

Introducing text types

Throughout the course, students must be exposed to a wide range of text types. The aim of such exposure is to familiarize students with the texts' different formats, styles and registers. This will, in turn, enable students to produce texts using the appropriate conventions in paper 2 (sections A and B (HL only)) and the written assignment at both levels.

Below are definitions of some of the popular text types, which may vary depending on the target language. Please note that the definitions below do not cover all the available text types—they are simply intended to provide guidance for teachers and students.

- An **editorial** is an expression of the (impersonal) opinion of the editor or editorial team of a newspaper or magazine about a recent event or current issue.
- An **interview** is a dialogue in question-and-answer style. It may include a brief introduction to the interviewee, setting or circumstances of the interview.
- A **journalistic review** is a review of a book, film, television or radio programme that is suitable for inclusion in a newspaper or magazine. It is based on the author's experience and is subjective.
- A **magazine article** is a non-fictional text written to inform readers about a particular subject or issue in some detail.
- An **opinion column** is the part of a newspaper or journal devoted to the expression of journalists' or readers' opinions.
- A **pastiche** is the imitation of the style and form of an original published work.
- A **brochure/ leaflet/ pamphlet** provides descriptive information to inform, sell or raise awareness about a certain issue.
- A **play** (for the written assignment at HL) may be a short play or scene written by the student, or an additional scene(s) to an existing play.
- A **short story** or **narration** (for the written assignment at HL) may be a chapter or section of a text written by the student, or an additional chapter or alternative ending to an existing novel or novella.

Course design

Teachers must keep in mind that no subject-specific knowledge or vocabulary will be assessed.

The following table provides suggestions for types of texts and recorded or visual material that can be used in the classroom, as well as exercises that teachers can introduce into the language B course.

The activities and text types below, or indicated for paper 2 and the written assignment in the *Language B guide*, are neither exhaustive nor prescriptive.

Skill(s) addressed	Sources	Exercises
Receptive	Adverts Articles Blogs Brochures, leaflets, flyers Editorials Interviews Letters to the editor News articles Reports Reviews Sets of instructions, guidelines	Gap-filling Identifying true statements Identifying inferences Identifying meaning of phrases or structures Identifying related ideas that are in different parts of the text Identifying relevant information Identifying who says what Justifying an interpretation by locating evidence in the text Matching summary sentences with paragraphs in the text Matching words or phrases from the text with

		definitions or synonyms Multiple-choice questions Short-answer questions True/false exercises with justification
Interactive	Adverts Broadcast news and entertainment Debates and discussions Dialogues and conversations Documentaries Instructions Movies Podcasts and other electronic media Songs, lyrics, poems Speeches, lectures, presentations	
Receptive and written productive	Advertisements Blogs Brochures, flyers Diary entries Essays Informative and opinion articles	

	<p>Interviews (direct or reported)</p> <p>News reports</p> <p>Novel or chapters of a novel</p> <p>Opening a debate</p> <p>Pamphlets</p> <p>Reports</p> <p>Reviews</p> <p>Short stories</p> <p>Speeches, talks and presentations</p> <p>Written correspondence (both formal and informal)</p>	
Interactive	<p>Photographs and films relevant to a culture where the target language is spoken</p>	<p>Description</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>Discussion</p> <p>Representation</p> <p>Fictional or factual narration</p>

Conventions of text types (draft)

So what exactly are these 'conventions' referred to in the Paper 2 Criterion C Format? More precisely, what instructions do we give the students ... what plans do we provide them, so that they can construct something that will fly ?

The draft list

The following reference list has been based, in the first instance, on the notes provided in [Marking text types](#). Here, however, the recognisable features of each text type have been organised according to two categories :-

Basic Format ... the most easily visible (and teachable) features of the text type - 'format' in the sense of layout, the physical organisation of the script

I list all of the common features that I can think of; not all of these would need to be present for the text type to be clearly recognisable.

