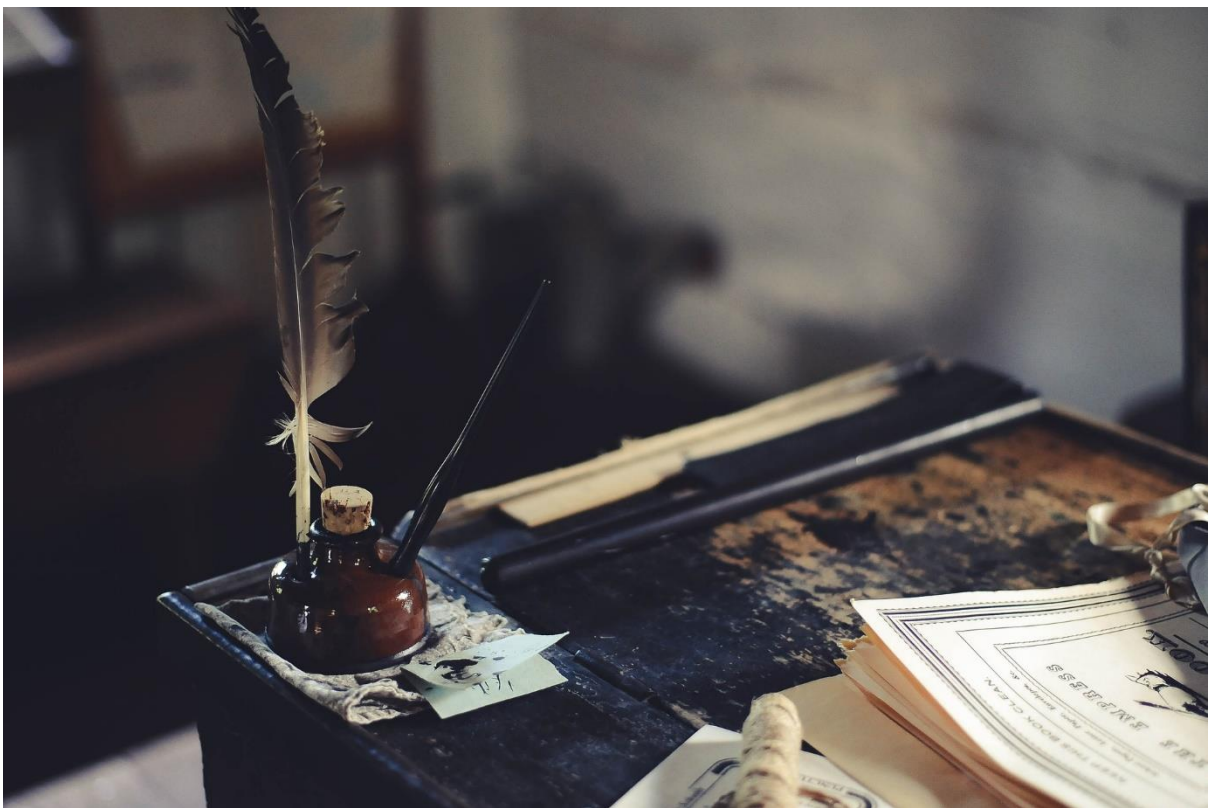


AQA GCSE English Language Revision Booklet: CREATIVE WRITING



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Creative Writing

Skill 1: Coming up with an idea

In the examination, you will have a choice of two questions. One question will be in response to a picture. The other question will ask you to write a story or part of a story. There is no right or wrong question to select. You need to choose the question that most inspires you because this will undoubtedly make you a better writer!

Then, there are some general rules that writers use.

1. Write about what you know, it will be a lot more convincing!
2. If it keeps you interested it is more likely to interest your reader
3. Using real life events that have had an emotional impact on you are useful for the examination.

The picture is a useful prompt for people who are visual learners. It is a good idea to spend a lot of time describing details in the picture as part of your writing.

Here is a picture that could be used in the examination.



The question asked by the examiner is: **Write the opening to a story where there is a dramatic storm.**

You do not have to use the picture. However, the opening of the story should set the scene with little action. This means that the opening should be a description of the storm. This means you can use the picture for the whole of your piece of writing.

Task 1: Nouns are things or ideas. Write nouns all over the picture.



