

IGCSE

English as a Second Language

Revision notes

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English as a second language is divided into 3 parts:

- 1- Reading
- 2- Writing
- 3- Listening

The content of these notes will assist you with:

- Understanding the demands of each part
- Identifying and learning the skills needed for each part
- Identifying strategies in order to develop those skills
- The perfect way to approach the exam questions
- Identifying common mistakes and how to avoid them

Reading

Part 1

1.1

- Types of questions
 - Reading part 1 involves matching questions
- The student will be presented with 10 different paragraphs, which they will be required to match to 10 different statements or comments

Example:

Statements

Paragraphs

1 Which paragraph refers to the cooking facilities used?

A B C D E F G H I J
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

2 Which paragraph refers to the possibility of falling?

A B C D E F G H I J
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

3 Which paragraph refers to the importance of water?

A B C D E F G H I J
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

4 Which paragraph refers to help not being available?

A B C D E F G H I J
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

5 Which paragraph refers to being prepared for a delay?

A B C D E F G H I J
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

To The Top: The Story Of Everest

A It was five o'clock in the afternoon when the howling wind began to quieten down and we made our decision: tonight we would leave for the summit. After weeks of hard work we had reached our top camp on Everest.

B Ed Webster and I were squeezed into a tent no bigger than a single bed, with only just enough room to sit up. Robert Anderson had just walked over from the second tent, but our fourth companion had left us that morning – returning down the mountain because of a worrying headache.

C It had been a brave decision to give up his chance at the summit, but he knew that high-altitude sickness can be dangerous if you stay up high too long. At the top of Everest there is no opportunity of a rescue, so he had returned to the safety of the valley to recover.

D That left three of us preparing for the great day ahead. First we had to eat and drink. At that height everything is frozen so Ed dropped chunks of snow into a pan on our gas stove to make water.

E After about an hour the water was boiling, but at nowhere near the usual temperature: at this altitude Ed could stick his finger in the water without pain. Cooking was out of the question, so he just stirred some instant noodles into the warmish liquid – our last proper meal for many hours.

F The most important thing of all at altitude is to have enough to drink, so we melted more snow, lump by lump, eventually filling two bottles, adding powdered energy drink to keep us going during the long day ahead.

G We were leaving at night. The idea was to reach the summit by early afternoon the next day and return to camp by nightfall. However, if the worst came to the worst and we failed to return in time, I wanted to be confident that I could survive a night out in the open, so I took great care with my many layers of clothing.

H At last, at 11pm we were ready. There was no moon, but the sky was brilliant with stars and there wasn't a breath of wind – a perfect night for the job. Even at night we could make out enough landmarks to know roughly where to go.

1.2

- Skills required
 - Skimming and scanning
 - Identifying lexical words

1.2. 1

Skill 1:

- Skimming and scanning
- Skimming is reading a text quickly in order to find key points and understand the overall message of the text
- When skimming, you have to read:
 - The title
 - The topic sentence – the first sentence of the first paragraph
 - Sub-titles -if there are any-
 - The first line of each paragraph – in case the text doesn't include any subtitles-
 - The conclusion

EXAMPLE:

Step 1: Reading the Title

- You have a text, the title says Libya
- There are dozens of things that can be addressed with such a broad title, so, by just reading the title, it is difficult to identify the main topic of the text

Step 2: Reading the topic sentence

- The topic sentence might be: *The Libyan education system has been facing dire problems in recent years*
- By reading the title and the topic sentence, we know that the text is addressing the **Libyan educational system**
- However, we still need to narrow the main idea down, because a country's educational system is a rich topic with many aspects, and we need to narrow those.

Step 3: Reading subtitles

- Subtitles might be:
 - 1- What caused the decline of the Libyan educational system?
 - 2- Unqualified teachers
 - 3- Old-dated teaching materials
- By reading these subtitles, we know that the first paragraph talks about the causes of the dire problems the educational system of Libya is facing (the topic sentence). The second and third paragraphs identifies these problems (Unqualified teachers – Old-dated teaching materials)
- So, now we've narrowed down our main idea to the causes of **the dire problems the Libyan educational system is facing.**

- In case there are no subtitles, we should instead read the first sentence of each paragraph to get the same result

NOTE: We narrowed down the main idea only by reading the title, topic sentence and subtitles, which takes less time and effort than reading the whole text in order to understand it. **That is why SKIMMING IS ESSENTIAL.**

Further explanations on how Skimming is beneficial will be mentioned later on.

1.2.3

How is skimming beneficial?

- That's a legitimate question that every student has the right to ask. To answer that question, we must lean on more examples:

Example 1:

- When answering reading questions (part 1, 2 or 3) you might have a question that says:

Q: What kind of teaching materials does the author think will benefit the Libyan educational system?

- Normally, students will continue reading starting back from where they stopped (if this is question 3, they will start reading the sentence that follows the answer for question 2). However, we know after **skimming** the text that the paragraph that talks about teaching materials is paragraph 3.
- So instead of reading the whole text, we can just read paragraph 3, **saving both time and energy.**

1.2.2

- Scanning is reading a text quickly in order to find specific details
- AGAIN, reading quickly isn't referring to the pace of reading, but rather, it refers to reading only parts of the text.

When scanning, you have to look for:

- Names (Start with Capital Letters)
- Dates (numbers)
- Lexical words (Explained next)
- Facts and opinions
- Other details

Example:

Q: According to Mr. John, who was the loudest student in class?

- Well, here to look for an answer, you don't have to read the text word by word, rather, you can scan the text looking for one word, which in this case is a **name**.

