Paper 2, Writing with a viewpoint

What this question involves
On Section B of Paper 2, you will produce a response in which you give your views on a topic linked to the materials in Section A. Your audience and the form of your writing will also be made clear. So, for example, you might have to write a speech for parents, a letter to a Member of Parliament or an article for a broadsheet newspaper.

There are 40 marks for the question. 24 of those are given for the content of your response and how well you organise it; 16 marks are awarded for the quality of your sentences, punctuation and spelling, as well as on your ability to use the correct – and best – words.

You have 45 minutes to complete your answer.

What the examiner is looking for
The examiner is expecting you to:
• present a point of view clearly and persuasively
• write appropriately for the purpose and audience
• write accurately.

In this unit you will revise:
how to impress the examiner. You will focus on how to:
• write in the correct style and form
• produce a speech, article or letter
• write to persuade, using the most effective techniques in your response.

Getting it right: Writing in the correct style and form

You will be expected to write in Standard English: you must not respond to the task you are given in an informal, conversational style.

This is from a Grade 2 student, who is offering her views on whether it is acceptable to keep animals in captivity.

non-Standard English: ‘really dangerous’

Animals should be free to go were they like but not if they are lions or something because they would bite people. That’s dead dangerous so they should be kept in cages and not let out at all like bad criminals, only they arent they are just dumb animals. But you cant have them all lose in towns innit? Perhaps they should be left in Africa so they dont hurt nobody.

Tasks
1 In this response, some non-Standard English, technical errors and ideas have been picked out for you. Identify all the other:
   • elements of non-Standard English
   • spelling and punctuation errors.
2 Re-write the extract in Standard English and in a better organised form.
There is no certainty about exactly what you might be required to write in Section B of Paper 2, but speeches, articles and letters are likely forms.

Exam tip
If you have to write a blog entry, that could be problematic, because blogs take different forms and are often in colloquial English. However, remember that you are being assessed on the quality of your Standard English and make sure you are still writing formally.

colloquial: conversational, chatty

Getting it right: Speeches

You might be told to write a speech. If so, you need to be aware of how to address your audience.

You might, for example:

- welcome them warmly ('Good evening, ladies and gentlemen ...')
- challenge them ('As I look at you tonight, I cannot help but wonder if you have ever ...')
- deliver a set of telling facts or figures ('In 1990, 87% of couples who lived together were actually married. Believe it or not, in 2015 ...')
- use humour ('I used to have a full head of hair. Black hair. Then I began to support Leeds United. Now ...')
- remind them of a relevant quotation ('None other than Martin Luther King once said ...').

Tasks

Consider this task: 'Sixteen-year-olds should be allowed to vote: but first they need to be given some political education in schools.'

1 Write a speech to be given to a youth parliament, in which you put forward your views on this proposal.

2 Copy out this table, then offer different openings for your speech, using the approaches listed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Opening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anecdote</td>
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<tr>
<td>statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>respectful</td>
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<td>using contrast</td>
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<td>humour</td>
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<tr>
<td>sarcasm</td>
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</table>

Ideally, your ending will summarise your views and win round the audience. You might say things like:

- 'Surely it is clear that ...'
- 'I hope the case has been made; I cannot see how anyone could doubt that ...'
- 'In years to come, when people look back on our attitude today ...'

and/or possibly use:
- a significant quotation
- repetition for effect
- a list of three
- a rhetorical question or two.

3 Write your ending.

Test Yourself answers at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/myrevisionnotes/gcse-english-language
Getting it right: Articles

When writing an article, remember:

- there are no marks for illustrations – don’t waste your time producing any
- it can be impressive to include suitable headings and sub-headings, but they are not essential: having interesting content in your text is
- if you do include headings, do not write in bubble-writing – that does not show a knowledge of the form
- resist dividing your page into columns: that almost always results in short sentences and paragraphs – and the mark scheme rewards you for using a range in both cases.

Read this extract from a newspaper article. Notice how the writer sets out to present his viewpoint in a way that interests the reader.

The naked rambler is making us look silly

Last week saw a flagrant attack on civil liberty mounted in the name of peace. A man who likes to walk around with a rucksack was told that he may have to spend the rest of his life in prison.

The rucksack, in this case, was not the cause of this draconian warning. It contained no bombs, real or fake. The problem was what the man, Stephen Gough, wore underneath the backpack: nothing.

Gough is better known as the Naked Rambler, an ex-marine who has spent most of the past seven years trekking around the countryside in nothing more than a pair of hiking boots and a hat. The rest of that time he has spent in police stations, courts and prisons. He has been arrested on more than 20 occasions, nearly every time in Scotland.

