CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge O Level

ENGLISH LANGUAGE **1123/21**

Paper 2 Writing **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: • the specific **content** defined in the mark scheme • the specific **skills** defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions • the **standard of response** required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks **positively**. This means that: • marks are not deducted for errors or omissions • marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for **other valid answers** which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate • the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged **only** when the mark scheme indicates that these features are **specifically assessed** in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must **consistently** apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the **full range of marks** defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and **must not** award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

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English & Media-Specific Marking Principles
(To be read in conjunction with the General Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptions:

- We use level descriptions as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptions are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

Components using point-based marking:

Point marking is often used to reward knowledge, understanding and application of skills. We give credit where the candidate's answer shows relevant knowledge, understanding and application of skills in answering the question. We do not give credit where the answer shows confusion.

From this it follows that we:

a DO credit answers which are worded differently from the mark scheme if they clearly convey the same meaning (unless the mark scheme requires a specific term).
b DO credit alternative answers/examples which are not written in the mark scheme if they are correct.
c DO credit answers where candidates give more than one correct answer in one prompt/numbered/scaffolded space where extended writing is required rather than list-type answers. For example, questions that require *n* reasons (e.g. State two reasons…).
d DO NOT credit answers simply for using a 'key term' unless that is all that is required. (Check for evidence it is understood and not used wrongly.)
e DO NOT credit answers which are obviously self-contradicting or trying to cover all possibilities.
f DO NOT give further credit for what is effectively repetition of a correct point already credited unless the language itself is being tested. This applies equally to 'mirror statements' (i.e. polluted/not polluted).
g DO NOT require spellings to be correct, unless this is part of the test. However, spellings of syllabus terms must allow for clear and unambiguous separation from other syllabus terms with which they may be confused (e.g. corrasion/corrosion).

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
	Indicates ideas selected from Text A (Section A)
	Indicates ideas selected from Text B (Section A)
	Indicates evaluation of an idea (Section A)
	Indicates development of an idea (Section A)
	Indicates merits of vocabulary (including spelling)
	Indicates merits of punctuation
	Indicates purposeful/effective use of descriptive/narrative and structural features
	Indicates level of achievement (use of sentence structures and grammar)

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Section A: Directed Writing

Question 1

This question tests the following reading assessment objectives (10 marks)

R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
R5 select and use information for specific purposes.

and the following writing assessment objectives (15 marks)

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
W4 use register appropriate to context
W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question	Answer	Marks
1	**You feel strongly about the impact of playing video games on young people. After reading two blog posts, you decide to write an article for your school magazine giving your views on how video gaming impacts young people.** **Write your article for the school magazine.** **In your article you should:** • **evaluate the ideas and opinions in both texts** • **give your own views about how video gaming impacts young people, based on what you have read in the texts.** **Base your article on what you have read in both texts but be careful to use your own words.** **Address both of the bullet points.** **Begin your article with a suitable heading.** **Write about 250 to 350 words.** **Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 15 marks for the quality of your writing.**	**25**

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	**Notes on task**: **Responses should be based on some or all of the following ideas:** **Text 1** Viewpoint – positive impact of video gaming • good for the brain (allow examples e.g. problem solving / quick decision making) • educational – used in schools • physical benefits / improves reflexes and coordination • socialising / develop social skills • mental break / escape from reality / relax Max 5 ✓1 **Text 2** Viewpoint – negative impact of video gaming • takes away time to rest the brain • missing out on family time • physical health problems • lack of sleep / not doing so well at school • mental health problems Max 5 ✓2 **Evaluation** is offering judgement of an idea. Anything which suggests prioritization of one idea over another, or dismissal of an idea, is valid as evaluation. Examples of phrases which *may* lead to evaluation *could* include: 'one of the biggest issues' 'the most important concern' 'it is certainly true' 'I can't deny' 'we can't completely ignore the fact' 'it is claimed'. Also look out for: • the use of rhetorical questions which may be **evaluative** • tone which implies **evaluation** • emotive vocabulary which implies **evaluation** **Development** is adding an example or information additional to an idea already in the text, e.g. a viable alternative, personal experience, etc. whereas evaluation is about offering a judgement of the quality or validity of that idea. It is also possible that we will see development of evaluation as in the examples below: A common argument against this is that instead of staring at a screen for hours after a long day, take an actual break by resting or doing extracurricular activities.	

