

## 13+ PAST PAPER PACK

# Exeter School 13+ English

## Complete Past Paper Pack

### CONTENTS

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#### 01 Practice Paper

Exeter School 13+ English. Work through this paper first.

Includes Paper Notes: overview, topics, revision tips, common mistakes.

#### 02 Practice Paper

Exeter School 13+ English. Work through this paper first.

Includes Paper Notes: overview, topics, revision tips, common mistakes.

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13+ English

Practice Examination Paper 1



**Time Allowed: 1 hour**

***READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST***

Your answers to this examination should be **written on lined paper**.

- 5 Make sure that **your name** and **your teacher's initials** are on **all** the pieces of paper you use.

This examination consists of:

- **Section A:** A reading passage with comprehension questions;
- 10 • **Section B:** A transactional writing section.

You must complete **both** Section A and Section B

## Honey Hotel

*Al, the owner of the Honey Hotel, wants to attract new business to his hotel and hopes that his competition winner will help him.*

15 Al waited at the airport – unusual for a hotel owner. He wanted to impress these guests. Besides, they might have difficulty persuading a taxi to drive out as far as his place. Honey Hotel’s remoteness meant a two-hour, suspension-challenging drive each way.

20 Last month, Al had advertised online: images of classical architecture, legendary landscapes and his newly-extended dining room would entice tourists in more profitable numbers, he felt sure. Struggling to describe his hidden paradise, he’d hit on the idea of offering the chance to stay for free to anyone booking who successfully completed in less than 100 words, ‘Why I want to visit...’ There’d been a handful of entries amongst the dozen or so enquiries he’d received.

25 ‘Mostly mediocre,’ his wife had observed. ‘This one’s amazing though,’ she’d said, passing him the name of the winner. ‘Really understands the spirit of the place.’

He agreed. Reading the winning entry, he’d been entranced by the sensitivity with which its gifted writer staged scenes of ancient civilisations and romantic journeys along half-forgotten sandy roads – conjuring a charming mirage of white-washed walls, embroidered gowns and orange trees laced with sunlight.

30 Al had been immediately anxious to meet the winner: M. R. Head. Correcting the poor punctuation, he’d moved Mr Head (and his wife) to the best suite, sighing over the half-full booking list. Perhaps Mr Head could be persuaded to write a glowing review for the website? The week’s itinerary had been carefully planned to encourage this.

35 On the second morning, Al sourced ingredients fresh from the market as usual – doubling up on everything – an unnecessary expense, but he didn’t want popular dishes to run out again tonight. Laden with the rainbow of produce he’d procured, Al worked his way back through the beehive that was the Old Town. Mr Head had seemed unimpressed during their tour here yesterday, complaining loudly to his wife of ‘straggling market stalls, tatty trinkets and bits of cloth’.

40 He’d refused even to visit the animal sanctuary or ‘that pile of rubble on the hilltop’. At dinner, he scoffed at ‘boring’ plans for the next day, bullying Al into including him in a planned excursion for a group of white-water rafters who came back year after year. Other guests said they’d also enjoy a trip on the water, so finally a small coach was hired. ‘Stay on flat water if you like,’ Mr Head goaded as guests piled onto the  
45 vehicle after breakfast. ‘I’m with the white-water boys.’

Only later did Al realise Mrs Head had not gone too. She sat with a notebook under the palms on the hotel terrace. Al worried what to offer her. The coach party had decimated the breakfast banquet like a hoard of locusts. He had only mint tea for his own elevenses he explained; she was welcome to that. She accepted gratefully,

50 remaining for nearly an hour sipping the tea and idly fussing a stray cat playing around her feet.

Still later, he noticed her talking with the gardener about his bees – curious to know more about the health benefits of their honey, saddened they were threatened by farmers guarding precious crops against other less friendly insects.

55 Al expressed concern that the ‘pain in her neck’ she’d given as her reason for not joining the others might have been caused by the pillows. He offered to change them for others less soft. ‘No,’ she smiled. ‘The pillows are perfect. The pain has gone now. Please, call me Maria.’