What is it about Britain and nudity? Even in saunas we hold on to towels as though they were lifelines. Yet bare breasts are the wallpaper of tabloid culture, lap-dancing bars litter the nation’s high streets and the most forensic pornography is available at the click of a mouse.

Andrew Anthony, The Observer, 2010

The ending of an impressive article is always going to include the writer's main point.

Gough’s behaviour is obviously unusual. But abnormal is not the same thing as criminal. While he has been adjudged to have broken the law, it’s hard to see what crime he has committed. Any society that thinks prison is the correct place for him has lost grip of a basic principle of liberty. "Man is born free," wrote Rousseau, "but everywhere he is in chains."
ambitious vocabulary
what he thinks of the man

In his own eccentric way, Stephen Gough has been trying to break those chains. He may be wrong, he may be misguided, but he’s not evil. In treating him as though he were, the Scottish authorities have got their knickers in a twist. And that will prove far more damaging than not wearing any knickers at all.

Andrew Anthony, The Observer, 2010

uses the same metaphor
colloquial phrase
used for humour and because it’s relevant to the subject
uses the phrase to hammer home the message and raise a smile

Task

1 Plan an article for a broadsheet newspaper to give your views on whether the royal family should be abolished.

In your plan, include some of the techniques from the Naked Rambler article, for example:
- something surprising to catch the reader’s attention at the beginning
- a phrase to shock
- humour
- at least one simile and one metaphor
- emotive language
- quotation
- impressive vocabulary
- a memorable conclusion.

Getting it right: Letters

If you are asked to write a letter, it is almost certain to be a formal one – to a national figure, a newspaper, the BBC or some other organisation.

You need to know how to set it out properly. This is the traditional way:

9 Dovecot Avenue
Kibworth
Leicestershire
LE17 1JH
9 June 2015

Top right: your address
Beneath: the date

Address on left: the person you are writing to and their address

Dear Ms Bland:
customary opening

Ms Hazel Bland
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

To finish:

Dear Ms Bland, (or any time you use a name)

Yours sincerely,

Dear Sir, (or Madam.)

Yours faithfully,

Exam tip

It’s easy to know whether to use ‘faithfully’ or ‘sincerely’: remember that when you hold two bar magnets, the south poles never go together. Here, you also have two ‘s’s – ‘Dear Sir’ and ‘Yours sincerely’. They don’t go together either.
If you are writing a letter, you can use the same range of techniques that you might use in speeches or articles.

However, you will be addressing one person directly, so you might well decide to avoid:

- grand rhetoric (as if you were trying to stir a huge crowd e.g. ‘We need to stand tall! We need to go from this place and prepare for government…’)
- any appeal to a mass audience (e.g. ‘We all need to think about how we spend our days and whether the children of this country are suffering…’).

Instead, you can personalise the ideas, while still keeping the formality:

- ‘I hope you will realise it is time for you to step forward and start to prepare for government.’
- ‘You might even ask yourself whether you are spending days usefully and whether your own children are suffering.’

**Tasks**

1 Compare the opening paragraphs in these two letters. They are written to the Prime Minister to offer views on whether we should change the way our country is governed. Decide why:
   - Letter 1 appears to be from a Grade 2 student
   - Letter 2 is reaching Grade 9 standard.

   To help, look back at the mark scheme on page 79.

**Letter 1**

Dear Mr Prime minister, this country is a mess and you know that and it's about time you did something about it and got it sorted right. My mum says she's not got enough money and neither have I so we need lots more and we should be able to say what needed doing. Think on

**Letter 2**

Dear Sir,

Since coming into office, you have prioritised the need to modernise this country. The United Kingdom cannot afford to stand still, because to do so would be to allow the rest of the world to leave us behind – in terms of trade, and economic and social progress and in the furtherance of human rights. We have to be moving through the twenty-first century with confidence and with pride in our achievements. You know these things.

However, I am hoping that you will take the next step in the full democratisation of the UK and begin to allow ballots on those important changes that affect us all. Referenda must, surely, become part of our everyday life, so that the public can feel involved and can begin to feel that they are part of decision-making.

In Letter 2, you should have noticed:

- the formal second-person approach
- subtle flattery
- the ambitious vocabulary
- a list of three
- the variety in sentences
- the strong persuasive approach (including ‘surely’)
- the logical and effective development of ideas.

2 Plan and write a letter of your own to the Prime Minister about the need to make our country a fairer place for everyone.

**Exam tip**

You might use the second-person technique in speeches or articles; you will always use it in a letter.

**Exam tip**

In the exam, you can use ideas from Section A in your response, but avoid copying. Do not ‘lift’ parts of the text – apart from facts and figures, obviously. Use your own words whenever you can.
Getting it right: Writing persuasively

It is obvious that when anyone presents a point of view, they hope the audience will accept it. To be successful, you should be drawing together the skills you have revised in this unit and throughout the other units on Section B responses.