You need to look small when you are listing nouns. Here is a man. "Man" is a noun.

What about: Coat, gloves, shoulders, fingers, shoes, soles, feet, trousers, hood, split, hand, step, fold, crease, thumb, sleeves, wrists, knees, legs, pockets, palms.

You see the point. "Man" is the main thing that you spot. However, when you look more closely you see a lot more details.

Task 2: List a lot more nouns, using the picture to help you.

You then need to select the nouns that you are going to focus on. Imagine that all you are going to do is describe this scene at the start of your story. The examiner will love this – they want you to show off – they really do only want the opening few paragraphs. So, with this in mind (and not what is going to happen in the rest of the story) select nouns that will help you say the most.

Task 3: Select the big nouns that are going to be the topic of your paragraphs. Then, select the best small nouns that you are going to focus on when writing the paragraph.

Big Noun	Small Nouns

Notice how you now have the start of a plan for your piece of writing.

You might want to improve the level of your writing by deciding what type of fiction you are going to produce. This will help guide you to make some choices and prompt ideas. For instance, if you decided this was going to be a disaster story or a love story or a spy story. These stories would help you to decide on what you were going to focus on in the image.

Task 4: Write a summary of the ways of describing the picture depending on the type of story.

Disaster	Love	Spy

The other type of question gives you a task but does not offer you much of a prompt. This gives you a lot of freedom to write what you want. This is both exciting and difficult all at the same time.

Here are some example questions:

Write the opening of a story that includes a scary character.

Write four paragraphs of a story that includes an exciting event.

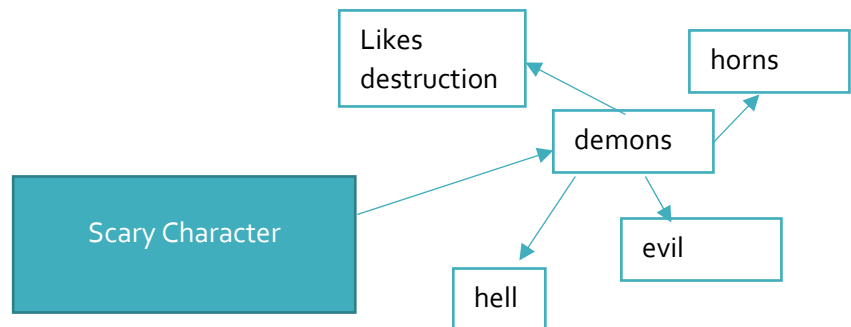
Write the ending of a story that leaves the reader shocked.

Tip: Notice how they only want you to write a portion of the story. This is on purpose. They want you to focus on writing well. They do not want the whole story and you don't have time. A professional writer takes weeks to perfect a story. You have about 40 minutes. Four paragraphs area plenty!

The first way to come up with an idea is to identify the keyword in the task and brainstorm ideas.

Write the opening of a story that includes a scary character.

Task 5: Fill up a page with ideas about "scary character". Write down anything that comes into your mind – even if you think it is silly. Use first ideas to come up with other ideas. One example has been completed for you.



Some people do not like the muddled nature of brainstorm/ spider diagrams. So, an alternative would be to write a list, using headings and subheadings and bullet points.

There are lots of strategies. Try this other strategy to see if you prefer this one instead.

Task 6: Give yourself exactly 90 seconds. Write anything and everything that comes into your mind. Don't stop writing, keep the pen moving. If your mind goes blank just write the phrase / am writing I am writing until something else comes in your mind.

It might be that your mind goes blank. Some people prefer to think in pictures. This would suggest you choose the picture question or you can do a 90 second sketch of an image that pops in your mind and then follow the strategies for a picture for your own work.

Here is another alternative.

Task 7: Think of a piece of music that links to the key word. Write ideas that this music prompts in your mind.

Creative Writing

Skill 2: Structuring your work

One of the major mark scheme points that will dictate your mark is your use of paragraphs.

- Students with a low mark will not use paragraphs.
- Students gaining a middle mark will use paragraphs but using them in a way that looks like they don't know how they work too well.
- Students gaining the highest mark will use paragraphs in an imaginative way, where choices are made for the effect they have on the reader.

