

# 'N' LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE

English Language GCE Normal Academic Level  
EXAMINATION FORMAT

There are three compulsory papers:

Paper	Description	Range of Marks	Weighting	Duration	
<b>Paper 1 Composition</b>	This paper is divided into two sections: Section 1 – Free Writing	Candidates answer both Section 1 and Section 2. Six topics are set. Candidates choose one topic and write 250 – 400 words on it.	Total marks: 60 30	40%	1 hr 45mins
	Section 2 – Situational Writing	Candidates write 180 – 250 words on the question.	30		
<b>Paper 2 Language Use and Comprehension</b>	This paper is divided into two sections: Section 1	All questions are compulsory. Candidates complete a cloze passage by filling in 15 blanks.	Total marks: 80 15	40%	1 hr 40 mins
	Section 2	This section contains two comprehension passages of a total length of about 1000 words.	25		
	Questions based on Passage A	Comprehension questions.	15		
	Questions based on Passage B	Comprehension questions.	5		
		Five multiple choice questions on vocabulary. Summary question (Candidates write a 130-word summary, not including the introductory words).	20		
<b>Paper 3 Oral Communication</b>	This paper consists of three parts: Part 1 – Reading Aloud	All parts are compulsory. All three parts are thematically linked.	Total marks: 40 12	20%	About 20 mins (including 10 mins preparation time)
	Part 2 – Picture Discussion		12		
	Part 3 – Conversation		16		

**PAPER 1 (Total – 60 marks; Weightage – 40%)**

This paper is divided into two sections, Section 1 and Section 2. You will need to answer both sections. The total duration of Paper 1 is 1 hour 45 minutes.

**Section 1 (Free Writing – 30 marks)**

- Format:**
- Six topics are set.
  - Candidates choose one topic and write 250-400 words.

- Tips:**
- Before you start writing:

- Read the question that you have chosen and highlight or list down the keywords to avoid "blockage" of ideas in the later stages of your writing.
- Analyse the way the question is phrased, paying particular attention to the directives/style.

Directives & Styles	Examples & Requirements
Do you agree.../ Argumentative	Example: Working during the school holidays is good. Do you agree? Requirements: You are asked to agree or disagree and give your reasons to support your argument.
One-word topic/ Open/Expository	Example: Peer pressure Requirements: You are asked to write on the topic of peer pressure. Your essay may take the form of narrative or descriptive, with appropriate examples.  This topic can also be approached in an expository manner where you need to define peer pressure, give reasons why and state the effects (positive and negative) of peer pressure.
In what ways.../ Expository	Example: What part does religion play in the lives of people in Singapore? Requirements: You are asked to explain the effects a religion has on the society.
Write about.../ Narrative	Example: Write about a significant event in recent years that has affected the way you think now. Requirements: You are asked to narrate a story about an event which had led you to look at things in a different way either positive or negative.
What do you think.../ Argumentative	Example: Fashion keeps coming back. What is your opinion? Requirements: You are to formulate an opinion and convince/persuade readers of your opinion through the use of relevant examples. You should also display the ability to adopt a different point of view and surface opposing points (ie. What others might think/ Why others may beg to differ) to reach a balanced and convincing argument.
Using a given phrase/ Descriptive/Narrative	Example: Write a story which ends with: "That was a close shave!" Requirements: You are asked to write any story, usually descriptive, inserting the given phrase where appropriate.

**When writing a argumentative or expository text type:**

- Begin with a **strong thesis statement** that introduces the **main idea** of your essay and state **key points**.
- Develop each key point in a complete paragraph, giving your supporting details.
- Use **transitions** to connect your points.
- Avoid using very **definite statements** when in doubt.  
*Example: Singapore implemented its family planning policy in 1975. It would be better to say 'Singapore implemented its family planning policy in the 1970s.'*
- End your essay with a **summary** of the main points. You can **restate** the central idea and indicate why it is important. However, do not use the same words; **paraphrase** instead.