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Question	Answer	Marks
1	While it is true that computers games are good for socialising the potential risks of this should also be considered. For example, young people may connect with people who have ill intentions towards them. Candidates may also decide to evaluate the actual texts – as well as, or instead of, the ideas and opinions within them – by considering the following aspects: • how **sensible / convincing** the argument is • evidence of **bias** in the texts • how well supported the argument is (with **evidence**) • consideration of **others' viewpoints** • use of **language** **NOTE: THE ABOVE LISTS AND EXAMPLES ARE <u>NOT EXHAUSTIVE</u>. REWARD ALL SENSIBLE ATTEMPTS AT EVALUATION.**	

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Marking criteria for Section A, Question 1

Section A: Reading Table

Use the following table to give a mark out of 10 for reading.

Level	Marks	Description
5	**9–10**	• Selects a wide range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Analyses, evaluates and develops the chosen content in a way that clearly fulfils all elements of the task. (R3)
4	**7–8**	• Selects a range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Some analysis, evaluation and development and a clear focus on the task. (R3)
3	**5–6**	• Identifies sufficient relevant facts, ideas and opinions from the text(s). (R5) • Some development of ideas in a reasonably focused response. (R3)
2	**3–4**	• Identifies some relevant points from the text(s). (R5) • Occasional development of ideas in a response that is sometimes focused. (R3)
1	**1–2**	• Attempts to identify a few relevant points from the text(s). (R5) • Evidence of some focus on the task. (R3)
0	**0**	No creditable content.

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Section A: Writing Table

Use the following table to give a mark out of 15 for writing.

Level	Marks	Description
5	**13–15**	• Content is complex, well developed and effective. (W1) • Well-organised structure that assimilates ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses a wide range of well-constructed sentences accurately, including complex sentences. (W3) • Precise and effective use of a wide range of vocabulary. (W3) • Consistently appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Highly accurate use of complex spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
4	**10–12**	• Content is developed and effective. (W1) • Secure organisation that combines ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses a range of sentence structures accurately, including some complex ones. (W3) • Effective use of a range of vocabulary. (W3) • Mostly appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, including some complex language. (W5)
3	**7–9**	• Content is relevant with some development. (W1) • Some attempt to organise and structure ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses most sentence structures accurately, sometimes attempting complex ones with success. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary. (W3) • Some awareness of an appropriate tone and register for audience and purpose. (W4) • Uses a straightforward range of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
2	**4–6**	• Content is straightforward with occasional development. (W1) • Occasional attempt to organise and structure ideas from the text(s). (W2) • Uses simple sentence structures accurately which may be repetitive. (W3) • Uses a range of simple vocabulary which may be repetitive. (W3) • A little awareness of appropriate tone or register. (W4) • Generally accurate use of more simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	**1–3**	• Content is simple with a little development of ideas. (W1) • Organisation and structure rely largely on sequence in original text(s). (W2) • Attempts to use simple sentence structures. (W3) • Uses some simple vocabulary accurately. (W3) • Limited awareness of appropriate tone or register (W4) • Some accuracy in simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
0	**0**	No creditable content.

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Section B: Composition

Questions 2, 3, 4 or 5

This question tests the following writing assessment objectives (25 marks)

W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
W2 organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
W3 use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Question	Answer	Marks
2	**Descriptive writing**	**25**
	Describe the scene on a busy street during a popular festival.	
3	**Descriptive writing**	**25**
	Describe the scene at a shopping centre in the middle of the day and when it is about to close.	
4	**Narrative writing**	**25**
	Write a story in which, by mistake, you open a letter addressed to someone else, and get a pleasant surprise.	
5	**Narrative writing**	**25**
	Write a story which includes the sentence: 'This opportunity is too good to miss; we have to take it!'	