So, what is a paragraph? A paragraph is a block focused on one idea – people often use TIPTOP to help them understand paragraphs. Time, place, topic, people. These are the different times you change paragraph. If you think about this sensibly, this means you change paragraph when you change focus.

Your thinking should go like this:

Right, I need to describe the setting – including a house and some weather

And then, I need to focus on my character

I should then show how the character spends the day

Then I will talk about an event the character was involved in.

Look at how the different line changes from one focus to another. The description of character might overlap with the day but you need to find the point when you have stopped describing the character and are now describing a day in their life.

Task 1: Think about the description of your scary character. Write four statements that show what you are going to focus on. Each focus you mention will be a different paragraph.



This is an image that could be used as a picture in the examination.

If you were using this to set the scene for a bigger story what would your focus be? Where would you start with the reader? Where would you move them to next, and next and then where would your description stop before moving on to the story?

Write these focuses as four statements. These statements would make up the paragraphs for your story.

Task 2: Find a distinctive image that could be used in the exam. Think how you would use this image to help guide the reader into a story, setting the scene.

Sometimes, paragraphs can be one sentence long. This should be used sparingly – for powerful effect on the reader!

You are expected to organise the ideas well within paragraphs too.

At primary school, you may have been taught something called: Big Point, little point. A Big Point is the paragraph. A little point is an idea within the paragraph.

So, the big point was to describe the setting and include details about weather.

Small points:

- Inside warm house
- Mountains through window
- Snow
- Windy
- Snow blowing against windows of house



Task: Use this image to come up with Big Points and little points.

The headings (big points) and bullet points (small points) will make up a paragraph map that would guide you when you write.

Tip: It is good examination technique to spend at least 20% of your time planning what you are going to write. It is better to write less than more, so you have time to plan what you are going to write.

What does imaginative and effective paragraphing look like? It is using paragraphs and the order of paragraphs to have an impact on the reader.

So, if I wanted the setting of my story to be peaceful and calm, as if I was writing a love story, then I would start by focusing on the water and the way the light hits the water.

If I wanted to suggest to my reader that something scary was going to happen, I would start with the branches of the trees, that are bare of leaves. Then, I might have a single sentence paragraph that introduces a noise.

Task: Look at your paragraph map. Is your use of paragraphing clever? Will it have an impact on the reader in some way? Do you know what impact this would be?

Revision Activity:

1. Go to this website - <https://pixabay.com/> where you will find lots of free images you can use. Use the images you find to drill the skill of coming up with ideas and organising these ideas effectively.

Creative Writing

Skill 3: Making clever choices on purpose

The favourite question of any student ever is: did the writer really mean to do that? Sometimes the answer will be no. A lot of time the answer will be yes. Skilled writers make choices on purpose – they want to have an impact on the reader.

If you want a top mark you need to make imaginative and effective choices that have an impact on the reader.

The easiest way to practise making clever choices is to write a short text. So, let's focus on writing exactly 100 words. This will force you to be disciplined and choose only the best words.



Task 1: Write a 100-word story in response to this picture. Remember to guide your reader through the story in an organised way.

As you only have 100 words, you will have had to edit closely as you write. You will have taken words out that were not needed and added some to extend an idea. This is part of the process of making effective choices. You must edit as you write.

You can also make your writing more effective by using imagery. Writers use imagery because they know we all have shared ideas about the world. Say "duck" to someone and they will likely see a similar image in their mind.

Task 2: Here is an activity to show you how powerful imagery can be. You and a friend/ family member follow these instructions, each which ask you to draw a tree. Don't watch each other.

1. Draw a tree.
2. Draw a tree that looks like a lollipop (simile).
3. Draw the witches tree (metaphor)

Swap pictures. What do you notice about the pictures that were drawn from imagery?