**Section 2 (Situational Writing – 30 marks)**

- Format:**
- Only **one** situation is set.
  - Candidates must write **180-250** words.

- Tips:**
- Before you start writing:

- Read the situation carefully and **highlight or list down the keywords** to avoid "blockage" of ideas in the later stages of your writing.
- Analyse what is required from the situation given, paying particular attention to format.

Requirement	Format
Informal Letter - informal language and tone are allowed	Address of sender Date Hi _____! [ B O D Y P A R A G R A P H S ] Your friend, [Signature]
Formal Letter - use only formal language and tone	Name of sender Address of sender Date Name of recipient Designation of recipient (if known) Address of recipient  Dear Mr [Family name of recipient], <b>RE: [Purpose of writing your letter]</b>  [ B O D Y P A R A G R A P H S ]  Yours sincerely, [Signature] [Print your name]  <i>*Note – With a salutation which includes the recipient's name eg. Dear Mr Lee, use 'Yours sincerely'. If the recipient's name is unknown, use 'Dear Sir' and 'Yours faithfully'.</i>

	[Title of your article]
Newspaper/Magazine Article - use informative and descriptive language	[ B O D Y P A R A G R A P H S ]
Speech - use direct speech in a relaxed tone	Good morning fellow students, [ B O D Y P A R A G R A P H S ]
Report - use only formal language and tone - be detailed and accurate	To: [Name and designation of the reader] From: [Your name and designation]  Date: _____ <b>Report on [what is your report about?]</b>  [ B O D Y P A R A G R A P H S ]  Reported by: [Print your name]

- Begin writing:**
- The main ideas and points are given. You have to build on them by providing more details.
- Use transitions to connect your points.
- Do not use the same words that can be found in the situation; paraphrase instead.

**PAPER 2 (TOTAL – 80 MARKS)**

This paper is divided into two sections, Section 1 and Section 2. All questions are compulsory. The total duration of Paper 2 is 1 hour 40 minutes.

**Section 1 (Cloze Passage – 15 marks)**

Candidates are required to complete a cloze passage by filling in 15 blanks.

**General Tips:**

- Read the entire passage first on its own before attempting to fill in an answer.

**Section 2 (Comprehension – 65 marks)**

This section contains two comprehension passages.

**Format:**

	Description	Marks
Comprehension Passage A	Comprehension questions	25
	Comprehension questions	15
Comprehension Passage B	Five multiple-choice questions on vocabulary	5
	Summary question of 130 words; not including introductory words	20

**General Tips:**

- Keep to the time schedule of 1 hour 10 minutes to complete the comprehension and vocabulary questions and 30 minutes to write the summary.
- Read the questions first to provide a road map of what you can expect and what to look out in the passage.
- Read both passages carefully before attempting to answer any of the questions.
- Get down the main theme of each paragraph in the margins so you do not lose track of the points.

**Tips on Comprehension Questions:**

- Answer the comprehension questions in the order set.
- Understand what the question is asking you. Inferential questions are tricky and require further analysis.
- Do not 'lift' points from the passage; paraphrase so that you answer the questions directly.
- When a question says 'use your own words', do exactly that without changing its meaning as found in the passage.
- When using quotes, do not miss out any words or add in any words in your own quote.
- Avoid using serious tense errors and inconsistent American spelling.
- Marks will be deducted in cases of gross misunderstanding over meanings of words used.
- Be careful with your verb forms and tenses (present, past, present/ past perfect tense).
- Avoid omission or obvious misuse of prepositions (eg. in, under, through, besides, etc).
- Answer all questions in complete sentences.
- Answer the questions directly. Try to avoid more than one sentence for the answer.
- The number of marks for each question is a good indication of how much the examiner expects in an answer. For example, 2 marks usually would require you to provide two points.

**Sample Questions**

**PAPER 2**

**Section One (15 marks)**

Read the passage below. Fill in each blank with a suitable word. Write each answer in the space provided in the passage.