So, that's how we use scanning to find our correct answers in an *EFFICIENT* way, once again **saving time and effort**.

The difference between **Skimming** and **Scanning**

- A text must be skimmed first thing, before reading the questions

WHY?

- In order to identify the main topic of the text and identify what each paragraph addresses.

- Scanning must be done while answering questions

WHY?

- In order to find a specific detail related to the question you're answering

Which of the following are examples of skimming, and which are examples of scanning?

- a** Flicking through a catalogue to get ideas for a friend's birthday present
- b** Looking up a word in a thesaurus
- c** Looking at a section of an instruction booklet to see how to do something
- d** Checking the time of a TV show you want to watch
- e** Reading a film review to decide whether to watch the film
- f** Picking the website you want from internet search options

Skill 2

- Identifying **lexical words**

Q: What are **lexical words**?

Ans: **Lexical words** are words that give meaning to a sentence

They are:

- 1- Nouns (Names of people, places, things. . etc.)
- 2- Verbs (an action – Jump, run, stand)
- 3- Adjectives (Words that describe nouns – Big, tall, beautiful, brave)
- 4- Adverbs (Words that describe verbs – Quickly, loudly, horribly, perfectly)

Q: How can identifying lexical words help us with answering reading IGCSE questions?

Ans: Identifying lexical words can help us with our scanning process. Let's look at some examples:

Well, one example we have already made when explaining the scanning process, when we knew that instead of reading the whole text, we should instead look for names that start with capital letters. But this example will explain it further.

The question you are trying to answer says:

Q: How does Fiona Wright describe the campsite she visited as a child?

- The key word in this question is the word describe
- Here, we are trying to find a word that is used to describe a place (the campsite)
- So, we are looking for an **ADJECTIVE**

Once again, instead of reading the text word for word, we just have to scan through it looking for an adjective and a place (a noun), finding our correct answer efficiently, with minimum time and effort expenditure.

Example 2:

The question you are trying to answer says:

Q: How did John react when he saw the bear approaching him.

Now I have a question for you:

What type of **lexical words** are we looking for when answering this question?

If you said a *verb*, you are correct!

- So, once again, we have to scan through the text looking for two words, the noun John, and the verb that either precedes or follows it
 - John ran as quickly as possible
 - John jumped aggressively, trying to escape.

* * *

This was all you need to know in order to be able to answer all 10 questions of IGCSE reading part 1.

For further tips and explanations, subscribe to Dreamcenterly.com (further video lectures and past paper exercises)

Practicing your skills:

- Along with obviously practicing with past papers, I would really advise every student determined to take on the IGCSE English as a second language exam to do the following
- Pick out a book
- Go through one chapter at a time
- Skim and scan the chapter in order to identify its main topic and pick out the important details
- Summarize the main topic that you understood merely by skimming the chapter, and under your summary, write the main details you picked out (important names, places, dates. .etc.)
- Finally, read the chapter and discover if you've skimmed and scanned the chapter effectively

I KNOW THAT MOST OF YOU WILL IGNORE THIS TIP, BECAUSE IT MAY SEEM EXHAUSTING. HOWEVER, THOSE WHO DON'T WILL GREATLY BENEFIT, BECAUSE ON THE DAY OF THE EXAM, SKIMMING AND SCANNING WILL BE JUST ANOTHER HABIT FOR THEM, THUS ALLOWING THEM TO GETTING THE CORRECT ANSWERS IN THE MOST EFFICIENT OF WAYS.

Reading Part 2

2.1

Types of questions

- Reading part 2 involves the following types of questions:
 - Multiple choice questions
 - Short answer questions
 - True / false / not given
 - Sentence completion

MCQ

21 Which of the following statements is true about Sarah Mace?

- ☐ A She has just started to think about decluttering her home.
- ☐ B She now understands decluttering and zero waste are linked.
- ☐ C She has followed a zero-waste lifestyle for the last decade.
- ☐ D She feels decluttering the home is not so important to her.

22 According to Sarah Mace, which of the following statements is true about charity shops?

- ☐ A They are the best places for unwanted items.
- ☐ B They struggle to sell non-seasonal clothing items.
- ☐ C They welcome donations at all times of the year.
- ☐ D They suggest checking on what items are needed.

Short answer questions

11 What is one of the best known options for items people no longer want?

.....

12 What do charity shops have a fixed amount of?

.....

True or false questions

	True	False	Not Given
26 According to David Fern, hand pumps in Africa are difficult to repair.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
27 David Fern believes people should pay for the services of a maintenance company.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.1.1

- The student may be required to complete up to 3 tasks in this part

- Unlike reading part 1 which is based on 10 short texts, reading part 2 is based on a long text

2.2

Skills required:

- It is worth mentioning that the following skills are in addition to the skills required for the first part (which are very essential)

- 1- Distinguishing between **facts** and **opinions**
- 2- Identifying **synonyms**

2.2.1

Skill 1:

Distinguishing between **facts** and **opinions**

- 1- Facts in this context refer to factual information about people, places or times

Example:

Q: Which item does Sarah Mace think people keep even though they may not like it?

- What we're looking for here is a fact about Sarah Mace.
- There's an item that she thinks people keep regardless of their feelings about it, WHAT IS THAT ITEM

So, by being able to identify factual information, we know exactly what we're looking for

Note: Most student follow the failing strategy of "I will read until I find the answer" when they don't even know what they're looking for. That strategy works in one condition, if you're aiming to get a C.

- Always make sure what the question is asking you to find.

- 2- Opinions refer to what people think about something, their attitude towards something (whether they feel positively or negatively about it) and their feelings.

