



Learner Guide

Cambridge IGCSE[®] First Language English 0500

For examination from 2020



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Section 1: About this guide

This learner guide explains what you need to know about your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course.

It will help you to understand:

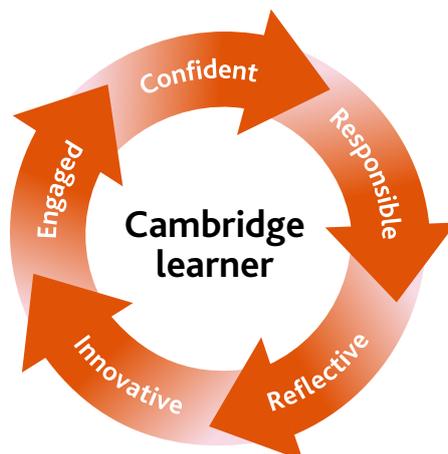
- ✓ the skills you should develop by taking this Cambridge IGCSE course
- ✓ how you will be assessed
- ✓ what examiners are looking for in the answers you write
- ✓ how you can revise effectively, using our revision tips and interactive revision checklist (Section 6).

You can use this guide to help you during your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course, but remember that it is important to **read widely** – both for your own enjoyment and to increase your awareness of the different ways in which English can be used. Try to read different types of text, such as short stories, novels, newspaper reports, magazine articles, travel writing, autobiographies and biographies.

Reading a wide range of texts will help to inform and inspire your writing, and help to increase your understanding of **how to write for different purposes and audiences**.

Alongside your skills in reading and writing, you also need to develop your speaking and listening skills, e.g. by engaging in conversations.

Cambridge IGCSE qualifications are accepted and valued by leading universities and employers around the world as evidence of academic achievement. Following the Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course will help you to understand the subject and develop the skills you need for your next step in education or employment. This guide provides ideas and information to help you make the most of the opportunities your Cambridge IGCSE course offers to become an appreciative and critical reader, writer, speaker and listener of English.



Section 2: Syllabus content – skills and understanding

During your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course you will need to:

- develop your ability to communicate clearly, accurately and effectively when speaking and writing
- learn how to use a wide range of vocabulary, and the correct grammar, spelling and punctuation
- develop your personal style of writing and speaking, as well as your awareness of the audience you are addressing.

You can think of your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course as having three main areas of skills and understanding:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and listening.

Here is an outline of the skills you should aim to have developed by the end of your course.

Reading

You need to be able to:

- R1** demonstrate understanding of explicit meanings
- R2** demonstrate understanding of implicit meanings and attitudes
- R3** analyse, evaluate and develop facts, ideas and opinions, using appropriate support from the text
- R4** demonstrate understanding of how writers achieve effects and influence readers
- R5** select and use information for specific purposes.

Writing

You need to be able to:

- W1** articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- W2** organise and structure ideas and opinions for deliberate effect
- W3** use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures appropriate to context
- W4** use register appropriate to context
- W5** make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Speaking and listening

You need to be able to:

- SL1** articulate experience and express what is thought, felt and imagined
- SL2** present facts, ideas and opinions in a cohesive order which sustains the audience's interest
- SL3** communicate clearly and purposefully using fluent language
- SL4** use register appropriate to context
- SL5** listen and respond appropriately in conversation.

These skills are sometimes called **assessment objectives** as they are the skills you will want to show you have when they are tested at the end of your course.

Section 3: How you will be assessed

There are four components available in the Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course. You will take either two or three components in total. Find out from your teacher which components you will be taking, and when you will be taking them.

At the end of your course, your reading and writing skills will be assessed for your final grade for Cambridge IGCSE First Language English. There are two different options for how this can happen.

Option one

You will take **two examinations**.



OR

Option two

You will take **one examination** and submit a **coursework portfolio** of written assignments completed during your course.



The same reading and writing skills will be tested in both options, and you will be able to access the full range of grades for the Cambridge IGCSE qualification.

There is also an extra option for assessing your speaking and listening skills:



Marks for speaking and listening do not contribute to the overall grade you receive for the reading and writing components. Instead, where you perform to an appropriate standard, your Cambridge IGCSE certificate will also record an additional speaking and listening grade.

Components at a glance

The table below gives you further information about each of the components.

Component	Time and marks	Skills assessed	Details	Percentage of qualification
Paper 1 Reading Passages (compulsory)	2 hour examination 80 marks	Reading (65 marks) Writing (15 marks)	Read three texts in the examination and answer three questions .	50%
Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition (alternative to Component 3)	2 hour examination 80 marks	Writing (65 marks) Reading (15 marks)	Read one or two texts in the examination and answer two questions .	50%
Component 3 Coursework Portfolio (alternative to Paper 2)	Completed during your course 80 marks	Writing (65 marks) Reading (15 marks)	Complete three written assignments . One of these is a response to one or two texts.	50%
Component 4 Speaking and Listening Test (optional)	Additional test 10–12 minutes total 40 marks Completed before your written examination(s)	Speaking (30 marks) Listening (10 marks)	You will talk for about 3–4 minutes on a single topic or theme. This individual talk leads into a conversation about your chosen topic or theme.	Separately endorsed

Remember:

- you **must** take Paper 1
- you take **either** Paper 2 **or** Component 3
- Component 4 does **not** contribute to your overall result, and is marked as a separate examination, for which you will be given a separate result.

About each component

Below are further details about each component.