International sports are all about the spirit of \_\_\_(1)\_\_\_, setting team against \_\_\_(2)\_\_\_, or man against man, all with the \_\_\_(3)\_\_\_ to be numero uno, with all athletes hoping to take a crack at smashing \_\_\_(4)\_\_\_ records along the way.

All these goes a long \_\_\_(5)\_\_\_ towards testing the athletes' stamina, swiftness, resilience, fortitude and intelligence. Finally there will be only \_\_\_(6)\_\_\_, the crème de la crème, who would be in support of international sport, the \_\_\_(7)\_\_\_ of the best the world would have to offer.

Past shining athlete celebrities include Sergei Bubka with his \_\_\_(8)\_\_\_ world-record breaking feats, Michael Schumacher who has broken almost every Formula One \_\_\_(9)\_\_\_ and Michael Phelps with 8 gold \_\_\_(10)\_\_\_ won in the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008.

International \_\_\_(11)\_\_\_ has been invaluable in helping Man to develop his vast \_\_\_(12)\_\_\_ in all areas of his psyche, be it mind, \_\_\_(13)\_\_\_ or soul. Development and progress are about heaving old world records, re-defining the limits and shattering these restrictions again, always in search of \_\_\_(14)\_\_\_.

The chase and the crusade are what make international sports so \_\_\_(15)\_\_\_ and so colourful to behold and spectate.

**Suggested Answers**

**Section One (15 marks)**

**Cloze Passage**

- |                |                |                 |               |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 1. competition | 2. team        | 3. desire       | 4. world      |
| 5. way         | 6. one         | 7. best         | 8. multiple   |
| 9. record      | 10. medals     | 11. sports      | 12. potential |
| 13. body       | 14. perfection | 15. interesting |               |

**Section Two (65 marks)**

**Comprehension Passage A (25 marks)**

Read the following passage carefully and answer the questions in the main paper:

- For almost 5,000 years, the pyramids have stood where they are right now, relatively intact despite nearly fifty centuries of earthquakes, wars, tourists, tomb robbers, neglect, and natural decay. Why? Who had built these structures with such sturdiness? 5
- Seek the answers to these questions among the ancient sources and you will face a tangle of conflicting theories, fables, and wild speculations. A religious writer of the 12th century believed that the pyramids were built to survive Egypt's Seven Lean Years. On the other hand, the Medieval Arabs thought them as storehouses for the wisdom and riches of a long-departed civilisation. 10
- However, most archaeologists today believe that the pyramids are royal tombs and evidence supporting this opinion is interesting. Did you know that all pyramids stand on the River Nile's west bank? Also, there were many, what appear to be stone coffins; a few unidentified and undated remains have been found; thousands of proven tombs crowd around the larger pyramids like servants of the Kings. Most pyramids contain a long, sloping entryway that points north, roughly towards a group of 15 stars that the ancients identified with the Gods.
- In 820, a Caliph was reported to be the first to enter the Great Pyramid. While inside, he found very little – no bodies, no treasures, no tools and no hieroglyphic inscriptions on any part of the pyramid. All he discovered was an empty stone coffin in what was known as the King's Chamber. 20
- Though many have tried to find evidence inside the pyramid, it was not until 1837, when a British explorer searched the interior of the Great Pyramid, that anything of significance was found.
- He blasted his way through the rock above the King's chamber with gunpowder, and in doing so, discovered four sealed chambers. On the walls of these highest cavities, he discovered red hieroglyphic-painted graffiti which included the name of Khufu. The vital clue that was needed – the pyramid had been built by the Pharaoh Khufu. So the empty stone coffin proved that the pyramid was Khufu's tomb. It was believed that the pyramid was probably ransacked shortly after it was built, which is why it was empty. 30
- Unfortunately doubts have been cast on the authenticity of these hieroglyphics. An author claims that the hieroglyphics that were found by the explorer had a number of inconsistencies. Firstly, the hieroglyphic graffiti was the only sign with Khufu's name to be found anywhere in the pyramid. Secondly, these hieroglyphics were located in an obscure and hidden part of the pyramid, found in the chamber where only the explorer had access to. Finally, several of these hieroglyphics were painted upside-down, and others were mis-spelt or written in bad grammar. 35
- Until today, it remains as an archaeologist's foolish dream to hope of finding one intact pyramid to study what the pyramid is all about!

