

IGCSE

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GUIDE TO COURSEWORK

Component 4



Overview of the IGCSE Course

This section tells you information about the ways in which you will be assessed for your IGCSE course.

A final examination – 50%

Paper 1 Reading Passage (Core) OR
Paper 2 Reading Passages (Extended)

Coursework – 50%

You will submit a Coursework portfolio of **three** assignments

Your teacher will assess your skills during the IGCSE course and will discuss with you which papers and which level of examination (Core or Extended) you should take for your version of the syllabus. Extended gives grades A* to E; Core gives grades C to G.

Overview of the Coursework Portfolio – Component 4

The purpose of coursework is to develop your skills. It allows you to:

- improve your writing skills
- choose topics of a personal interest to you
- consider the quality of your work and to edit, revise and correct it independently
- take pride in your completed portfolios.

Candidates submit **three** assignments, each of 500–800 words and worth 50% of the total marks. They may be written in any order. The work is assessed by your teacher and checked by Cambridge.

Assignment 1: informative, analytical and/or argumentative

Assignment 2: descriptive and/or narrative

Assignment 3: a response to a text(s) chosen by the teacher. It should be of two sides of A4 in total and contain facts, opinions and arguments.

Work may be handwritten or word-processed.

Dictionaries may be used.

You **must** include the first draft of one of the three assignments submitted. The first draft will not contribute to your final mark.

The coursework portfolio **must** also include the text(s) used for Assignment 3.

The work must be your own.

What will be tested?

The coursework portfolio tests the following writing assessment objectives (40 marks):

- W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2 sequence facts, ideas and opinions

- W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary
- W4 use register appropriate to audience and context
- W5 make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

For Assignment 3 only, the following reading assessment objectives are tested (10 marks):

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions

The writing objectives explained:

W1: Articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined.

This is probably the most important objective. It gives you the freedom to write personally. Strong writers will reflect on experiences that teach them about themselves and the world about them, instead of recounting the details of what happened.

W2: Sequence facts, ideas and opinions.

This is very closely to content. Every genre has its own structure e.g. letter, newspaper report, essays. Good writing has sound overall structure and the paragraphs are logically sequenced. For story writing you need to interest the reader in the story, develop ideas, create tension, and build to a climax.

W3: Use a range of appropriate vocabulary.

You need to show that you have the ability to communicate with wider and more precise vocabulary. Use a range of words to define meaning, to entertain, and to create variety. Use words appropriate for the genre you are writing.

W4: Use register appropriate to audience and context.

The way you write should be appropriate for your audience and purpose. This means that you should write with a suitable form of address and tone. Think about how you structure sentences and your choice of language, for example you should write formally when required. Your sense of audience should be clear.

W5: Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

It goes without saying that your use of spelling, punctuation and grammar should be accurate. This is important because you have the time to check your work and you can use spell checks and dictionaries to help you. Make sure you check for typing errors if you have used Word.

The most common error is that of a missing full stop at the end of a sentence, followed by leaving out commas and in descriptive or narrative writing, students often switch between past and present tense.

It is important that you develop the habit of carefully checking your work for simple errors as vital marks can be lost on easily fixed mistakes.

Assignment 1: Informative, analytical and/or argumentative

The types of writing covered in Assignment 1 may be writing to:

- **inform, explain, describe**
or
- **argue, persuade, advise**
or
- **analyse, review, comment.**

This assignment can be anything that is non-fiction.

ARGUMENTATIVE COURSEWORK

Many learners are interested in **international issues** such as animal welfare, crime, conservation, drugs, globalisation, peace studies, the influence of television, smoking, world sport, and diet. Many learners prefer to engage with **local issues** concerning their own country, their immediate area or their school. Topics are more interesting when you make some reference to **your own country and society** and **your own experience**.

A **personal viewpoint** is always more natural and more engaging for the reader.

A successful alternative to an essay is to write the words of a speech, with opportunities for writing in rhetorical language and with a powerful sense of audience.

