



# The ladder of skills: reading

Your examination answers will be marked using a document known as a mark scheme. This sets out the way in which certain marks can be awarded to particular types of answer. Students often see this as something of a mystery. The main elements of the mark scheme are set out here. It is probably more helpful for you to think of the ideas in the mark scheme as a ladder of skills, as shown.



Grade	General criteria
<b>A*/A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sees the concepts involved in the texts</li><li>• Close analysis of texts</li><li>• Consistent insight and convincing/imaginative interpretation</li><li>• Clear and detailed comparisons</li><li>• Sophisticated and convincing use of critical terms to describe media concepts</li></ul>
<b>B/C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Clear/competent discussion of texts, including attempts to engage with media concepts</li><li>• Structured response which selects and comments on different aspects of texts</li><li>• Some appropriate use of specialist terms</li><li>• Explains clear links between images and text</li><li>• Demonstrates clear competence in the use of technical terms</li></ul>
<b>D/E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tends to paraphrase the texts</li><li>• Response is largely descriptive</li><li>• Identifies some of the ways that meaning is conveyed using text and images</li><li>• Repeats what the writer says without explaining why it has been said</li></ul>
<b>F/G</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Little content</li><li>• Answer is mainly narrative</li><li>• General/descriptive comment</li><li>• Little evidence of understanding of the differences between image and text</li></ul>

# The ladder of skills: writing



Grade	General criteria
<b>A*/A</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Controlled and sustained crafting with highly effective choice of vocabulary</li><li>• Form, content and style are clearly matched to purpose</li><li>• Strong sense of audience and definite attempt to meet the needs of the audience</li><li>• Ability to vary tone to manipulate the reader</li><li>• Coherent structure with fluently linked sentences and paragraphs</li><li>• A high level of accuracy in spelling and punctuation</li></ul>
<b>B/C</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Form, content and style are generally matched to purpose and audience</li><li>• Well structured, starting to use paragraphs to enhance meaning</li><li>• Increasing sophistication in choice of vocabulary — clear purpose in choice of vocabulary</li><li>• Begins to anticipate the response of the reader</li><li>• Generally secure in spelling and punctuation</li></ul>
<b>D/E</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Awareness of purpose and audience</li><li>• Sentences organised into paragraphs — this might still be quite mechanical</li><li>• Some examples of conscious use of vocabulary for effect</li><li>• Begins to use language with a clear sense of purpose, e.g. rhetorical questions to develop a point</li><li>• Some accurate spelling of more complex words</li><li>• Starts to use a range of punctuation</li></ul>
<b>F/G</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communicates some meaning and simple ideas</li><li>• Some conscious choice of words</li><li>• Basic sense of purpose and audience</li><li>• Writes largely in sentences</li><li>• Some accuracy in basic spelling</li><li>• Some conscious use of punctuation</li></ul>

# School travel

Most people, especially those who are parents, will know just how much the journey to school has changed since we were at school ourselves — more traffic, longer journeys, more to carry, more pressure of time. Did you know that nearly 20% of cars on the road in urban areas at the morning peak time are taking children to school?

**Y**ou may not be aware of the dramatic changes that have occurred just in the last 15 years:

- The proportion of journeys to school by car has nearly *doubled*, from 16% to 30%.
- The average length of the journey to school for secondary pupils has gone up by well over *a third*.

The problem directly affects more

than *9 million* young people in education in the United Kingdom and their families. Indirectly it touches everyone through its effects on health, education, local air quality and congestion.

As a result, traffic and congestion is increased and in many areas a *vicious circle* comes into being — fears about safety in traffic lead to less walking and cycling and more driving, which



in turn increases traffic. Local air quality, journey times and the competitiveness of local business all deteriorate.

### **Demand for independent travel**

But the potential *benefits* of change are just as important. Surveys show there is unmet demand among young people

for more *independent travel* and greater freedom. Freedom to move around the local area independently is an important part of growing up. Building exercise into the day *improves fitness* immediately and *protects against coronary heart disease* in the longer term. Independent travel to school is also a chance to help reduce local pollution and congestion, improving quality of life for everybody. Better local air quality is beneficial for the growing number of people who suffer from asthma.

One well-established way of tackling the problem is to develop *safer routes* for walking and cycling to school. But there are many other things which can be done to reduce car use and improve safety on the way to school, and many local projects are already putting them into practice.

Source: [www.local-transport.dft.gov.uk](http://www.local-transport.dft.gov.uk)

## Questions on Item 1

**1** Identify three facts that the writer uses in Item 1.

**1**

**2** Identify three opinions from Item 1.

**2**

**3** Explain how you know that each opinion is not a fact.

**3**

## Skills tested

■ Identifying fact and opinion

■ Distinguishing between fact and opinion

# Explaining


The next thing you are likely to be asked to do is to explain ideas found in the passage. This sounds easy but many students come unstuck here. You must make sure that you do not simply list points and repeat what is in the passage. Take the following example.

