

Guidelines Prepared by NCTB for Question Setters and Markers

HSC Examination–2016

English Paper 2

Some general guidelines

a. Each test item must have validity. A test item is valid when it can test what it intends to test. Therefore, a particular test item must be able to serve its expected purpose. To decide whether a test item is valid or not, it is important to ask the question "Is the item going to generate information about the particular skill/ ability I want to test?" If the answer to this question is 'yes', the test item is said to be valid. It is also important to ask the question, "Can the candidate answer the question using some other skills/ strategies than the originally intended one?" For example, if the intention of test item is to test candidates' free writing skills, the item should be set in a way that candidates having free writing skills only will be able to answer the question; they should not be able to answer the question by any other skills/ strategies such as memorisation.

b. For some items such as *gap filling*, *completing sentences* etc. candidates do not need to reproduce the whole text in the answer paper. Only the correct answers with the relevant number/ letters (1, 2, 3 or a, b, c, d, etc.) are enough. However, if any candidate produces the whole text, s/he should not be penalised. Remember that you are checking their answers and any correct answer will get credit.

c. Any grammatical errors and spelling mistakes won't be spared in marking answers in Part A.

Item-wise guidelines

Part A : Grammar

1. Fill in the blanks with articles

Develop a text that needs different articles (definite and indefinite). Use blank spaces in place of the articles where students will use the right articles as required. Use letters (a-j) for numbering the blanks. Use additional blank spaces to assess whether learners can understand where they should not use articles. Altogether there will be ten blank spaces. For each correct answer, learners will have $\frac{1}{2}$ marks. For a sentence starting with a missing article, the candidates are expected to use the correct article in capital letter. However, no marks will be deducted for any lapses in capitalisation as this item is meant for testing candidates' uses of articles only.

2. Gap filling with prepositions

The test objective of this item is to assess whether candidates can use prepositions correctly in a certain context. Develop a coherent and cohesive text that needs different kinds of prepositions. This can be a brief anecdote, a short descriptive text or a dialogue. Use blank spaces in place of the prepositions where candidates will need to use the right prepositions as per the context. Altogether there will be ten blank spaces. Use letters (a-j) for numbering the blanks. For each correct answer, learners will have $\frac{1}{2}$ marks.

3. Gap filling with words/ phrases of special use

It may be a little unnatural to develop a running text where each sentence will need a special use. This is why, you need to develop ten very small texts that will produce ten contexts. Each context will have only one gap for a special use. Use letters (a-j) for numbering the blanks. Candidates will be awarded $\frac{1}{2}$ marks for each correct answer.

4. Gap filling with clauses/ phrases

Either develop ten very small texts that will produce ten contexts or develop a text with ten sentences that together stand as a cohesive text. Set a blank space where learners can use a phrase (prepositional phrase, noun phrase, infinitive phrase, participle phrase) or a clause (conditional clause, adjective clause, adverbial clause, or noun clause). Candidates will get $\frac{1}{2}$ marks for each correct answer.

5. Gap filling with correct form of verbs

As in the above items, develop a cohesive text. There might be ten sentences or more here but use of verbs in ten sentences would be assessed. Verbs will be given in the parenthesis in the text. Use letters (a-j) for numbering the blanks. Candidates will use the appropriate form of that verb and write it in the blank space. Each correct answer will have $\frac{1}{2}$ marks.

6. Changing sentences

Use a cohesive text of ten or more sentences. If the text has more than ten sentences, select ten sentences to change. The instruction in the parenthesis will tell candidates what change they need to do. Do not guess that candidates would understand what you want. For example, you can ask students to make a sentence negative. If so, do not expect that they will make it negative and keep the meaning intact. If you want them to change the sentence into the negative and keep the meaning intact, mention it in the instruction in the parenthesis. Candidates need to write answers (the new sentences) chronologically in complete sentences here.

7. Changing speech

Pick a text from anywhere (or you develop it) that has at least five direct speeches. Ask candidates to change the speech. You can also pick or develop a text with indirect speech and ask learners to change it into direct speech. While marking this item, a marker should consider the semantic aspects of the text as well as the syntactic aspect. A text which is semantically (semantics is related to meaning) and syntactically (syntax is related to grammar) correct is more desirable than a text which is syntactically correct but semantically incorrect, such as, *Rimu said that she loved her mom* (indirect speech for *Rimu said, "I love my mom"*). A marker should assess the text from a holistic point of view.

8. Pronoun referencing

Choose or develop a short text having faulty/ unclear pronoun referencing. In the text include a various types of mistakes students often make with pronoun referencing. For example, there could be sentences with pronouns that do not agree with the persons and number they replace or, there could be gender biased pronouns where they should be gender neutral. Sometimes the referent does not appear prior to the pronoun that refers to it or the pronoun referent could be totally missing. There will be five pronouns with faulty or unclear references to their antecedents. Candidates will have to rewrite the whole text by correcting the pronouns. In doing so candidates may only need to replace a faulty pronoun with a correct pronoun or they may have to replace an unclear pronoun with a noun/ noun phrase. For each pronoun referencing 1 mark will be awarded.

9. Use of modifiers

Develop a text with ten or more cohesive sentences. Use blank spaces to pre-modify or post-modify nouns or verbs. Tell in the parenthesis what type of modifier the learners will use in the blank space/s. Use ten blank spaces. Use letter (a-j) for numbering the blanks. Each correct answer will have $\frac{1}{2}$ marks.

