

IGCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

GUIDE TO CORE EXAM Paper 1



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.

The assessment objectives are:

Reading:

- R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions
- R4 demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects
- R5 select for specific purposes.

Writing:

- 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.

Overview of the exam – Paper 1 Reading Passages (Core)

1 hour 45 minutes, 50 marks

40 marks for Reading, 10 marks for Writing

50% of the overall mark for IGCSE

- Spend **10 minutes reading** Passage A and Passage B. Passage A will be 500–600 words and Passage B will be 300–350 words in length.
- Answer **three questions** on the texts:
 - Question 1 – This part will be divided into questions a-g on Passage A
 - Question 2 – Complete a writing task based on the information in Passage A
 - Question 3 – Summarise the information in Passage B.

You will be given a reading booklet and an answer booklet.

You must answer **all** questions in the answer booklet.

You can get grades C–G.

What will be tested?

The exam will test your ability to:

Reading:

- demonstrate understanding of words and phrases within extended texts
- identify and develop facts, ideas and opinions
- summarise, paraphrase and re-express
- demonstrate some understanding of how writers achieve their effects
- recognise and respond to simple linguistic devices including figurative language
- extract specific information.

Writing

- express thoughts, feelings and opinions in order to interest, inform or convince the reader
- convey simple and detailed facts, ideas and opinions in an orderly sequence
- use appropriate vocabulary
- demonstrate some sense of audience and context
- demonstrate adequate control of spelling, punctuation and grammar
- attempt a variety of sentence structures.

Key to Success – General Advice

- Work through the paper in order.
- READ EACH QUESTION CAREFULLY – check you have answered it fully.
- Look out for the key words in a question and underline them. What is the question asking you to do?
- Spend more time on questions that are worth more marks.
- Allow yourself time to check your answers: use * or ^ to insert more information and put a line through words you want to delete.
- Write as neatly as possible.
- Do not write more than you need to – you will not have time to check it.
- If you finish the exam early, go back and check your answers again; you may have missed something.
- Use punctuation properly to make your writing clear. Don't use commas where you should have used a full stop.
- Keep concentrating until the end – don't let the quality of your work decline.

Question 1 Comprehension questions (20 marks)

This part will be divided into seven questions a – g on Passage A. Some answers will need short responses, some will need longer more detailed answers – the higher the marks available, the more information you need. You should spend 30 minutes on this section.

Below is an example of the kinds of questions you could be asked and how to approach them.

Skills Assessed	Typical Wording	Approach/You should....
understanding of explicit meanings	Give two detail/facts... Give three reasons/ways... Give two effects... State...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find the facts, underline the key information. Make clear valid points. Short answers are acceptable. Make sure you have the correct number of points asked for.
understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes	Explain using your own words... How... Why... Which phrase shows... What does the writer mean by....	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put the text into your own words – don't copy out quotes from the text. Think about what the writer is implying. Explain clearly.
analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions	What do we learn about... Why does the writer say... Why... How...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the writer's opinion or attitude. Comment on the effect it has on the reader.
understanding of how writers achieve effects.	What does the word...suggest What effect does the writer achieve by...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chose the correct word/phrase Comment on the techniques used by writers. Explain the effect fully.

Example questions and responses

Must make 2 points to answer the question

Asking you to consider the writer's feelings/thoughts about the train

Give **two** reasons why the writer felt disappointed that his trip would be so short (lines 16-22).

Indicates where to find the information.

The train was comfortable.
It had everything he needed.

This a good answer because the student

- Gave two correct reasons
- Made clear, precise points on the writer's opinion

Bold is used to highlight you should use your own words and **not** copy quotes from the text.

The question is asking you to identify the differences between these two means of travel.

Explain **using your own words**, the difference the writer mentions between travelling by rail and travelling by ship (lines 23-24)

On a ship you have to talk to other passengers but on the trail you don't have to interact with others.

Indicates where to find the information.

This is a good answer because the student....

