

REVISION CHECKLIST for AS English Language 8693

A Guide for Students

How to use this guide

The guide describes what you need to know about your AS English Language examination. It will help you to plan your revision program for the examination and will explain what the examiners are looking for in the answers you write. It can also be used to help you to revise by referring to Section 3, 'What you need to know' to check what you know and which topic areas of English language you have covered.

The guide contains the following sections:

Section 1- How will you be tested?

This section will give you information about the different examination papers that are available.

Section 2 - What will you be tested on?

This section describes the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that you may be tested on.

Section 3 - What you need to know

This shows the syllabus content in a simple way so that you can check:

- which topics you need to know
- details about aspects of the syllabus
- how much of the syllabus you have covered

Section 1 How will you be tested?

1.1 About the examinations you will take

You will take **two** papers: Paper 1 (Passages for Comment) and Paper 2 (Composition).

1.2 About the Papers

Paper 1 (2 hours) (50 marks)

You must answer **two** questions from three. Each question is worth **25** marks.

Each question will be based on a passage selected from a range of different sources (for example, travel pieces, autobiography, biography, advertising, speeches, reviews, persuasive writing, and fiction).

Each question has a part (a) and a part (b).

You may be asked to comment on the style and language of the set passage in part (a). This will be worth **15** marks. Part (b) will ask you to write a directed writing task based on the material in the passage: this may, for example, take the form of a diary, a letter, a continuation of the passage. You will be asked to write between 120-150 words for this piece of writing. This part of the question is worth **10** marks.

Or

Part (a) may ask you to carry out a directed writing task first (a task, for example, such as a letter or diary) and this piece of writing will be between **120-150** words. This will be worth up to **10** marks. Part (b) will then ask you to compare the style and language of your piece of writing with those of the original passage. This part of the question is worth up to **15** marks.

Paper 2 (2 hours) (50 marks)

There are two sections to this paper and you have to answer **one** question from **each section** that is **two questions in total**. **Section A** is based on **Narrative/Descriptive/Imaginative Writing** and there will be a **choice of four** titles from which you must **select one**. You should allow **1** hour for this answer.

Section B is based on **Discursive/Argumentative Writing** and there will be a **choice** here too of **four** titles from which you must **select one** to write about. You should allow **1** hour for this answer.

Here is some more detail about each of the papers:

(i) Paper 1

This paper tests your **reading** skills in particular. However, there is also the opportunity to demonstrate some of your writing skills too.

You have to **answer two** of the three questions available. It is best to allow some reading time for the passages and the questions.

- Take your time to choose your questions carefully at the start of the examination.
- Planning is very useful.

- Don't be afraid to **highlight key** words and phrases, even using colour coding if you think it might help; don't be afraid to make notes on the paper.

Questions will be drawn from a range of different resources.

These may include some of the following: travel pieces, autobiography, biography, advertising, speeches, reviews, persuasive writing, and fiction.

You will be asked to comment on the language and style of the set passage and asked to carry out a direct writing task of between **120-150** words.

For this paper, it is important that you are familiar with a range of different reading materials and the conventions different genres may use. For example, sometimes extracts from speeches are set and it is helpful if you have some familiarity with some of the rhetorical devices a speaker may use: for example, a list of three or rhetorical questions. Similarly, if part of a ghost story is set, it is useful to know how writers might create mood and suspense: for example, through the use of setting and adjectives that create mystery and the unknown.

The **key** point about answering these questions is that you are not being asked to spot a list of features such as a list of three, rhetorical questions, the use of adjectives: you are being asked to **comment** on the possible **effects** that these features may achieve, the possible thoughts and feelings they may bring into a reader's mind, the mood(s) they may create at different points, the qualities that specific words and phrases may bring out.

To achieve higher marks you should also show an awareness of the structure of the passage, how it unfolds: therefore, it is sometimes best to work through the passage when commenting on language and style by breaking it up into smaller sections and commenting on any changes between them: for example, does the mood change between different sections?

You are not really expected to address the question by writing an answer based on a pre-learnt checklist: for example, it is not really effective to have a prepared list of subheadings in your mind to the point that you are determined; whatever the passage is, to write about things such as types of sentence, punctuation, vocabulary. You need to be flexible in your approach and select terminology that is relevant to comment on the set passages on the day of the examination.

(ii) Paper 2

This paper focuses on your writing skills. You answer **two** questions in total.

It is essential to note that each answer must be between 600 and 900 words. Compositions under this length lose marks.

Section A of the paper gives you a **choice** of **4** questions based on **Narrative/Descriptive/Imaginative Writing**.

You **choose one** of these to answer.