Your chances of persuading the audience will hinge on a number of factors:
- how well you engage the audience
- 'see'ing the audience and making sure you address them appropriately
- using Standard English
- the quality of the ideas
- presenting, perhaps, four or five significant ideas, each well explained
- using a structure that has been planned and so is logical, demonstrating 'joined-up thinking'
- the overall quality of the writing
- your accuracy
- using a wide range of vocabulary, paragraphing and sentences
- how interesting you make the ideas
- the high-quality features you include such as statistics, quotations, examples and anecdotes, lists, similes and metaphors, rhetoric, humour ...

Task

1. Consider this extract from a response offering views on the way old people sometimes behave and how it might be made more interesting. Then, complete the table, making additions to enrich the ideas.

Some old people are just incredibly bad mannered...A... In fact, they can behave so much worse than the teenagers they spend so much time criticising...B... It is so frustrating for anyone under the age of twenty that they have to suffer the abuse without responding because they are not considered old enough to have an opinion on anything...C...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible additions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You might add a simile, statistics, a quotation, sarcasm ... Offer as many alternatives as you can in each case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>C</td>
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</table>

Test Yourself answers at www.hoddereducation.co.uk/myrevisionnotes/gcse-english-language
This is part of a television review, in which the writer gives his views on *Doctor Who*.

After months of being whipped into a frenzy of anticipation by the BBC’s marketing department, I was disappointed to find myself slipping out of consciousness during the thrill-free early scenes of the new *Doctor Who*. Admittedly, we had the momentary distraction of a massive roaring dinosaur wading threateningly down the Thames (my heart went out to the hardworking CGI team when the poor creature had to be burned to death after five minutes on the grounds of plot irrelevance), but Peter Capaldi as the latest Time Lord must have been wondering what he’d got himself into as he capered around Victorian London in a nightgown, spouting nonsense for a good half hour. Had he regenerated himself as a person with dementia? It was hard to say. Certainly he didn’t appear to be himself, but he wasn’t Matt Smith either – and where did that leave his young assistant, Clara, so rudely deprived of a flirt-buddy nearer to her own age?


This review offers views on *Doctor Who*. It relies heavily upon:

- exaggeration
- metaphor
- humour.

It is intended to convince the readers by making them smile. This approach is totally suitable in a newspaper’s television review.

**Task**

1. Write a review of your favourite television programme or computer game. You do not have to use humour, but try to structure your review so that you include things like:
   - characters
   - settings
   - storyline
   - outstanding or disappointing features
   - why you would or would not recommend it.

The review of *Doctor Who* is light-hearted. When people feel that something is more important, they are much more serious.

The dreadful murders of PCs Nicola Hughes and Fiona Bone in Manchester have, understandably, caused some people to question whether Police in the UK should be routinely armed. I do not think they should be armed.

I am not a Police Officer any more and no longer face the challenges and the dangers of the job and serving Officers are entitled to their own view on this issue since they still have to go to calls not really knowing what hazards they may face.
But it seems that even serving Officers are usually against being armed - a survey in 1995 of serving officers found that 79 per cent were against the routine arming of Police and I suspect that even now the majority of them would not want to carry a gun.

Arming all Police Officers would bring many problems. There are around 100,000 Officers in the UK - obviously not all would carry guns but let's say we had 10,000 Officers routinely carrying a gun - that's an extra 10,000 firearms on UK streets with all the dangers that would bring.

As good as any training might be, Officers would make mistakes - people would be shot - accidents would happen ...


Notice here the use of:

- two contrasting points of view
- how one point of view is stressed and supported
- the use of statistics
- the use of facts and figures to support the writer's viewpoint
- the movement to a very convincing final point.

**Test yourself**

Decide whether you think it would be wise to arm the police.

Create a spider diagram of ideas.

Transform that spider diagram into an organised list. Remember to include jotted reminders to show how you will make your opinions more convincing: similes, quotations, examples ...

In just thirty minutes, as an exam practice, write your response.

Check your 'finished' version carefully, and correct and improve it as necessary.

**Typical mistakes**

- Jumbling ideas because the response has not been carefully planned and checked
- Offering ideas that are unconvincing because they are just stated, without any evidence or interesting features to support them
- Losing focus on the title

**How to prepare for the exam**

Read articles in newspapers and magazines that offer a point of view. It is valuable, for example, to read sports articles, television reviews or problem pages: anywhere where the writer is offering viewpoints.

Underline the features of the articles which are making them convincing.

Practise planning and writing responses of your own: choose your own subjects because any practice is valuable since you are using the same skills whether you are giving your views on world affairs or whether *Coronation Street* is really the best show on terrestrial television.