- Gave a clear explanation
- Used his own words
- Shows understanding of the contrast between travelling by train and ship

Bold is used to highlight that you should use your own words and **not** copy quotes from the text.

The question is asking you to explain the writer's opinion.

Explain **using your own words**, why the writer thinks people find travelling in a sleeping car 'attractive' (lines 26-32)

It is private and you can enjoy the view from the window. There is always something new to look at because the train is moving.

Indicates where to find the information.

This is a good answer because the student....

- Gave a number of reasons to answer the question fully
- Answered clearly
- Used his own words and didn't quote from the text

Find the precise quote from the text.

Must read the whole paragraph to find the correct phrase

Asks you to think about the writer's choice of words.

Which phrase in the final paragraph is used to emphasise the colour of the flying parrots?

Getting greener

This is a good answer because the student....

- Has selected only the correct phrase (did not write out a longer phrase)
- Showed understanding of the writer's use of language

Bold is used to highlight that you should use your own words and **not** copy quotes from the text.

The question is asking you to think about what the writer shows about his attitude towards the other passengers.

Explain **using your own words** what the writer means by 'this nagging made me evasive'. (lines 5-6)

The writer means that he was annoyed by the other passengers' repetitive questions and didn't want to answer.

You must explain the meaning of 'nagging' and 'evasive'

This is a good answer because the student....

- Did not copy words from the text, but used his own words
- Showed understanding of the words 'nagging' and 'evasive' in the context of the whole sentence.
- Showed understanding of the writer's feelings

Example question for g)

This question is laid out differently from the other questions in this section. You will be asked to select 3 of the 4 phrases given and write them into the first column. In the next column you should explain what the phrase means. In the next column explain the effect of the writer's choice of language.

Indicates where to find the phrases.

You must not copy out the words. Explain the phrases in your own vocabulary.

Choose 3 phrases in italics a, b, c or d. and write them in the first column.

i) Re-read the final paragraph beginning "In brilliant sunshine..." Explain, using your own words, what the writer means by the words in italics in three of the following phrases:

- a. 'submerged ploughs, preparing a rice field for planting'
- b. 'a town of grass huts and cardboard shelters'
- c. 'everyone was in motion'
- d. 'folding clothes, fanning the fire'

Your explanation should focus only on what the phrases show about the life of the villagers.

ii) Each phrases helps to create a picture in your mind of the people and their surroundings. Explain what each of these phrases shows about village life.

Phrase selected (a), (b), (c) or (d)	(i) The meaning of the words in italics	(ii) What each phrase shows about village life.

Example answer (extract)

Phrase selected (a), (b), (c) or (d)	(i) The meaning of the words in italics	(ii) What each phrase shows about village life.
<i>'in motion'</i>	To be moving, action, not staying still.	This shows that the people in the village are busy. Everyone is active and doing their job. This contrasts with the writer who is watching.

Correct italics phrase

Short, clear answer provided. Explains using own words.

Explanation is in student's words and explains what the phrase shows about the village.

Question 2 Extended Writing Task (15 marks)

You will be given a writing task asking you to use the information in Passage A.

The examiner wants to see that you can:

Read (10 marks):	Write (5 marks):
R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings	W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes	W2 sequence facts, ideas and opinions
R3 analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions.	W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary
	W4 use register appropriate to audience and context.

Read the question carefully because it will tell you very specific information about how you should write your answer. It is important that you read this information carefully before you begin.

- **Point of view:** The question may instruct you to write from the point of view of the writer for example, or a journalist, or a character in the text.
- **Form:** the question will tell you to write a letter, report, journal, speech, interview, newspaper report or magazine article.
- **Content:** You will be given a list of bullet points of information you should include.
- **Number of words:** You will be asked to write approximately **200-300 words**.
- **How to start:** The question may tell you to **begin with** these words.
- **Audience:** The question may tell you who your readers will be.

POINT OF VIEW: you should use I and imagine you are the character from the text.