Approach ... the less visible features of how the text type would normally be handled - register, author's voice and tone, address to audience, organisation of ideas, and so on.

I list major elements, in descending order of importance (most important, in my view, first). Again, not all of these need to be present - indeed in some cases, some of the approaches may be contradictory and would need to be selected according to the precise nature of the task.

The Basic Format elements can easily be taught and even the weakest students should be able to reproduce them. The Approach elements are intrinsically more difficult to teach, since they often involve quite sophisticated mental procedures - but surely students should be appropriately challenged with these.

Finally, note that I regularly refer to 'an exam script', in the context of defining what a 'good' version of the text type should display. This is simply being realistic - the point of this list is not to teach students how to write, for example, good diaries in real life, but rather how to be able to produce a realistic version of a diary in an exam.

Article

The term 'article' applies to a very wide range of styles and approaches. Clearly, it carries the notion of a journalistic discourse, but the context – which includes where it is to be published, and to whom it is to be addressed – will have a powerful influence on how it is written (see **NB**, below).

Basic Format

- *Headline / title*
- *Sub-headline, summarising*
- *Byline (author, date, location)*
- *Short paragraphs (possibly)*

- *Sub-headings (possibly)*

Approach

> '*Duty to inform*' ? A defining element of any 'article' is that it sets out to inform – does the script actually tell people something?

> *Precise nature of task* ? Is the main purpose to :

Inform ? In which case, is the flow of information methodical and clear?

Discuss ? In which case, is there a reasonably balanced coverage of different points of view?

Give opinion ? In which case, is a clear point of view presented? And is it coherent / consistent?

> *Opening & closing*? Is the opening, in particular, attractive / attention-catching ?

> *Address*? Is there a sense of effective address to the public ?

NB A basic problem of the 'article' as a task is that articles appear in many contexts, and these contexts may define style and approach. Unless the question specifies publishing context very carefully, one should beware of jumping to conclusions – for instance, a 'school magazine' may be written in many different ways, from jokey / colloquial to formal / serious. Usually, accept any approach which is credible and consistent.

Blog/diary entry

A distinction: both text types typically present personal experience and comment, but a blog is more of a public statement, whereas a diary is more of a private reflection. Beyond that, there is a problem: **are** there conventions for the relatively new blog - or for the anarchically personal diary ?

Basic Format

- *Heading* : *Blog* - title (perhaps quirky, witty); *Diary* - date; or dates, if multiple entries ('Dear Diary' is unbelievable!)

- *Lucid paragraphing*

(While one can think of real examples of both blogs and diaries which ignore basic paragraphing, students writing an exam script should be expected to show that they understand that sensible paragraphing aids clarity.)

Approach

> *organisation* - What should govern the effective organisation of these text types?

- if a *blog* is a 'public statement', ideas can be expected to be organised to show some evident + consistent purpose

- even if a *diary* is a (more) private reflection, an exam script can still be expected to show a clear and organised flow of ideas. This may include :-

> control of narration – the diary is usually set to address a narrative of some sort, so effective explanation and control of the events is expected

> narration plus comment – what distinguishes the diary from other forms of narrative is that the diarist reflects on the events and draws personal conclusions.

> *register* : informality enriched with sophistication - if both text types are personal, some informality can be expected in register and rhetoric, but higher marks will go to exam scripts which combine colloquialism with dashes of complex phrasing and

effects.

Brochure, leaflet, flyer, pamphlet, advertisement

What all of these formats have in common is that they are concerned to disseminate information quickly and concisely. The task may define an emphasis on informing (e.g. the health leaflet) or on promoting (e.g. the publicity brochure).