A question that is asking you to find an opinion might go as follows:

Q: According to Sarah Mace, what is one reason people hold on to things?

- The key detail in this question is it's beginning. **According to Sarah Mace**

The question here is asking us to look for Sarah's opinion, and to our luck, there is a pretty good tip that can help us identify an opinion in the text.

- A sentence stating an opinion will 90% percent start with a phrase such as:
 - I think
 - She hopes
 - As far as I'm concerned
 - As far as I know
 - According to what I know
 - In my opinion
 - In my point of view
 - In my own experience
 - It seems to me that
 - My favorite
 - I am confident that
 - I strongly believe / I believe

And so many other phrases that have the same meaning and purpose, that are just another way of saying "my opinion is"

So, we have to identify questions that address opinions and might have the phrases:

- According to
- What does she think is. .
- What does she hope will. .
- What does he think about. .

In order to look for sentences that start with the phrases above, which indicates opinions.

Note: That's one more way to answer questions correctly using scanning.

(Reading quickly to find the specific phrases rather than reading the whole text word for word)

2.2.2

Practice

Distinguish between the facts and opinions in the following:

- 1- Italian is an easier language to learn than Spanish (F / O)
- 2- The capital of Egypt is Cairo (F / O)
- 3- Smoke detectors can help save lives (F / O)
- 4- Cell-phones should be banned in schools (F / O)
- 5- Football is the best sport in the world (F / O)
- 6- Earth rotates around the sun (F / O)
- 7- Female doctors are more caring than male doctors (F / O)

- 8- In World War II, the Axis powers consisted of Germany, Italy, and Japan. (F / O)
- 9- Cycling is an enjoyable form of exercise (F / O)
- 10- Roger Federer is the best tennis player of all time (F / O)

2.2.2

Skill 2

- Synonyms are two words with similar meaning.
 - Hard – Difficult
 - Big – Huge
 - Smart – Clever
- The concept of synonyms, as seen above is very simple, and the way we can use synonyms in answering IGCSE reading questions is simple as well, yet they are very important.

So, how can synonyms help us?

- When reading the questions, a student must underline important key words.

Note: It is better to underline the key word physically with your pencil rather than just say (I'm going to keep these words in mind). I have seen the difference with my students, those who underlined their key words answered more questions correctly, simply because by underlining key words, they knew what to look for.

Let's look at some examples

Example 1:

Q: Which type of website accepts items that no longer work?

- The key words for this question, or what we are supposed to look for, are:
 - The type of website
 - Items **THAT NO LONGER WORK**
- In the text there might be various websites accepting various items, but we're specifically looking for the website that accepts items that no longer work.

A synonym for this description of the items might be:

- Broken
- Busted
- Inoperable
- Unfunctional

If we identify, for example, **broken** items in the text (which are the items that **no longer work**), we can easily identify the type of website which accepts these items.

Example 2:

Q: According to David Fern, hand pumps in Africa are difficult to repair.

This is an example of a true / false / not given question.

- Once again, we are looking for whether hand pumps in Africa are **difficult** to repair or not

So, after locating the paragraph which addresses the condition of hand pumps in Africa, we start looking for a synonym for our key word, **difficult**, which can be:

- Hard
- Exhausting
- Tiring
- Abstract
- Grinding
- Back – breaking

And there are many more, but we get the idea.

- Identifying synonyms can help us determine what it is we are looking for, which is the perfect strategy to adopt when taking on the IGCSE reading exam.

2.2.3

Practice

Identify the synonyms of the underlined words.

1. Public policy in regard to food in main economies around the world has not provided adequate incentive, the response to emergencies like accidents is equally sad.

1. Acceleration

2. Surplus

3. Baiting

4. Encouragement

2. The National Disaster Management agency, set up a short time ago being a central government agency, has limitations relating to infringing the jurisdiction of the states.

1. Breaking

2. Violating

3. Provoking

4. Hampering

3. Camerata revived the style of musical history that had been used in Greek tragedy taking most of the *plots* for their operas from Greek and Roman history and mythology, writing librettos or dramas for music.

1. Location

2. Instrument

3. Stories

4. Inspiration

Reading

Part 3

3.1

- Types of questions are the same with those of part 2
- Skills are the same with part 1 / 2

The difference is:

- Reading part 3 is based on a long text -similar to part 2- however, the text is more academic, like an article or a report.
- Other than that, it is exactly similar to part 2

Reading tips:

- The answers to the questions will follow the logical order (the answer for question 4 will follow the answer for question 3 in the text, it can never precede it.)
- In reading part 1, some paragraphs might not be used as an answer, and some paragraphs can be correct for more than one answer.)
- Copy the spelling of your answers from the text, as it is important
- In reading part 1, and true / false / not given questions, make sure you only cross one answer.
- If you want to change your answer, draw a line in the middle, as demonstrated in the instructions, then cross the second answer.
- READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY
- When answers have a limit of three words, numbers are included.
- Read the instructions carefully as not to miss the limit of words in short answer questions.

UNIT 2

Writing

4.1

Writing is divided into three parts

- 1- Writing part 1 (Email / Informal register)
- 2- Writing part 2 (Letter, Article, Report / Formal register)
- 3- Writing part 3 (Summary)

4.2

Writing part 4

Informal Email

Q: What is formal and informal register?

Ans:

- Formal register is writing formally in a respectful manner
- Informal register is casual writing to a close friend or a relative.

- Characteristics of informal register
 - Contractions (blending two words into one: I am / I'm, He is / He's)
 - Shorter sentences
 - Simpler vocabulary
 - More reference to personal matters

Let's further explain these characteristics and how to use them.

