

UMSSN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SEMINAR HANDOUT JUNE 2024

Preamble

This booklet provides properly curated test items and general guidelines including sample responses which offer crucial opportunities for learners to understand the gist of their end of cycle assessment and, therefore, practice how to respond to tasks that involve summary writing, structured (free response) and scenario-based functional and creative pieces of work.

Using this booklet, alongside facilitation(s), will boost your test item answering skills (in English Language and possibly other subjects) and greatly inform your preparation towards your end of cycle English language examination, which culminates into great success. Thus, explore the secrets of responding to the different categories of English language test items appropriately and in an outstanding manner through this booklet.

Now that you have it at your disposal, make the best use of it. Remember, achieving outstanding competency in English language has a direct positive impact on your competency in other subjects, and general competency in life.

An Overview of the Paper

The paper has two sections, A and B.

SECTION A: Reading

SECTION B: Writing

Section A tests your ability to;

- a) Summarize printed material
- b) Read and comprehend texts
- c) Interpret texts

Section B tests your ability to;

- a) Write a functional composition.
- b) Write a creative composition.

| SECTION | TASK | SCORE |
|---------|--|----------|
| A | Summary writing comprehension | 03 06 |
| B | Writing (either functional or creative) | 11 |
| Total | | 20 |

Note: THE SCORES REPRESENT YOUR COMPETENCES ACHIEVED THROUGHOUT THE CYCLE

Item 1.

SUMMARY WRITING.

What is a summary?

A summary is a shortened version of a text that covers the main points.

It is a skill that enables us to extract information from a text and rewrite it within the required number of words.

Important guidelines for summary writing

The type of tasks.

- A one-aspect task.
- A two-aspect task.
- A multiple –aspect task.

The process for summarizing.

- Read the question/task and understand the key words.
- Read the text quickly and understand.
- Choose the parts that answer the question/task.
- Write a rough copy in complete sentences.
- Count the number of words.
- Write the fair copy.

The title

- It is derived from the question/task
- It is advisable to write it in the upper case and not underlined or title case and underlined.
- The title must be complete (articles are part of the title)
- It must be grammatically correct.

The paragraph

- ✓ Use only one paragraph
- ✓ It must be indented- no block paragraph
- ✓ It must be intact- no several paragraphs are acceptable

The subject

- The first sentence must contain a subject in it (this must not be a pronoun)
- The subject can be derived from the question
- Lack of a subject leads to penalty

The sentence

- ✓ Use complete sentences throughout
- ✓ Use pronouns to avoid monotony

- ✓ Be direct to the point- there is room for gambling (leave out statistics, dates, quotations, details, examples etc. unless they are important for the understanding of your text)
- ✓ The sentence must be sensible/ communicate sense
- ✓ Each sentence can have one, two or three answers.
- ✓ Avoid using complex sentences.

Punctuation

- Have a full stop at the end of each sentence.
- Do not use more than two commas in a sentence.
- If a word has a hyphen maintain it.
- Quotation marks, colon and semicolon are not acceptable.

The tense

- Use the tense in the question/task given.

Spellings

- Use correct spellings.
- Avoid joining and separating words.

Transition

- Use a word or phrase to show transition in case the question has more than one part e.g. however or on the other hand.
- **The word- limit**
- Do not exceed the word limit.
- Count the words in the rough copy one by one (avoid estimating)
- Understand the language used in the task (not more thanin about.....)

SCORES

1. An indented paragraph with;

- 13 and above well-presented responses = 03
 - 7-12 well-presented responses = 02
 - 2-6 well-presented responses = 01
 - 00 -1 response = 00
 - No response/ Incorrect or Wrong response = 00
2. No title scores, Maximum 2 scores
 3. No subject scores, maximum 1 score.
 4. Outlined ideas, 1 score.
 5. No punctuation at all, 0 score
 6. Use of commas throughout, 1 score

Practical Example 1

Read the text below.