INFORMATIVE COURSEWORK

Informative writing may not be as challenging as argumentative work, although the use of **personal detail** and comment on **experience** will allow you to reach Bands 1 and 2.

The advantage of informative coursework is that you can express **personal interest**, **originality** and be **persuasive** but you must make sure that it is not too similar to Assignment 2.

If you are writing an informative piece, do not overly rely on researched information as your work needs to show your **personal interest** and be **original**.

MEDIA COURSEWORK

You may wish to write in different forms such as newspaper articles, interviews, reports, brochures, leaflets, information handouts. You should make it clear who your target audience is.

It is good to consider layout and presentation but the most important thing to focus on is the writing.

Examples of unusual and interesting assignments

- *Ghosts and things that go bump in the night*

- *Food in the school cafeteria*
- *Should teachers be role models?*
- *Teaching the tango in school*
- *An account of a horse rehabilitation Centre*
- *The Christchurch earthquake*
- *Subway construction in Cordoba*
- *Dolls as stereotypes*
- *Football and technology*
- *Against intimate relationships in school*
- *Reality is not what you see on television*
- *Banning the internet*
- *Should Shakespeare be taught in schools?*
- *A visit to the art museum*
- *Is it right for teenagers to fall in love?*
- *How to be a librarian...an electrician...a gym teacher*

Skills required for Assignment 1:

- Show individual interest and energy in your writing.
- Use the appropriate form e.g. speech, address, article, letter.
- Write with a clear sense of audience.
- Use rhetorical language.
- Structure your argument making clear points, developed with supporting detail.

Watch out for/avoid:

- Repeating information you found on the internet – you must respond personally.
- Overuse of rhetorical devices such as the rhetorical question.
- Writing about topics with not enough detail.
- Writing an argument that seems angry and has no logic.
- Inappropriate non-standard English.
- Repeating points and phrases.

Key Points

- The more **original** your assignment is the higher marks you will get.
- Think about issues you are **personally interested** in.
- It is important to express your own **opinions**.
- You need to make it clear what **specific audience** you are writing for.

Assignment 2: Descriptive and/or narrative writing

The types of writing covered in Assignment 2 may be writing to:

- **Explore, imagine, entertain**

For this assignment, you must make sure that it is not too similar to Assignment 1. The genre and style should be different.

FICTION

For this assignment you can write stories that:

- create suspense and atmosphere
- explore relationships and emotions
- are about adventure and achievement
- turn on unexpected events or result in unusual outcomes
- invent contrasting characters facing situations in which right triumphs over wrong, fortune over misfortune
- are about confrontations and their outcomes
- are about journeys and what happens on the way

In your story you should think about your target readers and how to interest them. Also you need to create a distinctive voice for the narrator, and whether you will write in first or third person.

Skills required for writing fiction:

- Structure your story (e.g. providing characters and details that later become significant; flashbacks; time lapses; different types of beginning and endings).
- Description (providing pictures to clarify and words that define).
- Imagination; (storylines should gripping but realistic; selecting details which are relevant to the story; have interesting dialogue that adds to the story).

Watch out for/avoid:

- Stories that include unrealistic and exaggerated events (including stories of violence, aliens, zombies and visits to haunted houses) are not interesting.
- Stories with nothing but events.
- Stories that are muddled with no links between events and details in different parts of the narrative.
- Boring plots with no climax and poor endings.

PERSONAL WRITING

For this assignment you can write stories about:

- an event concerning a relative
- the growth or failure of a relationship
- an event that is testing and stressful, but ends in success
- a visit to a challenging place, e.g. a surgery or a hospital
- an early memory from one's schooldays

- the holiday of a lifetime, or one that does not work out
- a serious disagreement
- moving to a new place
- events of importance, such as the birth of a sibling, an illness, or a special celebration.

You can write for yourself or have a specific audience in mind.

Skills required for personal writing:

- Select details that are relevant and don't slow up the action.
- Adding interest by describing.
- Presenting, not just narrating.
- Include thoughts and emotions.

Watch out for/avoid:

- Writing about events that are uninteresting.
- Simply narrating events – think about including thoughts and feelings.
- Not enough development of ideas.
- Uninteresting language.

