

Answering Techniques based on the Latest SPM Examination Format

PART 1: Reading and Use of English

1. Paper 1 is divided into **5 parts** and has a total of **40 questions**.
2. Each question is worth 1 mark, so Paper 1 carries 40 marks in total.
3. The time allocation for Paper 1 is **1 hour and 30 minutes**.

Part 1 – Short Texts (Questions 1 – 8)

Test Focus

- understanding main ideas
- understanding specific details
- guessing meaning of unfamiliar words

1. In Part 1, candidates are required to read **8 short texts**, each about 90 words in length, and answer **1 multiple-choice question** based on each text.
2. Each question comes with 3 options – A, B and C, Candidates must choose the best answer.
3. The text types include:
 - **advertisements**
 - **notices**
 - **text messages**
 - **news reports**
 - **articles**
 - **emails or letters**

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Skim through the questions so that you know what to look for when reading the texts.
- ✓ Read the texts carefully.
- ✓ Pay attention to the visual, if provided.
- ✓ Read the questions and options given carefully.
- ✓ Choose the best answer.

Part 2 – Cloze Text (Questions 9 - 18)

Test Focus

- grammar usage
- vocabulary in context

1. In **Part 2**, candidates are required to complete a linear text with **10 blanks**.
2. The text is about 250 – 300 words in length.
3. Each blank has 4 options – A, B, C and D, Candidates must choose the best option. A sample answer is given for the first blank.

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Read the text slowly. You may try filling in the blanks on your own as you read to connect the sentences.
- ✓ Take note of the tense used and the tone of the passage.
- ✓ Now look at the options given. Choose the most frequently used word.
- ✓ When in doubt, look at other words before or after the blank. Sometimes they will give you clues.
- ✓ You may also use the elimination process – strike out all the least likely options until you get to the answer.

Part 3 – Extended Text (Questions 19 – 26)

Test Focus

- understanding main ideas
- understanding specific details
- guessing meaning of unfamiliar words
- recognising author's attitude or opinion on the topic

1. In **Part 3**, candidates are required to read a longer text and answer **8 multiple-choice questions**. 4 options are given for each question – A, B, C and D.
2. The text is between 650 – 700 words in length, and may be factual or fictional.

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Skim through the questions so that you know what the focus of the text is, as well as what you need to look out for when reading.
- ✓ Read the text carefully, Ask yourself what is the purpose of the text, and what it is about.
- ✓ Read the questions and options given carefully.
- ✓ Choose the best answer.

Part 4 – Gapped Text (Questions 27 – 32)

Test Focus

- understanding main ideas
- understanding specific details
- guessing meaning of unfamiliar words
- recognising typical features at word, sentence and text levels

1. In **Part 4**, candidates are required to complete a passage with **6 sentences removed**. **8 options** are given in jumbled order and candidates must choose six sentences that are most suitable to fill in the gaps.
2. The text is between 350 – 400 words in length.

Tips to Score!

- ✓ For this question, it is important that candidates are able to understand structure, coherence and cohesion of a text.
- ✓ When selecting the sentences to complete the text, pay attention to:
 - the tense used – make sure it is consistent
 - linkers – *firstly, however, although*, etc.
 - demonstrative pronouns – *this, that*
 - vocabulary – words with similar or opposite meaning

Part 5 – Matching and Information Transfer (Questions 33 – 40)

Test Focus

- understanding main ideas
- understanding specific details
- guessing meaning of unfamiliar words
- recognising author's attitude or opinion on the topic

1. In **Part 5**, candidates are given various text types of about 370 words in total.
2. There are **2 parts** to this question. The tasks include **completion of notes** or diagrams, **matching** and **short answer** questions.
3. Candidates must choose words that are directly from the text to complete the notes / short answers.

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Read the text given carefully.
- ✓ Read the instructions for each part carefully. Make sure you understand what is required.
- ✓ Identify the keywords in the text that matches with the information you are looking for.
- ✓ Pay attention to the number of words you are allowed to write. Do not write more than what is specified.
- ✓ Make sure you use the exact same words that appear in the text. Do not change the form.
- ✓ Make sure that the spelling is correct.



You're going to kill it today

PART 2: Writing

1. **Paper 2** is divided into **3 parts** and has a total of **3 tasks**.
2. The time allocation for Paper 2 is **1 hour and 30 minutes**.
3. Each question is worth 20 marks, so Paper 2 carries a total of **60 marks**.
4. Take note that you are required to write 3 essays of different lengths so make sure you divide your time well.