Paper 1	Marks	Questions
<p>Reading</p> <p>2 hour examination</p> <p>You will answer three compulsory questions on three texts (A, B, C).</p> <p>The texts will be printed on the question paper insert and may be on a similar topic.</p> <p>You should spend about 15 minutes reading the texts, leaving approximately 30–35 minutes to respond to each question.</p>	30	<p>Question 1 is based on Text A and Text B (The total length of Text A and B combined will be 700–750 words) This question is divided into separate parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehension task (based on Text A) You respond to a series of sub-questions. These sub-questions test your understanding of both explicit and implicit meanings and your ability to select/use information from the text. <i>15 marks are available for reading</i> • Summary task (based on Text B) You answer a selective summary task using your own words. Your summary must be written as continuous writing of no more than 120 words. <i>10 marks are available for reading, 5 marks for writing</i>
	25	<p>Question 2 is based on Text C (500–650 words). This question is divided into two separate parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-answer questions You respond to a series of sub-questions which require answers of different lengths. These sub-questions test your understanding of the meaning of words and phrases used in Text C, as well as the effect they have on the reader. <i>10 marks are available for reading</i> • Language task You write 200–300 words in response to a question focused on certain paragraphs in Text C. You must select three relevant examples of interesting use of language from each of the paragraphs specified and analyse these examples to show how the writer uses language to convey meaning and to create effect. <i>15 marks are available for reading</i>
	25	<p>Question 3 is based on Text C (500–650 words).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended response to reading You should write 250–350 words in response to the task in which you modify, use and develop ideas and details from Text C. You will be asked to respond using your own words in one of the following text types: letter, report, journal, speech, interview and article. <i>15 marks are available for reading, 10 marks for writing</i>

Paper 2	Marks	Questions
<p>Directed Writing and Composition</p> <p>2 hour examination</p> <p>You will answer two questions: Question 1 and Question 2, 3, 4, or 5.</p> <p>Question 1 is compulsory and text-based. The text(s) will be printed on the question paper insert.</p>	40	<p>Section A Directed Writing is based on one or two texts totalling 650–750 words.</p> <p>You should write 250–350 words in response to the task in Question 1, using, evaluating and developing the information in the text(s). You will be asked to create a discursive/argumentative/persuasive response using your own words in one of the following text types: a speech, letter or article.</p> <p><i>25 marks are available for writing and 15 marks for reading</i></p>
	40	<p>Section B Composition offers a choice of four questions: two descriptive (Questions 2 and 3) and two narratives (Questions 4 and 5).</p> <p>You choose one question title (Question 2, 3, 4 or 5) and use the title to develop and write a composition. You should write 350–450 words.</p> <p><i>40 marks are available for writing</i></p>

Component 3	Marks	Questions
<p>Component 3</p> <p>Coursework portfolio</p> <p>You will submit three assignments that you have completed during your course of study.</p> <p>The three assignments will need to demonstrate different writing intentions and styles to the reader.</p> <p>Assignments may be completed in any sequence during the course.</p>	30	<p>Assignment 1: Writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade</p> <p>You will be asked to respond to a text or texts in your own words, e.g. to create an article, a letter, or the words of a speech.</p> <p><i>15 marks are available for writing and 15 marks for reading</i></p>
	25	<p>Assignment 2: Writing to describe</p> <p>You will be asked to create a piece of descriptive writing (or poem(s) with a commentary). You will need to develop ideas and images which create a convincing, well-defined picture, with varieties of focus.</p> <p><i>25 marks are available for writing</i></p>
	25	<p>Assignment 3: Writing to narrate</p> <p>You will be asked to create a piece of narrative writing. You will need to ensure the plot is well defined and developed with features of fiction writing, such as description, characterisation and convincing details.</p> <p><i>25 marks are available for writing</i></p>

Component 4	Time	Questions
<p>Component 4 (optional)</p> <p>Speaking and Listening Test</p> <p>There are two parts to the test.</p> <p>There is no question paper. You will choose your own subject with guidance from your teacher.</p> <p>You are not allowed to read from, or rely on, a script or extended notes.</p>	3–4 mins	<p>Part 1: Individual Talk</p> <p>You will talk for about 3–4 minutes on a single topic of particular interest.</p> <p>You will also need to show that you are able to prepare and organise material, are aware of audience, and can select and employ a range of language devices to make a lively presentation.</p>
	7–8 mins	<p>Part 2: Conversation</p> <p>You will take part in a conversation with the teacher/examiner about your chosen topic.</p>

Section 4: What skills will be assessed

In section 2 of this learner guide, you saw that the areas of knowledge, understanding and skills that you will be assessed on are called assessment objectives (AO) and that there are three sets of assessment objectives for English:

- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking and listening

Assessment objectives(AO)	What does the AO mean?	What do you need to be able to do?
AO1 Reading (50% of your final mark)	This is the part of the course where your ability to read and respond in different ways to different types of text is assessed. .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you understand the explicit (more obvious) meanings communicated in a particular text • Show that you can recognise hints and suggestions in a text to understand the implicit (more subtle) meanings and attitudes • Evaluate and analyse the facts, ideas and opinions you read by using, explaining and developing them (and referring to supporting evidence from the text where it is appropriate) • Show that you understand how a writer has influenced their reader through their use of language • Select and use relevant information from a text to answer different questions
AO2 Writing (50% of your final mark)	This is the part of the course where your ability to write accurately and effectively, using Standard English appropriately is assessed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write convincingly to convey real and imagined experience, thoughts and feelings • Sequence and connect the ideas and opinions effectively within your written response to interest and influence your reader • Use a range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures within each written response • Vary your writing to suit the purpose, audience and form of the task • Write accurately, avoiding errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar
AO3 Speaking and listening (This is optional and reported separately. It is not part of your final mark.)	During your course, you will be developing your use of spoken English in a range of situations. If you choose Component 4 Speaking and Listening Test, this is the part of the course where your presentation skills, your ability to participate in engaging conversations and to respond spontaneously to questions and prompts will be assessed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak about appropriate thoughts and feelings that relate to the topic of your talk • When you present your talk, ensure the order of your ideas are logical to make it easy to understand • Use a range of appropriate key features to communicate ideas in a way that satisfies the purpose and audience of your task • Communicate an appropriate and effective voice that matches the purpose and audience of the different types of talks you present • Listen to what others say during a conversation and respond with appropriate, relevant and thoughtful ideas of your own

