

# FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

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Paper 0505/01  
Reading

## Key messages

This paper tests reading comprehension and summary skills.

In **Question 1**, candidates should attempt to use their own words as far as possible in order to demonstrate their understanding of the German language.

In **Question 2**, candidates must write within the specified word limit of 200 – 250 words.

## General comments

Candidates performed well and were adequately prepared for both tasks. The general level of language was good. However, many candidates used a register that was too colloquial for formal writing.

The majority of candidates attempted to use their own words to avoid direct lifting from the texts.

The general comprehension of the texts was good, but candidates needed to make sure that they read the summary question carefully before starting to write as the task was not a general summary of both texts.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1**

In this part of the paper, it is important that candidates do not lift passages directly from the text but answer in their own words in order to demonstrate understanding.

- (a) This was a straightforward question and the majority of candidates achieved all of the available marks.
- (b) Another straightforward question where nearly all candidates achieved full marks.
- (c) This question was slightly more complex and was worth four marks. Some candidates misunderstood the author's statement that concerts do not always have to be fun in order to appeal to children.
- (d) The majority of candidates scored at least one of the two available marks. Some candidates did not include enough information to be awarded both marks.
- (e) The majority of candidates scored at least two out of three available marks in this question. Many forgot to explain the concept that, even though Maths was unpopular at school, no one thought about abolishing it. Some candidates had difficulty with the concept of music being part of our culture and gave abstract answers such as, 'Music is identity'. This did not show understanding and could not be credited.
- (f) This was a challenging question and understanding was somewhat limited. Many candidates copied the correct information from the text but did not explain it further.
- (g) Another challenging question to finish this part of the paper. Nearly all candidates attempted this question and were able to score at least one out of the available three marks.

## Question 2

Many candidates used up to 50 words for their introduction, explaining what they are going to say in their summary. This is not necessary, and it inevitably means that candidates exceed the word limit. Any valid content points made after the upper end of the word limit cannot be credited.

It is important to read the question to the end as it is not just a summary of both texts: candidates are asked to focus on particular aspects. In this year's paper, the focus was on problems and possible solutions with regards to classical music and young people. Many candidates structured their summary around these two aspects and were able to score good marks for Style and Organisation.

General understanding of both texts was good and many candidates were able to give a structured and succinct summary. Candidates showed good linkage by including *erstens/zweitens*, *weiterhin*, *darüber hinaus*, *ebenso*. However, there were also candidates who gave too much detail for a short summary. For example, when stating that concert-goers are expected to wear formal clothing it is not necessary to give exact details of the clothes worn.

Most candidates' language was generally appropriate, but many showed interference from another language in aspects such as word order or direct translations. Whilst the register was mostly appropriate, some candidates' language was too colloquial. Additionally, a small number of candidates were unfamiliar with the rules of punctuation and capitalisation.

A small number of candidates finished by including their own opinion about classical music or how it could be made more interesting for young people. This is not part of the question and could not be credited.

# FIRST LANGUAGE GERMAN

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Paper 0505/02  
Writing

## Key messages

This year's best essays were produced by candidates who worked from a well-structured plan thus avoiding repetition and presenting orderly and engaging work with precise and convincing detail.

The most successful responses in **Section 1** had a wide range of points and linked them together, not just by sorting them by relative importance, but also by building on one another to show where they are linked in multiple ways. The best work in **Section 2** showed good understanding of the essay-type required, using tenses and perspectives appropriately as well as employing a wide range of accurate vocabulary and varied syntax.

It would benefit their work if candidates took time with each sentence – re-structuring sentences in mid-flow rarely improves the quality and usually adds avoidable mistakes. A regular sentence needs both subject and verb. Elliptic sentences can be joined on with a comma or colon.

Candidates must take great care with their handwriting as illegible content cannot be taken into consideration when awarding marks.

## General comments

### *Style and Accuracy*

There was sometimes a discrepancy between a fluent, well-controlled syntax, combined with impressive, sophisticated and varied vocabulary and a very noticeable lack of knowledge or care for spelling and punctuation, and sometimes also grammar. These sorts of mistakes had a negative impact on marks awarded for what was otherwise excellent language.

