



**GCSE**  
**French**

8658/WF Paper 1 Writing Foundation Tier

Report on the Examination

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## General Points

The overall performance of students this year was very pleasing. As always, the variety of questions provided the opportunity for all students to demonstrate their linguistic skills. As in previous series, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. All questions had been attempted and it was extremely rare to see blank responses. This year it was particularly encouraging to see an improvement in the quality of responses for Question 4. Students were able to produce different time frames and a variety of language. They were also very skilled in expressing their opinions. This enabled them to fulfil the requirements of the assessment criteria for questions 2 and 4. As in previous series, where students failed to score marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. This mainly included inaccurate verb formations and omissions of key vocabulary. Another barrier to achievement was if students produced much longer responses than the suggested word count and/or attempted to include a level of complexity of language not commensurate with their ability, thereby creating more scope for error. In addition, a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary sometimes led to the inability to respond to the targeted rubrics and bullet points which had a negative impact on marks awarded.

## Question 1

Teachers are reminded that students are required to write four sentences about what is in the photo, i.e. a phrase that contains a verb or a construction using *voici* or *voilà*. Each sentence is marked separately and is worth a maximum of two marks. Teachers are reminded that this question is not marked for quality of language. For this reason, there is no need to provide any complex or variety of language. As in previous series, the best responses included successful use of simple phrases such as *il y a* or *voici/voilà* followed by a noun. Where students failed to score marks, it was mainly for the following reasons:

- ambiguous use of numbers eg *il y a un trois personnes*
- not including a verb or issues with verb formation which caused delay in communication eg use of the infinitive form of a verb or use of an auxiliary verb with an infinitive eg *ils manger, ils sont boire*
- spelling of key vocabulary that is incomprehensible or creates the wrong meaning eg *libre* for *livre* and words from other languages that do not exist in French eg *computer* and Spanish *tres* for *trois*
- when students wrote one word only
- when students commented about things not in the photo
- unsuccessful attempts at describing the weather conditions
- *a/est* confusion eg *ils ont heureux*
- attempting sentences that are unnecessarily complex in terms of this question and therefore creating avoidable errors
- inaccurate spelling of numbers.

## Advice to students

- Keep the sentences simple to ensure that a clear message is being communicated.
- Use *il y a* or *voici/voilà* with a noun rather than try to describe what people are doing, wearing, etc.
- Practise writing simple basic subject/verb/object sentences.
- Review basic vocabulary for everyday items that could appear in a photo.
- Use *on* eg *on joue/on mange/on regarde* if describing an activity.
- Translate the sentence back into English to see if it makes sense eg *il y a un 3 personnes*.
- Write numbers as digits to avoid miscommunication.

## Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

### Content

When awarding marks for content, both coverage of the bullet points and clarity of communication have to be considered. The vast majority of students were able to address all bullet points with some development of ideas. The first three bullet points '*votre maison, votre chambre*' and '*le centre-ville*' were well known and successfully addressed. However, as in previous series, some students wrote sentences using *votre* which led to their responses not being credited. The fourth bullet point '*les transports en commun*' was less successfully addressed as some students were not familiar with the *en commun* reference and wrote about their preferred method of transport which in some cases was not an acceptable public mode of transport. However, many students were able to respond successfully either because they knew what '*les transports en commun*' meant, or if they had been trained effectively to express an opinion, for example *J'aime les transports en commun dans ma ville*.

### Quality of language

The vast majority of students were able to include a good variety of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures. As in previous series, students demonstrated the ability to express opinions by using a variety of verbs and adjectives. They also demonstrated the ability to use different persons of the verb and to include intensifiers and connectives. In addition, the majority of students were also able to produce responses that were generally accurate. They were therefore able to access the top band of marks. Where students failed to score high marks, this was because they had unsuccessfully attempted complex structures beyond their level of language or verbs were either omitted or written in the infinitive instead of in the present tense. There was also a lack of success with language such as confusion between *j'ai/il y a* and *est/c'est*. However, the majority of errors seen were minor.

### Advice to students

- Mention all the of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Change *votre* to *mon/ma* in the bullet point before writing the response.
- Learn a variety of opinion phrases to express your likes/dislikes and include a different one for each bullet point. For example, short, simple sentences using *j'adore, j'aime, je n'aime pas, je déteste* and *c'est super/génial/fantastique* are the most successful.
- Try to use a variety of connectives; *mais, et, car, parce que*, the intensifiers *très, assez, vraiment* and/or time phrases such as *souvent, toujours, normalement, quelquefois*.

### Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Teachers are reminded that the key messages are designed to include a level of demand aimed at covering Grades 1 to 5 and that all students should be able to communicate some messages despite minor errors. The question differentiated well with all students being able to score some marks.

