

Guided Compositions

Section B of the ZIMSEC English paper consists of a compulsory guided composition that can take the form of **a letter, an article, a memorandum, reports, speeches and a CV**. Usually, this will be a situational essay with a prompt that will be specific to a particular scenario or situation, and sometimes, a list of points to include will be provided. It's important to practise and learn the different formats of situational essays because there won't be a choice and marks are awarded for correct formatting.

Here are some strategies for writing the different types of guided compositions:

1. Letter

a. Business/ Applications/ Formal letters

b. Friendly letter

a. Letters to the newspaper

- Quickly introduce your subject matter. Avoid verbose or wordy introductions
- Clearly state your point of view
- Use relevant examples
- Avoid generalisations and sweeping statements.
- Do not 'talk down' to your reader.
- Do not use cyber-slang
- Present a balanced argument
- Link your points neatly
- Conclude with strong practical suggestions

b. Letters in response to another letter/ article etc

- Address the referenced subject/ situation in question, for example, if in response to a friend in need, be sure to address the problems being faced and then suggest solutions
- Your tone should be specific to the situation, a letter to a friend can be informal, but a letter to a company in search of a job has to be formal

2. Articles

Magazine articles are a very popular form of writing because they can be informative but very easy to understand. When writing an article, keep the following points in mind:

- The heading must be interesting
- The article should be divided into sections, each with a subheading

- The writing style should be personal and should speak directly to the reader. In addition, the style can be informative (quite formal) , descriptive or figurative (less formal), depending on the content, appealing to the imagination of the readers
- Names, places, times, positions and any other necessary details should be included in the article
- The article should stimulate interest
- Paragraphs should not be too long, and should encourage readers to read the article
- If using a word processor (computer), the font should be light and attractive
- The article should be appropriately illustrated or contain relevant photographs, preferable in colour.

3. Report

A report usually tasks a student with giving an account of an event or description of a certain situation, usually an authoritative figure. When writing a report:

- A candidate must amplify the given points and explore them in depth
- There should be a variety of sentences constructed
- Students should effectively use links so that the given points are neatly linked in paragraphs.
- There should be a logical arrangement of ideas : this entails, in some cases, reorganisation of the points
- Students must also add their own relevant material.
- Students should employ this format:

To:

From/ compiled by:

Title/ Heading / Topic:

Date:

4. Memorandum

A memo is a written statement, record of communication between two or more people, usually in an official context such as the workplace. People in the workplace write memos to request something or to remind someone of important issues discussed in a meeting.

- Memos are usually written in semi -official language,so their register is quite formal .They also contain specific elements (e.g To; From; Date; subject).
- Memos usually end by stating the designation or position of the person writing the memo (e.g. Chairperson; Treasurer; Secretary).
- Through practice, familiarise yourself with the format for this composition.
- The four tenets in the memorandum format namely: To, From, Date and Subject must be included for you to receive a bonus marks
- Browse then thoroughly read the given information and points before you start writing
- Add your own relevant points to the list of points and remember to cluster them based off of their similarities
- Be sure to amplify the given points or pegs, merely mentioning the given points is inadequate
- Be sure to use appropriate registers, i.e the tone should be formal to reflect people being addressed

Speech

A speech is

- Determine who your audience is and customise your writing accordingly. Knowing your audience will help determine the register of your speech. Avoid terms or jargon your audience is unlikely to understand
- Before you start writing, determine your purpose and message: why are you giving the speech and what do you want your audience to take away from your speech? Knowing your purpose and message will also help determine the register of your speech.
- Brainstorm ideas on your topic. Do research on the internet and use other resources.
- Categorise and organise your ideas into a logical order.
- Draft your speech as follows:
 - *Introduction:* Make sure the introduction grabs the attention of your audience. Use an anecdote, a joke or a question that allows the audience time to settle down and focus. Then, outline the points you will cover in your speech.
 - *Body:* Stick firmly to the points you have outlined in the introduction. Decide which points need more emphasis than others and distribute the length of time you spend on each, accordingly. Make sure you use good transitions between points and suitable discourse markers that help signal your meaning to your audience.
 - *Conclusion:* Conclude in a manner that summarises what you have said, but very briefly, and in a fresh way that leaves the audience with a question or thought of implications that they ponder afterwards. Make your final sentence powerful and memorable

CV

A curriculum Vitae (CV) is an outline or summary of a person's educational and professional history, usually prepared for job applications.