- 1- Contractions
 - Contractions are two words blended into one word.
 - They are / They're You have / You've
 - In the beginning of your email for example: Instead of saying, "I hope **you have** been doing well" You say, "I hope **you've** been doing well."
 - Many students pay no attention to this detail as they don't understand its significance, but using contractions will show your understanding of informal register, thus gaining you more grades.
- 2- Shorter sentences
 - This characteristic is pretty self-explanatory
 - For example, instead of saying:
 - The trip was **significantly Joyful**
 - The trip was **fun**
 - Once again, using short and simple sentences will show your understanding of the informal register
- 3- Simpler vocabulary

- This can be explained with the same example from the previous characteristic
 - Instead of going out of your way and using **joyful**, the simple word **fun** does the job!
 - The play **did not impress me** at all / The play was **boring**
- 4- Reference to personal matters
- This will be explained clearly in the Introduction part of an informal email.
 - So, when writing a formal email to an employer or a school principal, you only focus on the topic in hand. When sending an email to a friend, however, you can mention a thing or two about your personal life.

Q: What is the difference between both sentences?

- 1- Football is a highly demanding sport that requires so much effort.
- 2- Football is an exhausting sport.

Sort the phrases into the correct columns.

I don't like him much.	Why don't you try this?
I need help with this.	The man does not impress me.
I require additional support.	I would suggest this action.

Informal	Formal

4.3

Type of questions:

- You are given a short description of a situation
- You are given three bullet points to follow
- You are given the limit number of words which you must adhere to

4.3.1

The structure of an email includes:

- Greeting
- Introduction (Greeting and introducing the topic)

- Body (Addressing the topic in brief detail)
- Conclusion (Wrapping up the email)
- Ending and signature

Important tips:

- Keep your email relevant to the topic and the given in the instructions
- Make sure you cover all three bullet points in detail
- Focus on the number of words given in the instructions
- Less words than required means deducted grades, and any words above the limit will not be graded.

4.3.2

Breaking down the structure

1- Greetings

Informal greetings are simple, you can simply start with:

- Hi, name
- Hello, name

There are more options, but it is better to keep the greetings simple.

2- Introduction

- The introduction part is tricky for many students, however, there are simple steps in order to learn the best way of writing a perfect introduction.

Q: What is the purpose of the introduction?

Ans: The introduction is written in order to warm the reader up and prepare them for the topic.

4.3.3

First strategy

Start with an **apology** + **reason**

Let's take this email as an example to demonstrate the perfect way of writing an email:

Your teacher is moving to another school. You and your friend would like to buy a gift for him/her. Write an email to your friend.

In your email you **must**:

- write what you would like to buy for your teacher
- explain why you have chosen this gift
- ask for your friend's opinion.

You **must** write between **75 and 100 words only**.

Our email can start as follows:

- Hi, Sarah
- I'm sorry I haven't written for ages (apology)
- I have been really busy with exams. (reason)

First, by starting with apologizing for not being in touch for ages, we indicate that we are:

- Constantly exchange emails with the recipient, therefore we are close to them.
- ALWAYS try to **personalize** your email when it's to someone close.
- Gave a personal reason, once again indicating that we are close to that person.

Note: If you start with an apology when writing a formal email, it is incorrect to state a personal reason, as demonstrated above, rather it is more appropriate to write:

- I apologize for not being in touch, I have been occupied with some personal issues.

That's a very critical difference we need to understand between formal and informal registers.

- Obviously, the reason can change
 - I've been busy moving
 - With work
 - Rehearsing for the school play
 - Feeling under the weather

Second strategy

Start without an apology

Example:

- It was great to get your letter yesterday. .
- It was lovely to hear from you. .

Note that in both sentences, **get** and **to hear from you** are respectively used to replace the word **receive**, which is too formal in this case

4.3.4

So, now we have a clear understanding of the first part of the introduction. However, we have already established that the purpose of the introduction is to prepare the reader for the topic.

How do we do that?

The answer is, by using **transitioners**

- Transitioners are words that we use to shift from the greeting part to introducing the topic
- In this case, two words will be sufficient
 - Anyways,
 - Anyhow,
- Note that you **always** have to put a comma after these words.

So, let's go back to our email in order to complete our introduction.

Hi, Sarah

I'm sorry I haven't written for ages; I've been really busy with exams. Anyways, I thought I'd drop you a line to discuss buying a gift for Mr. John since he is moving to another school.

Hi, Sarah

It was great to hear from you last week. Anyhow, just a short note to let you know that I am planning to buy Mr. John a gift since he is moving to another school.

- Start with a greeting
- Warm up and **personalize** your email
- Use **transition** word
- Introduce your topic briefly

- Notice that after the **transition** words, I haven't used the traditional start
- I am writing you to. .
- This is a typical and overused phrase to start, but rather you can use:
- I thought I'd drop you a line to. .
- Just a short note to let you know. .
- This provides a flavor to your email and distinguishes it from all the others.

- Finally, I introduced the topic that was provided in the instructions with no details, as those will be given in the body part.

4.3.5

You have learned the specific phrases you can use in order to write a perfect introduction.

- How to **personalize** your email with and without an apology
- How to **transition** from warming up to introducing the topic
- Introducing the topic

Remember the phrases provided!

4.4

Body part

- In the body part, you've got to follow the 3 bullet points given in the instructions.
- Keeping in mind the four characteristics that we've mentioned about informal register.

Our first bullet point says:

- Write what you would like to buy for your teacher.

Now, the introduction part is fixed, and from the beginning to the transitioner you can just memorize everything. However, in the body part you will have to get creative.