Part 1 – Short Communicative Message

Test Focus

- make and respond to simple requests and suggestions
- explain simple processes
- narrate factual or imagined events or experiences
- express and respond to opinions and common feelings such as happiness, sadness, surprise and interest
- punctuate written work with moderate accuracy
- spell written work with moderate accuracy
- begin to use formal and informal registers appropriate to the target audience in familiar situations

1. In Part 1, candidates are given a short informal message (email) as a stimulus.
2. Candidates are required to write a response in about 80 words.
3. This question is worth 20 marks in accordance to the following marking scale:

Content	Communicative achievement	Organisation	Language	Total
0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	20 marks

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Read and understand the stimulus given. Take note of what is required in your answer.
- ✓ Identify the sender and your relationship with him / her – i.e. friend, family member, neighbour, etc.
- ✓ Underline the key information you are required to respond to in the answer.
- ✓ Write the email address correctly and include an appropriate subject.
- ✓ Begin with a suitable greeting.
- ✓ Present your points in an organised manner. Make sure you include all the information required in the stimulus.
- ✓ End the email with a suitable closing.
- ✓ Pay attention to the word limit.
- ✓ Read through your answer and make sure there are no spelling, punctuation or grammatical mistakes.

Part 2 – Guided Writing

Test Focus

- explain the advantages / disadvantages of ideas, plans or arrangements
- explain the main points for / against an idea or argument
- express and respond to real or imagined opinions and feelings
- organise, sequence and develop ideas within a text of several paragraphs on familiar / unfamiliar topics
- punctuate written work on a range of text types with reasonable accuracy
- spell written work on a range of text types with reasonable accuracy
- use formal and informal registers appropriate to the target audience

1. In **Part 2**, candidates will be given a stimulus in the form of a **situation** with **three prompts** in bullet points.
2. Candidates are required to write an essay based on the stimulus in **about 125 – 150 words**.
3. This question is worth **20 marks** in accordance to the following **marking scale**:

Content	Communicative achievement	Organisation	Language	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focus on the information given and use of all the information in the answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • format and writing conventions, use of appropriate register – informal, neutral or formal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • well-organised and coherent - use of punctuation, paragraph and cohesive devices (linkers, conjunctions, pronouns) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appropriate grammar and appropriate vocab usage 	
0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	20 marks



Tips to Score!

- ✓ Read and understand the stimulus given. Take note of what is required in your answer.
- ✓ Underline the keywords in the stimulus given. Highlight the three points required in the prompts.
- ✓ Begin your essay with a good introduction.
- ✓ Present your points in an organised manner in the content paragraphs. Make sure you respond to each prompt in the stimulus.
- ✓ Use cohesive devices to link your ideas.
- ✓ End your essay with a short conclusion.
- ✓ Pay attention to the word limit.

Part 3 – Extended Writing

Test Focus

- explain the advantages / disadvantages of ideas, plans or arrangements
- explain the main points for / against an idea or argument
- express and respond to real or imagined opinions and feelings
- organise, sequence and develop ideas within a text of several paragraphs on familiar / unfamiliar topics
- punctuate written work on a range of text types with reasonable accuracy
- spell written work on a range of text types with reasonable accuracy
- use formal and informal registers appropriate to the target audience

1. In **Part 3**, candidates will be given **three questions (3 – 5)** but they are only required to **answer one** of the questions.
2. Candidates are required to write an essay **in 200 – 250 words** based on the stimulus given.
3. For each question, **two or three prompts** are given.
4. The types of essays tested are **articles, reports, reviews and stories**.
5. This question is worth **20 marks** in accordance to the following **marking scale**:

Content	Communicative achievement	Organisation	Language	Total
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus on the information given and use of all the information in the answer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> format and writing conventions, use of appropriate register – informal, neutral or formal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> well-organised and coherent - use of punctuation, paragraph and cohesive devices (linkers, conjunctions, pronouns) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appropriate grammar and appropriate vocab usage 	
0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	0 – 5 marks	20 marks

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Study each question carefully. Take note of what each question requires.
- ✓ Choose a topic and a type of essay that you know well. Remember that each type of essay has a different format and writing conventions. Use the correct format.
- ✓ Underline the keywords in the stimulus given. Highlight the points required in the prompts.
- ✓ Begin your essay with a good introduction.
- ✓ Organise your points in a logical order in the content paragraphs. Make sure you respond to each prompt in the stimulus.
- ✓ Use cohesive devices to link your ideas.
- ✓ End your essay with a short conclusion.
- ✓ Pay attention to the word limit.
- ✓ Read through your answer and make sure there are no spelling, punctuation or grammatical mistakes.

Even if you fail today, you will learn

PART 3: Speaking

1. **Paper 3** is divided into 3 parts and has a total of **3 tasks**.
2. The time allocation for Paper 3 is about **13 minutes**.
3. Paper 3 carries a total of **24 marks**.
4. For this component, candidates will be tested in **pairs**.

Part 1 – Interview

Test Focus

- Giving factual information about self
- Talking about present circumstances
- Expressing opinions
- Explaining and giving reasons
- Talking about future plans
- Talking past experiences
- Grammar focus – present simple, adverbs of frequency
- Vocabulary focus – transport, hobbies, daily routines

1. In Part 1, the interlocutor will ask questions about **topics that are familiar** to the candidates such as daily routines, family, school life, hobbies, etc.
2. This part will take about **3 – 4 minutes** for both candidates.
3. The purpose of this part is to allow the candidates to warm up and prepare them for the more serious topics of discussion.