Titles may include some of the following: the opening to chapter to a novel (title given); a complete short story; two contrasting descriptive pieces; the opening to a particular genre of writing (such as a science fiction story, a ghost story, a story based on suspense).

Holistic marks are awarded for imaginative or descriptive content, a sense of structure, variation in vocabulary and sentence structure, technical accuracy.

The issue of **technical accuracy** – as well as that of **appropriate length** noted above – is an important factor to consider. A good degree of fluency in English is a prime consideration when awarding marks at this standard, a step up from GCSE.

Section B of this paper gives you a **choice of 4** questions based on **Discursive/Argumentative Writing**.

You **choose one** of these to answer.

Titles tend to fall into two categories: the first kind of title may ask you to consider a moral or ethical issue, sometimes in the form of a direct question or in the form of two contrasting quotations which you are asked to consider; the second kind of title may ask you to answer questions in a certain format – such as giving advice in a newspaper or magazine article, writing a review of some kind, delivering a speech. Again, it is essential to note that each answer must be between **600 and 900** words.

Holistic marks are awarded for choices of appropriate and effective approaches, vocabulary, a sense of audience and purpose, persuasive strategies.

Section 2 - What will you be tested on?

AS English Language encourages you

- to write in a range of forms and styles and contexts
- to develop skills in reading and appreciation of the style, language and conventions of different types of text

These overarching aims are expressed in what are known as **Assessment Objectives** for the specification, the underlying targets your work is assessed against. There are **3** of them:

1. The ability to read with understanding written material in a variety of forms, and to comment on its effectiveness:

What does this mean?

This is specifically relevant to Paper 1.

Essentially, it requires you to show an understanding of a writer's purpose and audience; it asks you to consider the strategies a writer uses for particular means – what kind of mood or tone does the writer adapt at different points in the text? How is this achieved? What kinds of specific words or phrases help to achieve this? How does the passage unfold or develop? What is the point of view of the writer or narrator?

2. Knowledge and understanding of features of English language.

What does this mean?

Again this is specifically relevant to Paper 1.

It does not mean reeling off a list of learnt terminology and looking for it any passage regardless of the validity of such a strategy. You do not need to be armed with highly technical phrases but to be able to select from some known terms at a time when you think it is relevant to do so. For example, if it is appropriate to refer to the adjectives that a writer uses at a specific point in a piece of descriptive writing, then do so.

The **key** point is not the use of terminology for its own sake but a consideration of the effects that specific words and phrases create: what kind of tone/mood, what kind of qualities or images is brought to mind at particular points in the text?

3. The ability to write clearly, accurately and effectively for a particular purpose or audience.

What does this mean?

This is relevant to both Paper 1 and Paper 2.

It refers to the ability to appreciate the purpose and the audience for a specific piece of writing; it also refers to the ability to create a sense of structure, to choose appropriate vocabulary and conventions of a particular format. For example, writing a letter to a close friend does not really use the same format or vocabulary that giving a formal speech to an audience would.

Section 3 - What you need to know

This section will give you some advice on things you may wish to become familiar with for the two papers you take.

Paper 1

It would prove useful for you to be familiar with a range of styles of writing. Below are a few examples:

- Travel Writing
- Autobiography
- Biography
- Speeches
- Reviews
- Humorous Writing
- Persuasive or promotional materials
- Diaries
- Letters
- Different types of fictional writing

Paper 2

For **Section A (Narrative/Descriptive/Imaginative Writing)** familiarity with reading and writing different genres of texts will prove very useful so that you can develop an appreciation of the type of content and features we might expect to find in different styles of writing. Some examples of such writing are below:

- Character creation – how to introduce a range of characters effectively
- Descriptive writing – descriptions of different places, times and people
- Suspense – the ways in which character and setting are established
- Ghost stories – the way setting and mood are established through a sense of mystery and intrigue
- Futuristic/Science Fiction – the ways in which technical vocabulary and setting/narrative create an alternative world
- Reflective writing – forms which ask you to consider a particular mood or sensation or emotion

For **Section B (Discursive/Argumentative Writing)** familiarity with creating either balanced arguments, a sense of personal judgment, or persuasive writing aligned to different formats will prove very useful.

Balanced arguments should be aware of both sides of the case but do not necessarily mean that the personal voice is necessarily in evidence all the way through. The writer may well summarise what supporters and opponents of the case believe before offering any personal view.

Compositions involving a **personal judgment** on an issue should not simply be an outpouring of material or a rant of any kind. The writer should be aware of arguments against his or her beliefs and attempt to counter such arguments with material of their own.

Persuasive writing may involve a degree of role playing in which you are asked to perform a writing task in a particular ***format*** such as a review or an article. An appropriate awareness of such formats and their language and style should form part of this preparation.