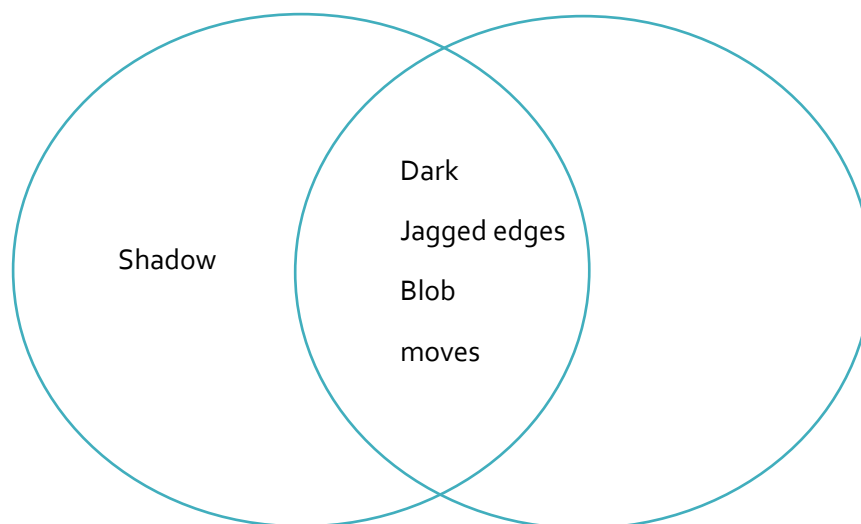
Imagery can change the way the reader thinks or feels about something.

Even in a 100-word story you need to impact on the way the reader thinks and feels.

Here is a 100-word story:

The woman walked down the dark street. All but one street light was blown out. It was dark. Her shadow was long down the road and soon there was another shadow there too. She began to walk quickly, then into a run and then a sprint. All shadows disappeared as she moved out of the light and now she panicked. She could hear the footsteps now, closer and closer. She stopped. She could not run anymore. From behind, a hand gripped over her face and pulled her back. She could not breathe and she could not escape. He had her.

The examiner would like the short sentences for effect. These sentences make it seem panicked and breathless. But, the word shadow is repeated and it feels a little factual. This examiner would want the writer to work harder to impact on the reader.



If you are going to add to the description you need to think of a simile or metaphor to give more impact to the shadow. The two circles overlap to suggest they are similar. The words in the overlap are the features that are the same. You need to think about what could be used as a comparison. An obvious metaphor would be *the monstrous shadow*. There are lots of possibilities.

Task 3: Look at your 100-word story. Highlight any words that you think could be enhanced by imagery. Use two overlapping circles to come up with metaphors or similes that could help your story have impact on your reader.

As well as images, the writer will also try to control the tone of voice that the reader uses. The writer will use techniques such as alliteration or onomatopoeia to make the piece sound more like the emotions the reader should feel.

To improve this line: *All shadows disappeared as she moved out of the light and now she panicked.*

A writer might use lots of "T" sounds or "P" sounds or "D" sounds. So, the writer could instead write "*Panic punched into her throat, as the darkness deepened.*" This sounds harsh, much scarier.

Task 4: Rewrite your 100-word story. Use sounds that match the emotions you want your reader to feel.

Here are some other techniques that a writer will use on purpose to have an impact on the reader.

Metaphor
Simile
Personification
Repetition
Exaggeration
Hyperbole
Oxymoron
Paradox
Symbolism
Alliteration
Pattern of three
Irony

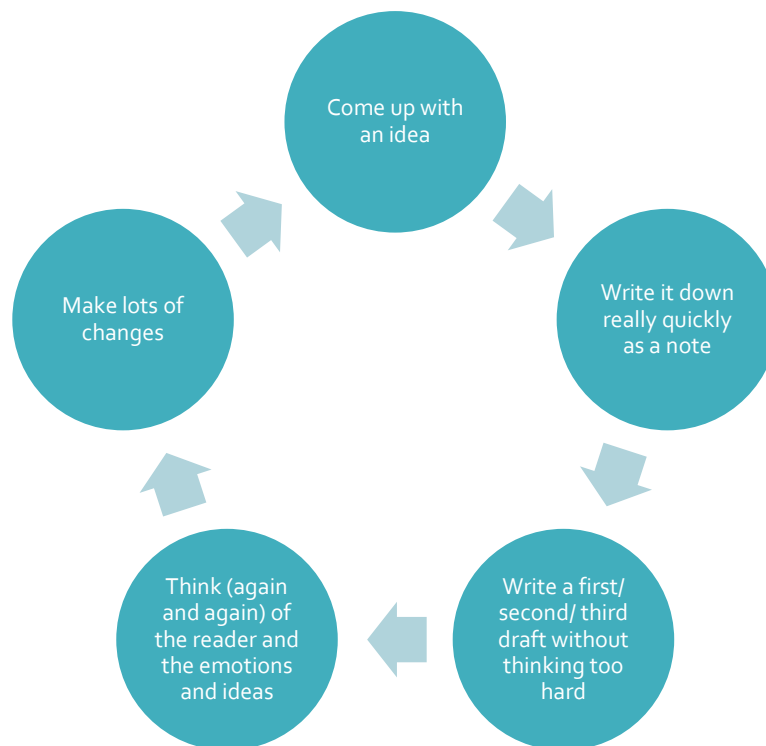
Task 5: Use the internet to find out why a writer would use each of these techniques. Why might they use them on purpose to impact on the reader.