Choosing a career definitely involves many aspects. It might take one a lot of time to think about what he would like to be. It is better for one to ask questions, do a little research and read newspapers in order to have adequate knowledge about the best career.

There are many things one should follow before choosing a career. If one does not want to commit more than 30 minutes to work each day, you would not want to be a flight attendant or a marine biologist. Find out about what businesses are thriving locally and what kind of jobs would be plentiful where you plan to live. So, think about where you live or where you want to live as you choose a career.

If you are interested in how things work, you probably should major in something like electronics. But if you like balancing your cheque book or setting up a family budget, the career like business management might be perfect for you. It is therefore important to choose a career that fits who you are. In other words, think about your personality and what you like or you do not like.

Sometimes people choose careers glamorized on television and find out later after years of study and expense, that real jobs are a lot different. Talk with people who in jobs related to the career you are considering. Try therefore to get first-hand knowledge before choosing a career.

How fast do you need to get a job or change careers? You may have all the time in the world and plenty of support from others but if you like us, time and money are critical. Maybe you only have enough time to attend school for a year. If, so, consider choosing a career where you can earn a certificate or diploma. The skills you would gain would enable you to get a job. Anyone should figure out how much time and money he can devote to his education, just do what is right for you based on your resources and motivation.

Choosing a career definitely involves deciding how much money you need in order to have the life you want. If you want to build a mansion, for example, you will need a career that pays a lot. But remember, making a lot of money is not everything but the bottom line is, make sure you know the earning potential for the career you choose and be sure the salary and the job are what you can live with.

While you may want to be a company president one day, you may want to advance beyond entry level. So, try to think about future opportunities, the career can offer. You know where life may lead, but it is always wise to find out where a career path may take you. For example, you may find out what graduates are doing several years after finishing the program.

Most careers have certain conditions that are associated with work. Like most farmers work outdoors, most teachers take work home every night during the school year, and most hair dressers stand on their feet all day. You need to find out what conditions (stress levels, work hours and travel, physical

environment, levels of responsibility) are, that will be associated with the type of work you will be doing. Try to understand the demand and expectations of your career choice. Can you handle not only the work but also conditions that you will probably face?

When all is said and done, make sure you choose a career based on you. Make choices that reflect your personality, your abilities, motivation and your desired lifestyle.

Be realistic, honest and do what is right for you. And whatever choices you make, think through the next steps. It may seem like a long journey. Remember to note “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” So never fear to make a choice!

Task:

Most students often find it difficult to choose a career. You have been invited to speak to them during a Careers talk. Write what you will speak to them about what one should consider in choosing a career as shown in the text. Use about 130 words.

The rough copy

The fair copy

Practical Example 2

Read the text

OBESITY AND CHILDREN

Some people predict that today's generation of youth will be the first in over a century with a life expectancy shorter than that of their parents.

In adults, obesity has long been known to be associated with a range of health problems such as coronary heart disease, diabetes and cancer. But now, alarmingly, this so-called disorder is affecting a large number of number of youths and children too. Young people in our country are becoming increasingly inactive, and they eat less than half the recommended portion of fruit and vegetables, while exceeding recommendations for fat, sugar and salt.

Although the risk to physical health is the issue that appears to have received most attention, the first negative health outcomes of obesity are often psychological.

Evidence shows that overweight children are more likely to be victims of bullying than their normal-weight peers, and are even perceived as less intelligent by their teachers.

Very young obese and non-obese children do not tend to differ remarkably in self-esteem, but by age five, a difference has already been noted with obese children showing lower self-esteem. By late childhood/ early adolescence, obese children have significantly lower self-esteem, and this is particularly true for girls.

Lower self-esteem is further associated with feelings of sadness, loneliness and nervousness, and is also seen to create tension in the child's family, suggesting a detrimental effect of obesity on emotional well-being for older children and adolescents. In obese women, increased acne formation, early menstruation and irregular cycles are additional problems that lead to low self-esteem and psychosocial suicides. It also creates difficulties in relationships with health professionals.

