menus have 1000 calories'. Many candidates claimed that salads could also be unhealthy without giving a reason and this could not be credited with a mark.
- (d) The majority of candidates answered one part of this question correctly, but did not mention the aspect of 'concentrating on your food/eating with enjoyment' and therefore, only achieved one out of two marks.
- (e) Many candidates answered this question correctly and were awarded full marks.
- (f) (i) Many candidates scored only one or two out of the three available marks here. It should be noted that 'Give examples from the text' does not mean simply copying the relevant quote from the text without further explanation. This does not show understanding and cannot be credited.

- (ii) This was a challenging question, as candidates had to look beyond the literal meaning of the words and explore their linguistic dimension. Some candidates coped extremely well with this question and scored full marks. Others did not understand that the answer could not be found directly in the text and just wrote a general answer on healthy living.
- (g) Again, this was a challenging question as the three elements of the answer were found not just in one paragraph, but across the whole text and thus required a re-reading of the entire text.

Question 2

In this part of the exam, candidates are required to write a brief summary of both texts and must make sure that they stay within the upper word limit of 250 words. The majority of candidates adhered to the word limit, but there was still a number of candidates who exceeded it by a long way. Any valid points mentioned after the 250-word limit cannot be credited and overlong answers will also have a negative impact on the mark awarded for Style and Organisation.

It is unnecessary and even detrimental to include a lengthy introduction or any introduction at all. Some candidates wrote an introduction in excess of 100 words – this is to be avoided as it will limit the number of content points the candidate can score. Equally, candidates should not include their personal opinion – many talked about their opinion on fast food – as this is not appropriate in a summary task and cannot be credited with marks.

The majority of candidates followed a very clear structure of first talking about fast food and its disadvantages and advantages, followed by the same for slow food. Some candidates grouped all the advantages of both foods together, followed by the disadvantages of both foods. Some candidates discussed only one food movement (mostly fast food) which limited the number of marks they could be awarded.

Some candidates also included points from their own general knowledge. Like personal opinions, this cannot be credited as the task is to write a summary based on what they have read in the two texts, not a general essay about fast and slow food.

It is worth noting that candidates who achieved high marks had often spent time on a plan/list before starting their summary.

Accuracy of Language

The vast majority of candidates produced mostly fluent German, handling most tasks well. There was, however, an increased instance of phonetic and/or incorrect spelling which sometimes made it very difficult to understand candidates' answers. The register was mostly appropriate, but many candidates used familiar language and expressions which should not be used in formal writing (e.g. *eine Pizza in den Ofen schmeißen*, *sich einen Salat reinziehen* etc.).

Many candidates did not know the rules about capitalisation and punctuation in German and wrote whole passages without a single capital letter and/or any punctuation marks. This had a detrimental effect on the Accuracy of Language mark.

FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

Paper 0505/02
Writing

Key messages

This year's best essays were produced by candidates who worked from a well-structured plan thus avoiding repetition, and presenting orderly and engaging work with precise and convincing detail.

The most successful responses in **Section 1** had a wide range of points and linked them together, not just by sorting them by relative importance, but also by building on one another.

The best work in **Section 2** showed good understanding of the essay-type required, using tenses and perspectives appropriately as well as employing a wide range of accurate vocabulary.

Candidates need to ensure that each aspect of the title is addressed appropriately and relevantly. It would benefit their work if all candidates took time with each sentence – re-structuring sentences in mid-flow rarely improves the quality and usually adds avoidable mistakes. A regular sentence needs both subject and verb, elliptic sentences can be joined on with a comma or colon.

Candidates must take great care with their handwriting, as illegible content cannot be taken into consideration when awarding marks.

General comments

Style and Accuracy

Some of the better essays showed an impressive control of language, convincing, scintillating wording, mastering sarcasm, irony and precise depiction of feelings and situations, showing brilliant extended vocabulary, assured use of complex syntax and grammar and flawless spelling.

Many mistakes were 'imported' (wrongly learnt) from material such as advertisements, newspaper articles and song lyrics. Candidates should be aware that there is a considerable difference between the 'free' use of everyday written language and producing texts in line with official rules, aiming for a given essay-type in the context of an exam.

The most obvious problems occurred with register. Colloquialisms were rife: *gucken, kriegen, wegen + Dativ, Jungs, Promi, mal, 'raus/'runter* and many more. Candidates need to be encouraged to refer to dictionaries to familiarise themselves with different registers and how they are tagged. A colloquial expression can only be awarded marks if it is used to create characterisation within the narrative or descriptive texts.

Equally important is to find out which relatively new and modern expressions have actually been added to the *Duden* and which are still waiting to be included. If a word is not in the *Duden*, it cannot be acknowledged as appropriate vocabulary, e.g. at this moment in time *soziale Medien* is acceptable only with a lower case on *soziale* whereas *Social Media* has two capital letters. There are three acceptable spellings of *Fake News*; *der Mainstream* is a German word whereas *der Streamer* can be used solely for IT or fishing issues, not within a media context. It is part of language proficiency to be aware of a prescriptive publication like the *Duden* and to be able to refer to it accordingly.