FORM: 'Reply' shows that this should be written as a letter. Include an address and use Dear...

AUDIENCE: You are writing to a friend, but you should still write in a formal way.

You are one of the children in the passage. A friend who lives in another country has written asking you if the 'paradise island' on which you live is really as good a place to visit as people say. Write a reply in which you tell your friend about:

- the good and bad aspects of the island
- the weather
- the experience you had when you went to Exeter Rocks

You should base your ideas on what you have read in the passage, but do not copy from it.

You should write between 1 and 1½ sides, allowing for the size of your handwriting.

Use your own words.

CONTENT - you need to make sure you provide more information on all these points.

Specifies how much you should write.

Ideas should use the information from the passage.

Appr

Coaching the task

For this question you need to take some time (5 minutes) to plan your answer. This will help you to organize your ideas to ensure you get to Band 3 or 4. Spend a further 20 minutes

When planning...

- Remember your reading skills are being tested.
- Pick out ideas from the passage and rework them to write a convincing response.
- Use and develop the ideas contained in the passage, and add original details of your own.
- Your ideas should remain based on the passage and not stray too far from it.
- Use the bullet points in the question to help you structure your piece of writing.
- Mind-map or list your ideas.

When writing...

- Remember your writing skills are being tested – the quality and accuracy of your writing is important.
- Keep the style of your writing appropriate for the task e.g. if asked to write to a 'friend' you still need to use a good standard of English with a range of vocabulary, if writing a news report you need to make your writing sound like one.
- You will be rewarded for showing a wide range of vocabulary – don't repeat the same word too often.

When checking...

- Check your answer and correct any mistakes. Look out for errors like missed full-stops and careless spelling errors.
- Read your answer back to yourself to help you spot errors.

Question 3 – Summary Question (15 marks)

This question is based on Passage B and may have two parts.

Part i) Will ask you to make notes and pick out specific information from Passage B.

Part ii) will ask you to summarise your notes in 100-150 words.

You should spend 30 minutes on this section: 10 minutes for part i, 15 minutes for part ii, and a few minutes to check your answers.

The examiner wants to see that you can:

Read (10 marks):	Write (5 marks):
R1 demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings	W1 articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
R2 demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes	W2 sequence facts, ideas and opinions
R5 select for specific purposes.	W3 use a range of appropriate vocabulary

How to approach the summary

- You will need to focus just on the specific ideas or details relevant to the question.
- Make sure you focus on all parts of the question.
- Do not write more or less than the specified word limit i.e. 100-150 words.
- Make sure that your points count – they need to be clear, not vague.
- Don't repeat points.
- You do not need to introduce or conclude your summary. Start by using the wording of part of the question e.g. 'The features of the desert were...'
- Find all the points you can for each part of the question. Do not stop when you get to 10 – use everything relevant to get top marks.
- To get full writing marks you need to be clear, concise and precise.
- Use the correct form: paragraphs, full sentences, objective third person.
- When writing the summary do not: use bullet points or a list, write in the first person or narrative, use quotation, add extra information or your own opinions.
- Use your own words except for larger technical words e.g. solar heaters.
- Use longer sentences with several points made.

SEE the Revision section (p.15) in this booklet for advice on how to prepare for summary writing.

Example questions and answers for Question 3

Part i)

Question 3

Answer the questions in the order set.

a) Notes

Only include information from Passage B

Read Passage B. What did the writer find unpleasant and enjoyable about the downhill journey?

Write your answers using short notes.

Use bullet points. You do not need to write in full sentences.

It's ok to use words from the passage.

You do not need to use your own words.

Up to 10 marks are available for the content of your answer.

For 10 marks you need to spend more time and make at least ten points.

This question is designed to help you plan your writing for Part ii). You should complete this section first

You must write about BOTH the good and the bad parts of the journey. Other information is not relevant.

