

# FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

Paper 0508/01

Reading

## Key messages

The question paper consists of two main questions on two main texts entitled 'Making your Success' and 'The Power of Determination is the Path to Success'. The first question tests candidates' comprehension by answering a set of questions (a)–(i) on text 1, with 20 marks allocated for the questions plus 5 marks for language accuracy. The second question requires a summary of the main ideas of both texts with a maximum mark of 15 for the main ideas, 5 marks for style and organisation and 5 marks for language accuracy. The total mark for the paper is 50.

The questions and accompanying texts were appropriately aligned with the intended level and effectively assessed a range of skills. The items demonstrated a suitable degree of variation in difficulty, eliciting responses from candidates across the ability spectrum, including lower, middle, and higher attainers.

Overall performance ranged from good to very good in both questions. Most candidates demonstrated good comprehension and summary skills. By comparison to the previous series, performance this year is better and is evident through examiners' observations and the statistics produced by Cambridge.

For **Question 1**, **Questions 1(a), 1(c), 1(d), 1(e), 1(f), 1(g) and 1(h)** received good to very good performance ranging from 65 per cent to 80 per cent. However, Questions **1(b)** and **1(i)** received the lowest performance of 47 per cent each. These two questions required careful reading of the text(s) and deductions skills. More details are given on 'comments on specific questions' below.

It has also been observed that most candidates adhered to the word limit demonstrating visible improvement on previous series. As for responses to **Question 1** and **Question 2**, there has been an increase in the number of candidates who adopted lifting from both texts. The lifting ranged from selective to considerable without any input whatsoever from the candidate(s).

Another important observation is that some candidates limited their content summary to one text. This had an impact on their achievement, as they have missed out on several main ideas (marks) on the text they have left out.

## General comments

As mentioned above, performance for this series was better than the previous series for **Questions 1 and 2**. Performance ranged from good to very good.

Compared to the previous series 2024, there has also been visible improvement on content (60 per cent versus 47 per cent), **Question 1** Accuracy (78 per cent versus 74 per cent), and **Question 2** Style and Organisation (69 per cent versus 67 per cent). As for **Question 2** Accuracy, performance was almost equal to previous series (66 per cent versus 67 per cent). These figures demonstrate good to very good performance overall.

For paper 7184/01, performance demonstrated visible improvement on previous series 2024 for both **Question 1** and **Question 2**. Performance for **Question 1** ranged from good to very good overall for **1(a)** (68 per cent), **1(c)** (74 per cent), **1(d)** (65 per cent), **1(e)** (72 per cent), **1(f)** (81 per cent), **1(g)** (68 per cent), **1(h)** (73 per cent). Like 0508/01, **Question 1(b)** and **1(i)** received the lowest performance (50 per cent and 48 per cent respectively).

For **Question 1**, candidates generally did not perform well for **1(b)** and **1(i)**. These two questions required good deduction skills.

There were impressive performances where some candidates achieved high range of marks (46–50).

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Question 1**

The questions are based on text 1. They covered a variety of points and tested different levels of abilities.

For 0508/01, overall performance was 67 per cent for **Question 1** and 63 per cent for **Question 2**, with the following ranking from strong to below average for **Question 1**: 1(f), 1(c), 1(h), 1(e), 1(a), 1(d) = 1(g), and 1(b) = 1(i).

For 7184/01, overall performance was 68 per cent for **Question 1** and 66 per cent for **Question 2**, with the following ranking from strong to below average: 1(f), 1(c), 1(h), 1(e), 1(a), 1(g), 1(d), 1(b) and 1(i).

#### **Question 1**

(a) Performance was very good (almost 70 per cent), and most candidates were able to answer the two required points. Some candidates offered only one point whilst others gave wrong answers (الوراثة والبيئة).

(b) Performance for this question was average (almost 50%). Half of the candidates either gave irrelevant answers or copied the wrong answers from the paragraph as follows:

ألا تقطع، لا تتعال بأنك لست نابغة، واعلم أن النجاح ليس مقصورة على النابغين وحدهم.

(c) Performance was very good (74 per cent). Many candidates gave the two required points, and others gave one correct point or gave two wrong answers. Examples of wrong answers:

الأفكار عائمة عن النجاح فهناك من ساروا في طريق العمل وقد بدأوا حياتهم بنوع من التخييب وعدم وضوح الرؤية.

(d) Good performance overall (65 per cent). There were candidates who were able to give the two required points. Others either gave only one correct point or two wrong points. Examples of mixed answers are:

أن يكون له قوة ينشدها، ومن قع بالدون لم يصل إلا إلى الدون.