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

For this assignment you can write descriptions about:

- busy places and atmospheres (markets, airports, train stations)
- quiet and beautiful places and atmospheres
- ugly places
- a moment when time stands still
- sound
- an event where there is a crowd
- a dreamscape
- a room where people are waiting
- hot places and cold places
- a sudden storm, hurricane, tornado, blizzard.

You should write descriptions that take place over a very **brief period of time** or which involve some **movement** such as approaching a market, visiting a stall and leaving the place behind. You can describe a scene at dawn or as night falls, or the same place in summer and in winter.

Skills required for descriptive writing:

- **Language** using the senses, adjectives, figurative language to create pictures.
- **Structure** organising paragraphs and including enough detail to interest the reader e.g. contrast, seeing the topic from afar and then up close.

Watch out for/avoid:

- Using limited vocabulary.
- Failing to create atmosphere.

- Not writing enough – make sure you don't run out of things to say but don't ramble on either!

Examples of successful and interesting assignments:

Fiction

- *Catnapping*
- *The story of a lighthouse keeper*
- *Whisper in the bedroom*
- *I can't understand humans (told by a tortoise)*
- *The voice in my head*
- *Just in the nick of time*
- *The door in the wall*
- *I am a pea*

Personal writing

- *A day with Grandfather*
- *A day I will never forget*
- *My new school*
- *Filipino Christmas*

Descriptions

- *The stadium*
- *The fish and chip shop*
- *An untidy place*
- *Storm ('This is nature's Blitzkrieg')*
- *The circus*
- *A person you are close to*
- *Climbing in China*
- *A scene before and after a disaster*
- *A main road by day and by night*

Key Points

- You need to ensure your writing is **interesting** for the reader
- Your writing needs to be **realistic** and **believable**.
- Write with **imaginative detail**.
- Use **language** e.g. adjectives, the senses, similes, metaphors to interest your audience.
- **Structure** your writing appropriately.

Assignment 3: Writing in response to text(s)

The types of writing covered in Assignment 3 may be writing to:

- **Comment, evaluate, analyse** and to **argue and persuade**

In this assignment you will get marks for responding to reading material selected by your teacher. You need to select, analyse and evaluate the facts, opinions and arguments in the text you have read. Less marks are given to students who simply repeat the ideas without evaluating them.

The text your teacher chooses will have obvious ideas and opinions for you to respond to. It will have a range of factual material, contain topics that you can agree or disagree with and will be approximately two sides of A4. **You do not need to analyse the language and devices used.**

Assessment objectives for Reading

In Assignment 3 only, 10 marks are also available for Reading:

- R1 Demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings.
- R2 Demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes.
- R3 Analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions.

Examples of successful articles:

University: why bother?

Wearing fur

How much money do I need to be happy?

Why you can't sack boring teachers

Bringing up Chinese children

Too young to be a criminal

A strong attack of Facebook (by Janet Street Porter)

Stuff the Tigers by Jeremy Clarkson (against conservation)

Goal line technology (for football fans)

Airbrushing photos of celebrities

Sex bias in the Girl Guides

Other types of texts

- a) Advertising texts: discuss the ideas used by advertisers. Perhaps you could evaluate the methods used by two advertisements for the same product.
- b) Speeches: these are often persuasive and should have clear ideas and opinions.
- c) Charity texts/leaflets: you could consider arguments and facts used to persuade people to contribute. You could compare two leaflets.
- d) Fiction e.g. a short chapter, section of a novel or short story, whole poem, or scene from a play may be used provided that they contain ideas, opinions and/or arguments.
- e) Texts from websites.
- f) Travel writing.

Types of responses

- Reply to the writer, publisher or editor in the form of a letter.
- Debate speech or conversation with the writer.
- Letter sent to a character.

Key Points

- Show that **understand** the text and the **views** of the writer.
- You do not need to analyse the language of and style of the text.
- You need to **respond** to the **facts and opinions** in the text and **evaluate** them.
- Express your **opinions** but do not personally attack the writer.

