

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

---

Paper 0501/01  
Reading and Directed Writing

## Key messages

### **Questions 1 and 2**

Candidates must read the text and the questions carefully and make sure they answer them correctly and clearly by picking the relevant information from the text and not just quoting the text. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of the number of ideas or points that need to be included in order to gain full marks. Candidates should not give more details than requested by the question as marks will be deducted for any additional incorrect information. Candidates do not have to answer in full sentences.

### **Question 3**

Candidates should produce a structured response which covers equally the three points of the question and uses the ideas from the texts only. Candidates should also pay attention to accuracy of language which is assessed in this question and should therefore allow time at the end of the exam to proofread their work so as to avoid careless grammatical and spelling errors.

## General comments

In **Question 1** and **2** candidates were required to show their understanding of a literary text by answering a series of questions on that text. In **Question 1** they had to demonstrate their understanding of both explicit and implicit meaning and in **Question 2** they had to demonstrate their understanding of how the writer achieves effects and influences readers.

Candidates generally performed better in **Question 1** than in **Question 2**. When providing more details than required, some candidates lost marks if those additional details were incorrect. They also did not get any mark if they just quoted sentences from the text instead of answering the question except when the question required them to quote a phrase from the text like in **Question 2(d)**. However, if a quote (which is not necessary) was added to the correct answer in order to support it, it was considered as a harmless addition. The best answers were those which were short and to the point. Language errors were not penalised unless they impaired communication.

In **Question 3** candidates had to read two articles about electric scooters and then write their own article for their school magazine, outlining the advantages and dangers of electric scooters and explaining how the dangers could be avoided, using only the information from the texts.

Most candidates kept to the word limit. Those who performed well in this task were those who presented a well-balanced and well-structured article where they had included a wide range of valid ideas from the texts which they developed and grouped into concise and well written paragraphs using a good range of linking words, the correct register and accurate language. Those who just listed ideas or failed to focus on the task by introducing irrelevant ideas or failed to address all the points or consistently used very inaccurate language, did not score high marks.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Question 1**

Candidates generally understood the text but occasionally struggled to answer some questions purposefully.

The range of questions provided opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability.

The questions which generated the best responses were **(a)**, **(b)**, **(e)**, **(g)**, **(i)**, and the most challenging ones were **(d)**, **(j)**, **(k)**, **(m)**. Marks are awarded for each specific relevant point made by the candidate. When a question is worth one mark only one detail is required and when a question is worth two marks only two details are required; providing more details than necessary may sometimes invalidate a correct answer.

- (a)** Most candidates scored a mark by either using the words from the text '*exigu*/'*étouffant*' or their synonyms. Those who said the flat was dirty did not score a mark.
- (b)** There were two possible answers to the question which asked what the nanny did on the first day and candidates generally gave one of them. However, answers like « *elle a observé des objets et des vêtements* »/« *Louise acquiesce mutique et docile* »/« *elle a poussé les murs, elle a rendu les placards plus profonds, les tiroirs plus larges* » were not accepted.
- (c)** Here candidates had to explain why Paul and Myriam no longer wore certain clothes. The targeted answer was either because buttons were missing, or hems were undone but answers conveying the idea that they were too lazy to mend them/to sew the buttons back on were also accepted. Those who just said that their clothes were damaged or that they were too lazy to find a needle, did not gain any mark.
- (d)** This question was less well answered as many candidates failed to understand « *Elle reprise les vêtements.* » which was key to the question. Myriam was wasteful not just because she was going to throw away Mila's clothes without regret but because she was going to throw away clothes which were mendable. Hence all those who answered « *Elle s'apprétait à jeter les vêtements de Mila sans regret* » did not gain a mark.
- (e)** The majority of candidates gave the correct answer. There were, however, a few incorrect answers like « *la présence de Louise est devenue indispensable* » or « *parce qu'elle veut la perfection et impose ses habitudes* ».
- (f)** This question which had two possible answers was generally well answered. But some candidates failed to notice that the question was targeting Mila ('*leur fille*') and not the children and they wrongly answered: « *Les enfants sont calmes et peignés* » or « *les enfants sont plus sages et dociles* ». Answers like « *elle était plus organisée* » were accepted but not « *elle est plus propre* » or « *elle nettoie derrière elle* » or « *elle obéit* ».
- (g)** The majority of candidates gave the correct answers and mentioned the places where Louise was taking Mila: « *au cours de danse* » / « *chez le pédiatre* » / « *au manège* », but some candidates had problems using the correct prepositions (e.g., « *au pédiatre* »/« *au danse* »). Some answers which scored no marks included « *au magasin de jouets* »/« *devant un étal à framboises* »/« *à des sorties d'école* »/« *dans la rue* »/« *aux horaires de la danse* ».
- (h)** This question was usually well understood but the answers were often incomplete as candidates often failed to mention to whom Myriam would say that it was Louise who cooked the dishes or to mention that it was to Louise that Myriam admitted that she could not do anything. Some candidates mistook Louise for Myriam and answered « *elle note tout dans un carnet, le prix de la glace qu'elle a achetée* ».
- (i)** Most candidates understood the question and gave the correct answers. However, answers like « *il apprend à marcher* » / « *il dormait d'un sommeil paisible* » / « *Louise attache Adam avec une grande étole* » / « *il lui fait un câlin* » did not gain any mark.
- (j)** Candidates found this question quite difficult as the answer required some language manipulation. A straight lift from the text « *elle répond à toutes les contrariétés par des hurlements* » was not accepted. Candidates were required to interpret that sentence and give the reason why Mila was