Use the Section B Composition: Content and Structure Table to give a mark out of 10 for content and structure and the Section B Composition: Style and Accuracy Table to give a mark out of 15 for style and accuracy.

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Marking criteria for Section B

Section B Composition: Content and Structure

Level	Marks	Description
5	**9–10**	• **Consistently effective response to the task** • A wide range of descriptive or narrative features used to create a consistently effective response. (W1) • Structure is clear, well balanced and carefully organised for deliberate effect. (W2)
4	**7–8**	• **Mostly effective response to the task** • A range of descriptive or narrative features used to create a mostly effective response. (W1) • Structure is mostly clear, balanced and well organised, with some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2)
3	**5–6**	• **Sometimes effective response to the task** • Some use of descriptive or narrative features to create a sometimes effective response**.** (W1) • Structure is reasonably clear, with some organisation and some choices made for deliberate effect. (W2)
2	**3–4**	• **Adequate response to the task** • A few ideas and/or experiences are expressed in an attempt to convey what is thought, felt and/or imagined. (W1) • Structure is occasionally clear, with some attempt at organisation to achieve effects. (W2)
1	**1–2**	• **Task is addressed** • An attempt to convey what is thought, felt and/or imagined. (W1) • Some attempt to structure ideas. (W2)
0	**0**	No creditable content.

Candidates may use some of the following features:

Descriptions:
- **Focus**: e.g. change from close at hand, to in the distance, or very detailed to impressionistic
- **Atmosphere**: e.g. welcoming, foreboding, pleasing, either uniform or varying
- **Direction**: e.g. opposite views from a high viewpoint
- **Senses**: sight, touch, hearing, smell (but weaker candidates do it too mechanically)
- **Contrast** (especially beyond any contrast given in the question)
- **Setting and people within the setting**
- **Reactions of observer**
- **Figurative language techniques** e.g. simile, metaphor, personification
- **Sound devices** e.g. onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance

And how the response is all linked together to make a cohesive picture, with minimal or no narrative framework.

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Narratives:

- **Scenario established at beginning**
- **Setting**: sufficient descriptive detail (but not too much)
- **Atmosphere**: e.g. foreboding, mysterious, joyful
- **Senses**: sight, touch, hearing, smell
- **Figurative language techniques** e.g. simile, metaphor, personification
- **Characterisation of protagonists** by, for example, reactions to events/others, direct speech, feelings, 'showing' rather than 'telling'
- **Control of time frame**: e.g. flashback, jumping in the sequence
- **Movement of events**
- **Build-up of tension** (if appropriate)
- **Effective climax**, or at least a definite, clearly signalled ending (or intentional cliff-hanger)

And how the response is all linked together to make a convincing story

Section B Composition: Style and accuracy

Level	Marks	Description
5	**13–15**	• Uses a wide range of well-constructed sentences accurately, including complex sentences. (W3) • Precise and effective use of a wide range of vocabulary. (W3) • Highly accurate use of complex spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
4	**10–12**	• Uses a range of sentence structures accurately, including some complex ones. (W3) • Effective use of a range of vocabulary. (W3) • Accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar, including some complex language. (W5)
3	**7–9**	• Uses most sentence structures accurately, sometimes attempting complex ones with success. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of appropriate vocabulary. (W3) • Uses a straightforward range of spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
2	**4–6**	• Uses simple sentence structures accurately which may be repetitive. (W3) • Uses a range of simple vocabulary which may be repetitive. (W3) • Generally accurate use of more simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
1	**1–3**	• Attempts to use simple sentence structures. (W3) • Uses simple vocabulary accurately. (W3) • Some accuracy in simple spelling, punctuation and grammar. (W5)
0	**0**	No creditable content

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