Suppose you were asked to explain the differences between a 30-minute episode of a television soap opera and a full-length film made for cinema. Many students would rush into listing as many differences as they could think of between the two types of entertainment. This is not actually what you have been asked to do. At this point you need to realise the difference between being asked to identify and being asked to explain:

- **Identifying** is simply picking something out. In the first two questions you were asked to identify facts and opinions.
- **Explaining** means saying why something is the way it is. You will still have to identify points before you can explain them, but you must not stop at identifying them.

Look again at the ladder of skills and you will see that identifying on its own is a grade-D/E skill. Explaining is part of the requirements of grades B/C.

The reason why there are questions on the exam paper that ask you to identify and then to explain is that you are being tested on your ability to move between the two. Candidates who can identify but not explain are probably working at grades D/E.



**Grades B/C**

- Form, content and style are generally matched to purpose and audience
- Well structured, starting to use paragraphs to enhance meaning
- Increasing sophistication in choice of vocabulary — clear purpose in choice of vocabulary
- Begins to anticipate the response of the reader
- Generally secure in spelling and punctuation

**Grades D/E**

- Awareness of purpose and audience
- Sentences organised into paragraphs — this might still be quite mechanical
- Some examples of conscious use of vocabulary for effect
- Begins to use language with a clear sense of purpose, e.g. rhetorical questions to develop a point
- Some accurate spelling of more complex words
- Starts to use a range of punctuation

## Questions on Item 1

Here you have to follow an argument and select material appropriate to the purpose.

**4** Explain in your own words what the 'vicious circle' of school traffic actually is.

**5** Explain in your own words how the 'potential benefits of change' might turn out to be important

**6** Explain in your own words how the 'school run' can be both a nuisance and a necessity.

**7** Explain the possible effects of even more parents choosing to take their children to school in the car.

## Skill tested

■ Explaining ideas

4

5

6

7

# Pupils should cycle or walk to cut school run congestion

Report advises measures including American-style yellow bus scheme to combat traffic build-up

**Polly Curtis**  
*in the Guardian*  
*Monday 23 March 2009*

**C**ouncils should consider supplying pupils with free bikes to cycle to school and reduce congestion caused by the daily school run, according to a major report by MPs.

A national campaign is needed to convince families to walk or ride a bike instead of driving every morning with extra funding for safer routes to encourage them, the transport select committee report on school travel, published today, says.

American-style yellow bus schemes should be introduced to tackle school congestion as well

as more free public transport for children and teenagers as has happened in London.

The report accuses the government of ignoring tensions it created by promising parents a choice of the school their child attends because it has encouraged parents to opt for schools further away from home, worsening daily traffic. Children should be forced to attend local schools to cut down on the daily traffic jams that build up around the school day, it was suggested to the committee.

Louise Ellman, chair of the

committee, said: It would be a good idea to give bikes to families who can't afford them. There is a scheme in Liverpool where bikes are lent to people to help them get to jobs. That could be expanded.

The report reveals a postcode lottery in the amount of free transport available for children living in different areas of the country. One survey found that nearly half of pupils now spend more than £11 a week on travel and some up to £50. Many teenagers spend more on travel than they receive in the £30 a week Educational Maintenance Allowance





if they stay on at school or college after 16. More children now travel to school by car than by public transport.

The government should make a clear commitment to promoting walking and cycling as the preferred transport options where this is practicable, it says, adding that budgets should be revised to give more money to sustainable transport options.

There is a tension between promoting choice of school and promoting sustainable school travel. The government has, to date, done little to address the tension, it says.

But it also suggests that children from the poorest rural communities have had their choice of schools capped by a rule which says they will only qualify for free school transport to schools up to six miles away from their home.

Children should not be expected to walk two to three

miles a day – the cap above which councils are forced by law to provide free travel. That arbitrary rule, which was set in 1944 before traffic congestion became a serious problem, should be reviewed, the report says.

In evidence, the environmental lobby group Sustrans said choice should be limited, with pupils attending their nearest school to cut down on the school run. Paul Osbourne of Sustrans said perhaps there should be some limited choice of school near to where people live .

Ellman said: Young people deserve safe and affordable travel to education, leisure and employment. The journeys people make when young will influence their preferences and habits in adulthood.

Source: [www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/23/school-run-congestion](http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2009/mar/23/school-run-congestion)

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## Questions on Item 2

**8** Identify three facts to do with changes in the way children go to school.

**8**

**9** Identify three opinions in the article.

**9**

**10** Explain how you know that each opinion discussed in answer to question 9 is not a fact.

**10**

## Skills tested

■ Identifying fact and opinion

■ Distinguishing between fact and opinion