60 That evening Al was busy, so wasn’t paying full attention when the coach party returned. He caught only snippets of sniggered conversation as guests re-entered the lobby dispersing to their rooms. ‘Told him... should’ve listened... good job the others knew what they were doing.’ He noticed Maria listening to one of the rafters in the corner, nodding softly, stopping only to raise her eyebrows and smile apologetically. The word ‘hospital’ caught his attention. Al strained anxiously to hear more: ‘Nothing  
65 serious – a few bruises, hurt pride. Told us he knew what he was doing...’ finished the rafter.

70 ‘Sorry to trouble you,’ Maria began, approaching the desk. ‘It looks like my husband will need collecting. Could we stop off on Friday on the way back to the airport perhaps? I’ll sign any forms you require now – it wasn’t anyone else’s fault. He won’t be putting in any kind of complaint, I promise.’

Relieved, Al received the incident form dated and signed: Maria Rose Head. ‘M. R. Head,’ he noted. Now he understood.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Section A: Comprehension Questions****(Total: 20 marks)**

1. In lines 13-22, choose **three** images that create a sense of **isolation** for the hotel. *You can write this as bullet point answers.*

**(3 marks)**

2. Reread lines 34-51. Explain how the **Mr Head** is presented. *Support your answer with brief quotations.*

**(5 marks)**

3. Using quotations from anywhere in the text, explore how the writer creates a sense of **anxiety**.

You may want to consider:

- Key vocabulary used by the author
- Paragraph and sentence length or punctuation used by the author

**(12 marks)****Section B: Transactional Writing****(Total: 30 marks)**

Marks will be awarded for thoughtful, descriptive pieces, which have accurate and varied paragraphs and sentence structures, as well as accurate spelling and punctuation.

**Write a letter to your parents explaining why you want to go back to your favourite holiday destination.**

You may want to consider:

- Why you enjoy the holiday destination so much.
- Ideas for activities that could be done by you (there and at home to prepare) and your parents (there)
- What the benefits and drawbacks of going on this holiday would be.

# Paper Notes: 13+ English Practice Paper (13+ English Practice Paper)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

## Overview

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This is a **13+ English practice examination paper** published by **Exeter School** in Devon. It is designed to replicate the format and challenge of the school's actual entrance examination for candidates applying for Year 9 entry. The paper assesses both **reading comprehension** and **transactional writing** skills under timed conditions, with one hour allotted to complete both sections.

The examination opens with a complete prose passage titled Honey Hotel, a character-driven narrative that explores themes of assumption, disappointment and unexpected revelation through the experiences of Al, a remote hotel owner, and his competition-winning guests. Candidates must analyse the writer's use of language, structure and perspective, demonstrating close reading and inference skills typical of **13+ selective school English papers**.

Section B shifts to transactional writing, requiring a persuasive letter format that balances personal voice with formal structure. This dual-focus approach mirrors the rigour of top independent school entrance assessments, where candidates must show maturity in both analytical and creative written expression. The paper suits students preparing for **13+ examinations at competitive independent schools** or those seeking to stretch their English skills beyond Key Stage 3 expectations.

## How this paper is organised

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The examination is divided into **two compulsory sections** totalling **50 marks** and designed to be completed within **one hour**. Candidates are instructed to write their answers on separate lined paper, ensuring their name and teacher's initials appear on every sheet.

**Section A (20 marks)** comprises three comprehension questions based on the Honey Hotel passage, which spans approximately 70 lines of prose. Question 1 awards 3 marks for identifying three images of isolation; Question 2 allocates 5 marks for character analysis of Mr Head with supporting quotations; and Question 3, the most substantial, offers 12 marks for exploring how the writer creates anxiety through vocabulary, structure and punctuation. The mark weighting signals that analytical depth and technical awareness are prized.

**Section B (30 marks)** requires a single piece of transactional writing in letter format. Candidates must construct a persuasive letter to their parents explaining why they wish to return to a favourite holiday destination. The task emphasises thoughtful, descriptive language, varied sentence structures, accurate paragraphing, and correct spelling and punctuation. Bullet prompts guide content without prescribing structure, allowing candidates to demonstrate maturity and personal voice alongside technical control.