Basic Format

- *Main heading* (informing), or *slogan* (promoting)
- *Use of multiple sections* : identified by bullet points, lines, stars, etc
- *Subheadings* : used to show the steps/stages of the argument
- *Succinct explanation* : individual concepts / ideas are presented clearly and quickly
- *Background information* : e.g. 'Contact us' + phone number / email

Approach

- > '*address*' - all of these text types include the idea of a form of direct address to a target audience ... are there indications that the student understands this, and expresses such address?
- > '*promotional language*' – usually, these text types are all hortatory, they encourage the target audience to agree with what is being presented, to 'buy the idea' ... so to what extent does the style + rhetoric achieve this effect?
- > *lucid step-by-step overall argument* : individual points are linked together into a convincing sequence of ideas

Essay (SL only)

The Essay is one of the commonest forms that teachers mark – but is there really agreement on what is meant by 'a good essay' ? There are many different conventions for many different types of essay, so which are expected, if any in particular, and how are the conventions to be recognised ? Also, essays are not distinguished by any particularly strong features of physical layout or format, but rather by a distinctive organisation of ideas.

Basic Format

- *stated sense of purpose / aim* : how effectively is the text directed at a clear issue or question?
- *introduction + conclusion* : these should effectively embody the 'sense of purpose'.
- *clear organisation* : both in terms of the individual steps of the argument, and in terms of the overall pattern of the argument.
- *clear and appropriate paragraphing* : emphasising the logical steps of the argument + good use of cohesives & sequence markers – all expected in a good exam script.

Approach

- > *register* - Tricky, this, because teachers seem to have differing expectations as to how formal / impersonal an essay should be – for instance, some encourage and some discourage the use of the pronoun 'I'. A good exam script will be rewarded for consistency, rather than penalised for expectations that may not be valid.

> *range of aspects considered* - There should be a sense that different arguments are explored – if only to refute some of them. Actual balance between, say Pro & Con, will depend on the task specified.

> *rhetoric* - Touches of rhetoric expected, rather than the full-blown regular effects more typical of a speech ... ?

Interview

There are two common varieties of 'interview': the 'transcript' and the 'embedded'. The Transcript reads like a script, being an accurate transcription of the words used, without commentary or description. The Embedded variety is essentially an article, based on description and commentary, with liberal quotation (which may be either direct quotation or reported speech).

NB for IB examining purposes:-

- ^ the OLD Subject Guide (until Nov 2012) - required the Embedded and NOT the Transcript
- ^ the NEW Subject Guide (from May 2013) - requires the Transcript and NOT the Embedded

HOWEVER ... see the latest clarification about the use of the Interview text type on the page [P2 sample questions](#) - the Transcript is officially likely, but the Embedded might also appear. So teach 'em both !

Embedded

Basic Format

As with the Article text type ...

- *Headline / title*
- *Sub-headline, summarising*
- *Byline (author, date, location)*
- *Short paragraphs (possibly)*
- *Sub-headings (possibly)*
- *Interview details + context of interview + background of interviewee*

Approach

- > *opening & closing?* Is the opening, in particular, attractive / attention-catching ?
- > *address?* Is there a sense of effective address to the public ?
- > *point of the interview:* Does the script lead to some sort of overall conclusion (which is likely to have been specified in the question) ?
- > *register:* Are the changes between written prose and colloquial handled effectively?

Transcript

Basic Format

- *Question & Response* - The basic structure will be defined by the 'alternating speeches' of the characters.
- *Realistic oral speech* - complex interactions, such as interruptions,

completions of questions, etc

Approach

> *relevance + development* How skilfully does the student handle ideas, relevant to the task set? This will be seen in (a) the questions asked, and (b) the way that the dialogue develops and explains ideas.

> *overall organisation* Is a clear pattern of argument detectable, despite the 'division of labour' between the characters?

> *rhetoric*: How lively / entertaining is the sense of dialogue? This may be suggested by humour, and elements of personal response such as surprise.

> *register*: Does the dialogue reflect a sense of whatever degree of formality may be implied by the task?

Introduction to debate, speech, talk, presentation

This text type involves the written form of a discourse to be presented orally. The task may emphasise clear explanation (talk, presentation), or convincing argument (introduction to debate, speech).