Relative clauses were the most disregarded subordinate clauses, followed by a number of mistakes on 'infinitive with zu' rules on *um zu*, *ohne zu* and so on. Commas after *dass* instead of before it, or separating adverbial phrases like *Am frühen Morgen* from the following main clause were prevalent. Candidates are also advised to pay attention to punctuation around direct speech as this was sometimes problematic.

Difficult areas for spelling included the unnecessary separation of separable verbs. For example, ...*was da gegen spricht* instead of *was dagegenspricht*; *auf gegangen* instead of *aufgegangen* etc. The same applied to compound nouns: *Vollmond Nacht* instead of *Vollmondnacht*. Another important issue centred on the spelling of imported (mostly English) words and phrases, e.g. *Face-to-Face-Kommunikation*, *Lasershow* etc. German spelling rules apply here too, and the Duden is the best source to clarify these individual cases as well as in general. Candidates are advised to revise and practise these points before taking the exam.

Candidates are advised to revise verbs thoroughly. Knowledge and appropriate use of subjunctive forms and indirect speech were rare this year. Strong conjugation for the past tenses was often flawed – *gesteigt*, *gefliagt*, *liefte*, *schlafte*, *schiessste* etc. – as was the use of tenses themselves. Especially in **Question 2**, there were a lot of changes of tense (e.g. preterite tense to present tense and back) when the narration stayed in the same time frame, at times within the same sentence. Tenses need to be accurate for an essay to gain marks in the top band for grammar. Narrative texts in particular often showed a lack of pluperfect to relate chronological events.

In terms of relative pronouns *wo* and *was* were excessively and often inaccurately used and *deren* and *denen* were often used interchangeably. Candidates can also improve their grammar by reiterating the use of dative and accusative cases.

### Content and Structure

Marks scored for this second criterion were usually higher than for *Style and Accuracy*. Examiners reported a majority of well-structured essays.

In **Section 1**, many good points and arguments were used and most essays provided an introduction as well as a conclusion. Some candidates did not appear to be aware of the difference between an argumentative structure that focuses on one side of a given topic (*Erörterung* – linear) and a well-balanced, two-sided discursive structure (*Diskussion* – *dialektisch*). This led to more vague threads of arguments and in several cases a conclusion which contradicted the points used in the main body of the essay. Candidates should read the title carefully as this indicates the structure required.

This year's creative essays generally showed a good grasp of essay-types and solid writing craftsmanship. Most candidates had made a plan before they started writing and this generally had a positive impact on the essays. The best descriptive pieces not only supplied details of sensual perception but also insight into the narrator's thoughts and feelings. Many narrative essays had a tight plot structure and often captivated the reader's interest from the start with imaginative storylines and interesting dialogues.

### Comments on specific questions

#### *Teil 1 – Diskussion und Erörterung*

##### Question 1

- (a) This was the most popular question and many thoughtful essays included the wider implications of a life without pen and paper. Nearly all of them mentioned at least two of three main threads, namely the impact on the environment, health issues on students carrying heavy book bags as well as the strain on eyes if all texts were to be processed digitally, and the mnemonic support which is provided by hand-writing notes as opposed to typing them. Many candidates also explored considerations for the older generation or those lacking financial means. Less successful essays focused on only one or two points and often came to conclusions which did not match the line of argument within the main body.
- (b) This topic was chosen by a smaller number of candidates but yielded plenty of food for thought. There was a wide range of impressive detailed knowledge on space travel as well as sustainable living and global warming. The most successful essays showed deep insight into the human condition to be able to destroy what keeps us alive no matter on which planet we find ourselves, and a profound belief in our ability to stop this process. Weaker work mainly described the damage to the environment without focusing on the main topic: how do we as a global society deal with these problems?
- (c) The question of whether every school-leaver should be able to speak at least one foreign language also produced interesting scripts of high quality. Many responses debated the cognitive and communicative benefits of bilingualism, and the advantages that bilingual jobseekers enjoy. Several candidates added the enjoyment of language-learning and the broadening of cultural horizons. Weaker essays tended to mainly list anecdotal or personal evidence from candidates' own school experience, and then struggled to find a convincing conclusion.
- (c) *Leben ohne Bargeld* attracted the second largest number of responses. Most essays were in favour of a levelled solution, phasing out cash gradually or trying to keep a portion of all financial transactions open for cash payments. Both business and customer points of view were considered. Essays on this topic often mentioned older generations and their reluctance to switch to a new system. The main arguments were concerned with hygiene and safety – in electronic as well as traditional solutions – as well as practicalities. Here again essays could not access the higher mark bands where these points were merely described and not further explored or ordered in relation to each other. The highest scoring essays convinced the reader by addressing the complex issue of acceptance and trust customers might or might not be able to put into global banking and finance.