- The format of a CV should always contain personal demographic information such as contact details, date of birth, marital status etc
- Since it is for a job application, the CV will also need to highlight educational history, work experience, as well as any skills that the writer may possess or that may be relevant to the job e.g languages spoken etc

General Marking Scheme

A Grade

Free(25-30) Guided (17-19) +1 for correct format/ layout

Ample material, fully relevant, high interest value/ persuasiveness; originality; merit of form and arrangement/ paragraphing; unity of tone/ approach; fluency; very good to excellent linguistic ability. Wide variety of apt vocabulary, sentence structure and linking devices

VERY FEW(LESS THAN 6) GROSS/ MAJOR ERRORS; very few slips or minor errors;

NB: All the following are gross/ major errors;

- a. Errors of agreement, number
- b. Serious tense errors, wrong verb form
- c. Elementary errors of sentence construction
- d. Misuse or confusion of simple words e.g they, their, there
- e. Spelling errors
- f. Punctuation causing serious lack of balance or misunderstanding or affecting sentence boundaries
- g. Ridiculous idiom
- h. Misuse of pronouns, prepositions, articles
- i. Confusion of key parts of speech

All work in this grade must show awareness of significant detail, wide information or apt illustration

B Grade

Free (21-24) Guided (15-16) + 1

Ample material, fully relevant, interesting and sustained theme/ approach; well arranged and paragraphed; very good linguistic ability; vocabulary and sentence structure varied and appropriate; few gross/ major errors; some slips and minor errors.

Some essays may be long, well arranged, but without much originality; others will be original, but not so well sustained/ balanced as A class scripts.

C Grade

Free (18-20) Guided (13-14) + 1

Ample and competent subject matter; less originality than B grade, quite well arranged, properly paragraphed; good linguistic ability, varied vocabulary and sentence structure; free from monotonous repetition; more major/ gross errors than in B class, some slips and errors

Lower C

Free (15-17) Guided (10-12) + 1

The language for these scripts is fairly correct; rambling and rather repetitive. Compositions in this class may have the following characteristics: flat content, proper arrangement of ideas and few gross elementary errors. Though the composition may be shortish, with limited vocabulary, the meaning must not be in doubt. Sentences may be short and stereotyped, but there must be some complex sentences. Sentences should be correctly separated, except for occasional slips.

Upper D Class

Free (12-14) Guided (8-9) +1

Dull but sensible content not explored in depth, some repetition; ideas fragmentary or vague, lack of sustained development, some attempt to arrange; clear evidence of relevance but perhaps occasional short digressions; expression flat, limited, uncertain; some serious faults of sentence construction, punctuation, vocabulary and tense; paragraphs short or run together; sentence and paragraph linking inappropriate or haphazard.

These types will fall into this classification:

- a. Scripts with enough competence for a limited range of simple points to be expressed unambiguously, with fair clarity, but with little vocabulary and few, if any, complex sentences
- b. Short, trite/ ordinary content: mainly correct language because no risks taken
- c. Long, racy scripts with interesting content but so much carelessness and accuracy that the writer cannot be employed even in simple clerical tasks; inability to punctuate consistently, especially in the separation of sentences.

Lower D

Free (9-11) Guided (6-7) +1

Compositions in this class show clear limitations of content and arrangement digressions, confused thought; flimsy development, poor links, repetitive ideas and constructions; many errors of all

kinds. Despite the obvious failings, scripts here have something relevant to say and manage to communicate without too much effort on the part of the reader.

E Grade

Free (0-8) Guided (0-5) +1

Through this grade, we find the following:

Vague, confused ideas, with little sense of the following:

Vague, confused ideas with little sense of development

Communication impeded by heavy error incidence

Errors in basic voluntary and simple idiom

Gross errors of all kinds

Upper E

Free (6-8) Guided (3-5) +1

Countless grammatical and syntactical errors, fair spelling sense mostly decipherable but some passages necessitating re-reading and the exercises of the reader's deductive powers. Content flimsy, ideas disconnected.

Lower E

Free (0-5) Guided (0-2) +1

"Multiple gross errors" i.e mistakes not easily definable or separable whole passages not making sense; chaotic word order, gross mis-spelling of basic words