Basic Format

- '*address established*' : direct address to audience at the beginning
- '*address maintained*' : use of the pronouns 'you' and 'we' to maintain direct links with the audience? ... and/or, how consistently?
- *clear opening / introduction* : statement of purpose
- *appropriate closing / conclusion* : summary of case / point

Approach

> '*MAP*' Does the student aid the audience's understanding by giving an early summary, or 'map', of what is going to be said?

> *lucid development*: How clearly does the script present ideas in order to explain, and/or impress?

> *cohesive devices*: How clear is the use of sequence markers to guide the audience?

> *opening & closing*: How forcefully does the script catch the audience's attention at the beginning, and leave a clear impression at the end?

> *rhetoric*: To what extent, and how effectively, are common rhetorical techniques used? Such as – rhetorical question ... references ... metaphorical tropes ... irony ... exaggeration (understatement?) ... etc etc

News report

The essence of a good news report is that it efficiently conveys a lot of clear facts about a defined situation. News media always have restricted space, so the information needs to be selected carefully and then presented concisely.

Basic Format

- *Headline / title*
- *Sub-headline, summarising*
- *Byline (author, date, location)*
- *Short paragraphs (possibly)*
- *Sub-headings (possibly)*

Approach

- > *register* : ... usually, semi-formal / simply-clear / direct
- > *main facts to subordinate details* : ... standard good practice in news reporting is to start with the important facts, and move gradually downwards to the least important facts (also known as the 'cut-from-the-bottom system' - subeditors could safely trim the text to size without having to re-write)
- > *fact / opinion distinction* : ... good journalism always strives to make clear what are objective facts, and what subjective opinions (e.g. opinions likely to be expressed as quotes from identified individuals)

Official report

The essence of this text type is the ability to present a clear explanation of a given subject – which involves (i) analysis, (ii) summary and (iii) organisation. What is meant by 'official' would presumably be defined in the question / task, but the fundamental skill in handling this text type must be to organise explanation in a cool, objective, lucidly logical way.

Basic Format

- *overall subject title*
- *main headings*
- *sub-headings, bullet points, numbered sections*
- *explicit clear organisation* : determined by the precise nature of the task, but these main elements should probably be recognisable :
 - background ... overall description ... description of important details ... concluding summary.
- *register* : use of (basically) formal language

Approach

- > *'address'*: How well does the script direct the proposal to a specific audience?

Proposal (HL only)

The essence of this text type is to 'sell' a concrete idea (rather than to 'win' an abstract argument, as in a debate or an essay task). This will usually involve suggesting specific practical changes to a given situation; and the notion of 'selling' will involve address to a specific target audience.

Basic Format

- *overall subject title*
- *main headings*

- *sub-headings, bullet points, numbered sections*
- *explicit clear organisation* : determined by the precise nature of the task, but these main elements should probably be recognisable :
 - summary of aim / purpose ... present context ... future result ... advantages (+ possible drawbacks?) ... conclusion + recommendation
- *register* : use of (basically) formal language

Approach

- > *'address'* : How well does the script direct the proposal to a specific audience?
- > *rhetoric* : How effectively does the script persuade?

Review

This text type is really a journalistic form, which aims to combine objective information with subjective opinion. The (dominant) element of 'opinion' should involve analysis and evaluation – while the journalism context usually demands that the overall impact should be interesting and entertaining. A review is not the same thing as a commentary (which implies an academic context).

Basic Format

- *Headline / title*
- *Sub-headline, summarising*
- *Byline (author, date, location)*
- *Short paragraphs (possibly)*
- *Sub-headings (possibly)*

Approach

- > *'address'* - lively, direct communication that will interest the audience. [This is likely to involve a semi-formal register (for clarity and concise explanation) with dashes of informality to convey the personal tone + vivid comment / rhetoric.]
- > *'Angle'* – the script has a clear overall point of view / attitude, and this informs the structure of the argument

Set of instructions, guidelines

The essence of these two related but distinct text types is that they both aim to give precise guidance as to how to handle a practical situation. The key to good instructions is that they give concrete explanation in a precise sequence, whereas the key to good guidelines is that they give general explanation, which may or may not involve precise sequence.