Information about the unpleasant and enjoyable aspects of the writer's journey

- It was freezing cold
- Their hands lost all feeling/could not feel handlebars
- The hairpin corners were dangerous
- Their lips/knees froze/pure agony
- Their noses ran
- The village was abandoned and shut up
- The journey took a long time, about 3 hours

- The roads were smooth
- They could reach good speeds (on the gradient)
- The countryside and scenery
- Seeing the animals

This is a good answer because the student...

- Used the information from Passage B
- Has listed a number of points
- Made notes using bullet points
- Copied from the text and did not spend time writing it in his own words
- Did not add in extra or irrelevant information
- Commented on both unpleasant *and* enjoyable parts of the journey

Part ii)

Use the points you made in the last part to help you write your summary.

b) Summary

Now use your notes to write a summary of what Passage B tells you about writer's thoughts and feelings on what was unpleasant and enjoyable about her downhill journey.

Writing should be in proper paragraphs with full sentences.

You must use continuous writing (not note form) and use your own words as far as possible.

Your summary should include all 10 of your points in Question 3(a) and must be 100 to 150 words.

Use all the information from a).

Do not write less or more than the word count specified.

Up to 5 marks are available for the quality of your writing.

You will gain more marks for accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Student 1

Truly exhilarating in good condition It is freezing while our hand are gloved, not good when you need to be able to feel your hands. You lips go numb first it was pure agony above the cloudy & We arrived

This gets a low mark because....

- The student only made two points about the unpleasant aspects of the journey.
- It is too short.
- He copies information directly from the text and does not put it into his own words.
- He does not write in full sentences.
- There are simple punctuation and grammar errors.

Student 2

Before they reach Andean Village, they were physically mentally tired causes of weather and temperature but when they reach Andean Village, their causing problem were gone. About three hours later, they arrived at Colquepata and they were on the way to Paucartambo, road was smooth and downhill. And they met nice farmland groups of eucalyptus trees and herds of cattle and sheep. pleasant farmlands; the cattle and sheep.

This is better but gets a lower mark because...

- The student made a few points about what was enjoyable about the journey, but did not mention unpleasant aspects of the journey.
- It is too short.
- There is irrelevant information included e.g. where the travellers were going to, showing that the student has lost focus a little.
- It is written in proper paragraphs.
- The student's writing is not clear and there are some errors with grammar and punctuation.
- The student uses his own words where possible.

Student 3

What may have seemed unpleasant for the writer was that the Manu region was terribly cold, to the point of freezing temperatures. Every part of the body had been cold and their hands went numb. Also the time it took the writer to arrive at Colquepata, how miserable she felt.

The enjoyable part to the writer was that the people in the Andean Village were welcoming and warm from the top, although it had been abandoned. Even though the journey had been downhill, the sight of seeing farmland and animals was enjoyable, and they could go faster because they were travelling downhill.

This gets a higher mark because....

- The student made a number of clear, concise points.
- He focused on both the unpleasant and enjoyable aspects of the journey.
- It does not get full marks because some of the information is repetitive e.g. mentioning the cold and there were other points the student missed.
- It is the correct number of words (but only just!).
- The student uses his own words where possible.
- It is written in proper paragraphs, one discussing what was unpleasant about the experience and one paragraph referring to what was enjoyable.
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar is accurate.

What you need to do

English is different from other subjects because you are tested on your skills rather than your knowledge. In Science for example, you might need to learn how a process works. In English you need to be able to have practised writing and reading in a wide variety of contexts. You need to understand the different ways that the language can be used and can respond appropriately.

The best approach is to use a variety of books, articles, newspapers, magazines, as well as the internet to practice the skills you will be tested on. The table below suggests some activities that will be useful.

