

HONG KONG DIPLOMA OF SECONDARY EDUCATION EXAMINATION
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
DRAFT LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Subject Descriptors

Level 5

Candidates at this level typically

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand spoken English, both literal and figurative, when delivered at near-natural speed in familiar accents and a wide range of situations, and are able to evaluate views expressed and identify the speakers' attitudes and intentions through stress and intonation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand complex texts and are able to follow the development of an argument and evaluate the opinions presented within them, make inferences and work out the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context, and respond comprehensively to written instructions requiring relevant information from the texts to be used to complete a task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write in an interesting, relevant, organized and creative way, using a wide range of sentence structures and vocabulary accurately, and adopting a style suitable to the purpose.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express a wide range of ideas fluently in clear, accurate, well-pronounced English, consistently initiating and maintaining exchanges and responding to others in a sustained and constructive manner.

Level 4

Candidates at this level typically

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand spoken English, both literal and figurative, when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents and most situations, and are able to evaluate views expressed in fairly complex texts and identify the speakers' attitudes and intentions through obvious features of stress and intonation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand fairly complex texts and are able to follow the development of an argument and identify the opinions presented within them, make obvious inferences and work out the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context when clear textual support is given, and respond to written instructions requiring relevant information from the texts to be used to complete a task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write in an interesting, relevant, organized and creative way, using a range of sentence structures and vocabulary accurately, and adopting a style suitable to the purpose, especially when the text type is familiar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Express a range of ideas fluently, if with occasional hesitation, in clear, accurate, well-pronounced English, initiating, and maintaining exchanges and responding to others in a sustained manner, especially when with a sympathetic partner.

Level 3

Candidates at this level typically

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand literal spoken English when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents in familiar situations, and are able to identify views expressed in straightforward texts and the speakers' attitudes and intentions when they are explicitly expressed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand simple texts, especially if the topic is familiar, and are able to follow the development of an explicit argument and identify explicit opinions presented within them, make straightforward inferences and work out the meaning of unfamiliar words when a familiar context is given, and respond in part to simple written instructions requiring relevant information from the texts to be used to complete a task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write in a relevant, organized and creative way when the context is familiar, using some more complex sentence structures and common vocabulary accurately, and adopting the main elements of a style suitable to the purpose.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a range of simple common expressions with fluency, pronouncing familiar words accurately, and responding to others in a sustained manner.

Level 2

Candidates at this level typically

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand literal spoken English when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents in familiar situations, and are able to distinguish fact from opinion when this is clearly signalled and the context is simple and familiar.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand simple texts if the topic is familiar, and are able to follow parts of the development of an explicit argument and identify opinions when they are clearly signalled, work out the meaning of unfamiliar words when a simple and familiar context is given, following simple written instructions to locate and transfer some information relevant to a given task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make some relevant points in writing, organized in a straightforward way using simple sentence structures and simple vocabulary accurately, and showing some awareness of features of genre.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a small range of short and simple common expressions with fluency, pronouncing familiar words comprehensibly, and responding to others when prompted.

Level 1

Candidates at this level typically

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand simple spoken English in short spoken texts when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents in familiar situations, and are able to identify and extract simple, predictable information on a familiar theme.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understand parts of simple texts if the topic and vocabulary is familiar, and are able to distinguish straightforward factual information, identifying some relevant details through awareness of headings and other basic textual features and using them to complete parts of a given task.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make one or two relevant points in writing with a few simple comprehensible sentences, several examples of simple vocabulary, and some links with other parts of the text.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use a few short and simple common expressions and pronounce some simple familiar words comprehensibly, giving brief responses when prompted.

Reading Descriptors

Level 5

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme and subthemes or focuses of complex texts are identified with less familiar topics.• Views and attitudes expressed in complex texts are evaluated and alternative views are compared. The development of a point of view or argument is followed, and the reasons are fully understood.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inferences are made in a wide range of complex texts, including those based on an understanding of the wider meaning of a text. The purposes of the texts are understood.• The meanings of words and phrases are identified when a context is given, including a context based on more than one part of a text. This includes both literal and figurative language.
Awareness of style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tone and mood are interpreted in all texts.

Level 4

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme or ideas of fairly complex texts are identified.• Views and attitudes are identified, and the development of an argument followed.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obvious inferences are made in fairly complex texts. More sophisticated inferences are made if the text is simple and the topic is familiar.• The meaning of words and phrases is identified when a context is given by one or more sentences or a paragraph in fairly complex texts.
Awareness of style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tone and mood are interpreted in fairly complex texts.

Level 3

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme or ideas of a paragraph are identified if a text is straightforward.• Explicitly expressed views and attitudes are identified.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly stated information is understood in fairly complex texts on familiar themes.• Straightforward inferences are made.• The meaning of words and phrases is identified when a familiar context is given.
Awareness of style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tone and mood are interpreted in simple texts.

Level 2

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main idea of a simple paragraph is understood when this is clearly signalled.• Fact is distinguished from opinion in simple texts when this is clearly signalled.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly stated information is understood in simple texts.• The meaning of words is identified when a simple and familiar context is given.
Awareness of style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic stylistic features can be recognized.