## Topics covered

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- Close reading comprehension of contemporary narrative prose with attention to characterisation, setting and narrative perspective
- Identification and analysis of imagery and figurative language used to create atmosphere and tone
- Character analysis supported by textual evidence, exploring how dialogue, action and narrative framing reveal personality and motive
- Exploration of how writers use vocabulary choice, diction and connotation to generate mood, particularly anxiety and tension
- Analysis of structural techniques including paragraph length, sentence variety, punctuation for effect, and pacing
- Transactional letter writing in a formal yet personal register, balancing persuasion with sincerity
- Persuasive writing techniques: anticipating objections, presenting balanced arguments, and using descriptive language to engage the reader
- Paragraphing and organisation of extended written responses for clarity and rhetorical impact
- Technical accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar under timed examination conditions
- Inference and interpretation of subtext, particularly the revelation at the story's conclusion

## How to use this paper for revision

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- Read the Honey Hotel passage carefully at least twice before attempting the comprehension questions, annotating details about setting, character and mood as you go.
- When selecting quotations for Questions 2 and 3, choose short, precise phrases rather than long extracts; embed them smoothly into your sentences to show close reading.
- In Question 3, structure your answer methodically by examining vocabulary first, then moving to sentence structure and punctuation, ensuring each point is supported by textual evidence.
- For the transactional letter in Section B, plan your content briefly before writing: jot down three reasons you love the destination, two activities for you, two for parents, and one benefit and one drawback.
- Adopt a warm, respectful tone in your letter; it should feel genuine and personal whilst maintaining good paragraphing, varied sentence openers and formal letter conventions.
- Reserve five minutes at the end to proofread both sections, checking especially for common errors like comma splices, apostrophe mistakes and sentence fragments.
- Practise writing under timed conditions so you can allocate roughly 25 minutes to Section A and 30 minutes to Section B, leaving five minutes for proofreading.

## Common mistakes to avoid

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- Quoting excessively long passages instead of selecting precise, focused phrases that directly support the analytical point being made.
- In Question 1, explaining or analysing the images rather than simply identifying them; the question asks only for three images, not commentary.
- Failing to link vocabulary analysis in Question 3 to the specific effect of creating anxiety; many candidates describe language generally without tying it to the question's focus.
- Writing the Section B letter in an overly informal, chatty tone that lacks paragraphing or structure, forgetting it is a formal examination task requiring clear organisation.
- Neglecting to consider both benefits and drawbacks in the letter, resulting in one-sided persuasion that feels unrealistic or immature.
- Running over time on Section A and leaving insufficient time to plan, write and proofread the 30-mark letter, which carries the greater weighting.

## Exam technique

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Begin by reading the instructions and the entire passage carefully, highlighting or underlining key moments that relate to isolation, character and anxiety as these are the focus of the comprehension questions. Aim to spend no more than **25 minutes on Section A**, dividing that time roughly as 5 minutes for Question 1, 8 minutes for Question 2, and 12 minutes for Question 3. This proportional approach mirrors the mark allocation and ensures you give appropriate weight to the more demanding analytical question.

For **Section B**, allocate at least **30 minutes**: spend the first 5 minutes planning your letter's structure and content, then 20 minutes writing, and 5 minutes proofreading. A clear plan prevents rambling and ensures you cover all the bullet prompts (why you enjoy the destination, activities for you and your parents, benefits and drawbacks). Start your letter with a proper salutation ('Dear Mum and Dad,') and close with an appropriate sign-off ('Yours lovingly,' or similar).

Remember that the letter is worth 30 marks, the largest single component of the paper, so prioritise completing it fully even if it means your comprehension answers are slightly less polished. Under timed pressure, quality matters more than quantity; write concisely, vary your sentence structures, and check your spelling and punctuation. If you finish early, reread your work to catch errors and improve clarity rather than sitting idle.

## What to revise alongside this paper

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To prepare thoroughly for this examination, revise **narrative comprehension techniques** including identifying narrative perspective (third-person omniscient or limited), analysing how writers reveal character through indirect means (action, dialogue, other characters' reactions), and recognising foreshadowing and irony. The twist ending of Honey Hotel rewards close attention to names and details, so practise reading for subtext and re-examining earlier passages in light of later revelations.