## Teil 2 – Schilderung und Erzählung

### Question 2

- (a) This topic attracted the most responses in this section. A high number of essays took the reader to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower while others visited the Great Wall of China, the Leaning Tower of Pisa or the Grand Canyon. Several castles, cathedrals and the Pyramids were also on offer. A good number of essays did not name the landmark in front of which they were finding themselves and still delivered dense and convincing atmospheres. Some essays quickly left the outside perspective and took the reader into or onto the landmark, often rushing through obvious visual impressions and as a result missing the opportunity to relate insights into the protagonist's thoughts and feelings. Well-written essays tended to include impressions of overcrowding, noise and hectic or, in many cases, the stillness and feeling of being alone at a landmark devoid of tourists at unusual times of the day or year. Very often awe and wonder were expressed but not always: several high-scoring works presented critical thoughts and negative impressions, for example, accusations directed at fellow visitors for not having enough respect for and piety towards a *Trauerdenkmal*.
- (b) This was a popular title. A few essays took the reader to a traditional hall or theatre, awaiting a pianist or violin player but the majority of described events focused on the rock, pop or rap scene. Mostly set at festivals or huge indoor arenas, excitement and anticipation were described in great variety. Even though the breadth of vocabulary was naturally restricted, many pieces succeeded in taking the reader right into the middle of the pre-concert humming and buzzing, providing plenty of detail and also covering a manageable time span, prompted by the word *gleich* in the title. Less successful essays either disregarded this, taking the reader through the whole concert and therefore losing depth of atmosphere, or lacked basic structure and simply repeated the same impressions: loudspeakers, lights, security personnel. Many successful essays focused on the closeness to other members of the audience, on experiences of temperature, hunger, thirst and the attempt to manage anxiety. Some exceptional pieces zoomed in and out of the time frame, for example to relate the moment they were given the tickets or to another event with the same artist.
- (c) There were some excellent and inventive stories, including crime, romance, fairy tales and numerous werewolf plots. Most of these narrative texts had an effective structure which candidates managed to adhere to and thus presented entertaining and fascinating storylines, supported by witty and exact dialogue and often well-designed twists at the end. Less successful pieces simply transferred everyday life events into a night setting, sometimes omitting the full moon altogether, relying on the forbidden nature of such meetings as the only carrier of suspense.
- (d) The prompt for this narrative task led to a kaleidoscope of different travel devices: apart from the rather familiar metal container, candidates also presented the reader with machines from unexpectedly successful school projects, travelling saunas and, more unusually, a special chocolate recipe that triggered the journey. There was also a huge variety of destinations: from ten minutes earlier (same day, same location) to the Stone Age, the Roman Empire, the Roaring Twenties, Robin Hood's England or battlefields in different historical wars, or, more poignantly, encounters with absent family members. Some were written from a starting point in the future, travelling back to 2021, which added another layer of science fiction finesse to the plot and gave it more interest. It was rewarding to see how some essays also projected the development of today's problems into a future society in true genre fashion. Less successful essays got lost in minute description of the time machine or irrelevant dialogue, not leaving enough room for an interesting plot to unfold.