وكل من عزم أن يسير ميلاً واحداً أحس التعب عند الفراغ منه.

ولكن من عزم أن يسير خمسة أميال قطع ميلاً وسبعين وثلاثة من غير تعب.

(e) Many candidates answered this question correctly. Performance was very good (71 per cent). Some candidates gave very short answer بالسد، but this needed qualifying with the following:

بالسد الذي يحجب الشمس عن أعيننا.

Others did not mention عن أعيننا which is important since it works as connotation for 'seeing light' at the end of "hard work" which will lead to success. Others gave completely the wrong answer:

الخوف من الفشل أو الكسل.

(f) This question received the best performance out of all the questions (80.5 per cent). Most candidates gave the three required points. Others gave either one or two points. Those who did not give the three points adopted lifting from the paragraph and in doing so they included wrong/irrelevant answers, as in:

أن نرى الناس يقيسون نجاح الشخص.  
إن ذلك لا يكفي ما لم يرتكز على الدعائم التي ذكرناها.

(g) Performance for this question was good (66.5 per cent). Many candidates gave the two correct answers. The remaining candidates either gave one correct answer or two incorrect answers or did not answer at all (no response). Here is an example of a mixed answer:

ومن أكبر الأخطاء اعتقادك أن نفسك غير قادرة على النجاح.  
ذلك هو معول هدم طموحها.

(h) Performance was very good (73 per cent). Many candidates were able to give the two required points. Other candidates gave one correct answer, whilst some others gave no response (NR) or gave wrong answers as follows:

ومن ظن بأنه غير قادر فلن يصيب مراده.  
ومن أكبر الأخطاء اعتقادك أن نفسك غير قادرة على النجاح، ذلك هو معول هدم طموحها.

(i) This question received the weakest performance (47.5 per cent). This is since many candidates did not understand the demands of the question or did not understand the question well. Also, the question required very good deduction skills from the paragraph in the text. Some candidates gave one correct point, and some others gave no response (NR) or gave the wrong answers like the following:

يعد النظر إلى الجانب المشرق في الحياة.  
الفرجين.  
المستشرين.  
لا تنظر إلى الحياة من خلال نظارة معتمة.

## Accuracy

Candidates demonstrated much better performance than in previous years. Performance was very good overall (77.5 per cent). Many candidates' answers were direct and to the point. Other candidates adopting lifting of whole paragraphs to get to the answers. Despite lifting, they committed spelling and grammatical errors. Many of the errors were like those reported in previous series:

- Missing the 'hamzah' or using the wrong one or their inability to distinguish between همزة الوصل وهمزة القطع.
- Weakness in the use of إن وأخواتها، كان وأخواتها، المثلى والجمع and subject-verb agreement.

## Question 2

### Content

Performance was generally good and better than the previous series (62 per cent). Many candidates understood the demand of the task and were able to locate many key ideas from both texts. In fact, there were impressive performances where some candidates managed to achieve full mark for the content. In addition, a good number of candidates used their own words to summarise both texts. By contrast, some candidates did not structure their writing well and hardly used punctuation marks. In addition, they limited their summary to one text, and in doing so they lost valuable points. Another group of candidates relied heavily on lifting which ranged from mild to severe. They may have obtained some content points but their style and organisation as well as accuracy have been impacted.

## Style and Organisation

Again, performance for this series was much better than the previous series. Performance was very good (69 per cent). Many candidates wrote a well-structured piece and used paragraphing and linking words and phrases to make their summary coherent and with a sense of purpose. They also used their own words and attempted to rephrase or paraphrase, not to mention the appropriate use of punctuation marks. By contrast, other candidates did not seem to have good sense of style and organisation since they delivered one block of writing without any paragraphs or an appropriate use of punctuation marks in addition to lapses of focus. Many candidates utilised some of the linking words and phrases or connectors (listed below) to deliver a coherent piece of writing:

من الجدير بالذكر، إضافة لما سبق، علاوة على ذلك، في البداية، وفي الختام، أضف إلى ذلك، وكما أن، زد على ذلك، وإلحاقاً لما سبق، مما لا شك فيه، بالرغم من أن، بالإضافة إلى ذلك.

## Accuracy

It is pleasing once again to observe that performance for accuracy was better than the previous series. It was quite good (66.5%). Despite spelling mistakes and grammatical errors, candidates' writing was overall clear and gave the intended meaning. In other words, these errors did not impede understanding.