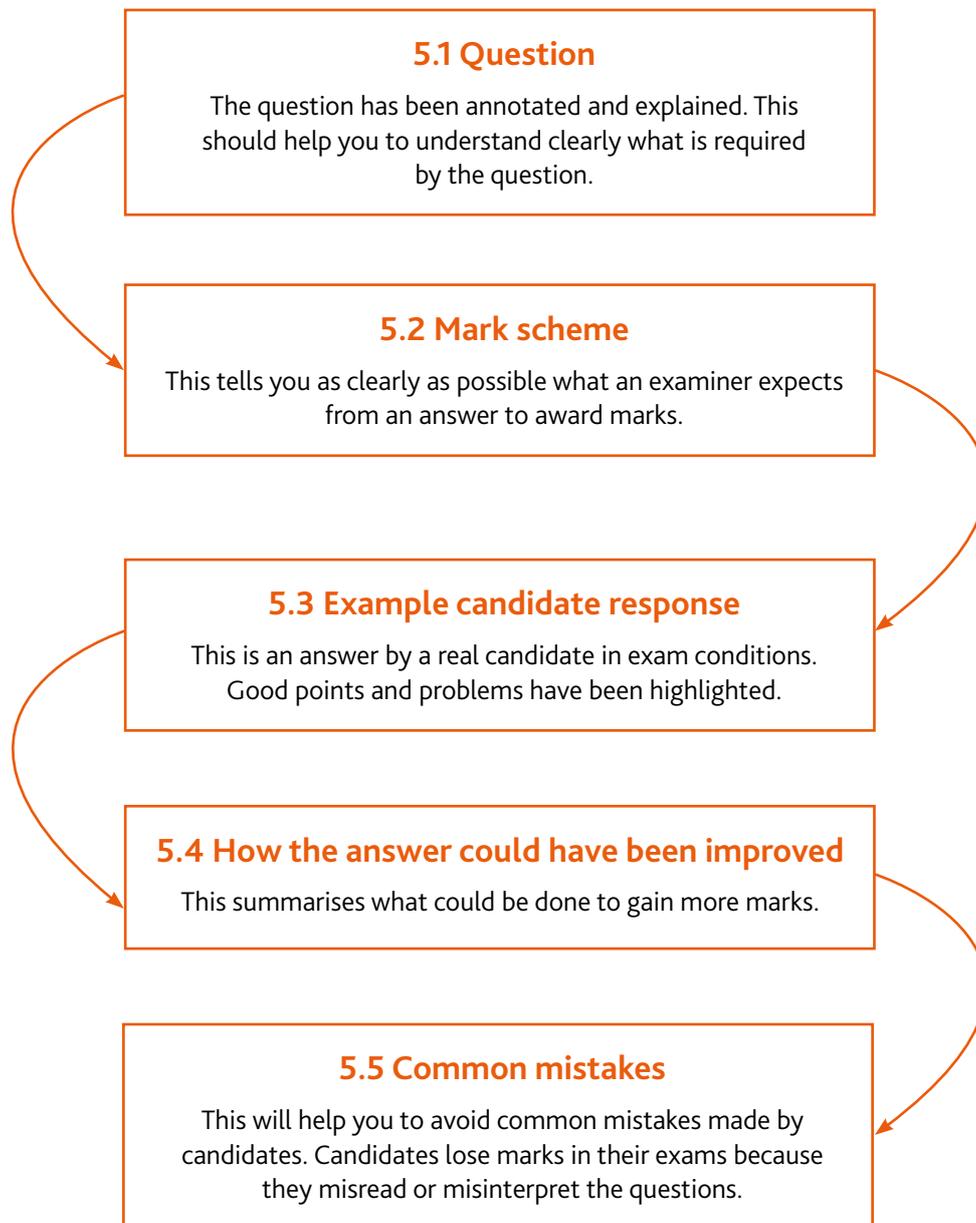
Section 5: Example candidate response

This section takes you through an example question and response from a Cambridge IGCSE First Language English specimen paper. It will help you to understand what is required in a particular response.

Remember, the information and advice in this section is specific to the example question and response being demonstrated. It will help you to understand how your responses might be viewed by an examiner, but it is not a list of what to do in all questions.

In your own examination, you will need to pay careful attention to what each question is asking you to do and consider the evidence of skills and understanding you need to demonstrate for that particular task.

This section is separated as follows:



5.1 Question

This is an example of a **Paper 1 Question 3** task – an extended response to the text.

Once you have read through the question instructions, you will need to **re-read** the text to identify ideas and details you can adapt to use in your answer.

The **purpose** of the response is to explain the grandfather's point of view as he remembers the events described in Text C.

Re-read Text C, *The Gift*, in the insert and then answer Question 3 on this question paper.

Question 3

You are the grandfather. Some years later you are interviewed about your memories of that night for a radio programme about local history.

The interviewer asks you the following three questions only:

- What did you see and feel during your journeys through the city that night?
- What do you remember of your granddaughter's behaviour and reactions that night?
- What were your reasons for taking your granddaughter out that night and what do you think she gained from the experience?

Write the words of the interview.

Base your interview on what you have read in Text C, but be careful to use your own words. Address each of the three bullet points.

Begin your interview with the first question.

Write about 250 to 350 words.

Up to 15 marks are available for the content of your answer and up to 10 marks for the quality of your writing.

The **audience** for the response includes both the interviewer and listeners to the radio programme who are interested in what happened at the time of the story.

You will need to include both explicit (obvious) and implicit (more subtle) ideas in your response – making sure you cover ideas for all three questions the interviewer has asked will help you to do this.

The response to this question needs to be in the **form** of an interview. Remember in your examination to check which form (or text-type) you need to use to answer the task.

The number of words suggested is for guidance: write **about** 250–350 words. Paying attention to the guidance for word limits will help you to plan your time in the examination and target the requirements of each question more effectively.

You will need to use ideas from Text C to show evidence of close reading, but be careful not to copy phrases or longer sections from the text as doing so suggests that you have not fully understood what you have read.

Text C: The Gift is taken from a longer narrative, *The Tigers Wife* by Téa Obreht. Your teacher will be able to find a full copy of the 2020 Specimen Paper 1 Insert on our School Support Hub www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Here is an extract of Text C:

"We were nearing the end of our side street and I assumed the silence of our walk would be shattered by the bustle along the tramway. ...'The newspapers ran a picture of him, standing stark-ribbed in his new pen at the zoo, an advert of better times to come, hope for the future and the end of the war."