Obesity cannot be prevented or managed solely at the individual level. Committees, governments, the media and the food industry need to work together to modify the environment so that it is less conducive to weight gains.

Encourage your children to play more sports during and after school hours. Parents should create an environment which promotes healthy eating habits and physical activity. The role of parents is crucial and they should be a consistent role model to their children.

I feel quite strongly that healthier options must provide at school as children spend the majority of their time in school during the day. Introduction of healthier vending machines, healthier lunches and cookery clubs would be a start. Organize youth clubs' activities which promote a healthy lifestyle at colleges or in the workplace. Prevention measures also include substituting unhealthy foods which eventually cause fatal diseases like obesity, cholesterol, cancer and heart-related disorders.

Task:

The cases of obesity are increasing in your school and the administration has requested you to sensitize the whole school. As a Health Prefect, write what

you will share with the whole school on the effects of obesity on children and adults and what should be done to prevent and manage obesity as shown in the passage. Use about 130 words.

The rough copy

The fair copy.

Item 2. Comprehension.

GUIDELINES TO COMPREHENSION

- Read the passage slowly and carefully while digesting everything.
- The questions here are scenario-based. These scenarios are generated from your environment as a student.
- The responses here require high level of critical thinking and problem solving skills

Some possible questions assessed here fall under:

1. Extraction; here you are expected to provide a response to the task basing on the passage/extract. If it is a proverb or wise saying, you are expected to interpret it in relation to the text. Wrong interpretation leads to no score at all.
2. The grammar question requires knowledge of grammar i.e. Reported speech, phrasal verbs, adverbs, conjunctions etc. You are expected to provide one possible correct response.
3. The task that requires you to give advice expects a positive advice in relation to human values, for example you should not advise someone to abort.
4. The task on character traits. You are expected to know that the character of a person is understood basing on what the character does, says or what other characters say about him or her. Character traits are always stated using descriptive adjectives that convey specific qualities or attributes of a person e.g.

John is kind. *He is always willing to help others and shows genuine concern for his age mates (provide an example from the passage where kindness is exhibited)*

He is honest. *He values truth and integrity, always speaking the truth even when it is difficult.*

She is arrogant. *She often boasts about her achievements and looks down on others (give examples from the passage.)*

He is lazy. *He avoids work and responsibilities, preferring to take the easiest path (give examples from the passage.)*

5. **Admiration** i.e. *which character do you admire/ dislike and why? While attempting this task, the candidate will state the character (name) and then provide the plausible reason for the choice of that character. If the candidate chooses to admire a bad character, he/ she will lose a score, and vice versa.*

6. **Feelings.** A task that requires feelings will require you to state a feeling and its justification.

You should express genuine feelings that befit the specific characters for example you should not have positive feelings for a villain/ bad character. Incorrect and irrelevant feelings will score zero.

Examples feelings that you can use include but not limited to;

Positive feelings

- *I am happy*
- *I am excited*
- *I pity*
- *I sympathize*
- *I am empathetic*

Note

Remember each adjective of feelings is accompanied by a justification from the passage. E.g. *I am happy because Andrew is finally arrested by the police.*

Negative feelings may include:

- *I am angry*
- *I am disappointed*
- *I hate/ detest*

These too should be accompanied by justifications from the passage/ stimulus.

You should not state feelings beginning; **I feel....**

7. **Lessons.** Here, you may be asked what you have learnt from the passage/ story.

You can state lessons in the following way;

- Lessons are stated in form of proverbs, wise sayings or advice e.g. *One should think twice before they act.*
- Lessons should be well explained basing on the passage.
- Your teacher will reject lessons that start with: *I learn to.... / not to...*

8. Opinions. Stating opinions effectively involves expressing your viewpoint clearly and often using phrases that signal your point of view;

- In my opinion...
- I believe...
- I think...
- From my perspective...
- Arguably ...