Basic Format

- *main heading / title*
- *secondary headings (guidelines)*
- *numbered sections (instructions)*
- *short paragraphs*

Approach

- > *control of language* - * plain & clear i.e. functional and efficient * explanation of technical terms – where technical terms have to be used, are they explained / defined ?
- > *clear sequence* (for instructions) – a sense of logical steps
- > *attention to detail* + control of essential, useful information
- > *anticipation of difficulties* – understanding which parts of the process may cause problems for the uninformed
- > *empathy with audience* – most easily detected by the ability to anticipate difficulties, (e.g. explanation of technical terms, above), but may also involve use of encouraging, helpful comments

Written correspondence

This group of text types involve writing directly to a specific reader – as opposed to the other text types, which all involve writing for a generalised or notional audience. The fundamental distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' is that in the formal type the purpose of the letter is more important than the relationship with the reader, whereas in the informal type, the relationship between writer and reader is at least as important as the purpose.

Formal letter

Basic Format

- *sender's address*
- *date*
- *opening/closing salutations* ('Dear Mr/Ms ...' / 'Yours sincerely...' etc)
- > *register* : nature of 'formal' tone - what address + attitude to the recipient is expressed ?
- *recipient's address* (very optional)

Approach

- > *relevance*: How consistently is the text focused on the set task / purpose?
- > *development of explanation*: How succinct + clear/forceful is the presentation of the ideas?

Informal letter

Expectations for Informal letters and for Emails are very similar – but it may be useful to look at the small but significant differences between the two sets of recommended features.

Basic Format

- *date* (or simply day: 'Saturday')
- *opening/closing salutations* (personal + friendly - 'Dear Joe ...' / 'All the best / A big kiss...' etc)

Approach

- > *'address'*: To what extent is it clear that the email is addressed to a specific person? (Contrast with Email , below - less sense of 'dialogue' is expected since letters do not receive such rapid replies !)

- > *relevance & organisation*: Contrast with Email: is it fair to say that written letters may be produced rather more slowly, and so with more consideration? If so, would require more careful attention to structure?
- > *focus on task*: Since the question will always propose a task, does most of the message deal with the task? And if so, how effectively?
- > *control of digression*: One key could be to assess whether the 'digressions' are purposeful or accidental – for instance, chatty asides, jokes, personal references (see concept of 'dialogue' under 'address', above) may actually indicate good control of attention.
- > *register*: To what extent is there evidence that the candidate has command of a range of register - informal combined with formal ... colloquial with sophisticated ? ('command' means 'moving deliberately from one register to another')

Emails

The email is a relatively new form of text, and no generally-agreed codes of formal expectations have yet evolved – quite apart from the fact that there are vast variations in how the type is used in practice. That said, for marking purposes there are a few ground rules that can be advanced, based on a common-sense approach to the communicative function of the type.

The basis of the following suggested 'rules' is that any email produced in an English B exam will be produced in response to a question, and that question will always have a specific task – candidates will never be asked simply to produce idle chat.

Basic Format

- standard heading of 'from / to / date ...etc'
- informal opening and closing salutations (many and various)

Approach

- > *'address'*: To what extent is it clear that the email is addressed to a specific person? This may be extended to include a sense of 'dialogue' – direct questions, comments which require an answer – since it is inherent in the email form that replies can be received very rapidly.
- > *focus on task* – Since the question will always propose a task, does most of the message deal with the task? And if so, how effectively?
- > *control of digression* - One key could be to assess whether the 'digressions' are purposeful or accidental – for instance, chatty asides, jokes, personal references (see concept of 'dialogue' under 'address', above) may actually indicate good control of attention, if handled clearly and with discipline.
- > *register*: To what extent is there evidence that the candidate has command of a range of register - informal combined with formal ... colloquial with sophisticated ? ('command' means 'moving deliberately from one register to another')