Then, try to use these techniques in your 100-word story. Keep each draft you make.

Show someone your first draft and then your final draft. Ask them to decide which one is better and why.

You cannot be expected to use these techniques as you write your first draft. This is the reason the examiner is asking for only a short extract from a story. The examiner realises that you will need to keep going back to edit and make improvements to your choices.

Here is the thinking process of a writer.



The writer will go around this cycle as many times as they need to. They will keep refining and perfecting a piece of writing until they impact on the reader as powerfully as possible.

Revision Activity:

2. Keep writing 100-word stories and editing them, using the techniques on purpose.

Creative Writing

Skill 4: Varying your sentences

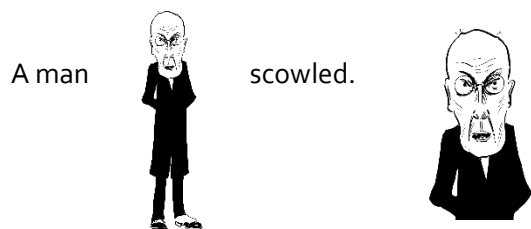
The examiner will be looking your use of sentences. You need to write accurate sentence, you need to use lots of different types of sentence and you need to write sentences that have an impact on the reader.

Accurate sentences that lack variety = low mark

Varied sentences, accurately written = middle mark

Varied and accurate sentences, which are used to impact the reader = high mark

Sentences have a subject (noun) and a verb. They need a capital letter and a full stop.



This is a sentence because something (man: noun) acted (scowled: verb).



This is also a sentence – “is” – which means the action here is just being alive!

Task 1: Drill the skill of writing accurate simple sentences.



Use this image to write a series of simple sentences.

Nouns:

- Girl
- Dancer
- Ballerina

Verbs

- Danced
- Spins
- Stretches.

The first way you can add variety is by adding an adverb to the start of the sentence.

Angrily, the man scowled.

Obviously, the man is old.

Another way you can add variety is by adding more information to the end of the sentence. Here there are subordinate clauses added to the main clause. This makes a complex sentence.

The man scowled, as he looked at the picture.

The man is old, which means he struggles walking.

Task 2: Edit your sentences about the girl. First include an adverb at the start of the sentences about the girl. Then, see if you can turn your simple sentences into complex sentences.

As	In case	How
As if	Since	Just as
After	When	That
Before	So that	Where
Ever since	Although	Whom
Whenever	Even if	Who
Until	Not only	Whatever
Because	Unless	Like

These are called subordinators. These should help you to add extra information to your simple sentences. For instance: *The old man scowled, before angrily leaving the room. The old man scowled, even if you paid him a complement.*

The great thing about subordinate clauses is that you can move them to different places in the sentence. For instance: *Before angrily leaving the room, the old man scowled. Even if you paid him a complement, the old man scowled.*

Task 3: Move the subordinate clause to the start of your sentences.

You can also add variety by writing compound sentences. Be careful though, both sentences that you link with "and, but or because" suggest they are connected. For instance: *The old man scowled and he is old. The old man scowled because he is old. The old man scowled but he is old.*

You can also add variety to your sentences by turning them into questions. For instance: *Did the man scowl? Is the man old?*

Task 4: Write more sentences about the little girl. Use compound sentences and questions to give you even more choices.

Revision Activity:

3. Drill the skill, find a picture and write lots of different sentences using different choices.

To get the highest mark, you need to make sentence choices on purpose. This means you choose a sentence that has an impact on the way that the reader feels or the way the reader thinks.

Look closely at this extract from *The Iron Man* by Ted Hughes.

The Iron Man came to the top of the cliff.