By using these phrases and techniques, you can clearly convey that you are expressing a personal viewpoint, making it distinct from stating facts.

9. Prediction. Stating prediction involves expressing a forecast or an expectation about future events.

We can predict using phrases like;

- I predict that....
- It is likely that...
- It is expected that....
- There is a good chance that...
- If....then (If the current policies remain, then unemployment rates will decrease).
- Basing on.....
- According to....

NB. You should provide clarity and context for your predictions.

Practical example 3

Read the text below.

Recently, I visited my sister who lives in Jinja. I arrived at about 3.00 o'clock in the afternoon. After asking around I was directed to her house. I knocked on the door for quite some time but no one answered. However, I could hear some music playing inside the house. I got frustrated, and being very tired, I decided to sit on the beautiful lawn that made up the large compound. I must have dosed off because the next thing I heard was my sister's voice waking me up. 'Mukisa, how can you travel all the way from Kagulu to come and sleep on the lawn? Let's go inside,' she said as she led me into the house. I was surprised when we got inside the house only to find four children glued to the TV.

My greetings were answered with sullen grunts. Only one or two looked up briefly to see who the stranger was. My sister excitedly introduced me to the children as their uncle. They shouted and screamed, but I was scandalised to realise that I was not the cause of their excitement. Their pop star had just taken the stage in the music program they were watching, causing all the excitement. This infuriated me.

For the next three days I witnessed the children wake up early in the morning and watch TV till late into the night. I observed that during prayers

for meals, all the children did was to mute the sound on the TV and then pretend to be praying while they continued to watch the TV. I heard very little conversation either among themselves or their mother. These children had become 'TV zombies'. On the last evening of my visit I decided to intervene. After supper I demanded that they switch off the TV. This was met with disbelief and open hostility. Nobody made any effort to switch off the TV, but I was not going to relent. So I took the remote control unit and switched off the TV. 'What is wrong with watching TV?' the eldest girl protested, looking at me with murderous eyes.

'The Television itself is not the problem,' I said firmly, 'but the way one uses it'. At least I now had their attention. The house was deadly silent. This was the first time in three days that the children were talking with me, albeit in a hostile environment. I explained to them that television was a positive tool only to a certain extent. First, it is certainly a good source of education. There are many well researched documentary programmes which viewers can benefit from. Second, TV is a good source of entertainment. There are numerous sports and drama programmes which are quite entertaining. On the other hand, TV can be a negative force. When you sit for hours on end watching every programme without discrimination, thus this is very dangerous.

Some of the programmes may not be appropriate and may corrupt your morals. You also run the risk of becoming a zombie. 'Since I came here three days ago none of you has had time to talk with me, yet I am your only maternal uncle' I reasoned with now attentive children. 'I am leaving tomorrow morning but none of you even knows my name!' I continued. 'I am sorry, uncle,' the youngest child pleaded. 'I am not against your watching TV, but you need to plan your time properly so that you don't end up watching TV the whole day. You must select the programmes you are going to watch carefully; otherwise you'll end up watching all the programmes, including those meant for adults only!' I concluded. 3 As I went to sleep that evening, all the children followed suit. The next morning, as my sister and her four children escorted me to the bus station, I told her that she needed to create time to discuss with the children what they watched on TV.

Respond to each of the following tasks below.

- a) 'The television itself is not the problem,' I said firmly, 'but the way one uses it'. Rewrite without using quotation marks.

- b) In life, we understand people's character by what they say, do or what others say about them. Describe the character of the following;

i) the children

.....

ii) their uncle

.....
.....
.....
a) Advice is one of those complicated things because people always never want to listen to it. What advice would you give regarding the appropriate use of the television?
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b) Learning never stops. What are some of the moral lessons you learn after reading the passage?
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c) Describe what will happen if the trend in the passage does not change.
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Item 3

Functional writing

What is functional writing?