The main spelling and grammatical errors are almost like those reported for the previous series:

- Some candidates had difficulties maintaining the correct linguistic references (nouns and pronouns: in respect to gender and number) when referring to people and/or things.
- Verb conjugation and subject-verb agreement was also another problematic aspect for the candidates.
- هزمات المد والوصل والقطع، إن وآخواتها، كان وآخواتها، المثنى والجمع.

## Concluding remarks

Performance for this series was better than the previous ones, and many candidates did very well indeed. It has been observed that there is marked improvement across both questions.

## Recommendations

Based on the above elements of this report, one can offer the following recommendations to enhance performance:

- Careful reading of the questions to understand their demands or requirements.
- Careful reading of the texts.
- Avoid lifting from the texts as much as possible and instead use your own words or adopt rephrasing or paraphrasing in the summary.
- Practising past exam papers together with their mark schemes.
- Training on summarising texts, using exercises that enable candidates to extract key ideas for each paragraph in a text.
- More practice on how to summarise a text, focusing on the ideas rather than the examples that explain them.
- Candidates are advised to structure their summary into an introduction, presentation and conclusion as well as using separate paragraphs to address different points or themes from the texts.
- Using linking words and phrases to make their summary coherent.

# FIRST LANGUAGE ARABIC

## Paper 0508/02

## Writing

## Key messages

This paper rewards two key qualities: precise language control and purposeful, well-structured writing. The observations below are based on this year's scripts and highlight areas where targeted preparation can make a substantial difference.

## 1 Strengthening Language Accuracy

Arabic writing demands mastery of all aspects of grammar, syntax, morphology, and spelling. The following points require sustained practice and correction:

## A Sentence structure and agreement

- Understand the core building blocks of Arabic: noun, verb, particle and how case endings differ between them.
- Revise the components of nominal and verbal sentences, paying close attention to how each element governs case endings.
- With إِنْ وَأَخْوَاتِهَا كَانَ وَأَخْوَاتِهَا
- Predicate of كَانَ and subject of إِنْ → accusative case.
- Add أَلْفَ to singular masculine nouns (that do not end with tā' marbūṭa) in the accusative.
- When the verb comes before its subject in the sentence, keep it in the singular form, regardless of the subject's number.

## B Verb conjugation essentials

- Consolidate forms for the dual and feminine plural in both nominal and verbal sentences.
- In plural verbs, retain the ألف (e.g., سافروا).
- Weak verbs in the majzūm form must drop the final weak letter (لم يبق) not (لم يبقى).
- The Five Verbs lose their ن in both accusative and jussive cases.
- Maintain gender agreement: ذهبا (incorrect) vs صديقاتي ذهبن (correct).

## C Relative pronouns and plurals

- Match relative pronouns to gender and number (الطلاب الذين، الطالب الذي).
- Avoid using a relative pronoun after an indefinite noun; we do not say: رأيت طفلا الذي يجري.
- Apply correct rules for non-human plurals: use singular feminine verbs, adjectives, and relative pronouns (التي).

## D Orthography and morphology

- همزة الوصل، همزة القطع، الهمزة المتوسطة، الهمزة المتطرفة.
- Distinguish between التاء المفتوحة and التاء المربوطة, الألف المقصورة and الألف الطويلة as well as between
- In drop the final ألف when indefinite in nominative/genitive cases.

## **E Prepositions and spelling accuracy**

- Pronouns must attach to the preposition before them (في هي، مع هو) (فيها، معه).
- Multi-letter prepositions should not be fused with the next word (في الساعة، not فالساعة).
- Use the correct preposition for each verb — avoid literal translations from English and remember that some verbs may need a preposition in English but not in Arabic and vice versa.
- Common spelling issues: لأن، هاذا، and the distinction in meaning between إلى / إلا.

## **2 Producing Relevant and Effective Content**

### **A Understanding and selecting the task**

- Read each question in full before deciding which one to answer.
- Choose based on both topic knowledge and the style of writing you can perform best in.
- It is often better to pick a style you can execute well than a topic you know but cannot structure effectively.

### **B Maintaining focus and relevance**

- Keep every part of your answer tied directly to the task.
- Avoid memorised openings and summaries that do not connect to the topic.