Broaden your understanding of **language analysis** by studying how specific word choices (verbs, adjectives, metaphors) create particular moods, and how sentence length and punctuation affect pacing and tension. Look at examples of anxious or tense writing in short stories or novel extracts, noting how writers use fragmented sentences, rhetorical questions, or rapid dialogue to convey unease.

For transactional writing, study the conventions of **formal and semi-formal letters**, including appropriate openings, closings, and register. Practise balancing persuasive content with personal reflection, and read exemplar letters that successfully integrate descriptive language and varied syntax. Strengthen your paragraphing skills by

planning letters and essays in advance, ensuring each paragraph develops a single idea clearly before moving to the next.

## Key terms

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**Imagery, Isolation, Characterisation, Atmosphere, Tone, Inference, Subtext, Quotation and embedding, Vocabulary analysis, Structural techniques, Transactional writing, Persuasive register, Formal letter conventions, Paragraphing, Textual evidence**

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**13+ English**  
**Practice Examination Paper 1**



**Time Allowed: 1 hour**

***READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST***

Your answers to this examination should be **written on lined paper**.

Make sure that **your name** and **your teacher's initials** are on ***all*** the pieces of paper you use.

This examination consists of:

- **Section A:** A reading passage with comprehension questions;
- **Section B:** A transactional writing section.

You must complete **both** Section A and Section B

## Passage B: Kongamato

1 Although dinosaurs are known to have been extinct for thousands of years, a strange tale from Zambia, in Africa, might suggest otherwise. Over the centuries there have been numerous reports of ferocious flying reptiles that bear an uncanny resemblance to a supposedly extinct species of dinosaur called the pterosaur.

5 These claims have inspired such curiosity that, in 1932, the traveller Frank Welland ventured into the Jiundu swamps of the Mwinilunga district of western Zambia to investigate the story. The local villagers gave him detailed accounts of monstrous, reddish birds with a wingspan of 1-2 metres, and long beaks full of teeth and leathery skin in place of feathers. They called these creatures 'Kongamato', which translates as 'overwhelmer of boats', owing to the fact that the huge birds would often overturn small vessels, attacking and sometimes killing the occupants. The local people were so terrified of the Kongamato that it was thought that just looking at one would result in certain death. When Welland showed them drawings of the prehistoric pterosaur, they unanimously and unhesitatingly agreed that these sketches identified precisely the creature they knew as the Kongamato.

15 Sightings of this dragon-like creature continued. A European living in Africa recounted how he had met a Zambian who had suffered an almost fatal wound to the chest while exploring the much-feared swampland. The man claimed he had received his injury in an attack by a huge, long-beaked bird.

19 Another account came from a zoologist, Ivan Sanderson, who, in 1933, was leading an expedition to the Assumbo mountains in the Cameroons. He described how, while hunting one day he shot a fruit bat over the fast-flowing river. Wading into the water to retrieve the fallen animal, he lost his balance. Having regained his footing, he heard a warning yell from a colleague and to his horror saw a gigantic black creature bearing down on him from the sky at great speed.

25 He ducked into the river to escape the huge bird and made for the riverbank. The creature renewed its attack, diving down on him again, and both he and his companion threw themselves on the ground, conscious only of the sound of the beating of the creature's powerful wings. Fortunately, it flew off: into the night, leaving the two men to return to their camp. Here they related their story to the local people, asking them if they knew what their attacker might have been. The locals fled in terror without answering the question.

31 Sanderson reflected on what he had seen and described the creature as about the size of an eagle, with a semicircle of sharp white teeth in its lower jaws. He also remarked that the beast, like the pterosaur, resembled a bat.

34 In another book, Captain C. Pitman described the existence of a bird that produced tracks, suggesting that it had a large tail that dragged along the ground behind. He went on to describe how the bird was alleged to feed on rotting flesh if corpses were not buried to a sufficient depth.

38 Today, sightings continue in remote areas of Africa and the existence of the Kongamato is

common knowledge among the inhabitants . When asked to draw what they have seen, they repeatedly draw a creature that looks remarkably like a pterosaur.

