

# English Mock Exams Revision Tips

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### IGCSE ENGLISH AS A FIRST LANGUAGE (0500)

#### First Language English—Reading Passages (Paper 2)

##### Question 1: Directed Writing (Article, Diary, Letter, Transcript of a Speech or Interview) 20 marks

- This question will be based on passage A only.
- You will be assessed on the appropriate style, format, and register. For example, if you were writing the transcript of an interview ensure that the language of the interview has character and sounds real. Ensure that contributions of the different speakers vary in length and are well sequenced and substantial.
- Or, for example, if you were required to write a newspaper article, you must ensure that you don't end up writing a story. Instead you will be required to adopt an appropriate journalistic tone and focus on being informative. Remember to be a reporter. In this case it will be essential to write in paragraphs.
- You are required to show a thorough knowledge of the passage and the characters in it.
- Your writing should be able to adapt to the requirements of the questions. Adopt an appropriate tone and vocabulary for different characters.
- You will be rewarded for original ideas that relate to the passage, especially if you have supporting details.
- Read the question carefully and make an attempt to respond to all bullet point stimuli in the question.
- Avoid making general references to events and characters in the passage.
- Avoid mechanical repetition of words and events from the passage.
- Ensure that your comments are very clearly expressed and enhanced by a wide range of positive and interesting language with a varied vocabulary.

##### Question 2: Language Analysis (10 marks)

- This question is marked for the your ability to select effective or unusual words and for an understanding of ways in which the language is effective.

- You are required to select words that carry specific meaning, including implications, additional to general and to ordinary vocabulary.
- You will be marked for the overall quality of your answer, not for the number of words chosen.
- You are required to have a wide ranging discussion of language with comments that add meaning and associations to words in both parts of the question.
- You should be able to demonstrate the writer's reasons for using them. Say *why* the author has used a certain word and discuss *what effect* it has on the reader.
- Comment on figures of speech (metaphors, similes, hyperbole, etc.) Don't merely identify them—say why the author has used them and discuss what effect they have on the reader.
- Try and group examples to demonstrate overview of meaning/inference/attitude.
- Remember to follow the structure: Statement → Quote → Analysis
- You are not really required to have an introduction and conclusion. However, if you include this you will not lose marks.

### Question 3: Summary (20 marks)

- This question is based on passage A and passage B
- There are up to fifteen marks available for the selection of relevant facts and up to five for focusing on the question, writing concisely and using your own words. There are usually up to twenty possible answers listed in the examiner's mark scheme so if you read carefully and methodically you will have no difficulty in scoring full marks for content.
- Avoid writing in an informative style or of a commentary. This diverts your attention from the task of getting the content points onto paper. Commentaries mean that rewardable facts will be few and far between.
- Stick to facts—avoid opinions or explanations.
- There is no need for an introduction or conclusion.
- Stick to the word limit. While Examiners do not count words, they expect the summary to take up about one side. If you write two and a half sides you are demonstrably ignoring the requirements of the question.
- Attempt both parts of the questions and give equal importance to both passage A and B.
- Remember to write in your own words.

- You are not required to interpret ‘things’ as ideas and concepts as you would do in questions 1 and 2 for Passage A. This summary question does not test ideas, but only facts. It is designed to test your ability to read a satisfactory length accurately within a short space of time.
- Avoid attempting to write a comparison of the two passages.
- Ensure both parts of your answer are concise, focused, and precise.
- Avoid making lists or writing in bullet-points.
- Avoid repetition and avoid lifting lines from the passages

## First Language English—Directed Writing and Composition (Paper 3)

### Question 1: Directed Writing (Article, Diary, Letter, Transcript of a Speech or Interview) 25 marks

- You will read one or more short texts which will be printed on the question paper. You will be required to use and develop the given information in another form, e.g. a letter, a report, a speech, a dialogue.
- Ensure you plan and draft before you start writing. (But don't waste too much time on this. Manage your time appropriately).
- You will be required to articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined as per instructions in the question.
- Your writing should be able to adapt to the requirements of the questions. Adopt an appropriate tone, format, and vocabulary for different characters. So for example if you were required to write a letter, structure your letter appropriately and write in an appropriate voice. Avoid being too casual or informal. Write in paragraphs. Remember to include a salutation and sign off. If the aim of the letter is to analyse and persuade, ensure you make your case in an analytical, evaluative, positive and persuasive.
- Select details from the relevant texts.
- You may add your own ideas and details—but they should be plausible and rooted in the texts.
- Try and ensure a consistent sense of audience
- Use a style that fits for purpose.
- Use fluent and varied sentences and a wide range of vocabulary. Show a strong sense of structure, paragraphing and sequence.
- When reading the texts, read effectively between the lines. Try and develop the reading material and integrate it into the argument.
- Avoid copying or lifting lines unselectively from the texts.

### Question 2: Composition—Essay Writing (25 marks)

- You will have at least two argumentative/discursive, two descriptive and two narrative titles to choose from. You will be required to write on one title only.
- Write between 350 and 450 words.
- Ensure your writing is consistent, stylistically fluent, linguistically strong and accurate, and has clear sense of audience

- Attempt to use ambitious language, varied vocabulary and complex sentence structures, where appropriate.