### **C Genre-specific guidance**

- Argumentative writing:
  - Begin with a clear stance.
  - Support it with strong evidence. (give at least 3 reasons in separate paragraphs supporting your stance).
  - Address and challenge opposing views. (refute at least 3 reasons supporting the other stance).
- Discursive writing: Present balanced advantages and disadvantages, expanding on each point. (at least 3 positives and 3 negatives).
- Avoid using dialogue form for argumentative or discursive essays.
- Descriptive writing: Avoid unrelated scene-setting or travel narratives; ensure every description contributes to the task's aim.
- Narrative writing:
  - Avoid producing a mere sequence of events or a travelogue-style account. A story should not be a simple chain of events – it must have a clear عقدة (central conflict, problem, or turning point) that drives the plot.
  - Ensure the story has a clear structure – an engaging opening, a meaningful middle with development or conflict, and a resolution that leaves an impression.

### **D Presentation and review**

- Accuracy matters more than word count – unnecessary length often introduces more mistakes. Remember that it is better to meet the minimum required word count with precise, correct language than to exceed it with mistakes that lower the overall quality.
- Keep handwriting clear and consistent; misplaced dots and unclear letters reduce readability. Examiners have limited time to mark each script and will not spend extra time deciphering difficult handwriting – unclear work risks being misunderstood or overlooked.
- Use formal, idiomatic Arabic; avoid colloquial phrases and literal translations.
- Always proofread before submission, correcting errors and confirming that all parts of the task have been addressed.

### **Final Insight**

Examiners consistently find that candidates who balance precise language control with focused, relevant content perform best. Mastery of foundational grammar and attention to detail in writing style remain the most effective route to higher marks.

## General comments

In **Section 1**, candidates showed a clear preference for discursive questions, with **Question A** proving the most popular, followed by **Question B**. Argumentative questions were less well received this session, with **Question D** being the least popular. **Question C** attracted a moderate level of interest. In **Section 2**, both narrative and descriptive tasks were well balanced in popularity, though narratives appeared to have a slight edge. **Question D** was the most popular in this section, followed by **Question B**, and **Question A** coming third.

Overall, the paper showed a wide range of performance levels, with many candidates producing work that was well-organised and engaged effectively with the tasks. Like in recent sessions, encouraging progress was seen, particularly in candidates' ability to follow descriptive and discursive writing styles and in the gradual reduction of colloquial and foreign expressions. Essays in these two styles demonstrated a stronger understanding of their distinctive features.

However, despite generally adhering to the required styles, persistent issues continued to affect marks. In descriptive writing, many candidates began with a narrative introduction or relied heavily on storytelling, blurring the line between description and narrative. Others focused on peripheral details rather than the main subject. In discursive tasks, candidates frequently listed relevant advantages and disadvantages but did not sufficiently develop these points.

Challenges also remain in argumentative and narrative writing. A notable number of candidates choosing argumentative tasks still wrote in a discursive manner, merely presenting opposing views without constructing a clear, persuasive argument supporting one position. It seems that there is a common misconception that stating an opinion only at the conclusion makes an essay argumentative, which is incorrect. Similarly, narrative writing requires improvement, as many stories lacked a clear climax, indicating room for further development.

Lastly, grammatical weaknesses remain a major factor affecting the performance of a significant number of candidates. Recurring errors in basic grammar rules are frequently noted and, in some cases, cause confusion or distort intended meanings. Such difficulties impede clear communication and reduce the overall quality of candidates' responses. Although many candidates present relevant ideas and demonstrate an understanding of the tasks, persistent language inaccuracies often limit their ability to attain higher marks. Therefore, addressing these fundamental grammatical issues is crucial to improving candidate performance.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section 1**

#### **Questions A and B (Discursive Tasks)**

**Questions A and B** required candidates to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of employing nannies and the use of final exams to assess students' abilities, respectively. Although the topic in **Question B** closely resonates with the everyday experiences and concerns of the target age group – encouraging thoughtful engagement – **Question A** proved to be more popular, with both questions receiving substantial responses.

Generally, candidates who chose these discursive tasks performed better than those opting for argumentative ones, as discursive writing typically demands less complexity; there is no need to refute opposing views. By presenting around three positive and three negative points and adequately expanding on each, candidates can achieve high marks, provided their language is accurate.

Most candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of the discursive style and adhered well to the task's requirements. Many essays effectively offered insightful discussions on the benefits and drawbacks of having nannies and final exams, with clear organisation and relevant examples. Nevertheless, two key issues were apparent: some candidates did not sufficiently develop each point, limiting the depth and persuasiveness of their discussions, and persistent basic grammatical errors detracted from the overall quality, hindering higher scores.

In summary, while performance on these questions showed encouraging progress, further attention to detailed elaboration and language accuracy is essential to improve outcomes.