Skill	You should be able to	Suggestions to practice the skill
Reading. Locating specific information as quickly as possible = Skimming	Read short non-fiction texts, such as leaflets, news reports and advertisement	Looking at leaflets, reports, instructions, brochures. Practice picking out the facts, main ideas, finding information quickly and underlining it.
Reading. Locating more detailed information; looking more carefully = Scanning	Read longer non-fiction texts, such as articles from newspapers and magazines	Reading articles similar to exam passages. Reading factual articles. Extracting relevant information from articles i.e. writer's opinion, thoughts, feeling Use dictionary/thesaurus to improve vocabulary
Reading & Writing. Integrated reading and writing	1. Read a text which contains information and respond using the relevant material from the text	Practising using information to write in different styles or forms e.g. mystery story, leaflet Practice writing formal letters
	2. Understand descriptive texts and select relevant information and phrases from them	Reading passages from stories Identify the ways feeling or atmosphere has been created.
	3. Adopt an appropriate voice in which to express a response to a text	Practising using different registers and styles for different purposes e.g. argue, persuade, describe, advise, inform, report
	4. Show awareness of audience	Practising writing for different audiences Experiment with language and techniques
	5. Write short summaries	Writing a summary based on a set of notes of between 7 and 15 points Practising the use of own words Becoming familiar with the concise and precise language of summary style
Writing	1. Describe, discuss, argue and narrate	Writing descriptions of events, places, people using all five senses and imagery Planning openings and endings to stories Structuring and supporting points for an argument.
	2. Use language for a specific purpose, e.g. to persuade, to consider, to evaluate, to inform, to entertain, to convey an impression.	Writing (and performing) debate speeches Ideas for and against a discussion topic. Analysing the devices used in letters, articles and editorials stating a point of view. Writing stories which have gripping openings, pace, dialogue, climax, strong endings.

Revision

Reading

- You should read as widely and as often as you can – all sorts of texts, from magazines to short stories, from leaflets to letters sent out by businesses or schools. The aim is to know what as many different forms of written English might sound like.
- You should try to learn the meanings of common prefixes so that you can guess meanings of words.
- Use a dictionary and thesaurus to help you develop your vocabulary and understand the full meaning of words you already know.

Summary

- Practice summarising passages. This is a specific skill which easily get full marks if you practice.
- Use the following steps:
 1. Read and underline the relevant material in pencil (so that you can change your mind easily if needed).
 2. Transfer the points into a plan, whilst changing them into your own words.
 3. Group the points logically (using arrows/brackets); put them in order (using numbers), and decide which ones can be combined into one sentence.
 4. Write the summary in one or two paragraphs, using longer sentences to combine information.
 5. Check the summary for clear wording and ensure you have included enough points. Delete any material that is not necessary or has been repeated.
- Don't write too much – you are meant to be summing up, not adding to the original ideas.
- Do not express your opinion.
- You will get one point for each mark so if there are 10 marks available you need to make 10 points.
- Remember that summaries never include:
 - examples
 - repetitions
 - direct speech
 - figurative language
 - minor details.

All these must be removed from the passage, and then you use only the facts, which are what you have left.

- Practice turning passages into news reports. Use a proper news article style. You will need to think about:
 - style – short paragraphs, short sentences and dramatic vocabulary
 - using impersonal expression (do not use 'I' or 'We' and do not give any opinions)
 - use interview material and speech rewording it in your own language
 - structure –news reports begin with the very recent past (usually yesterday); go on to fill in past background prior to the event; return to the immediate present and how things are developing; then finally speculate about the future.

Writing

- Practise writing formal letters to people in official positions and people you don't know well. You should use a formal style and polite tone.
- Structure it in three sections
 - the topic of the letter/reason for writing it
 - background information, arguments and factual details
 - request or suggestions for future action.

Your teacher will keep telling you that each question should be answered in a different style.

What is style? It is about using words/structure that are appropriate for:

- i)* the person speaking (write in role)
- ii)* the audience/reader (think about who you are writing for)
- iii)* the purpose of the task

You also need to think about the appropriate structure and devices for the genre. As you read different types of texts in English, try to notice how they look and sound different from each other and how they compare.

