

'TOP TIPS' FOR GCSE ENGLISH – PAPER 1

- Answer **Section B** first – question 5.
- There are two questions (describe and/or narrative) – **you choose one.**
- You are advised to spend **45 minutes** on Section B
- There are two separate marks given that make a total of **40 marks**
- You are awarded a mark out of 24 for **content and organisation**
- You are awarded a mark out of 16 for technical accuracy: your **spelling, punctuation and grammar**
- Write at least three sides.

PAPER 1 – SECTION B – 45 mins

1. You will have a choice of questions that will ask you to **describe** or write a **narrative** (story), whichever you choose it is important to use a range of techniques.
2. The first question will be **based on a picture** – it will be a description or a narrative.
3. **Plan before writing.** Think about methods and techniques as well as content and plan for both.
4. To make your work more detailed if you are **describing**, think about what you are being asked to describe from different angles.
 - Start off with a broad description of the place e.g. the whole shopping centre.
 - Focus in on smaller areas e.g. one shop window
 - Think about the people in the place e.g. a group of shoppers
 - Focus in on one person and what they are doing e.g. an old woman shopping
5. If you choose the describe question – **DO NOT WRITE A STORY.**
6. If you write a **narrative (story)**, you must limit it to a **small amount of closely described actions** and use a range of techniques or you will not get many marks.

PAPER 1 – SECTION B – 45 mins

3. Remember that you **MUST** write in **PARAGRAPHS**.
4. You can put yourself into the description, picture or story if you like and imagine you are in the place.
5. Use your imagination to interpret the question and make up details – **be creative and be original**.
6. Try to engage the reader – your opening must be original and interesting – think about structure and how you will finish your piece of writing. It could have an open ending, or a cyclic structure. You might want to use analepsis (flashback) and prolepsis (flash-forward) to get more marks.

8. Try to use as many of the following descriptive techniques as possible:

APPEAL TO THE SENSES – sights, sounds, smells, touch (textures/feelings) and taste.

USE COMPARISONS:

SIMILE – (LIKE/AS) Spencer ate like a pig. Spencer is as greedy as a pig.

METAPHOR – Spencer **is** a pig. The ship ploughed through the waves.

PERSONIFICATION – The sun smiled down on me.

ONOMATOPOEIA – words that imitate sounds – crash, bang, wallop

ALLITERATION – She sells sausages with saucy centres

9. Refer to size, colour and movement.

10. **Vary your sentences** – use short sentences for suspense.

Start some sentences with subordinate clauses—start with an –ly or –ing word.

e.g. Smiling happily, the young girl put her icy cold hand on the knife.

Cautiously, the scared, shivering child crept into the cold, empty hall.

11. **Vary your paragraphs** – a one word, or one line paragraph can be used for effect. Think about interesting and engaging ways of starting paragraphs.

12. Try to use **two** adjectives before a noun. e.g. big old house and adverbs next to verbs e.g. running quickly.

10. Use the full range of punctuation – ellipsis, semi-colon, colon, brackets, dash, apostrophes, question marks, exclamation marks, commas etc.
11. Use a wide, challenging and descriptive vocabulary.
e.g. ‘wandered’ instead of ‘walked’
‘magnificent’ instead of ‘nice’.
12. To get started – picture what you are being asked to describe in your imagination. This is the picture you are trying to create for the reader through words.

**CHECK PARAGRAPHING, SPELLING, GRAMMAR AND
PUNCTUATION**

MAKE IMPROVEMENTS IF YOU CAN.

PAPER 1 – SECTION A – 1 hour

- You may want to think carefully about the **order** in which you approach the questions in **Section A** in order to target the highest marks.

Question 1

- This question asks you to **SELECT AND INTERPRET RELEVANT DETAILS**
- You have 5 mins to plan and answer this question
- There are 4 marks for this answer.
- Find and read the right section.
- Select only details relevant to the key words in the question.
- Write a full sentence for each answer.
- Use your own words as far as possible.

PAPER 1 – SECTION A – 1 hour

Question 2

- Paper 1 Q2 – is focused on **analysing language**
- **12 mins / 8 marks**
- Find **3 examples** of interesting imagery (or one example could be about sentence structure if you choose) that link back to the **key idea** in the question.
- You need **quotations** for any imagery you select.
- Identify the **language techniques/methods** being used in those chosen quotations.
- Write about what you **infer** (the impression you get) from the imagery and/or sentence form, **making the link back to the key word in the question.**
- Try to **develop your inferences** – 2/3 points, not one.
- Use **P.E.E.** to structure your answer (**Point/Evidence/ Explanation.**)
- Use **discourse markers** that add information when you move to your next point – (e.g. also, in addition, furthermore.)

PAPER 1 – SECTION A – 1 hour

Question 3

- This question asks you to analyse **STRUCTURE** (the way the extract is organised.)
- You have **12 mins** to plan and answer this question for **8 marks**
- Look at the **opening few lines** of the text and think about what they are about and **WHY this interests the reader** – what is introduced/WHY?
- Look for the changes in focus in the extract - **WHY** and **HOW** does this happen – why does this **interest the reader**?
- Look for one other structural feature and why it **interests the reader**.
 - movement from big to small in ideas or perspectives
 - taking an outside to inward perspective, or vice versa
 - the function of a particular paragraph
 - use of repetition
 - narrative voice
- Use **quotations** to support points.
- **Use words and phrases from the white box.**

structure	introducing
change of focus	developing
progressing	turning point
repeating	contrasting
changing	transition
foreshadowing	concluding

PAPER 1 – SECTION A – 1 hour

Question 4

- Paper 1 Q4 – is about **evaluating** details and **making a judgement**.
- You have **20 mins** and it is worth **20 marks**.
- You will be given a statement and have to decide whether you agree with the judgement or not, or how much.
- Focus on the **correct area of the source**.
- Find any details that will help you to decide if you agree or not – consider the statement.
- **Start with a clear statement of whether or not you agree.**
- Look at the **methods/techniques** - language and structure as well as the content - and **how** you get an impression - link back to the statement in the question.
- Think about the **writer's intentions** and what they are trying to achieve.
- Pick out **3-4 quotations** that support your view.
- Use **P.E.E./SQL to argue a convincing case for your opinion** using details from the text and referring to techniques/methods.
- Use **discourse markers** as you add points to argue your case e.g. **also, in addition, furthermore**.

And finally...

- **READ THE QUESTIONS CAREFULLY**
- **MAKE SURE YOU PLAN BEFORE WRITING**
- **KEEP AN EYE ON THE TIME**
- **START WITH SECTION B – THINK ABOUT THE BEST WAY TO TARGET THE HIGHEST MARKS IN SECTION A**
- **TRY TO ANSWER ALL OF THE QUESTIONS**
- **MAKE SURE YOU WRITE DETAILED ANSWERS ON QUESTIONS THAT CARRY HIGH MARKS**
- **THIS IS AN ENGLISH EXAM – WRITE CLEARLY AND ACCURATELY**

GOOD LUCK!