At this point in the story, it is the night of Natalia's sixteenth birthday. Her grandfather, a doctor, has arrived back late at night from visiting patients. He has woken Natalia and asked her to follow him quietly through the streets of their city.

5.2 Marking Criteria for Question 3 (Level 5)

The marking criteria below lists the evidence of reading skills and understanding the examiner will be looking for in your answer. Level 5 includes a possible mark of 13–15 out of 15 marks available for reading in this question.

READING Level 5 description	READING Explanation
The response reveals a thorough evaluation and analysis of the text.	You have considered, adapted and used ideas from the text carefully and shown your understanding by presenting them from a different perspective to that of the original.
Developed ideas are sustained and well related to the text.	You have paid attention to details, hints and suggestions in the text to extend ideas in your response, e.g. to suggest what different characters might be thinking based on the evidence you have.
A wide range of ideas is applied	You have selected and used relevant ideas from the whole text and shown that you understand both explicit (obvious) ideas and implicit (more subtle) ideas and attitudes.
There is supporting detail throughout, which is well integrated into the response, contributing to a strong sense of purpose and approach.	You have identified a good number of important details in the text which your audience would need to know and/or which help to back up your purpose for writing. You include these details by dropping them in where relevant as you write your response.
All three bullets are well covered.	You have paid equal attention to all three bullet points in the question and included a number of relevant ideas for each bullet.
A consistent and convincing voice is used.	You have shown that you understand attitudes and perspectives in the text by using your own words to create a suitable voice for your response.

The marking criteria below lists the evidence of writing skills including structure and order and style of language, that the examiner will be looking for in your answer. Level 5 includes a possible mark of 9–10 out of 10 marks available for writing in this question.

WRITING Level 5 description	WRITING Explanation
Effective register for audience and purpose.	Just as we speak differently to different people, we write English differently in different circumstances. For example, we might alter the tone we use and/or be more formal in how we write depending on who is going to read what we write (the audience) and why we are writing (the purpose). You will need to use a level and style of writing to suit the audience and purpose for the task as set.
The language of the response sounds convincing and consistently appropriate.	You will need to maintain a suitable style, voice and tone for the whole of your response in order to show your expertise in using language in that particular context. You can think of this as like playing a role – your whole response should be convincing and sound like the real thing.
Ideas are firmly expressed in a wide range of effective and/ or interesting language.	Avoid repeating vocabulary from the text, or over-using certain words and expressions. You should try to use a wide range of vocabulary, selecting the appropriate words to express your meaning precisely and help communicate your ideas exactly to your reader.
Structure and sequence are sound throughout.	Make sure that your reader can follow your writing. Plan, organise and link ideas clearly and helpfully. Avoid repeating the same points, listing ideas or simply replaying information in the order of the passage.
Spelling, punctuation and grammar almost always accurate.	Try to minimise your errors by spending some time checking and correcting your answers. It is especially important to avoid errors which may make your meaning unclear.

5.3 Example candidate response and examiner comments

1 “Hello, thanks for having me on this programme today.”

“No problem we are welcome to have you. Regarding your memories of that particular night, what did you see and feel during you journeys through the city that night?”

2 “Well, I took my granddaughter out for her 16th birthday. We walked to the end of our side street and entered into complete silence. 3 There were no cars and no windows alight 4 at all. I felt like time had stopped, everything was so silent. Smiling to myself, I turned left and kept walking until my granddaughter stopped me. I told her to be quiet 5, then we carried on, passing empty shops, lightless buildings and a beggar sleeping like a rock. 6 Then we reached it. Ecstatic 7, I told my granddaughter to look across the street, the one with the broken street light. And there it was, that majestic creature, walking slowly along the street.

1 The candidate does not waste time with a long introduction, and remembers to adapt their style to suit that of a radio interview.

2 This information would be better used in answering the third question as it explains one reason for taking his granddaughter out that evening.

3 The candidate includes a number of relevant ideas in answer to the interviewer's first question: it was silent, it was dark and there was no one around.

4 'Alight' is not the correct use of the word – alight means being on fire not being illuminated or lit up. More precise use of vocabulary is needed.

5 This idea answers the second question as it concerns Natalia's behaviour – suggesting she was too loud and needed to be quiet.

6 Supporting details make the response more convincing. Empty shops, lightless buildings, a sleeping beggar are explicit details of what grandfather saw (mentioned by Natalia). To show higher level reading skills, the candidate could develop these ideas by suggesting how grandfather felt about what he saw, based on the details in the text, e.g. we can infer that he felt sadness and regret at seeing the city like this.

7 The candidate picks up on details in the text to work out grandfather's feelings at this point.

*Amazed by this creature, I could only stand and watch in awe. It slowly swayed up and down the street, full of lethargy **8** it dragged its trunk across the ground. **9** A few metres in front of it was a young man, coaxing it with a tempting bag filled with food. We watched as they slowly walked away.”*

“Wow. And for my next question, what do you remember about your daughter’s behaviour and reactions that night?”

*“I remember she was completely in awe **10** of the magnificent beast, just like I was. She was extremely surprised at it. She was complaining the whole way as well.” **11***

“And for my final question, what were your reasons for taking your granddaughter out that night and what do you think she gained from the experience?”

12** “My reason for taking her out were simple, number one, to give her an appreciation of animals and their lives and also, number two, to give her hope and the courage to live on till the end of the war. I wish she will have gained the courage and ability to never give up and that is a very important message. I want to share.” **13

“Amazing. Thank you for that and I appreciate your finding the time in coming here today.”

“No problem and thank you for the brilliant show.”

8 The candidate works out that the elephant seemed tired and lacking in energy (lethargic). This is an implicit idea – suggested by the way the animal is moving. Including implicit ideas as well as explicit ideas shows evidence of careful reading.

9 The candidate mentions the creature they saw, but could show they had read the whole text carefully by mentioning that grandfather had seen the elephant earlier at the train station.