behaving in a capricious manner. Answers like « *elle est obsédé par son reflet* » / « *elle est difficile* » / or « *elle est capricieuse* » were not accepted either.

(k) This question was usually understood but the answer was often incomplete. It was not enough to say that Mila was manipulative in the street, it was essential to add that it was when she had an audience. Answers like « *elle pousse des cris et des hurlements car elle sait que Louise en a honte* » / « *après avoir fait une crise elle demande de l'attention* » were not accepted.

(l) This question was also usually well understood but the answer was also often incomplete as candidates often omitted to mention what type of shop Louise was trying to avoid. Answers like : « *parce qu'elle sait comment se comporte Mila quand elles sortent ensemble* » / « *elle fait des détours pour éviter les endroits où Mila pousse des cris* » were too vague and not accepted.

(m) Many candidates did not gain a mark because they did not understand the phrase « *non sans avoir sauvé le monde* ». Those who just answered « *parce que les gentils meurent à la fin* » scored a mark but those who wrote « *parce que les gentils meurent à la fin sans avoir sauvé le monde* » did not gain a mark because the omission of «*non* » changed the meaning of the sentence and thus invalidated their answer.

(n) This question was generally understood and well answered. Those who did not gain any marks were those who gave more than one answer and had marks deducted for each incorrect answer and those who mentioned skills which were not related to looking after children like cleaning, cooking etc.

## Question 2

Candidates generally did not do as well in this section as in the previous one. They found questions (b) and (c) particularly difficult.

(a) Candidates had to explain that by using the phrase « *Louise a poussé les murs* » in line 3 of the text, the author meant that Louise had created more space in the flat. Most candidates gave a correct answer but some thought that she had pulled some walls down, others that she had cleaned or repainted the walls. Answers like « *elle a amélioré l'appartement* » were too vague or incoherent like « *Louise a mieux économiser la place et a fait tenir plus de choses dans les pièces* ».

(b) Candidates found this question very difficult. They had to explain that by comparing Louise to « *un général devant une terre à conquérir* » the author meant to show how much Louise was confident/determined that she would become in charge of the place.

(c) This was another difficult question for candidates. They had to interpret what the author is implicitly trying to reveal about Myriam. Only the more able candidates were able to answer correctly. Answers like « *Myriam a honte de sa famille* » / « *Myriam ne sait pas cuisiner et ne peut donc pas nourrir sa famille* » did not score a mark.

(d) This was a more accessible question. There were two possible answers and candidates usually gained a mark. Those who failed to quote the whole sentence did not score any points.

(e) This was another question where candidates generally answered correctly, but marks were often lost because candidates gave more than one answer, and a mark was taken off for each incorrect answer. Answers like « *joie* » / « *bonheur* » / « *elle trouve Adam mignon et facile à gérer* » were not accepted.

(f) The question was generally well answered but some candidates had difficulties differentiating and spelling the words « *narcissique* », « *narcissist* » and « *narcissisme* ».

(g) Candidates usually understood the phrase « *Louise apprivoise l'enfant* » but had difficulties explaining its meaning in their own words.

(h) Candidates are usually not very confident in answering this type of question and often lose marks by giving more answers than required, forgetting a mark would be deducted for each incorrect answer. Some incorrect answers included « *un language sarcastique/familier/fantastique/magique/soutenu/déclaratif* » ...

### Question 3

#### Reading

- Candidates were required to pick the relevant information from text B and text C to write an article about the advantages and dangers of electric scooters and explain how the dangers could be avoided, using only the information from the texts.
- A title and a prompt were given to start the article. Those who did not use it lost one reading mark.
- A short introduction is advisable but not a lengthy one explaining the purpose of the article and summing up what it would be about, especially as the word limit is 350 words.
- Often candidates failed to achieve top marks because they tended to just list facts and ideas without attempting to develop them.
- Sometimes there was not an equal focus on each of the bullet points of the question or irrelevant information was included or an entire section had been lifted from the texts.
- Good marks were given for Reading where a wide range of relevant facts, ideas and opinions covering equally each of the points of the question had been selected from both texts and developed in a convincing way. Contextualising the article and using headings was also a plus.