Taking this bullet point as an example, you will have to remember the following:

- Keep your ideas logical and realistic
 - For example, it is better to avoid illogical things for this bullet point like buying your teacher a car, that would be unrealistic
 - Choose your gift based on the gender of the teacher, you won't by Mr. Jon a dress
 - Think of a sentimental gift that would be meaningful, that way, explaining the reason behind your choice is easier.

4.4.1

Let's start.

First bullet point

- Write what you would like to buy for your teacher.

Ans: I think a good gift for Mr. John would be a watch. I've thought about other options like a marker or a thick jacket, but the watch sounded so much better in my opinion, what do you think?

Here, we have covered what the bullet point has asked us to cover, which is to name the gift we chose. However, always remember that you're writing a paragraph, so simply stating the gift in one sentence wouldn't be enough, you have to elaborate.

- Mentioning other options
- Stating why you disregarded those options
- Finally, asking for your friend's opinion to personalize your email even further

Note: Keep your elaboration relevant

For example, its incorrect to say: We bought Mrs. Jonson a watch and she liked it.

- Don't wander off to another teacher and another gift, this way, you lose coherence and grades!

4.4.2

Second bullet point

- Explain why you have chosen this gift

So, you've completed the first step, which is choosing the gift, now you have to chose a reason.

- I've got a reason for choosing a watch by the way. Remember last week when Mr. John dropped his watch and it broke, he never wore it again, so I think its unfixable and he seemed sad. For that reason, I think buying him a watch will make him happy.
- Pick out a reason
- Once again, one sentence is not enough so elaborate
- Keep your elaboration relevant
- Remember the four characteristics

4.4.3

Third bullet point

- Ask for your friend's opinion

Here, the trick is to blend two bullet points into one paragraph.

By blending bullet points 2 – 3, you can simply end your paragraph by:

- So, Sarah, this is the gift I think is best. What do you think?

Note: You always have the options to join two bullet points in one paragraph, depending on what you feel is most suitable.

4.5

Conclusion

- The conclusion part must be brief and straightforward
- Personalize your email and end it in a polite manner

For example:

- What do you say we meet in our regular café downtown and talk about it more? It's been so long since we went there.

So, what we did here is ending the email by suggesting a meeting to discuss the topic further, this is always handy and works in most contexts.

More conclusions that you can use:

- I really wish you were there! You would have loved it! Give my regards to James and Uncle Joe. Reply soon!
- That's it for now. See you soon!
- Catch you soon.
- Speak soon.
- Shoot me an email soon.
- I must dash now. Update me on your trip to London!
- I've got to go. Write back!
- I must go now. Stay blessed!
- Don't you wish you'd been there? Must dash to see if there is anything about it on the local news.
- What are your plans for later this week? Let's grab a coffee on Friday if you're free.
- Before I close, did you see the new exhibit at Ithra? Want to check it out sometime?
- Time to stop. I have my assignment to complete; the last day of submission is tomorrow.
- Well, I must stop now. My annoying brother is banging on the door. Got to open it before he breaks it down.

- My mum's calling for dinner, so I'll cut this letter short. Take care!
- I'm looking forward to seeing you soon/ hearing from you soon.
- How're things on your end? Let me know what's been going on with you.

Keep all these in mind, and you can memorize two or three of them to use your energy and time in addressing the 3 bullet points.

Endings:

There are plenty of ending you can use to end your informal email, these include:

- See you soon,

Name

- Love,
- With love,
- Take care,
- Talk soon,
- Catch you later,

These are some email endings or signatures you can always use to end an informal email.

Note:

Remember the structure

Take care,

Taha

- The ending must be followed by a comma, and beneath it write your name.
- Only first name in an informal register, don't mention your surname

Note: Don't confuse informal writing with slang writing.

Congratulations, now you know how to perfectly structure an informal email.

5.1

Writing part 5

Formal writing

(Email / report / Article)

- The difference between a formal and an informal writing is only the register.
- The structure is identical.

5.2

Formal register

Characteristics

- More respectful writing
- No personal writing included
- No use of contractions

5.3

Introduction

- When writing in a formal register, it is a good strategy to start your introduction with a **time fixer**.

Examples of time fixers:

- Nowadays,
- Recently.
- For many years,
- These days,
- Since...
- For the last...

Most students get stuck in the introduction part, as it is difficult to figure out how one should start their introduction if the task in hand is not writing an email, so using **time fixers** is a good start.

Let's look at an example:

You have been asked to write a report for the school magazine on the importance of being active.

In your report you **must**:

- give **one** reason why people are less active nowadays
- give **two** ways that people could become more active
- state how important being active is to you.

You **must** write between **100 and 150 words only**.

If we read the whole question, including the bullet point, we will understand that:

- We are asked to write a report.
- The report is about 'the importance of being active'.
- We should give reasons for why people are **less active**

The last point (less active) is very essential for our report, as it gives us the point of view we should follow, which is that people are less active nowadays.

Introduction example:

Recently, people have become less and less active due to many reasons. However, it is important to understand that activity is essential for human beings in many positive ways.

So, let's analyze our introduction:

- 1- **First**, if you notice, I started with the **time fixer** 'Recently'. I preferred 'recently' over 'nowadays' because the latter is already used in the question.
 - However, it is perfectly fine to reuse 'nowadays', yet it is better to show your wide range of vocabulary and use your own words.
- 2- **Secondly**, In the first bullet point, we are asked to give one reason for people becoming more active, and here comes the purpose of the introduction when writing a report or an article:
 - In the introduction, you must refer to the (reasons, causes, opinions, or whatever the question asks for) **generally**.
 - Say 'for many reasons' without mentioning what these reasons are.
 - You will mention the reason in the body part
- 3- **Finally**, we have done the same thing with the *two ways* asked for in the second bullet point, mentioned them **generally** so the reader knows what our report is going to be about.