Part 2 – Individual long turn

Test Focus

- Giving information
- Talking about past / present / future experience
- Explaining and giving reasons
- Expressing and justifying opinions
- Describing people, places and situations
- Speculations
- Naming personal characteristics objects and activities
- Paraphrasing words and ideas, if necessary
- Grammar / language focus – present and past tense, expressions for likes and dislikes, expressions for giving reasons, expressions for giving opinions
- Vocabulary focus – words for describing, expressing feelings and opinions

Part 3 – Discussion

Test Focus

- Explaining and giving reasons
- Exchanging information and opinions
- Expressing and justifying opinions
- Negotiating agreement
- Making and responding to suggestions
- Discussing alternatives
- Language focus – expressions to agree and disagree, turn-taking, opening and closing a discussion, moving along a discussion

1. In **Part 3**, the interlocutor will present a topic in the Candidate booklet to both candidates. Both candidates will be given 20 seconds to study the mind map and prepare.
2. Then both candidates must **discuss on the topic for about 2 minutes**.
3. After discussing each point highlighted in the mind map, both candidates must **come to a decision**.
4. Finally, both candidates are given a **question related to the topic** in which they must answer.
5. Part 3 takes about **4 – 5 minutes** overall.
6. Candidates will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Grammar	Vocabulary	Communicative competence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can communicate with a good degree of accuracy • can show a good degree of control of a range of simple and some complex grammatical structures, • can use a range of cohesive devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can use a wide range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on a wide range of familiar topics • can convey relevant meaning with good vocabulary choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can express him / herself with little hesitation, • can initiate, maintain, develop, and close a conversation with ease, • can relate contributions to his / her partner and negotiate towards an outcome

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the format.
- ✓ Read up on current issues so that you have some knowledge on a wide range of topics.
- ✓ Brush up on the relevant vocabulary and grammar / language focus. This will allow you to speak more fluently and smoothly.
- ✓ Do not memorise your answers. If you memorise, you will have a tendency to be overly dependent on certain topics, or not answer the specific questions that the interlocutor is asking.
- ✓ Speak slowly but clearly. Do not rush through your answers.
- ✓ Practise speaking on your own. This will help you get used to making an oral presentation.



PART 4: Listening

1. **Paper 4** is divided into **4 parts** and has a total of **30 questions**.
2. The time allocation for Paper 4 is about **40 minutes**.
3. Paper 4 carries a total of **30 marks**.
4. For each part, the listening text is played twice.

Part 1 – Short dialogues / monologues (Questions 1-7)

Test Focus

- Understand specific details when listening to texts on familiar topics
- Understand independently the main ideas in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently specific information and details in longer texts
- Recognise independently attitudes or opinions in extended texts on a wide range of topics

1. In **Part 1**, **7 short dialogues or monologues** are played (60 – 70 words each).
2. For each text, there is a **multiple-choice question** with **3 options**.
3. Candidates are required to choose the **best** option.



Part 2 – Longer narrative / monologue (Questions 8 – 15)

Test Focus

- Understand independently the main ideas in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently specific information and details in longer texts
- Recognise independently attitudes or opinions in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently longer and more complex narratives on a wide range of topics
- Guess meaning of unfamiliar words from clues provided by other words and by context on a wide range of topics

1. In **Part 2**, a **longer monologue** is played (350 – 400 words).
2. There are **8 multiple-choice questions** with **3 options** based on the monologue.
3. Candidates are required to choose the **best** option.

Part 3 – Matching (Questions 16 - 20)

Test Focus

- Understand independently the main ideas in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently specific information and details in longer texts
- Recognise independently attitudes or opinions in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Guess meaning of unfamiliar words from clues provided by other words and by context on a wide range of topics

1. In **Part 3**, **5 short monologues** are played (50 words each).
2. Candidates are required to **match the idea** or information given **to the speaker** in the text.
3. There are **5 questions** with **7 options**.



Part 4 – Note completion (Questions 21 - 30)

Test Focus

- Understand independently the main ideas in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently specific information and details in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Recognise independently attitudes or opinions in extended texts on a wide range of topics
- Understand independently more complex questions on a wide range of topics
- Guess meaning of unfamiliar words from clues provided by other words and by context on a wide range of topics

1. In **Part 4**, a **dialogue or an interview** is played (600 – 650 words).
2. Candidates are required to **complete the summary** with **one word per gap** based on the listening text.
3. There are **10 questions** altogether.

Tips to Score!

- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the format.
- ✓ Read the questions carefully before the listening audio is played. Take note of what you should be listening for.
- ✓ As the listening audio is played, keep your eyes on the question. Listen for the answer to that question and do not be distracted by the other information given in the text.
- ✓ If you could not answer a question, do not panic. Keep going and answer the other questions first.
- ✓ The second listen is for you to confirm the answers and to pick out what you might have missed the first time.
- ✓ If time permits, check your answers before submitting the answer sheet.

Thank You!