10 The grandfather's feeling of awe at the elephant is mentioned – this is based on the suggestions in the text of the elephant's potential power and size. This development shows that the candidate is focused on the task and thinking about the events from the grandfather's point of view.

11 The candidate offers a very short answer to the second question from the interviewer with just one clear idea – that Natalia was surprised to see the elephant. The candidate mentions her complaining which is not correct. She refused to go further, but followed him without complaining for most of their journey. This needed more careful explanation.

12 The reason that it was Natalia's birthday is mentioned earlier in the answer. The candidate might suggest that this trip was also a present for her birthday. This idea is hinted at in the title of the text 'The Gift'.

13 The candidate offers two more relevant ideas – that the trip to see the elephant was to give Natalia hope, and that grandfather hoped that seeing the elephant would help her to appreciate the wonders of nature/ the natural world. The candidate explains that this was important as this was all happening during wartime, showing that the candidate has read the text carefully.

5.4 How the answer could have been improved

The candidate includes a good range of ideas, but could have used more ideas from the text in response to the second bullet especially.

Some ideas are developed but opportunities are not always taken to suggest grandfather's feelings and his reactions looking back.

Planning ideas for each bullet before writing their response would have allowed the candidate to organise the route through their answer and make sure they made the best use of the ideas they had spotted rather than rely on the order of the text. For example, it could have been better to mention that it was Natalia's birthday in answer to the third bullet and suggest more clearly that this was a present for her, rather than including that information at the start of the answer.

The writing is mostly accurate, though there are some errors which could have been avoided with more careful checking.

At times, the candidate repeats vocabulary, e.g. 'slowly' – rather than offering a wider range by finding alternatives.

5.5 Common mistakes

Remember that the extended response task is designed to assess both your reading and writing skills. You need to provide the examiner with evidence to show the skills and understanding you have. You should try to avoid mistakes which suggest you have misread either the task or text. Below is a list of some of the common mistakes learners make:

- **Missing out one or more of the bullet points of the question**

Bullet points are included to help you plan your answer to show evidence of your reading skills and understanding. It is important to identify and include ideas relevant to all three of the bullet points.

- **Forgetting to include relevant details**

Details such as names, times and locations may be important evidence that you have read closely. Try to include all the details your audience would need to know to have a full understanding of the ideas you are including in your answer.

- **Drifting from the text.**

The task is designed to test how well you have read and understood the text. If your answer invents characters, events or information that are not mentioned or even hinted at in the text, you are missing the chance to show your reading skills and may have lost focus on the task and text. Make sure that any ideas you include in your answer have been suggested in the text or task.

- **Repeating the text**

Simply repeating what happens exactly as it happens in the text is not going to show that you are able to understand implicit meanings, or make judgements about what you have read. Make sure you pay attention to what the task is asking you to do, e.g. how it wants you to change perspective (point of view) to show that you have understood more than just the obvious, explicit ideas.

- **Writing from the wrong perspective**

The extended response task is designed to give you the best opportunities to show that you have read the text closely and understood the ideas and attitudes it contains. Make sure you pay close attention to the role you have been given, e.g. you may have been asked to be a particular character in the text and write from their point of view, or asked to write an article as if you were a journalist who had interviewed those involved.

- **Missing opportunities to develop ideas**

You will need to show evidence that you have not just considered the obvious surface meaning of what you have read, but can read more carefully. Reading carefully and closely will mean that you are able to make judgements about what you have read and show that you understand the implications by extending ideas. Making judgements and extending ideas are examples of 'development' you might include to show reading skills at a higher level. You can think of 'development' as making obvious in your answer some of the meanings and ideas which are not as obvious in the original text, e.g. what a particular character might be thinking at a given point, or what they are likely to do next based on the evidence you have in the text.

- **Using inconsistent or faulty style**

Your response to the extended reading task will also be assessed for writing skills. It is important to control your writing throughout the whole response. Make sure that you do not include errors that affect the meaning of what you are writing. Do not lose focus on the type of text you are meant to be writing in your response, e.g. by forgetting to sign off in character at the end of a letter.

5.6 General advice

- Read the text and question carefully more than once.
- As you read the question, identify the perspective (the point of view or role) you are being asked to take in your answer.
- Underline the text type the question is asking you to use for your response, e.g. letter, interview, speech and keep this in mind for the whole response.
- Thinking from the perspective you have been asked to take, consider why you are writing (or speaking) and who you are imagining will be reading (or listening to) what you write or say.
- Use the bullet points in the question to plan the ideas you will include in your response. Make sure you include ideas for all three bullet points.
- Use your own words most of the time – try not to copy phrases or longer sections from the text.
- Remember to include all the important details your reader would need to know.
- Use and develop ideas from the text – if you find you are simply repeating ideas, re-read the question to check what you have missed.
- Control and correct your writing, e.g. keep tenses in agreement and use connecting words/phrases to link your ideas.
- Make sure that the voice and register you develop in your response fits your persona/role, audience and purpose.
- Re-read your answer to spot and correct errors in spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Section 6: Revision

This advice will help you revise and prepare for the examinations. It is divided into general advice for all papers and more specific advice for Paper 1, and Paper 2.

Use the tick boxes to keep a record of what you have done, what you plan to do or what you understand.

For more advice on revision, see the **Cambridge Learner Revision Guide** on our website

www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridge-for/parents-and-students/in-class/study-resources

General advice

Before the examination

Find out when the examinations are and plan your revision timetable. Divide the time you plan to use into sections to cover each part of the course.

Use this guide to find out how long each examination is, how many questions you have to answer, and how many marks there are for each question, to help you plan how long you have for each question.

Find out the choices you have in each examination paper. Make sure you know how many sections there are and which sections you should answer from.

When there is a choice of question types in a section, or a range of response types possible, make sure you revise all response and question types equally well.

Make sure you understand the meaning of the words used in questions. Look at past examination papers, highlight the words and consider carefully what they are asking you to do.

Make revision notes of errors to avoid and/or rules you need to remember, e.g. spellings you often get wrong, or how to punctuate direct speech correctly. Try different styles of notes, e.g. mind maps, cue cards, extended notes, colour coding, voice recordings, etc.