There was some inaccurate use of pronouns, mainly relative and reflexive. For example, *Die Person....er hat, man...dein/sich, deren/dessen* etc. Insecurity in using these correctly also highlighted weaknesses in sentence construction. Many candidates would benefit from using shorter sentences or, alternatively, revising and training the use of interdependent subordinate clauses, e.g. ..., *dass, wenn man Süßigkeiten isst, muss man sich die Zähne putzen.*

A good number of candidates were not aware of nuances in their native language, e.g. *vertraulich* does not mean the same as *vertrauenswürdig*. In one essay, Donald Trump was surrounded *von seinen Zuhältern*, meaning his loyal supporters. *Veropfert* for *aufgeopfert*, *verglorreicht* for *glorifiziert* and *entfährdet* instead of *der Gefahr entronnen* were creative neologisms and the same applies to *feinfühlsame* instead of *einfühlsame Jungen*. These creations cannot be rewarded as accurate use of vocabulary. If time allows, work on lexical fields would be desirable in preparation for this paper.

Thorough revision should be extended to verbs. Knowledge and appropriate use of subjunctive forms and indirect speech this year were rare. Strong conjugation of past tenses was often flawed – *gesteigt*, *geschlaft*, *vermeidet*, *laufte*, *trachte* etc., as was the use of tenses themselves. Especially in **Question 2**, there were a lot of changes of tense (e.g. preterite tense to present tense and back) when the narration stayed in the same time frame, at times within the same sentence. Tenses need to be accurate for an essay to be awarded marks in the top band for Accuracy. Narrative essays in particular often showed a lack of pluperfect to relate chronological events.

Many candidates endeavoured to convey atmosphere in the descriptive texts by giving abundant poetic detail on colour, weather and light, as well as what they could smell and touch, most of them doing so extremely well.

Comments on specific questions

Erster Teil – Diskussion und Erörterung

Question 1

- (a) This was the most popular title for **Question 1**. Many essays were very thoughtful and tried to capture both perspectives – the celebrity's and the fan's – and offered discerning explorations on the theme of responsibility within society, where too much idolatry will lead and how independent from other people's opinion both fan and famous person should become. Less successful essays concentrated more on the behaviour of the celebrities than on the actual topic of responsibility.
- (b) There were many outstanding essays on this title, providing perceptive insights about free speech, journalism and society. Most candidates stressed the importance of free information and taking responsibility for one's own education. Weaker work tended to just list different sources of news without focusing on the main part of the topic – how much trust do they deserve and how can we know?
- (c) Many candidates approached this argumentative essay well and were persuasive in presenting their point of view either for or against eating sweets in childhood. Outstanding work managed to strike a balance between strongly stating a personal point while at the same time acknowledging that there are equally strong views on the opposite side. They supported their claims with a wealth of information on sweets' ingredients, the biology and psychology of child development, and nutrition. When this balance was not met, weaker essays tended to just comment on how 'bad' or 'nice' sweets can be for a child without giving evidence or drawing conclusions in answer to the title.
- (d) *Sportunterricht* attracted the second largest number of essays. A fairly even number of opinions for and against gender separation emerged. Most were focused on personal experiences; the best work explored matters of organising a fair sports education from both the school's and the students' perspective, including thoughts on public funding, gender equality, discrimination and LGBT issues.

Zweiter Teil – Schilderung und Erzählung

Question 2

- (a) Quite a lot of 'Garden of Eden' descriptions were offered for this title: timeless natural beauty and distance from the noise and pollution of our modern days. Others also included modern technology to support a healthy and peaceful society. In most essays, this paradise was completed by an absence of injustice, envy, greed, hunger and illness, war and violence. This often provoked the use of the subjunctive – a more difficult mode for this essay-type but nonetheless an understandable choice to describe something so removed from reality. A few essays were

impressive in terms of their originality: paradise is home and good memories are linked to each and every room; Adam and Eve taking a good look at the world today, even the snake got to make a comment. A small number of essays gave a rather factual account of what constitutes the notion of 'paradise', missing the requirements of the descriptive task in the process. Most candidates insisted on having friends and family with them, while others created a retreat full of material wealth and luxury.

- (b) This proved to be the most popular choice for **Question 2**. Not all essays focused on the view but almost all included a range of impressions from a walk. All kinds of landscapes were offered, all seasons from scorching hot jungle to freezing midnight mountain hikes, looking at the valley below on New Year's Eve. Less successful descriptions focused on people and events alone. Here a close reading of the title – *was Sie sehen und fühlen* – would have been helpful.
- (c) Many adventure stories were created for this title, most of them in a foreign country, exploring an additional layer of *fremde Stadt*. A large number of stories were working up to a robbery or abduction as a climax, not all of them depicting a happy ending. Others wrote about getting lost in time travel in their own city or meeting their future self to help them back to familiar territory. The best work was focused on the main plot, creating characters through detail. Less successful responses mainly narrated long strings of unengaging details before the event relating to the title. Having a rough plotline as a draft seemed to be the key to accessing the higher mark bands.
- (d) This rather open topic invited a variety of weekend happenings to be related. Most included either a trip or an important sporting event with the protagonist trying to achieve victory. Some candidates offered a third-person narrator, flashbacks and time lapses. The restriction to focus on just one weekend prompted tight plotlines and most of the essays were therefore of a good standard. Here, too, less successful essays offered unengaging depictions of everyday scenarios with not much of a climax, which left the reader wondering what about the weekend in question made it 'the best'.