**Read Passage A carefully and answer Questions 16 to 25.**  
*\*NOTE: When a question asks you to answer in your own words, YOU MUST NOT COPY THE WORDS IN THE PASSAGE IN YOUR ANSWER.*

**From Paragraph 1**

- Which phrase explains that the pyramids looked almost the same as when they were first built? [1m]
- Explain why it is surprising that the pyramids looked almost the same as when they were first built. [2m]

**From Paragraph 2**

- List the theories that can be found in this paragraph to explain why the pyramids were built. [2m]

**From Paragraph 3**

- How would you know that the pyramids are royal tombs? [2m]
- In which direction did the ancients associate with the Gods? [1m]

**From Paragraph 4**

- List the five things that the Caliph reported about the Great Pyramid? [5m]

**From Paragraphs 5 & 6**

- Show your understanding of these paragraphs by filling in the blanks, labelled (a) to (e). Use **ONE** word only in each blank and make sure you **do not copy words from the passage**. [5m]

- A lot of people have tried to find (a) \_\_\_\_\_ that the pyramids contain (b) \_\_\_\_\_ and mummies of Kings, their families and servants but until today they are not able to do so. However, a British explorer managed to force (c) \_\_\_\_\_ into one of the pyramids of a Pharaoh Khufu but did not manage to find (d) \_\_\_\_\_ valuables except for some strange (e) \_\_\_\_\_ on the walls of the pyramid.

**From Paragraph 7**

- What does the phrase 'authenticity of these hieroglyphics' mean? [2m]
- List three things that were mentioned in this paragraph which showed that the hieroglyphics are not authentic. [3m]

**From Paragraph 8**

- In your opinion, do you think it is possible to find an intact pyramid? [2m]

**Suggested Answers**

**Section Two / Passage A (25 marks)**

**From Paragraph 1**

- The phrase is, 'the pyramids have stood where they are right now, relatively intact.' [1m]

**From Paragraph 2**

- The pyramids were built almost 5,000 years ago [1m] and there had been many natural calamities over these years [1m].

**From Paragraph 3**

- One of the theories is that the pyramids were built to withstand 'Egypt's Seven Lean Years' [1m] and the other theory is that the pyramids were built to safe keep the knowledge and wealth of the rich [1m].

**From Paragraph 4**

- The pyramids are royal tombs because there was proof of smaller tombs that surrounded a larger tomb as though these were the tombs of courtiers to the Kings. [2m]
- The direction is the north towards a group of stars. [1m]

**From Paragraph 5**

- The Caliph reported that he did not find any bodies, treasures, tools or ancient language writings on the wall but only found a stone coffin which had nothing inside. [5m]

**From Paragraphs 5 & 6**

- A lot of people have tried to find (a) **proof** (NOT evidence) that the pyramids contain (b) **treasures/valuables/wealth** and mummies of Kings, their families and servants but until today they are not able to do so. However, a British explorer managed to force (c) **entry** into one of the pyramids of a Pharaoh Khufu but did not manage to find (d) **any** valuables except for some strange (e) **writings** (NOT hieroglyphics) on the walls of the pyramid. [5m]

**From Paragraph 7**

- It means whether the writings found on the walls of the pyramid are the original writings of the first people who had built it. [2m]

**From Paragraph 8**

- Firstly, the writings only showed that the Pharaoh Khufu's name was only found in one part of the wall and nowhere else. Secondly, the writings were found in places where only the explorer had access to. Thirdly, some of the writings were carelessly or poorly written. [3m]

**From Paragraph 8**

- In my opinion, it is unlikely for an intact pyramid to be found. Otherwise, with modern equipment, these would have already been discovered. [2m]

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