To improve the Reading mark candidates should:

- Read the texts and question carefully
- Identify an equal number of relevant ideas for each section of the task
- Develop those ideas with information from the texts
- Remain focused on the task
- Answer all three parts of the question equally
- Use their own words rather than lift big chunks of texts.

#### Writing

Good marks were given for Writing when the content was well structured, when it included a range of linking words, when the correct register was used and when a variety of accurate vocabulary and structures were utilised.

Good candidates tended to group and link several ideas from the texts into one sentence. They also structured their content well using clearly presented paragraphs and a range of linking words, and they employed the correct register.

Weaker candidates tended to lose focus and pick ideas at random without grouping them which made their answer hard to follow or they just listed the ideas without developing any and the overall effect was somewhat repetitive. Their use of linking words was often limited and the register was sometimes not appropriate e.g. the use of « *tu* ».

Accuracy which was assessed only in **Question 3** varied greatly from faultless to very hard to read for those who used phonetical spelling. The language was generally appropriate but often simple and unsophisticated or just lifted as candidates were often more concerned with making valid points than with improving the quality of their language.

The most common errors were the following:

- use of the infinitive instead of the past participle or vice versa
- incorrect verb endings
- incorrect agreement between adjectives and past participles
- wrong gender
- wrong tense
- omission of 'ne' when using the negative form
- failure to use the subjunctive when required
- incorrect use of pronouns and possessive adjectives
- incorrect prepositions after certain verbs
- omission of accents or apostrophes
- a missing capital letter after a full stop
- anglicisms.

Many candidates favour the phonetical rendering to the detriment of grammatical accuracy e.g., *c'est* was sometimes spelt *cet/cette/ses/ce* ; *est* often spelt *et* or *ai* and vice versa; *ce* spelt *se* ; *ceux* spelt *ce/se* ; *ça* spelt *sa*; *on* used instead of *ont*; *a* instead of *à* and vice versa; *eu* instead of *eux*; *sont* instead of *son* and vice versa.

Such mistakes can be avoided if candidates take the time to proofread their work.

To improve the quality of language, candidates should pay particular attention to the following:

- agreement of adjectives and participles
- correct verb endings
- correct use of pronouns and prepositions
- the difference between *a* and *à*; between *et*, *est*, *ai* and *aie*; between *c'est*, *s'est*, *ses*, *ces*, *sait*; between *ce* and *se*; between *sa* and *ça*; between *été* and *était*; between *on* and *ont*; between *son* and *sont*
- widening their knowledge and use of linking words and vocabulary
- increasing the use of complex structures
- the importance of accents, apostrophes, commas, full stops and capital letters.

To improve the style and structure candidates should:

- organise and plan their response so that it is purposeful, clear and fully relevant
- start with the given prompt
- write in clear paragraphs
- include a short introduction and conclusion
- use a good range of linking words
- avoid copying chunks of the original texts
- remain focused and avoid mentioning things which are not in the texts or repeating the same ideas
- use the correct register
- sound convincing.

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

---

Paper 0501/02

Writing

## Key messages

To be successful in this paper, candidates need to select two titles (one from each section) and write a response that is relevant, well-structured and clear. Essays should be accurate with a use of idioms and appropriate vocabulary. They should be coherent and present well-developed ideas.

## General comments

In **Section A**, candidates are given a choice of 2 titles: **Question 1**, a discursive essay and **Question 2**, an argumentative essay. In **Section B**, candidates are given the choice of 2 titles: **Question 3**, a descriptive essay and **Question 4**, a narrative essay.

Each essay is marked out of 25: a maximum of 12 marks for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 marks for content and structure.

Most candidates knew how to write a descriptive essay, and some were very detailed. A few candidates wrote a descriptive essay despite choosing a narrative question and vice versa. Whilst most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words to be used (350–450 words per essay), some responses were significantly shorter.

This paper generated some excellent work which demonstrated not only accurate and fluent linguistic skills, but also a good understanding of the issues to be considered in **Questions 1** and **2**. Some examples selected were very efficient.

A few candidates need to remember the formal structure of a discursive/argumentative essay and ensure they start with an introduction. It is also important to organise the work into paragraphs and include a conclusion.

In **Question 3**, some successful candidates wrote descriptive essays which produced a vivid experience for the reader. Many candidates needed to improve the quality of descriptions and continuity. In **Question 4**, successful candidates were able to develop a good story without being predictable. Taking a few minutes to plan a rough plotline as a draft is the key to achieving a higher mark.

The importance of clear handwriting cannot be overstated. Where candidates are aware of the limitations in this area, they should be advised to take extra care to ensure that they are not unduly penalised simply for the lack of clarity.