Let's look at another example:

You have been asked to write a report for the school magazine about the benefits and the disadvantages of tourism.

In your report you **must**:

- give **two** benefits that tourism brings to a country
- give **two** disadvantages that tourism brings to a country
- give your opinion about tourism.

You **must** write between **100 and 150 words only**.

In this example, we are asked to write about:

- Tourism
- The benefits of tourism
- The disadvantages of tourism

Introduction example:

In recent years, the rate of tourists visiting Libya has dramatically increased. During this period, tourism has shown that it can have various advantages, yet again, it also comes with some disadvantages.

Analysis:

- The use of a time fixer
- Using our own words (Advantages rather than benefits)
- Addressing the first two bullet points in a general manner (not a single detail)

This is the structure of a perfect introduction.

Let's move on to the body part.

5.4

Body part

- The body part for writing part 5 is going to be short and simple
- As seen in writing part 4, in the body part, we have to address the bullet points
- So, in reading part 5, the body part contains three paragraphs, one for each point.

5.4.1

However,

- Writing a report has one difference
- When writing an article, a letter, or a formal email, the paragraphs are straight forward
- However, when writing a report body part, each paragraph must have a **heading**, or a **subtitle**.

Example:

The first bullet point in our report says:

- Give two benefits that tourism brings to a country
- Since we already introduced the topic – tourism- in our introduction part and mentioned that we're going to be talking about its advantages and disadvantages, we should start our body part as follows:

Advantages

One of the advantages of tourism can be. . .

- So, before starting with a paragraph, we must add **a heading / subtitle**

The rest is the same:

- 3 paragraphs
- Each paragraph addresses a bullet point

5.4.2

Sequencing ideas

- In writing part 5, the student will be often asked to list two or more causes, problems, advantages. . . etc.
- The way to do that is simple.

For example:

In the first bullet point, once again, we are asked to give two advantages that tourism brings to a country, and we can sequence the two benefits as follows:

- Firstly / secondly
- First of all / another benefit / point
- The first / the second

And if asked to provide three, the format is as follows:

- Firstly / secondly / Finally

Note: When asked to provide more than two points, introduce the last one with the word 'finally' instead of thirdly to indicate that this is the last point of the paragraph, which is extremely important.

Example:

Advantages

Tourism can offer various advantages to a country. *Firstly*, tourism introduce locals to the different cultures of different countries, increasing people's awareness of the differences between cultures. *Secondly*, tourism can also be beneficial to a country's economical state. In fact, there are many countries that utilize tourism in order to benefit financially.

5.4.3

Joining points

- The last detail concerning the body part is, how do we connect one paragraph to another?
- By using **Joining points**

- Joining points:
- If the first paragraph and the second paragraph address similar points, we use:
 - Furthermore,
 - Moreover,
 - Besides,
 - Additionally,
 - In addition,
- If the two paragraphs address opposing points, we use:
 - However,
 - On the other hand,
 - In contrast,
- Notice that all sequencing and joining words are followed with a comma ALL THE TIME.

5.4.4

Results

- When talking about **causes**, the student will also have to explain the **results**

For example:

- Working hard should be the core of education for teenagers, it is essential for one to succeed that they understand the concept of being hard worker instead of lazy and passive. Hard work is not wasting time, but rather using it to improve in every metric in life. **As a result**, one would have the proper abilities to succeed at any line of work they choose.

In order to present results, as illustrated in the example above, we use:

- As a result,
- This means that
- Therefore
- This results in. .
- Consequently

Keep these in mind, for they are very essential key words in writing part 5

5.4.5

Opinions / predictions

- In the last bullet point of our example question, we are asked to
- Give our own opinion about tourism
- We should start the last bullet point by using:
 - In my opinion
 - I think
 - I believe
 - In my view
 - The way I see it
 - As I see it
 - As far as I'm concerned

Try to be versatile in your choice of words.

For example, even though using phrases such as: I believe / I think is acceptable, it is better to use something like

- The way I see it
- As far as I'm concerned

Starting with something like this helps show that you have good command of English, and that you are versatile in the use of language.

Example:

In conclusion, as far as I'm concerned, tourism has its pros and cons, but it is a very good way to teach people about different cultures, behaviors and languages, as well as other benefits concerning economics and politics. **Therefore**, I would say that I am a supporter of tourism.

Note:

- The last bullet point, which is often asking for an opinion or a prediction, is also your conclusion paragraph.
- To start a conclusion paragraph, we use:
 - To sum up,
 - In conclusion,
 - Overall,
 - To wrap it up
 - All in all

Writing

Part 6

6.1

Summary

- In writing part 6 a student will be provided with a detailed text
- The student has to summarize this text
- You will also be asked to give your opinion or prediction

6.2

Skills needed

- Paraphrasing
- Summarizing

- Using synonyms

6.2.1

Paraphrasing

- Paraphrasing is repeating a specific piece of information in your own words.

Example:

Original: One symptom of influenza is having a stuffed nose.

Paraphrased: A nose blockage can be a sign of having the flu.

When paraphrasing, one repeats the same meaning by changing two things:

- Words
- Sentence structure

This is important because repeating the same exact sentences, even if you found the right information, can cost you a lot of grades.