How far had he walked? Nobody knows. Where did he come from? Nobody knows. How was he made? Nobody knows.

Taller than a house, the Iron Man stood at the top of the cliff, on the very brink, in the darkness.

The wind sang through his iron fingers. His great iron head, shaped like a dustbin but as big as a bedroom, slowly turned to the right, slowly turned to the left. His iron ears turned, this way, that way. He was hearing the sea. His eyes, like headlamps, glowed white, then red, then infrared, searching the sea. Never before had the Iron Man seen the sea.

He swayed in the strong wind that pressed against his back. He swayed forward, on the brink of the high cliff.

And his right foot, his enormous iron right foot, lifted - up, out into space, and the Iron Man stepped forward, off the cliff, into nothingness.

CRRRAAAASSSSSH!

Down the cliff the Iron Man came toppling, head over heels.

CRASH!

CRASH!

CRASH!

From rock to rock, snag to snag, tumbling slowly. And as he crashed and crashed and crashed.

Here is a simple sentence.

Here are some questions.

Here is a complex sentence.

Here are complex sentences with lots of clauses.

Here is a list, which is another form of question.

Here is a single word sentence, an exclamation, which is accurate because it is an exclamation.

Here is an incomplete sentence used for effect on the reader – so accepted as accurate – done on purpose by the writer.

Task 5: Go through the choices made by Ted Hughes. Explain the choices made by the writer and how they impact on the reader.

Task 6: Write a paragraph about the little girl dancer. Use different types of sentences. Choose the sentences to have an impact on the reader. Then, label your paragraph, explaining the reason you chose the sentence.

Revision Activity:

4. Drill the skill, Write 100-word stories and then label them, explaining your choices.

Creative Writing

Skill 5: Making word choices on purpose

Getting a good mark will rely a lot on your vocabulary. This is because good vocabulary is easier to spot than other things in the mark scheme.

- To get a low mark you will have a small vocabulary that you use repetitively.
- To get a middle mark you will have a decent vocabulary, though some words will be out of place.
- To get a top mark you will have an excellent vocabulary but you know when to use a word to have the most impact on the reader.

The difference between being good at using words and being excellent at using words is not about the difficulty of the vocabulary. Sometimes using simple words is powerful. Complex words can often get in the way of meaning. So, with words, it is all about CHOICE.

Your examiner will be able to see if you have a weak vocabulary if you keep using “really” and “very”. Is something *very good* or *really important*? *Is the person really happy and very angry*? These are like flashing lights in your work that you need to work on your vocabulary.

Look at this image:

WORDS TO USE INSTEAD OF “VERY”	
✗ very noisy	✓ deafening
✗ very often	✓ frequently
✗ very old	✓ ancient
✗ very old-fashioned	✓ archaic
✗ very open	✓ transparent
✗ very painful	✓ excruciating
✗ very pale	✓ ashen
✗ very perfect	✓ flawless
✗ very poor	✓ destitute
✗ very powerful	✓ compelling
✗ very pretty	✓ beautiful
✗ very quick	✓ rapid
✗ very quiet	✓ hushed
✗ very rainy	✓ pouring
✗ very rich	✓ wealthy
✗ very sad	✓ sorrowful
✗ very scared	✓ petrified
✗ very scary	✓ chilling
✗ very serious	✓ grave
✗ very sharp	✓ keen
✗ very shiny	✓ gleaming
✗ very short	✓ brief
✗ very shy	✓ timid
✗ very simple	✓ basic

Task 1: Write two paragraphs. In one paragraph use words in the “very” column. Then, rewrite the paragraph using words in the other column. Read the two paragraphs out loud to someone. Ask them which sounds the best.

There are words that you will use all the time as part of your vocabulary. Go through your English book or History book, in particular. List the words you seem to use a lot, especially where you use really or very. Words like good, nice, horrible, silly... where you might have used excellent, sweet, sadistic, idiotic.

Task 2: Look up the words that you use a lot in a thesaurus. Write down more appropriate words or words that sound more intelligent that you could have used instead.

Tip: The bigger your vocabulary you have, the more intelligent you will become. When we have a lot of words in our heads it is easier to explain to ourselves and to others what is happening and why it is happening. Often when we say we don't understand, we mean we don't have the words to say what we think. The best way to increase your vocabulary is to read books – no lies – it is really the only way.