Functional writing refers to a type of writing that is practical, purposeful and aimed at achieving a specific goal or communicating information effectively. It is used to convey information, instructions or ideas in a clear and concise manner, often in a professional or technical context.

Examples of functional writing include;

- Reports
- Proposals
- Letter writing i.e. business and personal letters, emails etc.
- Technical writing e.g. user manuals, instructions, newspaper articles etc.
- Procedures and guidelines e.g. recipes, directions etc.
- Policies and regulations
- Marketing materials e.g. brochures, product descriptions, advertising manuals such as posters etc.

- Website content such as blogs, journal articles etc.
- Academic writing e.g. essays, research papers etc.

Features of functional writing include;

- Clarity and concision
- Organization and structure i.e. formats
- Use of precise language and terminologies that correspond with appropriate register
- Objective tone
- Focusing on the message or purpose
- Minimal use of ornamental language or literary devices.

Note

- **A scenario will be presented to you and then a task.**

Remember;

The primary aim of functional writing is to communicate information efficiently and effectively, rather than to entertain or persuade. It is an essential skill in many fields, including business, academia and technical communication.

How you will be marked. Remember the new curriculum assesses competences

Scoring grid.

| Format | Content | Spelling | Tenses | Punctuation | Sentence Construction | Vocabulary and Register |
|--------|---------|----------|--------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 03 | 03 | 01 | 01 | 01 | 01 | 01 |

Decision Rule:

- For; spellings, punctuations, tenses, and sentence construction the teacher will do an error count.
- He or she will code the errors and the marks will be allocated as follows;
 - i. From zero to three errors = 01
 - ii. Four and above errors = 00
 - iii. For wrong formats, you will lose scores for only format but get other scores. However, all scores are important and you shouldn't lose any.
- Items will not be direct. They can say; Make a write-up/ advise/ create/ write your message/respond to.../ write a presentation/ prepare a presentation.

Functional writing examples for discussion.

1. You recently purchased a faulty electronic device from a local shop in your area. Complain to the shopkeeper, detailing your issues with the product. (Use 250 – 300 words.)

2. At School, a senior one student reported you to the Disciplinary Committee alleging that you bullied them. The committee sat in a meeting and you were called for hearing of the case. After investigations, it was concluded that you are guilty. You have accepted your mistake. Write to the Chairperson of the Disciplinary Committee. . (Use 250 – 300 words.)
3. You are the chairperson of the Debate Club at your school. Your neighbouring school has always requested you to organise a friendly debate and you are finally organising one. Write to the Patron of the Debate Club of the neighbouring school. (Use 250 – 300 words.)
4. A student switched off lights during evening lessons. Your name was mentioned among the suspects. You were summoned to the disciplinary committee. Write your talk or chat with the chairperson disciplinary committee. (Use 250 – 300 words.)

Creative Writing

What is creative writing?

This is a type of writing that expresses thoughts, feelings, and ideas in a unique and imaginative way. It involves using literary devices, such as metaphors, similes, and imagery, to create a narrative, poem, or other form of writing that is both personal and creative.

Examples include;

- Novels
- Short stories
- Poetry
- Plays
- Screenplays
- Flash fiction
- Creative nonfiction (e.g. memoirs, personal essays such as descriptive, narratives, persuasive essays etc.)

Creative writing often features

- Imagination and originality
- Literary devices and techniques
- Emotional resonance and depth
- Use of language to create atmosphere and mood
- Personal expression and reflection.
- The primary aim of creative writing is to engage readers, explore the human experience and create a lasting impact. It is a form of self-expression and a way to tap into one's imagination and creativity.

Scoring grid

You will be scored using the following table.

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| O | F | C | S |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|

| | | | |
|----|----|----|----|
| 02 | 03 | 04 | 01 |
|----|----|----|----|

Key

O – Organization (Format)

F – Focus & Development (content)

C - Convention (Language)

S – Style.

Examples of creative writing activities for discussion.