### Questions C and D (Argumentative Tasks)

In Questions **C** and **D**, candidates were required to respond to prompts by expressing their opinions and persuading the reader. The prompts were: 'With the spread of online shopping, all shops will close' (**Question C**), and 'Students should not be required to wear a school uniform' (**Question D**).

Argumentative tasks typically require more complex organisation than discursive ones, as candidates must clearly state a position, support it with convincing reasoning, and address opposing viewpoints. Consistent with previous sessions, some candidates produced well-structured arguments with relevant examples, demonstrating an ability to anticipate and rebut counterarguments effectively. However, many were hindered by language weaknesses.

Several responses lacked sufficient depth or persuasive force. Some candidates merely listed advantages and disadvantages without clearly linking them to a coherent stance or delayed revealing their position until the end, which weakened the overall argument. Others failed to engage with opposing views, resulting in one-sided discussions that did not fully meet task requirements. Common grammatical errors – such as verb conjugation mistakes and misspellings – detracted from otherwise sound ideas. Another recurring issue was presenting the task as a dialogue between the candidate and a relative or friend, or as a televised discussion, rather than as a formal argumentative essay.

To improve future performance, candidates should be encouraged to:

- Structure arguments with a clear introduction stating their opinion upfront, followed by well-developed supporting paragraphs and a strong conclusion.
- Provide at least three detailed pieces of evidence to support their position.
- Identify and refute at least three counterarguments to demonstrate awareness of alternative perspectives.
- Use specific, relevant examples to substantiate each point.
- Maintain grammatical accuracy and employ varied vocabulary to enhance persuasiveness.

## Section 2

### Questions A and B (Description Tasks)

In **Question A**, candidates were asked to describe a personality they admired from a movie they had watched, along with the feelings this character inspired in them. In **Question B**, they were tasked with describing a countryside village they had visited and their emotions during the visit.

The second question proved more popular, with many candidates producing reasonably vivid descriptions of the village and their associated feelings. Overall, the descriptive style was noticeably stronger in **Question B** than in **Question A**. In the first question, a significant number of candidates fell into the trap of narrating the plot of the movie rather than focusing on the description of the personality and the feelings evoked.

Similarly, in **Question B**, some candidates – despite offering good descriptive passages – were unable to secure high marks because they began their essays with lengthy narratives about how the idea to visit the village arose, or recounting the events leading up to their departure. Others described every detail of the journey to the village, leaving little space to develop the core description of the village itself and the emotions it elicited.

To improve future performance, candidates should be encouraged to:

- Maintain the required writing style throughout the essay, avoiding narrative digressions when the task demands description.
- Focus on the main subject of the task from the outset, rather than beginning with extended introductions or unrelated backstory.
- Allocate sufficient space to the central description (village or personality) and its emotional impact, ensuring these elements are fully developed.
- Practise distinguishing between descriptive and narrative writing, with targeted exercises that help sustain the correct mode for the entire piece.

### Questions C and D (Narrative Tasks)

In **Question C**, candidates were asked to write a story based on the phrase '*Indeed, your Lord gives respite but never neglects*'. In **Question D**, they were tasked with describing a trip to a forest in which they learned an unforgettable lesson. **Question D** proved the most popular choice in this section, while **Question C** attracted the fewest responses.

Some candidates who chose **Question D** produced engaging and well-developed narratives; however, the majority struggled to maintain coherence and avoid predictability. In many cases, stories became a straightforward sequence of events without a clear build-up or a meaningful climax. Similarly, responses to **Question C** often failed to integrate the given phrase effectively into the narrative, with the moral sometimes appearing only as an afterthought.

A significant factor limiting candidates' performance in this section as well as the previous one, was difficulty with basic grammar. This issue was particularly evident among candidates with creative and original ideas who were nevertheless unable to express them accurately in Arabic. Such errors often affected clarity and prevented otherwise strong responses from achieving higher marks. Candidates should be reminded that, as this is a language examination, accurate language use is essential to success.

To improve performance in narrative writing tasks, candidates should be encouraged to:

- Plan their stories carefully, ensuring a logical progression and a clear climax.
- Integrate the central theme or moral throughout the narrative rather than limiting it to the conclusion.
- Develop characters, settings, and events in ways that build suspense and sustain reader interest.
- Avoid overly predictable plots by introducing creative twists or unexpected developments.
- Strike a balance between description and action to maintain narrative momentum.
- Strengthen their grasp of basic grammar and sentence structure to ensure ideas are conveyed with accuracy and clarity.