Work for short periods then have a break. Revise small sections of the syllabus at a time.

Test yourself by listing the main writing styles and their key features without looking at your notes.

Make a list of the different question types in your examination paper(s) and the things you need to do, or avoid doing, for each type.

Look at past paper questions so that you are clear about what to expect in an examination.

Look at mark schemes to help you understand how the marks are awarded for each question.

Read and listen to other writers and speakers of English. When revising, you do not have to read or listen to whole texts and could listen to excerpts or read short sections of longer texts. Write your own examination-type questions based on what you have read or try to write a paragraph in the same style as the writer.

In the examination

Read the instructions on the examination paper carefully and make sure that you answer the correct number of questions from each section.

Plan your time according to the marks for each question. For example, a question worth three marks requires less time and a shorter answer than one worth ten marks. If a question has several parts, then the parts with more marks will need more time and more developed answers.

Do not leave out questions or parts of questions. Remember, no answer means no mark.

Read each question carefully so that you are clear what you need to do.

- Identify the key words – you could underline or highlight them.
- Identify the other key words and guidance, e.g. if it is important to use your own words, or write no more than a certain number of words in your answer, the question will tell you.

Read through all parts of a question before starting your answer. This will help to make sure you do not repeat material and waste time.

Read any text(s) you are given in the examination more than once – circle or underline key information and ideas to use in your answer. You might find it useful to use a question mark or wiggly line next to anything in the text you are unsure of and need to look back at.

Answer the question. Stay focused on what you are being asked to do and only write what is needed to answer the question.

Plan your answer before you write them. Rambling, muddled or repetitious answers are unlikely to score well – if you know what you are planning to write before you start it is easier to communicate clearly and make efficient use of the time in the examination.

Make sure that your answer is presented helpfully, e.g. your hand-writing is clear and any corrections you make to your work can be read easily. If you continue an answer on another sheet make sure that the continuation is clearly labelled to show the question number you are answering. Paper 1 advice

Paper 1 advice

Question 1: Comprehension

Read Text A carefully before you answer any of the questions. As you deal with each question, look back at the section of the text it is asking about to work out your answer.

Make sure you use your own words where the question tells you to do so.

Pay attention to the specific evidence the question is asking for, e.g. if the question asks for two examples make sure you give two.

Where a question asks you to explain how or why, make sure you explain ideas fully. You can use 'because', 'as' and 'since' to help you to do this.

Question 1: Summary task

As you read Text B, underline ideas that will help you answer the focus of the summary task.

Use your own words where possible when writing your summary. Do not use quotations or copy phrases or longer sections from Text B.

Keep your summary objective – do not include personal experiences, comments or opinions.

Only include ideas that directly answer the question, any redundant material or extra information from the text should not be included.

Organise relevant ideas from the text into a logical order. Paragraph your summary if it is necessary and helpful to do so.

Use connecting words/phrases to link or contrast ideas within and between sentences. Do not write in note form or list ideas.

Ensure your summary is within the word limit. If it is too long, then it is not an effective summary.

Question 2: Short-answer questions

Read the whole of Text C at least once before you start your answers to Question 2. You will need to show that you understand the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in this context not just the general meaning of them.

Read each question carefully and pay attention to what you are being asked to do to show your understanding, e.g. if the question asks you to give one word or phrase do not give a whole sentence.

Make sure you use your own words where the question tells you to do so.

As you answer each question, look back at the section of Text C it is asking about in order to work out your answer.

Where a question asks you to explain how or why, make sure you explain your ideas fully. You can use 'because', 'as' and 'since' to help you to do this.

Remember when you are asked to use an example to explain, you will need to identify your example clearly, e.g. put quotation marks around any words taken from the text. Use your own words in the explanation of how the example chosen is working to suggest something particular to the reader.

Question 2: Language task

Re-read both of the paragraphs identified in the question, underlining examples of words or phrases you might choose to explain in your answer.

Select the strongest three examples from each paragraph – that is six in total. Try to include imagery and to choose examples you can best explain in detail.

For each example you use, make sure that you explain the precise meaning in context and suggest exactly how the words/phrases are meant to make the reader feel in relation to the focus of the question (the 'effect' the writer wanted to create).

To help you analyse and explain the effect of your examples, think of the associations of each of the words and phrases the writer has used, e.g. consider where else you might expect to hear this word used, what picture(s) it creates, what sensation(s) it suggests.

Use 'because', 'as' and 'since' to help you extend your explanations.

Where you recognise connections or contrasts in how the writer has used language, explain them in a concluding general comment or overview.

Make sure that your explanations are precise and specific – avoid empty general comments such as 'the writer uses a lot of description' and do not use the same explanation for more than one example.

Remember Question 2 is not assessed for writing – this means it is better to try to find the right word to explain a meaning or effect precisely and show your understanding more fully, even if you are not quite sure of the spelling.

Question 3 Extended response to reading

Reading

Pay attention to the perspective, audience, purpose and form required by the question.

Use the bullet points to help plan the content for your answer.

It is important to demonstrate your ability to interpret and use a good range of relevant ideas and details from the text.

Make sure you cover all aspects of all three bullet points – this will help you to include evidence that you have understood implicit ideas and attitudes, as well as explicit, more obvious meanings.

Use your own words where you can – do not just copy expressions from the text.

Try to develop ideas – watch out for hints and suggestions in the text such as how characters might feel, or their reasons for behaving as they did.

Extend explanations and ideas using the evidence you have found by reading Text C – do not invent completely new ideas or information that could not be backed up with details or clues from the text.

Writing

Ensure the voice, style and register you use fits the persona/role, audience and purpose for the task.

Plan the route through your answer before you start writing to make sure your ideas are ordered logically and linked helpfully for your reader.

Keep in mind the text type that you are meant to be writing for the whole answer.

Take time to read back and correct your answer to avoid errors which affect meaning.

Paper 2 advice

Section A Directed Writing

Writing

Identify the purpose and form (text type) for the task as you read the question and keep these in mind as you plan and write your answer.