### Argumentative Writing:

- Ensure your arguments are consistently well developed, and you have logical stages.
- Ensure each stage is linked to the preceding one, and sentences within paragraphs are soundly sequenced.
- Avoid repetition.
- Your writing should be carefully planned.
- You should support your opinions with facts or examples wherever possible.
- A clear introduction and a forceful conclusion will help to convince the examiner to agree with your ideas.
- If you are given a specific audience for your writing, use vocabulary and a register that is appropriate to it.
- Argumentative writing tasks often appear to be very far-reaching: don't fall into the trap of trying to cover too many major issues in your answer. Plan carefully.
- You need not include more than four or five main points as long as they are developed in detail.
- Try not to include too many generalised statements; illustrate all of your main points with specific details and examples.
- Use vocabulary and a register appropriate to your audience but don't forget that your real audience is the examiner.
- If you are writing a speech, try to make it sound authentic by using phrases that are directed at your imagined listeners, but don't write in such a colloquial way that the examiner is unable to understand clearly what you mean.
- Argumentative writing is difficult, especially under examination conditions, so remember that you have a choice of topics; you don't have to choose the argumentative option.
- If you enjoy this type of writing then it's a good idea to make some preparations. Read newspapers and magazines so that you have an understanding of key issues and some examples which you can use to support your arguments.
- When you read what people have to say about a particular issue, practise thinking of opposing arguments to those they are putting forward.

- Always try to see both sides of an argument; good argumentative writing is controlled by the mind; you must control your feelings and express them as a logical argument.
- Argumentative writing does not mean you have to argue with the wording of the question.
- Argumentative writing does not mean you have to write a story.
- Structure:

*Introduction: State your understanding of the issue.*

- Set the tone and hook your reader
- Explain your understanding of the issue/problem
- Explain why it is important to be discussing this issue
- Briefly state the different views on the subject
- Make your thesis statement in a concise and succinct manner.

*Body: Comprises of several paragraphs in which you explain, illustrate and justify your point of view.*

- Use rhetorical questions
- Present evidence
- Provide examples and facts
- Use interesting quotations
- Stick to a formal and impersonal style
- Give reasons for objections to any opposing views
- Structured rebuttals / counterarguments

*Conclusion: Wraps up your essays and directs focus on your key points*

- Summarise a couple of your most effective/important points/reasons
- Re-state thesis statement (ensure it is worded differently from the introductory paragraph)

### Descriptive Writing

- Ensure you have well-defined, well-developed ideas and images, describing complex atmospheres with a range of details.
- Overall structure is provided through devices such as the movements of the writer, the creation of a short time span, or the creation of atmosphere or tension.
- Ensure there is no confusion with writing a story.
- Ensure repetition is avoided and the sequence of sentences makes the picture clear to the reader.
- Avoid clichés and telling a story.
- Describe what you see, hear, smell and feel.

- Slow down and dwell on the details.
- Use a rich and varied variety of adjectives, adverbs, metaphors, and similes.
- Stick to the same tense.
- Try to remain more or less in the same place while describing.
- Try to see things from the reader's perspective.

### Narrative Writing

- Narrative tasks may require you to write a story or part of a story; they may also ask you to write a true account. The purpose of your writing is to entertain the reader through the situation you have imagined and also to explore that situation and the characters involved in it
- Remember how much time you have in the exam. Don't try to write too complicated a story. Examiners want quality not quantity.
- Don't fill your writing with direct speech; it causes problems with punctuation and it's difficult to use effectively. Just use a little to show that you are in control of it.
- Writing a story is not just about narrative; description of characters and setting is as important.
- It may help you to base your story on something that has (or might have) happened to you. You can then embroider the situation as seems best.
- Don't take a story you may have read (or written) before and try to make it fit the title on the question paper - examiners will be able to see the joins!
- Don't forget to use paragraphs.
- Ensure the time sequence in your essay runs into a few hours and not into months and years.
- Don't create too many characters.
- Planning what you are going to write is crucial; the opening sentence allows you the opportunity to develop a story in many different directions. Think about what direction you will take and where it will end - before you start to write.
- Wherever you decide to set a story, you must make it convincing to the reader by including background details. For example, at what time of the day (or night) is the story going to start? Who else, apart from the central character, is going to be involved? How much detail or description will you give of the characters involved in the story? For example, in the sample question below how much time will you spend in describing the corridor, the walk to the door and what is to be found behind it?

- Are you going to write your story in the first or third person? It's your choice, but a first person narrative will be centred on the experiences of the narrator; a third person narrative will allow a wider viewpoint but may lead to an over-complex account.
- Make sure that your continuation is consistent with the tense used in the opening sentence. As an example, the opening sentence of the sample question below is written in the past continuous tense; the rest of the story should continue in the same tense.

### Overview of First Language English Papers

Paper 2	Reading Passages (Extended Tier)	Questions relating to two passages, linked by theme, of approx 600-700 words each printed on question paper (includes summary exercise)	2 hours	50%
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**AND**

Paper 3	Directed Writing & Composition	One directed writing task based on a stimulus printed on the exam paper, and one composition task chosen from a range of narrative/discursive/descriptive options.	2 hours	50%
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