**Section A: Comprehension Questions**

**(Total: 20 marks)**

1. In lines 5-14, choose **three** words or phrases that tell us about the Kongomato's **appearance or actions**. *You can write this as bullet point answers.*

**(3 marks)**

2. Reread lines 15-30. Explain how the author creates **fear** of the Kongomato. *Support your answer with brief quotations.*

**(5 marks)**

3. Using quotations from anywhere in the text, explore how the writer creates a sense of **believability in the reports**.

You may want to consider:

- Key vocabulary used by the author
- Paragraph and sentence length or punctuation used by the author

**(12 marks)**

**Section B: Transactional Writing**

**(Total: 30 marks)**

Marks will be awarded for thoughtful, descriptive pieces, which have accurate and varied paragraphs and sentence structures, as well as accurate spelling and punctuation.

**Imagine you have been to an amazing local attraction (real or imagined). Write a speech encouraging pupils in your school to make a visit to that place. E.g. a local museum, zoo, wildlife reserve, theme park ...**

You may want to consider:

- Why they might enjoy that trip (and why you did).
- Ideas for activities that could be done there
- What the benefits and drawbacks of going on to this place would be.

# Paper Notes: 13+ English Practice Paper (13+ English Practice Paper)

Compiled by [SATs-Papers.co.uk](https://www.SATs-Papers.co.uk) to help you get the most from this paper.

## Overview

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This is an **Exeter School** practice paper for **13+ English**, designed to prepare Year 8 pupils for entrance examinations into independent senior schools. The paper divides into two sections: a reading comprehension based on a non-fiction passage about the **Kongamato**, a cryptid reported in central Africa, and a transactional writing task requiring students to compose a persuasive speech. The entire examination must be completed within **one hour**, testing both close reading skills and the ability to write with clarity and purpose.

The comprehension questions span **20 marks** and progress from simple retrieval to higher-order analytical tasks, including language analysis and the exploration of authorial technique. The writing section carries **30 marks** and explicitly rewards thoughtful content, varied sentence and paragraph structures, and technical accuracy. Examiners will look for candidates who can adapt register to suit a persuasive speech and demonstrate control over both simple and complex syntax.

This paper is well suited to pupils aiming for grammar and independent senior schools at 13+, particularly those who need practice in both analytical reading and extended transactional writing under timed conditions. The Kongamato passage offers a rich source for exploring how writers construct credibility and tension in non-fiction accounts.

## How this paper is organised

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The paper is divided into **Section A: Comprehension Questions** (20 marks) and **Section B: Transactional Writing** (30 marks). Students have one hour to complete both sections and must write all answers on lined paper, ensuring their name and teacher's initials appear on every sheet.

Section A consists of three questions of ascending difficulty. Question 1 (3 marks) asks for simple retrieval of descriptive words or phrases. Question 2 (5 marks) requires explanation of how the author creates fear, supported by brief quotations. Question 3 (12 marks, the highest-weighted question) asks candidates to explore how the writer establishes believability, with explicit prompts to consider vocabulary, paragraph structure, sentence length, and punctuation.

Section B presents a single extended writing task worth 30 marks. Pupils must imagine visiting a local attraction and write a speech persuading their peers to visit. The mark scheme explicitly states that credit will be given for thoughtful, descriptive writing with accurate and varied paragraphs and sentence structures, plus accurate spelling and punctuation. Three bullet-point prompts guide candidates towards discussing enjoyment, activities, and benefits or drawbacks.

## Topics covered

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- Reading comprehension of non-fiction eyewitness accounts and cryptozoology reports, analysing structure and narrative voice
- Retrieval and inference: locating descriptive language about a creature's appearance and behaviour from specified line ranges
- Analysing how writers create fear and tension through language choices, imagery, and the pacing of reported events
- Exploring techniques of credibility and believability in persuasive or investigative non-fiction, including use of named sources and specific details
- Understanding authorial methods: vocabulary selection, sentence structure, paragraph organisation, and punctuation for effect
- Transactional writing: composing a persuasive speech with clear purpose and audience awareness
- Speech-writing conventions: direct address, rhetorical questions, varied tone, and structural clarity
- Paragraph construction and sentence variety in extended persuasive writing
- Spelling, punctuation, and grammatical accuracy under timed exam conditions
- Balancing persuasive argument with acknowledgement of drawbacks or counterpoints to maintain credibility