In your own writing you can:

- Practise joining simple sentences using a range of connectives. Avoid using 'and', 'but' and 'so'.
- Practise varying your sentences and starting it in different ways e.g.
 - Start with a reservation: Although...
 - Start with a time: Before....
 - Start with a place: Near...
 - Start with a verb + ed: Shocked by.... Angered
 - Start with a verb + ing: Yelling... Holding...

To improve your own writing you should also:

- Learn to spell commonly misspelt words e.g. separate, definitely, business, opportunity, surprise, privilege. The best way to learn them is to:
 1. Stare at them; cover them while you write them from memory; check to see if you were correct. This is the Look, Cover, Write, Check method.
 2. Break difficult words down into syllables in your mind, so that you can hear how 'in-ter-est-ing' must be spelt.
 3. Create sayings and rhymes to help you remember e.g. 'necessary' has one coat and two sleeves; 'possesses' possesses five esses.
 4. Be aware of prefixes, so that you can work out which words have double letters and which don't e.g. 'dis-satisfied' as opposed to 'dismay'
- Revise direct speech punctuation. It is likely that you will need to use dialogue. Remember that a change of speaker requires a new line, and that all speech needs a final punctuation mark such as full stop, exclamation marks or question marks inside the speech marks.

'Really?' she asked.

'Really,' he answered.

When you are practising your writing:

- You should try use a range of connectives.

Be aware that there are over thirty connectives available in English for joining parts of sentences (clauses) together. Challenge a friend to see how many you can think of without looking them up.

In addition, present and present perfect continuous participles ('arriving', 'having arrived') can also be used.

- Practise persuasive writing. Support all points with proof and think about how you might persuade your reader – for example the use of triplets, rhetorical questions, direct address.
- Read lots of openings to stories and practise beginning the same story in different ways. You could start:
 - i) by setting the scene, referring to place and time, season and weather
 - ii) with description of the main character
 - iii) in the middle of the action
 - iv) in the middle of dialogue
 - v) with an intriguing or shocking statement
- Try writing a plan for a story, then experimenting with different ways to end it. There is a range of ways to end a narrative including:
 - i) ironic comment in direct speech
 - ii) an unexpected twist
 - iii) a return to the beginning
 - iv) a happy ending
 - v) a sad ending
 - vi) a 'cliffhanger'

DON'T end the story by waking up from a dream - that just means that as a writer you couldn't think of an ending to explain what had happened in your story in any other way – a sure sign of poor planning!

- You also need to consider and practise the ways of beginning an argumentative essay:
 - i) an unexpected claim
 - ii) a provocative statement
 - iii) a summary of a situation
 - iv) a famous quotation
 - v) a direct question

To improve your writing further:

- Learn, finally, those little things you've always got wrong and never bothered to work out why e.g. the difference between it's (it is/it has) and its (belonging to it); who's (who is/who has) and whose (belonging to who); continuous (without stopping) and continual (with stops); uninterested (without interest) and disinterested (without prejudice); lay (with object) and lie (without object).
- Remind yourself of any punctuation marks of which you have never been sure. You could revise
 - the rules for the use of the apostrophe (missing letter or possession)
 - the hyphen (using two words as one)
 - starting a new paragraph (change of time, place or topic).

- Paragraphing is particularly important as it is evidence of lack of planning and/or inability to sequence material. Revise how to structure paragraphs, topic sentences, PEE structure and when to start a new paragraph.
- Commas are also important. They help make the meaning of the writing clearer. A comma should be used to separate parts of a sentence. Often students use them when they should use a full stop.
- It is now important to learn where to put full stops, even if you have always found this difficult. Your writing marks will be low if you are unable to form proper sentences using commas where you should use full-stops. Read your sentences back to yourself – if you take a longer pause when reading it means that you need a full stop.

Finally – use the internet!

There are websites you can use to improve your skills and you can use search engines to help you find examples of different types of writing too.

Here are some sites you might like to try if you have not already visited them:

www.englishbiz.co.uk

www.topmarks.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/schools/gcsebitesize