

AQA

GCSE English Language
Specification A

Exam Practice: Paper 1

(sample pages)



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1 Overview

This resource will help you to prepare for Paper 1 of the AQA Syllabus, Specification A and give you handy hints on how to tackle the exam. To do well in exams, you need a combination of perspiration and inspiration and this guide will help you to put in a bit of both so that you can dazzle the examiner with your knowledge and exam expertise.

So let's start off with a brief overview of Paper 1. Words underlined will be explained in the glossary of terms at the end of this resource..

Both Foundation and Higher Papers consist of Section A (marked for reading only) and Section B (marked for writing only) with equal marks for each section. There is no choice in Section A (i.e. you must answer all the questions) but in Section B you choose one out of three or four questions.

The time given is on the front of both papers (1 hour and 45 minutes) and you are told on the front of the paper how long to spend on each section. Take note of their guidelines: they are there to help you.

Section A

Section A is the Reading section of the paper. On both Foundation and Higher, you are advised to spend about an hour on this section. You will be given two or more pieces of non-fiction or a media text. These could consist of:

- newspaper articles
- items from the internet
- letters
- extracts from a biography
- travel writing
- an advertisement
- a charity appeal
- a leaflet
- an encyclopaedia entry

You may be given a visual stimulus – a photograph, cartoon, etc.– and be asked to comment on that too.

The questions in Section A are designed to test your understanding of what you have read. You need to show that you can show how form and style help writers to get their ideas across, and that you understand how writers use different techniques to persuade us that their ideas are valid and worth supporting.

Section B

Section B is the Writing section of the paper. You should spend 45 minutes on this section. You are given a choice of tasks which test your ability to argue, persuade and advise. Only choose one of these tasks. Do not under any circumstances attempt all of them! You will be offered a variety of different forms to write in which could consist of:



- a newspaper or magazine article
- a letter – formal or informal
- a leaflet, concentrating on the text
- a speech
- a report

I have a dream ...

Section B assesses your ability to write clearly and accurately, with an awareness of purpose and audience. On both Foundation and Higher, you are invited to write about two pages in your exam book – depending obviously on the size of your writing.

2 Exam techniques for both sections



Exams are a bit like football tournaments. Was Greece the best team playing in Euro 2004? Probably not, but somehow by a mixture of preparation, technique and performing well on the day, they came out on top. Exams are similar – it's not always the best students who get the best marks. How often do you come out of an exam feeling that you haven't done yourself justice? You've run out of time or you just haven't planned your game properly? Worst case scenario – almost into

injury time ten minutes before the end of the exam, you realise that you've made a mistake?

This section will help you to avoid those problems by preparing you with the right equipment, mental attitude and skills to tackle this exam. Nothing takes the place of hard work through your GCSE years and some solid revision before the exam. But read the notes below and you should be able to perform on the day and get the result you deserve.

Top tips

- Bring the right equipment for the exam.
- Manage your time properly.
- Make sure you know how to get Reading marks in Section A and Writing marks in Section B

Essential exam equipment

- ✓ pens – in the plural just in case one runs out
- ✓ pencils
- ✓ a ruler
- ✓ a watch
- ✓ highlighter pen or pens – for annotating the text

Remember: you can't take a dictionary into the exam – a good reason to work on your spelling!

Time management

- 1 The exam board and the examiners are kind to you – believe it or not: they want to give you marks. One of the ways they help you is by telling you on each paper exactly how long they think you should spend on each section. Use that information as your guideline.
- 2 Use the time when you are being seated in the exam to read the information on the front of the paper. There is useful time information (and other information) on the front of the paper.
- 3 Make use of your watch. Be strict with yourself on time. Don't let yourself go over time on one section of the paper – once your time is up, finish that section quickly and move on to the next one.
- 4 In Section A, do some quick mathematics to make sure that you're spending more time on the questions with more marks. Generally speaking, spend twice as long on the questions with eight marks than on those with four.
- 5 Before you divide the time up, subtract five minutes for reading right through the paper and ten for checking at the end. It is not a good idea to write up to the deadline – you'll pick up more marks in ten minutes checking through your work at the end than you will in ten minutes' worth of writing.
- 6 If you run out of time to check your work (and you won't if you've followed all of the above), concentrate on Section B rather than on Section A because that's where the writing marks are.

Activity 1



Look at the list above and try to remember one word which sums up the advice in the point made. Then visualise it as an object. For example, you might decide that point 3 is best summed up as a clock. Now imagine those six objects on a tray in front of you. Then see if you can remember them – and if this helps to bring back the exam tip being made. It may help you to make a sentence using the first letters of each word – it really works for some students.