Organise your ideas before writing and plan the structure of your response carefully so that it is helpful and clear for your reader. For example, if you are arguing a particular point of view make sure you build your argument logically and persuasively, rather than just list ideas or track through points in the same order as the text(s).

Use vocabulary carefully and deliberately – try to use a range of precise and appropriate words, rather than repeating the same words, using very simple words or copying vocabulary from the text(s).

Control sentence structures, keep tenses in agreement and use connecting words/ phrases to link your ideas.

Be aware of the audience for your response and adapt your written style to suit the kind of style your reader/ listener would expect.

Check and correct your writing to avoid errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Reading

Read the text(s) carefully, underlining ideas that will help you address the task. Plan to use ideas from the whole text, or both texts, in your answer.

Do not just repeat ideas from the text(s) – be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the text(s).

As you read the text(s), look for clues to the attitudes of writers or speakers which may affect their viewpoint or suggest that something they say may be biased.

Include a range of ideas from the text(s) – including implicit (more subtle) ideas as well as explicit (more obvious) ones and evaluating at least some ideas in depth.

Make sure the ideas you use are derived from the text(s) – paying attention to the bullet points when you are planning your content will help you to do this.

Section B Composition

Consider all four choices of task before selecting the one you feel will best allow you to demonstrate your skills as a writer.

Remember the key features of the type of writing you choose – descriptive or narrative – and keep these in mind as you plan and write your composition.

Plan your route through your composition – including how it will end – before you start writing.

Try to be convincing and original in your use of detail.

Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Check your writing carefully and correct errors especially those which will badly affect your mark, such as basic spelling, tense and punctuation mistakes.

Component 3 advice

Coursework portfolio

Do not leave writing your coursework assignments until the last minute.

Adapt your writing to demonstrate a different writing intention and style in each assignment.

Plan your assignment beforehand and be prepared to revise, edit and draft your response to make sure it best suits your audience and purpose.

Re-read each draft carefully and correct any errors in grammar, spelling, paragraphing, sentence structure or punctuation.

Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Always think carefully about which tense you should be using, and check that your tenses are always in agreement.

It is generally better that you complete more than three assignments during your course from which a suitable choice can be made for your final portfolio.

Assignment 1: Writing to discuss, argue and/or persuade in response to a text or texts

Reading

Your response should include an overview of the argument in the text(s) as a whole.

Show your understanding by commenting on specific ideas presented by the author of the text(s).

Do not just repeat ideas from the text(s) – be prepared to criticise or question the ideas in the text(s).

As you read the text(s), you look for clues to the attitudes of writers or speakers which may affect their viewpoint or suggest that something they say may be biased.

You evaluate a range of ideas - including implicit (more subtle) ideas as well as explicit (more obvious) ones.

Writing

Keep the purpose and form (text-type) for the task in mind as you plan and write your assignment.

Organise your ideas before writing and plan the structure of your response carefully so that it is helpful and clear for your reader. For example, if you are arguing a particular point of view make sure you build your argument logically and persuasively, rather than just list ideas or track through in the same order as the text(s).

Use vocabulary carefully and deliberately – try to use a range of precise and appropriate words, rather than repeating the same words, using very simple words or copying vocabulary from the text(s).

Control sentence structures, keep tenses in agreement and use connecting words/ phrases to link your ideas.

Be aware of the audience for your response and adapt your written style to suit the kind of style your reader/listener would expect.

Check and correct your writing to avoid errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Assignment 2: Writing to describe

Remember the key features of descriptive writing and keep these in mind as you plan and write your assignment.

Plan your route through your description – including how you will vary the focus – before you start writing.

Develop the ideas and images you include carefully using well-chosen details.

Try to develop a convincing overall picture.

Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Check your writing carefully and correct errors in spelling, tense and punctuation mistakes.

Be prepared to revise and redraft your assignment to find the best way to engage your reader.

Assignment 3: Writing to narrate

Remember the key features of narrative writing and keep these in mind as you plan and write your assignment.

Plan your route through your narrative – including any twists or turns in the plot and how you will end – before you start writing.

Decide how best to begin your story to interest your reader from the start.

Avoid using clichés. Try to 'show rather than tell' your reader, e.g. include convincing details.

Choose your vocabulary and sentence structures carefully to create specific effects.

Check your writing carefully and correct errors in spelling, tense and punctuation mistakes.

Be prepared to revise and redraft your assignment to find the best way to engage your reader.

Component 4 advice

Speaking and listening

Speak clearly and audibly.

Offer full explanations.

Take account of your listener and consider their reaction(s) to what you say.

Use a range of vocabulary to express your ideas.

Adapt the way you speak to suit your purpose, e.g. by varying your use of tone or emphasis for effect.

Part 1 Individual Talk

Choose a theme or topic of particular interest which will allow you to create a lively presentation.

Think about the kind of questions you might be asked about your planned topic – if you cannot think of any questions, it may be that the topic is not interesting enough and you might want to change it.

Prepare and organise the ideas for your talk beforehand – you can bring one small cue card into the examination room to remind you of the points you want to make, but you are not allowed a script or extended notes.

Think about how you will gain and maintain the interest of your audience, e.g. by making use of creative presentational styles such as taking up a 'voice'.

Practise your talk before you undertake the recorded assessment but do not try to memorise everything you will say – you need to be able to talk naturally and take account of your audience as you speak.

Part 2 Conversation

Try to respond fully to any question the teacher/examiner asks, offering reasons and/or examples to support your ideas, thoughts and opinions.

Try to develop the conversation by asking the teacher/examiner questions, or moving the conversation on by introducing another relevant discussion aspect, point or idea.

Listen to any suggestions and comments from the examiner but do more than simply agree or disagree. Be confident to extend what they are saying with further explanation or examples to illustrate the point, and/or suggest an alternative viewpoint.

Revision checklists

This section of your guide provides some revision checklists you can use to help focus your revision. These checklists do not cover everything you need to know in detail, but will provide you with an overview of the skills and knowledge from the syllabus that you should revise. For more details you should talk to your teacher about what the syllabus requires.