## How to use this paper for revision

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- Practise identifying language techniques by annotating non-fiction passages, labelling verbs, adjectives, and sentence types that create specific effects like fear or credibility.
- Time yourself on both sections to ensure you leave at least 25 minutes for the writing task, which carries more marks and requires planning, drafting, and checking.
- For Question 3, plan a brief answer structure before you start writing so you cover vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation systematically rather than repeating yourself.
- When writing a persuasive speech, begin by jotting three or four strong reasons to visit the attraction, then build paragraphs around each one with examples and enthusiasm.
- Read your speech aloud in your head as you write to check that it sounds natural and engaging, not like an essay; use direct address ('you will love', 'imagine') to maintain tone.
- Revise the difference between simple, compound, and complex sentences, and consciously vary your sentence openings and lengths in the writing task to hit the 'varied structures' criterion.
- Practise quotation technique: embed short phrases within your own sentences rather than dropping long quotations in without explanation.

## Common mistakes to avoid

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- Quoting without explaining: in Questions 2 and 3, students often list quotations but forget to analyse how the language creates the required effect, losing half the available marks.
- Ignoring the line-range instruction in Question 1 and selecting details from elsewhere in the passage, which will not receive credit even if accurate.
- Writing an essay instead of a speech in Section B, missing the register and rhetorical features (direct address, enthusiasm, persuasive devices) that the format demands.
- Spending too long on Section A and running out of time for Section B, despite the writing task being worth more marks; aim to finish comprehension within 25 to 30 minutes.
- In Question 3, discussing only vocabulary and ignoring the other bullet points (paragraph length, sentence structure, punctuation), which limits the mark you can achieve on a 12-mark question.
- Over-using simple sentences or writing in a monotonous style throughout the speech, failing to demonstrate the 'varied sentence structures' the mark scheme rewards.

## Exam technique

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Begin by reading the Kongamato passage carefully, underlining or noting key details about appearance, actions, and eyewitness accounts as you go; this active reading will save time when you tackle the questions. Answer Question 1 quickly but accurately, sticking strictly to lines 5 to 14, then move to Question 2 and remember to explain as well as quote. Allocate about 8 to 10 minutes to Question 3, structuring your answer clearly so you cover vocabulary, sentence structure, and punctuation in turn.

For Section B, spend the first five minutes planning: jot down your chosen attraction, three or four persuasive points, and a few specific examples or activities. Write in paragraphs, varying your sentence structures and openings deliberately to demonstrate range. Aim for at least three substantial body paragraphs plus a short introduction and conclusion.

Leave five minutes at the end to proofread both sections. Check quotations are accurately copied, full stops and capital letters are in place, and your speech sounds convincing and enthusiastic when read back. If you run short on time, prioritise finishing the speech over perfecting Question 3, since Section B carries more marks overall.

## What to revise alongside this paper

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To prepare thoroughly for this paper, revise other non-fiction text types such as travel writing, biographical accounts, and journalistic reports, focusing on how writers establish authority and engage readers. Practise close language analysis on a range of passages, looking at verb choices, adjectives, and how punctuation (particularly commas, colons, and semicolons) controls pace and emphasis.

For the writing section, study examples of persuasive speeches and articles, noting how successful writers balance enthusiasm with acknowledgement of objections or drawbacks. Work on varying sentence structures by writing short practice paragraphs that consciously mix simple, compound, and complex sentences with different openings. Revise formal and informal registers so you can adapt tone to suit the audience and purpose of a task.

Broaden your vocabulary by reading widely in both fiction and non-fiction, and practise using adventurous adjectives, precise verbs, and varied connectives in your own writing. Finally, ensure you are confident with grammar basics (subject-verb agreement, tenses, apostrophes, commas in lists and clauses) so that technical accuracy does not let down otherwise strong content.

## Key terms

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**Pterosaur, Cryptozoology, Eyewitness account, Credibility, Tension, Language analysis, Quotation and embedding, Transactional writing, Persuasive speech, Register and audience, Rhetorical question, Direct address, Sentence variety, Paragraph structure, Inference**

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