This means that your first job with the picture to name the nouns in the picture is crucial. You need to pick the right noun to name the item in the picture. Then, you need to consider the best adjective – but most importantly the most effective verb.

Here are some nouns in the picture:

- Bridge
- River
- Dome
- Lights

Task 3: For each noun select an adjective that best helps you describe the noun. Look the adjective up the thesaurus to see if there is a more effective adjective.

Task 4: For each noun phrase (noun + adjective) select an effective verb to complete the sentence. Look the verb up in the thesaurus to see if there is a better verb available.

The more you do this, the more words you will be able to use. The words will come to you automatically the more you look these up and the more you try to use these in sentences.

Revision Activity:

5. Drill the skill, find a picture and label nouns. Build these nouns into sentences, finding adjectives and verbs. List lots of adjectives and verbs to find the best ones.

Creative Writing

Skill 6: Using punctuation for effect

One of the simplest ways to make your writing effective is to use punctuation. This adds a tone of voice to your writing and helps to give variety to your sentences.

Task 1: Do you know all the punctuation marks?

Name these punctuation marks:

! " () ? : ; ' . , - ...

To get a low mark you will need to use full stops and a few commas, maybe used incorrectly.

To get a middle mark you will use a range of punctuation, which tends to mean three or more pieces of punctuation used accurately.

To get a high mark you will need to use the full range of punctuation, when it is effective and appropriate.



Whether you use a comma or not can completely change the meaning in a sentence, as this picture shows you.

Task 2: Here is a sentence without punctuation. Write the sentence as many times as you can, using different punctuation to change the meaning.

please get out of here you are not welcome call the police now

You can remove letters to include apostrophes. You cannot delete whole words.

Write a few sentences about the differences between the sentences you have written and the effect of the change in punctuation.

Sometimes with punctuation less is more. Weak writers tend to use a lot of exclamation marks. This is a way of insisting to the reader that this is shocking or surprising. Maybe it would be better if you didn't have to insist and it was actually shocking or surprising. The ellipses are also overused at times. Putting ellipses at the end of paragraphs or at the end of a story is done when the writer wants to do the work for them.

Task 3: Write a paragraph that is shocking and surprising. The problem is – you are banned from using exclamation marks and ellipses. How are you going to use punctuation to get the effect you want with more subtlety and more cleverly?

The time when you will want to use punctuation carefully is if you choose to write dialogue in your story. Dialogue is difficult to get right. We all have different ways of speaking and we unknowingly use punctuation to split up what we say.

Loud, over the top people use a lot of exclamation marks in the way they speak, even when they seem to be asking questions. For instance, *"Hello! So good to see you! What are you doing!"*

Australians, for some reason, seem to end every sentence with a question mark. They always start answers to questions with a word, followed by a comma. For instance: *"Look, I don't know why that happened?"*

Arrogant people tend to speak in statements. They are unlikely to ask questions – because – well because they know everything don't they.

Task 4: Listen to people speak. Imagine the punctuation they would be using if punctuation appeared above their head. You might find that people use a lot of – (dashes) when they speak.

If you are confident with punctuation, then dialogue is a great way to show off. If you are not confident, then it is the easiest way to show your examiner that you are rubbish at punctuation. In other words, if in doubt, leave dialogue out. The way to learn how to punctuate dialogue effectively is to look at an extract from a book.

"No ice! No ice! No ice!" she shouted gaily.

And Dennis chimed in from under his hat. "Only to be had from the fishmonger's."

And Bill Hunt, emerging, added, "With whole fish in it."

Oh, what a bore!" wailed Isabel. And she explained to William how they had been chasing round the town for ice while she waited for him. "Simply everything is running down the steep cliffs into the sea, beginning with the butter."

"We shall have to anoint ourselves with butter," said Dennis. "May thy head, William, lack not ointment."

"Look here," said William, "how are we going to sit? I'd better get up by the driver."

"No, Bobby Kane's by the driver," said Isabel. "You're to sit between Moira and me."

Task 5: Count the number of different punctuation marks used in this dialogue.

Revision Activity:

6. Drill the skill, write lots of sentences with different punctuation marks.
7. Use the internet to learn how to use a semi-colon. A semi-colon used accurately is the sign of a sophisticated writer.