#### Conveying key messages

|   |  |
|---|--|
| My father is very sporty.                   | The vocabulary here is familiar to students and on the whole, the messages were successfully conveyed. However, some students incorrectly used <i>trop</i> or <i>vraiment</i> for <i>très</i> .  |
| Often I eat sweets and chips.               | These messages created difficulties for many students. <i>Souvent</i> was not seen widely. Similarly ‘sweets’ and ‘chips’ were often not correctly translated either because the vocabulary was unknown or the incorrect French word ‘chips’ was used.   |
| There is a lot of pollution at the seaside. | The vocabulary here was accessible to many students. However, where messages were not conveyed, it was because ‘pollution’ was mistranslated, for example as <i>pollué</i> and/or where seaside was translated as <i>au bord de la mère</i> or <i>dans la mer</i> .  |
| I like to watch television in the evening.  | The vast majority of students were able to convey the messages and score marks here despite minor errors of spelling.  |
| I worked in the library last Tuesday.       | This sentence contained high demand elements, targeted at the most able students. Although many students were able to convey the perfect tense successfully, where students were unsuccessful, it was because of the following issues: <i>librairie</i> was incorrectly used, the day <i>mardi</i> was unknown, or the phrase <i>(le) dernier mard’</i> was given, thereby creating a different meaning. |

#### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

As in previous series, minor errors did not prevent the award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were clearly communicated. However, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, the element of accuracy had to be considered. For example, inaccurate spellings of *sportif*, *beaucoup*, *travaillé* and *bibliothèque* and omitted or incorrect versions of **très sportif**, **des bonbons**, **des frites**, **beaucoup de**, **j’aime regarder**, **le soir** and **dans la bibliothèque** had to be taken into account when marks were awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

## Advice to students

- Practise/revisit high frequency words and phrases and their spellings eg prepositions, days of the week, places in town, intensifiers.
- Practise adverbs eg usually, normally, often, sometimes, every day, rarely etc.
- Practise time expressions eg tomorrow, yesterday, today, and last, next etc with days/months/periods of time.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed. For example prepositions/articles such as *très, des, beaucoup de, le soir* and *dans*.
- Proofread your work by looking out for specific issues eg verb endings, plurals/genders, spellings, omissions.
- Do everything that you can within the task, even if only a few words, in order to gain access to some marks.

## Question 4

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be addressed, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. The vast majority of students were able to respond well to this question, with many producing extended pieces of writing that communicated a lot of information clearly. They were aware of the need to develop their responses, to produce three time frames and to express at least two opinions. On the whole they were successful in achieving this. As in previous series, students were less successful if they incorrectly interpreted or omitted bullet points or if they produced inappropriate time frames.

## Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: Coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, inaccuracy that creates a lack of clarity of communication (referred to as ‘lapses’) impacts negatively on the marks awarded for content. Students also need to be aware that in addressing the bullet points, they should avoid using the possessive adjectives *votre* or *vos* in their responses, as this can negate the message. Students were aware of the need to produce three time frames and it was pleasing to note this year that there was an improvement in their ability to communicate these successfully.

## Question 4.1

The vast majority of students understood the requirements of the question and managed to address all the bullet points with a good degree of success. The topic is very familiar with students, and they were able to produce some well-constructed, extended pieces of writing. On the whole, students successfully produced a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 ‘*vos activités pendant votre temps libre*’ provided the vast majority of students with the opportunity to produce extended responses. However, some students misinterpreted the word *libre* as a reference to books/reading and created ambiguous responses. Bullet point 2 ‘*votre opinion des réseaux sociaux*’ was well covered with some excellent developments. The vast majority of students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in previous series, students were not successful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time

markers ‘*un week-end récent*’ and ‘*vos projets pour la semaine prochaine*’ and therefore the required time frames could not be credited.

### Question 4.2

Most students were able to produce extended pieces of writing addressing the bullet points effectively and developing their responses. As with 4.1, they were also able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Although bullet point 1 ‘*votre jour préféré au collège*’ elicited many detailed responses that included a variety of opinions, in some cases the word *jour* was either incorrectly interpreted as *jouer* or disregarded altogether, with some students writing about favourite aspects of school that did not relate to the days of the week. Bullet point 2 was successfully addressed. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in 4.1, students were unsuccessful if they used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers ‘*la récréation hier*’ and ‘*vos préférences pour vos études futures*’ thereby not successfully referring to the required time frames.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. As in previous series, the following was seen relating to the successful inclusion of variety and complexity of language: different persons of the verb, different ways of expressing opinions, for example, *j’adore, j’aime, j’apprécie, je préfère*, together with a greater variety of adjectives such as *c’est génial/fantastique/amusant/super/nul*, infinitive constructions, a variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses such as *je pense que, ma mère dit que* or *mon père pense que*, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. As in previous series, at this tier, simple expression was often the most successful. Again, some students were determined to include set structures and/or idiomatic expressions that had been recommended by teachers with varying degrees of success. Unfortunately, sometimes inaccurate production of these structures and expressions led to a lack of clarity, which impacted negatively on marks. As in previous series, less successful language also included inaccurate tense formation, especially with the perfect tense and occasional inappropriate use of the infinitive.

### Advice to students

- Choose the question where you know what all the bullet points mean.
- Check each bullet point to make sure you know which ones require reference to the PAST or FUTURE.
- Look for clues in the bullet points (*normalement, récent, mémorable, projets pour l’avenir, l’année prochaine...*) Use the time markers in the bullet points and include them in your response eg *hier, la semaine prochaine*.
- Practise writing in three different tenses. Pick a theme/subject and write the same sentence in 3 tenses: *D’habitude/normalement... La semaine dernière/hier .... À l’avenir/ le weekend prochain....*
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives *votre/vos* to *mon/ma/mes*.
- Learn basic recyclable verb phrases that you can use in many topics eg *je vais/je suis allé/j’ai joué/je voudrais aller*.
- Make sure sentences are well formed rather than trying to pre-learn complex phrases. Create short lists of varied vocabulary (different adjectives, connectives etc).

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.