Final Comments from the Examiner

Candidates achieving a low band had:

- Punctuation errors, particularly of full stops, commas and semi colons.
- Straightforward, limited language or words used incorrectly.
- Awkward sentences and lack of fluency.
- Simple responses and not enough detail.
- No proof reading and checking for errors.
- Poor use of the spell check – wrong words and wrong spellings.

Candidates achieving a high band had:

- Demonstrated their personal ideas, feelings and interpretations of the world about them.
- Wrote as individuals and thought with originality.
- Used a variety of style, language and genre.
- Varied sentences separated by full stops and clarified by the appropriate use of commas and semi-colons.
- Proof-read their work carefully,

Coursework provides an opportunity for you to learn to be a better writer, to express your own ideas and experiences of the world about you.

Your work must be authentic and not copied or completed by anyone else.

Marking Criteria for Writing Assignments 1-3 (40 marks)

Band	Criteria
<p>Band 1 (36–40)</p> <p>Confident and stylistic completion of challenging tasks throughout the portfolio</p>	<p>W1: Candidates describe and reflect effectively upon experience, give detail and analyse thoughtfully what is felt and imagined. Arguments are cogent and developed in mature, persuasive thought.</p> <p>W2: Facts, ideas and opinions are ordered logically, each stage in the argument or narrative carefully linked to the next. Paragraphing is a strength, and candidates are confident in experimenting where appropriate in the structure of expressive writing.</p> <p>W3: Candidates write with assurance, using a wide range of effective vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates vary their style with assurance to suit audience and context in all three assignments. They use well-constructed sentences.</p> <p>W5: Candidates write accurately. They use punctuation and grammatical structures to define shades of meaning. They spell simple, complex and technical words with precision.</p>
<p>Band 2 (31–35):</p> <p>Frequent merit and interest in the choice of content and the manner of writing</p>	<p>W1: Candidates describe and reflect upon experience, and analyse with occasional success what is felt and imagined. Some argument is well developed and interesting, although the explanation may not always be consistent.</p> <p>W2: Facts, ideas and opinions are often well ordered so that the construction of the writing is clear to the reader. Sentences within paragraphs are mostly well sequenced, although some paragraphs may finish less effectively than they begin.</p> <p>W3: Candidates write with some confidence, demonstrating an emergent range of varied vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates give evidence of understanding the need to write appropriately to audience and context even if there is not complete consistency in the three assignments. There is some fluency in the construction of sentences.</p> <p>W5: Candidates show some signs of understanding how punctuation and grammatical structures can be used to aid communication. Errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar are minor, and rare at the top of this band.</p>
<p>Band 3 (26–30):</p> <p>Competent writing with some development of ideas</p>	<p>W1: Candidates express clearly what is felt and imagined and supply some detail, explanation and exemplification for the benefit of the reader. Arguments are expressed in a competent series of relevant points and a clear attempt is made to develop some of them.</p> <p>W2: A clear attempt is made to present facts, ideas and opinions in an orderly way, although there may be some insecurity in the overall structure.</p> <p>W3: Candidates write competently, using appropriate, if sometimes unadventurous, vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates make a clear attempt in at least one assignment to write with a sense of audience and there may also be some evidence of adapting style to context. Sentences mostly link ideas successfully.</p> <p>W5: Candidates use punctuation and grammar competently although the range is not strong. There may be a number of minor errors especially at the bottom of this band and even occasional errors of sentence separation.</p>
<p>Band 4 (21–25):</p> <p>Satisfactory content with brief development and acceptable expression</p>	<p>W1: Candidates express with some clarity what is felt and imagined. Arguments are relevant to the topic and are developed partially with some brief effectiveness.</p> <p>W2: There is evidence of overall structure, but the writing may be presented more carefully in some sections than in others. There may be examples of repetition and the sequence of sentences within paragraphs may be insecure in places.</p> <p>W3: Candidates write with occasional competence, using a mixture of effective and straightforward vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates show occasional evidence of writing with some understanding of audience and context, but this is not sustained. Candidates use some complex and some simple sentences.</p>