1. Remember a moment when you were secretly reading a love letter or text message from a crush or romantic interest, and your parent suddenly walked in on you, catching you off guard. Describe that incident.
2. Your close friend is wrongly accused of something serious. The truth has been twisted beyond recognition. Write an original story with the title, 'The false Accusation'
3. In our lives, we meet different people and face a number of challenges. And sometimes we encounter life threatening situations. Write an account, either real or imaginary, of an incident during which you were nearly killed or got seriously injured.

General guidelines to writing activities

Sentence structure

- ✓ Master the various types of sentences and use them in your compositions and essays. These include; simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences and compound – complex sentences.
- ✓ Add details to your sentences
- ✓ Vary the sentence lengths
- ✓ Where necessary start sentences with cohesive devices for effect.
- ✓ Write accurate sentences
- ✓ Write persuasively where necessary.

Making links

As you write you should make links in order to make your work coherent. Cohesive devices will help to show how your ideas are linked.

Common linking words/ cohesive device

To begin

First of all, To begin with, firstly, primarily, initially, in the first place, first and foremost etc.

To add information

Also, next, as well as, besides, furthermore, hence, in addition, for instance, in as much as, in the second place, in the same way etc.

To give examples

For example, for instance, to illustrate, in particular, in case, that is, namely, such as, provided that, if, unless etc.

To sum up

All in all, by and large, in general, in conclusion, largely, on the whole, therefore, in retrospect, in brief etc.

To compare/ contrast

Like, regardless of, in fact, in spite of, by comparison, however, unlike, whereas, otherwise, even when, to put it in another way, on the contrary, nevertheless, alternatively, on the other hand etc.

Using paragraphs.

- A paragraph usually deals with one idea. Paragraphs break large sections of writing into manageable readable portions. They make our work look organized.
- Paragraphs are created for various reasons:
- They introduce a new idea that is different from what has been under discussion.
- They begin with a word which shows the passing of time.
- Beginning: *The next day when Amateshe did not turn up at school everyone became uneasy...*
- If it is a conversation, they indicate a new speaker
- Beginning:
 "Did you call me?" Ddumba asked.
 "Sorry I was only humming a new song," Batte replied
- They introduce new characters. Beginning: *unlike Okello, Ofoyuru was always late...*
- They introduce a shift in the setting or surroundings. Beginning: *somewhere else in the same town...*
- A paragraph can be used to show that what you are discussing was caused by what was mentioned in the earlier paragraph
Beginning: *Consequently, the argument was very shallow...*

Parts of a paragraph

- The lead sentence which tells us what the paragraph is going to be about.
- The body of the paragraph which contains a group of sentences that follow the lead sentence to give more details on the topic or subject.

- The concluding sentence which sums up what has been under discussion.
- Your writing will flow coherently if the paragraphs are linked. You can do this through: the theme, repetition of words, use of pronouns or through adverbs or reason, concession, time, place etc.

Style matters

The word style is used to refer to the way you use English. You are required to use Standard English when you write. This will directly point to the way you use parts of speech mainly; verbs, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs and conjunctions

Points of style to look out for

- Issues of formal and informal language at all levels.
- Spoken forms of words you need to avoid including in your written work.
 Use of informal words, you should not adopt words from your mother tongue into your writing e.g. “*ka boy*” to mean “*small*” do not write: *The ka boy lost his bag...*
 Other informal words could also refer to words like: “kids” for “children”, “thingy” for object etc.
- Does your writing flow?
- Is the meaning made clearly?
- Do you have control of the language?
- In your work, style matters are gauged through the following:
- Vocabulary range
- Sentence structure
- Accuracy of grammar and spelling
- Content and structure.

Reference.

1. New lower secondary school syllabus for Uganda (English language)
2. Juliusocwinyo et al (2010) *progressive English for secondary schools book4*. Uganda. Fountain publishers limited
3. Headstart English language for Ugandan secondary schools