6.2.2

Practice

1. The student requested that the professor excuse her absence, but the professor refused.
2. International Center is hosting English Conversation classes. They help non-native speakers of English practice their English speaking skills.
3. The car that was pulled over by the police officer yesterday just had an accident. That driver is not careful.
4. Of the more than 1000 bicycling deaths each year, three-fourths are caused by head injuries. Half of those killed are school-age children. One study concluded that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injury by 85 percent. In an accident, a bike helmet absorbs the shock and cushions the head. From "Bike Helmets: Unused Lifesavers," Consumer Reports (May 1990): 348.
5. "The Antarctic is the vast source of cold on our planet, just as the sun is the source of our heat, and it exerts tremendous control on our climate," [Jacques] Cousteau told the camera. "The cold ocean water around Antarctica flows north to mix with warmer water from the tropics, and its upwellings help to cool both the surface water and our atmosphere. Yet the fragility of this regulating system is now threatened by human activity." From "Captain Cousteau," Audubon (May 1990):17.

6.2.3

Summarizing

- Summarizing is presenting an idea in a general view, without diving into any details or explanations.

Example:

Original: Messi is the greatest man to play football, this is evidenced by all his personal accolades, along with his team trophies in which he is undisputed.

Summarized: Proved by his many achievements, Messi is the greatest football player in history.

- The trick is to remove the details, (in this case, Messi's accolades) and present the claim in a general manner.
- In other words, we don't answer the questions WHY? Or HOW?

Which takes us to the next skill

6.3.3

Using synonyms:

- Synonyms are two different words with similar meaning.
- In order to paraphrase something, one can use the help of synonyms

As shown in the example above (6.3.2), we have used a couple of synonyms:

- Accolades / Achievements
- Evidenced / Proved

So, to summarize the skills, in writing part 6, we have to:

- Find the information we are asked for
- Summarize it (remove the details)
- Write it in our own words
 - o And change the sentence structure when possible.

Let's look at an example question

6.4

You are doing a project on travel options. Read **Insert Booklet, Part 6, Page 8** and write a summary for your teacher.

In your summary you **must**:

- give **three** ways in which train travel is more convenient than other forms of travel
- state **two** ways in which train travel is more comfortable than other forms of travel
- give **your predictions** on how train travel may change in the future.

You will be awarded up to **5 marks** for using relevant information from the text.

You **must** write between **100 and 150 words only**. You **must** use your own words where possible.

- First, read the instructions
- You must write between 100 and 150 words only
- You **MUST** use your own words

Bullet point number 1

- We are asked to give 3 ways in which train travel is the most convenient form of travel

Step 1:

- Find the information

Step2:

- Remove the details

If the text says:

When you travel by train, you just buy your ticket and board. You do not have to arrive two hours early at an airport and endure long security lines.

We say:

One thing that makes trains the most convenient for of transportation is saving time.

THAT'S IT, we don't say how or why!

- If you notice, you are asked to give 3 ways in the first bullet point, and two in the second, that is to cover the number of words asked for.

6.5

Summary Structure

- Introduction paragraph
- 2 body paragraphs (first two bullet points)
- Conclusion paragraph (last bullet point)

So, when introducing the topic of your summary, you will follow the same ideology presented in Writing Part 5.

- Introduce the topic in your topic sentence (First sentence)
- Clarify what aspects of the topic you are going to talk about **generally** (no details in the introduction)

Example:

In this modern age, (Time fixer) there are several ways one could travel, including trains, planes, cars and more. However, each of these transportation ways offer different advantages and benefits. Trains in particular are very interesting to inspect, both in terms of convenience and comfort.

- First, we start with a time fixer.
- Second, we elaborate by providing examples of different ways of travelling
- Third we focus on trains which are the core focus of the bullet points and our summary
- Lastly, we state what we are going to be talking about in our summary (convenience and comfort)

Just like that, our introduction is finished.

For the body part, remember to sequence your points logically:

- Firstly, secondly, finally

In the conclusion part (where you are asked for your opinion or prediction) remember to start with:

- In my view
- In my opinion
- As far as I'm concerned
- From my experience
- I believe
- I think

And there are plenty of other options

That was all on the writing section!

I hope it was all clear!

Listening

7.1

Listening is divided in to 4 parts

7.1.1

Listening part 1

Types of questions

- You will be provided with 10 statements
- You will listen to ten speakers
- You will have to match each speaker to the relevant statement

A Box of loose tea

B Interesting potted plant

C Reusable water bottle

D Vegetable growing kit

E Handmade goods to eat

F A second-hand gift

G Recycled stationery set

H Fabric shopping bag

1 Speaker 1

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2 Speaker 2

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3 Speaker 3

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

That is how the format of the question is going to look like.

- If speaker 1 is talking about gifts, we know that the answer is probably **F**

NOTE: Do not worry, we will discuss the skills needed for the listening part later, after introducing all 4 parts, as the listening requires only a couple of skills which are equally important for each part.

7.1.2

Listening part 2

Types of questions

- Listening part 2 is based on a long listening text (monologue or radio podcast)
- You will have to complete several tasks. These can be:
 - o Multiple choice questions
 - o Sentence / diagram / table / chart completion
 - o Short answer questions (no more than three words)
- The structure of the questions is similar to the reading part, but here you have to listen and identify the answers rather than read.