**Question 2** was more popular than **Question 1**, and **Question 4** was more popular than **Question 3**.

As far as the quality of language was concerned, the best essays demonstrated a good level of grammatical accuracy and a wide variety of vocabulary and expressions. Linguistically, the quality of the essays varied considerably. Weaker candidates tended to use simple language and showed little grammatical or lexical awareness, which meant that ideas were not well communicated. Candidates should be reminded to use the appropriate register: *boulot, truc, glandier, mecs, prof, l'aprem, resto, dégueulasse, bouffer, vachement*, and *bordei* should not be used when writing an essay. Using the *tu* form is also not acceptable. Candidates also need to remember that *vitement* does not exist.

Recurrent errors were:

- frequent misspelling of words such as *beaucoup* and *exemple*

- *beaucoup de* often written as *beaucoup des*
- agreement of *tout/tous* and *ce*: *tous ces années, cet opinion*
- confusion between: *on/ont, mais/mes, sont/son, ça/sa, c'est/ces*
- verbs and conjugation: *il faisait, il peux, je continua, il s'est ouvrit, nous sommes allé, j'ai mangée*
- omission of accents: *a/à, ou/ou, du/dû, sur/sûr*
- use of *dû à* instead of *grâce à*
- overuse of *ça, cela, il y a*
- conjunctions at the beginning of paragraphs: *donc, aussi*
- preceding direct object agreement: *elle nous avait invite*
- use of *savoir* instead of *connaître*
- formation of adverbs in *-ment*
- anglicisms: *résulter à, consister de, advertissements* (for *publicités*)
- dependent infinitive: *je pensais de faire*
- how to ask questions: *Peut les magasins traditionnels survivre ? Es vraiment le cas ?*
- hanging past participle: *on s'allonge toute la journée en dormant*

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A**

##### **Question 1**

###### **'Les vraies vacances sont celles où on ne fait rien'. Discutez.**

This question generated a significant number of thoughtful, well-constructed and cogently argued essays. The question stated that real holidays were those when people did not do anything. Only a few essays were off topic. Stronger candidates wrote in detail about both sides of the discussion before making a judgement. Some weaker candidates only focused on one side and mentioned briefly the other side. Others lacked depth and needed to expand ideas. In order to be successful, candidates need to practise presenting a discussion in a logical way, with strong points that do not contradict themselves, and including a conclusion that is not a simple repetition of what was said before. Candidates should not use dialogues to present their discussion.

The general feeling was that you needed a balance: yes, you need to rest after working hard at school or at work but travelling and doing a few activities during the holidays is also good for the soul.

##### **Question 2**

###### **'L'art ne sert à rien'. Qu'en pensez-vous ?**

In this question candidates had to argue whether art is of no use. Although this question was popular, it came with the grammatical challenge of the negative in the statement: *L'art ne sert à rien*. This created some issues for some candidates as they were unsure how to formulate that yes, art is not useful (*l'art ne sert pas à rien*), or no, art is useful (*l'art sert à quelque chose*).

Most essays disagreed with the statement and presented a wide range of supporting ideas. They suggested that art was everywhere, in different forms: drawings, graffiti, music, paintings, sculptures, cinema... Some candidates mentioned that it makes places more attractive or that it helps us learn about our past. The Egyptian civilisation, Michelangelo and the Renaissance were often given as examples. Some candidates mentioned that is a valuable tool to learn about ancient cultures which did not use writing. Some weaker essays did not give any examples to support their ideas.

#### **Section B**

##### **Question 3**

###### **Vous rencontrez, par hasard, une personne que vous n'avez pas vue depuis des années. Écrivez vos réactions, vos sentiments et vos pensées.**

This question generated some good answers. Stronger candidates wrote a good description of the person as well as portraying reactions, feelings and thoughts. They used adverbs, adjectives (including comparatives and superlatives), relative pronouns and personal pronouns successfully. Some essays successfully provided impressive details of the person but omitted to write about the reactions, feelings and thoughts. Some weaker candidates used this title as a narrative task and did not provide enough description of reactions, feelings and thoughts to be successful.

#### Question 4

**'Quand je suis arrivé(e) à la gare, le dernier train venait de partir.' Incorporez cette phrase dans une courte histoire.**

This given sentence would be more suited if located in the middle of the story rather than at the very beginning in order to build up suspense. Some essays were very engaging and achieved successful effects. When selecting this type of question, candidates are advised to use the past historic and the imperfect or pluperfect tenses. Some candidates found this challenging and tended to mix present and past tenses.

Some candidates had learnt a story by heart and tried to make it fit the sentence, which was often unsuccessful. Some weaker essays needed to engage the reader more from the beginning, by introducing a challenge and maintaining the tension built up throughout: the plot was often too simple and there was no climax.