10. Sentence connectors

Develop text with ten blank spaces. Learners will use cohesive devices or sentences connectors/ linkers to make the text coherent and cohesive. Make sure that the candidates do not have many alternatives to fill in the gaps though synonyms are acceptable. But if different candidates use different connectors and all their answers are correct, there could be inconsistency among markers which may question the reliability of the item. Set ten gaps and each gap has $\frac{1}{2}$ marks for correct answer.

11. Antonym and synonym

The test setter will underline ten words from a cohesively written text. There will be instructions below the text on how candidates will change the words (into synonyms or antonyms). For each correct answer, $\frac{1}{2}$ marks will be awarded.

Alternatively, the question setter will pick five words and ask learners to reproduce new sentences with synonyms or antonyms (as per the direction given by the test setter). For each correct sentence 1 mark will be awarded.

12. Punctuation

Develop a text with ten punctuation errors. Ask students to reproduce the text with correct punctuation marks. Make sure that test item has no ambiguity or more than one version of correct answer.

Part B : Composition

13. Writing letters/ emails

Students will be asked to write a formal letter/ email. Both content and formats should be considered while marking the letters/ emails. It is a good practice to provide the candidates with a formal letter and ask them to reply to it. This is better than just asking students to write a letter which they had practised up to class 10.

A business letter must contain some essential parts in due format/ style. An ideal business letter should have the following eight parts : (a) Sender's address (b) date (c) inside address (d) salutation (e) subject line (f) body (g) closing, and (h) signature. When writing business letters, candidates must pay special attention to the format including line spacing, indenting and use of punctuation marks.

One of the most common layouts of a business letter is known as **(Full) block format**. In this format the entire letter is left margined and single spaced except for a double space between paragraphs. Another widely used format is known as **modified block format**. In this type, the body of the letter and the recipient's addresses are left indented and single-spaced. However, the date, sender's address, closing and signature are right to the centre. Another less used style is **semi-block**. It is much like the modified block style except that each paragraph is indented instead of left margined.

the what, when, where, how and why of an event or incident. It is mandatory for candidates to write a little of the report. The title should be catchy, short and snappy. It should not be written in sentences but in phrases only (Examples : Lost son finds his way home). Out of 8 marks allocated for report writing 1 mark will be awarded for title. Candidates who write only the title but not the body should not be awarded any marks.

As brevity and preciseness are considered two important features of a report, candidates should not be encouraged to go beyond the word limits.

15. Writing paragraph

Ask students to write on a particular topic based on one of the paragraph types : listing, narration, comparison and contrast, cause and effect. The question must clearly say what style the student will follow in writing the paragraph. The instruction must tell about the word limit too. If the specified style isn't followed candidates won't get full marks. The answer must be written as a single paragraph and must follow to the word limit.

16. Writing composition

This is another item for free writing. Choose a topic that fall into any of these categories of writing : descriptive or narrative, persuasive/ argumentative, imaginative and creative. The topic should be based on personal experience, everyday problems, familiar topics, recent events and incidents etc. Mention the word limit (200–250). Candidates will lose marks for writing less than 200 words. As learners have enough practice of writing descriptive and narrative compositions at previous grade, give more emphasis on persuasive, argumentative, imaginative or creative writing at this stage.

Special guidelines for marking of written composition

It is strongly suggested that the markers use an analytical marking scheme/ rubric for marking students' compositions. Impressionistic or holistic marking of students' written works should be discouraged at all types of tests. A sample rubric for marking students' written works is given here. This rubric looks at the piece of writing on the basis of five key criteria : grammar, vocabulary, mechanical accuracy, content, and communication. The sample rubric is made for 20 marks but it can be adapted to any marks by adding or reducing marks in each criteria.

Item	Score (0-4)
Grammar	0 = grammatical patterns wrong/ weak spelling & punctuation 1 = frequent grammatical errors/ poor spelling & punctuation 2 = some serious grammar errors/ spelling & punctuation errors 3 = some minor grammatical errors/ spelling & punctuation good 4 = almost error free in every respect
Vocabulary	0 = vocabulary inadequate and inaccurate 1 = frequent repetition and very limited 2 = some serious misuse of vocabulary/ limited although adequate 3 = some minor vocabulary errors/ varied and appropriate 4 = varied and appropriate
Mechanical accuracy (spelling and punctuation)	0 = mistakes in almost all sentences 1 = mistakes in more than two thirds of the sentences 2 = mistakes in more than half the sentences 3 = mistakes in less than a third of the sentences 4 = only one or two mistakes in total
Content	0 = obviously memorised/ completely inappropriate 1 = limited attempt to produce relevant content/ repetition 2 = limited although adequate content 3 = good content & relevant but not developed sufficiently 4 = varied/ appropriate/ interesting
Communication	0 = impossible to understand/ does not communicate 1 = very difficult to understand what is being communicated except for occasional sentences. 2 = an effort needed to understand/ mostly simple sentences 3 = mostly easy to read and understand/ variety of sentence types (simple, complex etc.) effective communication 4 = ideas clear/ flowing style : coherent/ very effective communication
Maximum possible score : 20	