	<p>W5: Candidates use a limited range of punctuation and grammatical structure with some care, although occasionally grammatical error will cause the reader some difficulty. There may be quite numerous errors, particularly of sentence separation and the misuse of commas.</p>
<p>Band 5 (16–20):</p> <p>Simple writing, the meaning of which is not in doubt</p>	<p>W1: Candidates express intelligibly what is felt and imagined. Arguments are expressed with variable relevance, logic and development.</p> <p>W2: Facts, ideas and opinions are presented in paragraphs which may be inconsistent. The overall structure is unsound in places.</p> <p>W3: Candidates use simple, straightforward vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates make slight variations of style according to audience and context, although this does not seem deliberate. Simple sentences are correctly used and there may be an attempt to write complex sentences which have a slight lack of clarity.</p> <p>W5: Candidates show knowledge of simple punctuation and grammar, but the amount of error, especially of tense and the use of prepositions, is sometimes considerable. Sentence separation is often poor, but error does not prevent the reader from understanding what is written.</p>
<p>Band 6 (11–15):</p> <p>Writing can be followed despite difficulties with expression</p>	<p>W1: Candidates make a simple attempt to express what is felt and imagined. Arguments are expressed very simply and briefly.</p> <p>W2: Facts, ideas and opinions may appear in partially formed paragraphs of inappropriate length and some attempt is made to provide a beginning and an end.</p> <p>W3: Candidates use simple, mainly accurate vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates may show occasional, brief acknowledgement of the possibility of writing for different audiences and contexts, but overall there is little variation of style. Attempts to write complex sentences may involve repetition of conjunctions and some blurring.</p> <p>W5: Candidates occasionally use appropriate punctuation and can spell simple words, but the reader is not convinced that their understanding, especially of grammar, is adequate.</p>
<p>Band 7 (6–10):</p> <p>Some of the writing can be followed</p>	<p>W1: Candidates occasionally express what is felt, thought and imagined, but they are hampered by their command of language.</p> <p>W2: There may be some signs of an overall structure although inadequate presentation of facts, ideas and opinions creates blurring.</p> <p>W3: Candidates demonstrate a narrow vocabulary.</p> <p>W4: Candidates may write appropriately on the whole but their command of language is not strong enough to acknowledge audience or context. There are unlikely to be more than a few accurate sentences.</p> <p>W5: Weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar are persistent, but the reader is able to follow at least part of the writing.</p>
<p>Band 8 (1–5):</p> <p>Writing does not communicate adequately</p>	<p>W1: Very simple meanings are attempted, but most of the work is too inaccurate and blurred to make sense.</p> <p>W2: An absence of overall structure and paragraphing leads to confusion.</p> <p>W3: Very simple meanings are attempted, but the candidate’s knowledge of vocabulary is too slight to make adequate sense.</p> <p>W4: There is insufficient evidence of audience, context or sentence structures to reward.</p> <p>W5: The amount and breadth of error prevents sufficient communication of meaning.</p>

Band descriptions for reading (Assignment 3 only) (10 marks)

Band 1 9-10 marks	Candidates analyse and evaluate several ideas and details from the text(s), and develop lines of thought. Their own ideas are closely related to the original text(s) and show a good understanding of the main arguments.
Band 2 7-8 marks	Candidates respond in detail to ideas from the text(s), explaining them and expressing views on them with varying degrees of effectiveness. There is some reference to details in the original. Their own ideas are based on those of the original text(s).
Band 3 5-6 marks	Candidates show some response to the ideas in the text(s), summarising them and giving simple views on them. Their own thinking is relevant, if not always tightly focused on the original text(s).
Band 4 3-4 marks	Candidates give a response to the original text(s). Their ideas are relevant to the topic but make only occasional references to individual ideas or details in the original text(s).
Band 5 1-2 marks	Candidates write about the topic but there is little evidence that they have read or understood the text(s).
Band 6 0 marks	There is no discernible reference to the topic or to the text(s).