7.1.3

Listening part 3

Types of questions

- Reading part 3 is based on an interview
- Types of tasks are similar to those in listening part 2

However, since this is an interview, you have to focus on the following

- There will be several questions asking about the speakers' opinions
- What most students get confused with is
 - o Interviewer
 - o Interviewee
- As most students assume that the **Interviewee** is the one with the answers, which most of the time is true, some questions ask about the **interviewer's** opinions.
- Read the question Carefully

7.1.4

Listening part 4

Types of questions

- Based on a longer recording (monologue or dialogue) usually on a more academic topic
- The questions are the same to Listening parts 2/3

7.2

Approaching the questions

- Unlike the reading part, in the listening part, the student cannot afford to read the question multiple times to get an answer.
- The recording will be played twice, and for many students, that is not enough.
- You will be given time to read the questions before the recording starts, use that time to read the questions carefully!
- That said, when approaching the questions, something I always advise my students to do and that actually results in massive improvements is:
 - o Underline the keywords with your pen / pencil
- Every question has a specific point, and by underlining the keyword, the student can always take a quick glance at the keyword to remember what specifically they are listening for.

Example:

After the Summer Solstice people would (11) for harvest and winter.

In this example of a sentence completion questions, we notice the following:

- The speaker will mention something people do **after** Summer Solstice.
- Our first keyword is *after*
- Next, what they do has something to do with **harvest** and **winter**.
- By identifying these keywords, we know that we are looking for:
 - o Something happening **AFTER** Summer Solstice
 - o It has something to do with **Harves** and **winter**
- The speaker might mention other things that people would do after Summer Solstice that are not related to harvest and winter
- Or he would mention some things that people do before Summer Solstice.
- By highlighting the keywords, we can avoid confusion with unrelated, yet suspicious information

So, read the questions before the recording (you will be given time) and underline what you believe are the important keywords.

7.3

Skills:

There are some skills required to find your answers effectively in the Listening part. However, before we list them, we must be aware of the following:

Most students who take the IGCSE English as a Second Language would condemn the listening to be the most difficult part, however, this is only because we, as foreigners are not used to listening to English in the correct contexts, and when we do, we don't focus on the details we should be focusing on.

Having said that, here are some tips:

- Start listening to podcasts, the news, documentaries. . . etc. (I know they are boring, but those who are aiming for the highest grades, this is the best way one can improve their listening skills.)
- Watching movies and listening to music cannot be your solution because they mostly use slang language, which is unhelpful when it comes to taking the IGCSE.
- When watching movies, try to watch without subtitles.
- Same with YouTube videos.

7.3.1

Skills

1- Listening for details

- When reading the questions, try to listen for specific details such as:
 - Colors
 - Sizes
 - Names
 - Dates
 - Shapes
 - Places
 - Events
- It is important to listen for those details
- If you have already identified and underlined the keyword which asks for the detail, you know what to look for.

Example:

Q: Who originally made the sweet and spicy bread?

- The word 'who' signifies that what we are looking for is a **name**.
- It can be a name of:
 - A person
 - A group of people

- An organization
- A website

It is important to always remember, that when we are looking for a name, it doesn't necessarily mean a single person, but it can mean any of the above.

Example 2:

Many of the festivals that celebrate the solstice are
(12) of years old.

- The keyword in this question is 'years old'
- That means, the detail we are listening for is related to **time**.
- It can refer to:
 - A number of years (10 years, 20 years)
 - A period of time (decades, centuries, millennia)

So, identifying both **keywords** and **key details** go hand-in-hand to assist us in finding the correct answer **effectively**!

2- Listening for the speaker's attitude

- Does the speaker have a positive or a negative attitude towards something?
- Do they agree or disagree?
- Like or dislike?

- Identifying the attitude is a tricky skill because it cannot be directly linked to correct answers
- Nor can it be exemplified
- However, it helps in determining key details like:
 - If we are listening for an adjective, knowing that the speaker dislikes the object they are talking about, we know that we are probably listening for a negative adjective.

Example:

35 The experiment showed that drivers
might display less

..... in the
future.

- In this diagram completion question, we are told that the drivers will have a reaction to an experiment, but we have no idea what it is.
- By understanding the attitude of the speaker on the experiment, we can assume whether the drivers might display less
 - o Aggression (positive)
 - o Comfort (Negative)
- Thus, it is easier for us to listen for the right adjective

3- Explicit and implicit information

If someone goes into the house and says: "It is chilly in here?" what are they actually saying?

We will come back to this.

First, let's introduce the two types of information:

- Explicit information is information literally stated (means what it says)
- Implicit information is information that implies something else (doesn't mean what it exactly says).

So, going back to the previous question, what is your guest actually saying?

It is chilly in here – what is said

Can you please close the windows? – What is meant!

In the listening part, we have the same concept as well, especially in Listening part 4

Some information is stated literally, and that is easy to spot, but some information is implied, and you must be able to identify it.

Example:

The electric engine is
..... and
this might make drivers more relaxed.

Read the question and consider the following sentence from the speaker.

- Quiet engines are safer and might actually reduce the rate of accidents.

Here, the sentence structure of the spoken statement and the question are different, and also, it is not explicitly stated that the engine will affect drivers. However, we have to understand the implication:

- More relaxed drivers imply a reduced rate of accidents
- By understanding this implication, we can identify that the answer is 'quiet'.

- Most students will wait until they hear the type of engines that make the drivers more relaxed in the spoken text (Explicit information). However, sometimes we have to identify implied or implicit information as well.

TAHA BENGHARBLA

Congratulations!

You are ready for your IGCSE English as a second language

More exam tips below

Exam Tips

- Trust your answers (If you're answers are based on the skills we have learned, trust them and don't keep changing)
- Leave the unknown to the end
- Practice on as many past papers as you can (while setting a timer)
- There is no reason to be nervous or afraid if you have prepared yourself well, so don't be
- Sleep well before the exam, you will need to concentrate the whole time!

One last thing:

- Read books, summarize them chapter by chapter, and learn to guess the meaning of words from context!
- This will help you immensely in understanding the texts with no difficulty
- As well as improve your English generally

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