The table headings are explained below:

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
Questions for each paper.	Skills and understanding you need to cover.	<p>You can use the tick boxes to show when you have revised a part of the course and how confident you feel about it.</p> <p>R = RED means you are really unsure and lack confidence in that skill; you might want to focus your revision here and possibly talk to your teacher for help</p> <p>A = AMBER means you are reasonably confident in a skill but need some extra practice</p> <p>G = GREEN means you are very confident in a skill.</p> <p>As your revision progresses, you can concentrate on the RED and AMBER skills in order to turn them into GREEN. You might find it helpful to highlight each skill in red, orange or green to help you prioritise.</p>			<p>You can use the 'Comments' column to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add more information about the details for each point • include a reference to a useful resource • add learning aids such as rhymes, poems or word play • highlight areas of difficulty or things that you need to talk to your teacher about.

Remember to check which of the four course components you are taking – Paper 1 Reading, Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition, Component 3 Coursework Portfolio and/or Component 4 Speaking and Listening Test – then use the relevant revision checklists on the next pages to help plan and guide your revision.

Paper 1 Reading

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
1(a–e)	Find evidence in the text of explicit (more obvious) ideas				
1(a–e)	Use your own words to explain explicit (more obvious) ideas from the text				
1(a–e)	Identify and explain implied (more subtle) ideas in a text				
1(f)	Select relevant ideas from the text to answer the summary question				
1(f)	Organise and structure your summary response helpfully for your reader and to avoid repetition				
1(f)	Use your own words, concisely, to show you have understood a wide range of relevant ideas from the text				
1(f)	Write accurately – avoiding errors of spelling, grammar and punctuation which affect meaning				
2(a–b)	Find a word or phrase in the text with a particular meaning				
2(a–b)	Use your own words to explain the precise meaning of a word or phrase used by a writer				
2(c)	Use examples from a short section of text to explain how a writer makes the reader feel about a character, event or setting				
2(d)	Choose a range of interesting examples of words or phrases (including imagery) from two paragraphs of text				
2(d)	Explain the precise meanings of each of the words and phrases you have chosen				

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
2(d)	Explain how and why the writer has used this language to create specific effects				
3	Take account of the persona/role, purpose and audience for the task				
3	Consider ideas in the text from a different perspective to that of the Original, e.g. from a different character's point of view or a different point in time				
3	Adapt your writing to suit different text types, e.g. letter, report, article, journal, speech and interview				
3	Identify a wide range of relevant ideas from the text to fully address each bullet point of the task				
3	Use your own words to respond to the task fluently, accurately and clearly				
3	Develop and extend ideas based on the hints and more subtle details of the text				

Paper 2 Writing

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
Question 1 Section A	Use an appropriate register (discuss/argue/persuade)				
	Identify relevant ideas from the text to address the task bullet points				
	Evaluate the information (facts and ideas) in the text(s) for use in your answer				
	Adapt your writing to suit different text types, e.g. speech, letter, article				
	Make accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar				
	Take account of your audience, e.g. organise ideas and opinions				
	Recognise and respond to implicit meanings and attitudes – including perspectives, opinions and bias				

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
Question 2/3/4/5 Section B	Use the title/task to plan relevant and interesting content ideas before you write your composition				
	Engage and interest the reader in your answer				
	Organise and structure your answer deliberately for effect				
	Develop the plot clearly in narratives, e.g. use description, characterisation and convincing details				
	In descriptions, create a convincing overall picture with varieties of focus				
	Use precise, well-chosen vocabulary and varied sentence structures, chosen for effect				
	Use an appropriate register for your response				
	Avoid errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar				

Component 3 Coursework

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
All assignments	Use an appropriate register for each response				
	Plan, redraft and revise your writing to make it more engaging and effective for your reader				
	Identify and correct errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar				
	Use precise, well-chosen vocabulary and varied sentence structures appropriate to context				
	Organise and structure your ideas and opinions for deliberate effect				
Assignment 3	Develop the plot clearly, e.g. use description, characterisation and convincing details				
Assignment 2	Create a convincing overall picture with varieties of focus				
Assignment 1	Adapt your writing to suit different text types – e.g. speech, letter or article – and different purposes (discuss, argue and/or persuade)				
Assignment 1	Identify relevant ideas from the text to address the bullet points of the task				
Assignment 1	Recognise and respond to implicit meanings and attitudes – including perspectives, opinions and bias				

Component 4 Speaking and Listening Test

Question type	You should be able to	R	A	G	Comments
Task 1: Individual task	Express what you feel, think or imagine in some detail without relying on or reading from extended notes or a script				
and Task 2: Conversation	Take account of your audience – e.g. by ordering your ideas helpfully and using a lively style of delivery				
	Explain experience(s) clearly and effectively – e.g. using tone or emphasis for effect				
Task 2: Conversation	Listen carefully to what the teacher/examiner says during your conversation and respond fully to their questions and ideas				
	Speak on equal terms with the teacher/examiner during your conversation				

Section 7: Useful websites

The websites listed below are useful resources to help you study for your Cambridge IGCSE First Language English course.

www.cambridgeinternational.org/cambridge-for/parents-and-students/in-class/study-resources/

This is the Cambridge International Assessment Education public website where you can find the syllabus and the most recent past papers to download in the **Resource centre**.

Also look out for the **Introduction to Learner Guides** and **Learner Revision Guide** videos.

Please note: The website links below provide direct access to internet resources. Cambridge Assessment International Education is not responsible for the accuracy or content of information contained in these sites. The inclusion of a link to an external website should not be understood to be an endorsement of that website or the site's owners (or their products/services).

The website pages were selected when the guide was produced. Other aspects of the sites were not checked.

<https://www.thepaperboy.com/uk/index.cfm>

This provides front page articles from a variety of newspapers in real time.

www.ted.com/talks

Find some interesting and engaging talks to study and analyse.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish>

Some interesting activities, games and videos to help secure your skills of writing, reading and, speaking and listening. This website also has the feature of learning English with the support of other languages, e.g. Mandarin, Gujarat and Hindi.

learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/

This site contains resources and activities to help improve your English.

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