Level 1

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The sequence of events is identified in a text with a simple structure.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly stated factual information is understood in simple texts containing familiar vocabulary.• Features such as headings can be used to locate relevant information.
Awareness of style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic stylistic features can be recognized in short, simple texts.

Writing Descriptors

Level 5

Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The content is relevant and extensive, shows an awareness of purpose, and engages the reader's interest.• Creativity and imagination are shown when appropriate.
Language and style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of sentence structures is used accurately and appropriately.• Meaning is conveyed through accurate and appropriate punctuation and grammar.• Vocabulary is wide and appropriate, with some use of more ambitious and sophisticated language.• Register, tone and style are appropriate to the text type.
Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The structure of the writing is wholly coherent and appropriate to the genre and text type.• Paragraphing is effective.• Cohesion between sentences and paragraphs is sophisticated.

Level 4

Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The content is relevant, in parts detailed and engages the reader's interest.• Creativity and imagination are shown in most parts of the writing.
Language and style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A range of sentence structures is used accurately and appropriately.• Punctuation and grammar is sufficiently accurate to convey meaning. Errors do not affect overall clarity.• Vocabulary is moderately wide, appropriate, and most words are spelt correctly.• Register, tone and style are mostly appropriate to the text type.
Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The structure of the writing is coherent in most parts and appropriate to the genre and text type.• Paragraphing is sufficiently effective for overall coherence to be maintained.• Cohesion between most sentences and paragraphs is successful.

Level 3

Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most of the content is relevant.• Several examples of creativity and imagination are evident in the writing.
Language and style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple sentences, and some complex sentences are well formed.• Basic punctuation and some basic grammatical structures are accurate.• Common vocabulary is used appropriately and spelt correctly.• There is some evidence of use of register, tone and style appropriate to the text type.
Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some sections of the writing are coherent and appropriate to the genre and text type.• Paragraphing is effective in parts.• Cohesion between some sentences and paragraphs is successful.

Level 2

Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are some examples of relevant content.• Some features of familiar genres are used.
Language and style
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple sentences are well formed.• Most basic punctuation is used correctly. Grammatical accuracy is sufficient to make some sentences comprehensible.• Simple vocabulary is appropriate and most is spelt correctly.
Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The structure of the writing can be discerned when the genre and text type is simple and familiar.• There is some evidence of paragraphing.• There are some simple links between sentences and paragraphs.

Level 1

Content
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few content points are relevant.
Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are a few simple, comprehensible sentences.• There are a few examples of simple vocabulary used appropriately.
Organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are a few links made between sentences.

Listening Descriptors

Level 5

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme and subthemes or focuses of complex spoken texts are identified.• Views and attitudes expressed in complex spoken texts are evaluated. The development of a point of view or argument is followed, and the reasons are fully understood.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inferences are made from complex spoken texts and their purposes understood when delivered at near-natural speed in different varieties of English in familiar accents in a wide range of situations.• Both explicitly stated and implied information is extracted from spoken texts. Figurative language is understood.
Awareness of sound patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speakers' attitudes and intentions are identified based on features of stress and intonation.

Level 4

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme or ideas of a text are identified.• Views and attitudes expressed in a fairly complex text on familiar topics are evaluated. The development of a point of view or argument is followed, and the reasons are understood.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obvious inferences are made from fairly complex spoken texts when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents in most situations.• Explicitly stated and some implied information is extracted from spoken texts. Literal and simple figurative language is identified.
Awareness of sound patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speakers' attitudes and intentions are identified based on obvious features of stress and intonation.

Level 3

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main theme or ideas of a spoken text are identified when it is straightforward.• Explicitly expressed views are identified.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly stated information is understood in spoken texts when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents in familiar situations.• Straightforward inferences are made from literal language.
Awareness of sound patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Straightforward attitudes of speakers are identified based on stress and intonation.

Level 2

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The main idea of a simple spoken text is identified when it is clearly signalled.• Fact is distinguished from opinion in simple texts when it is clearly signalled.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explicitly stated information is understood in simple spoken texts when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents.• Literal language is understood when the context is clear.
Awareness of sound patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very simple emotions can sometimes be recognized from the speakers' delivery.

Level 1

General comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple, predictable factual information is understood in short simple spoken texts.• A sequence of events is identified in texts with a predictable linear structure.
Specific comprehension
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Straightforward explicit information is understood in short simple spoken texts when delivered at moderate speed in familiar accents.
Awareness of sound patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Simple emotions can be recognized from the speakers' delivery.

Speaking Descriptors

Level 5

Pronunciation and Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronunciation of words is clear and accurate.• Use of stress and intonation enhances communication.• Fluency is sustained with only occasional hesitation.
Communication strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A wide range of expressions and strategies is used to initiate and maintain interaction and to respond purposefully to others.• Body language enhances communication.
Vocabulary and language patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary is varied and appropriate.• Language patterns are accurate and appropriate.
Ideas and organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant information and ideas are clearly expressed and developed.• Topics are expanded on cogently with explanations or detail.• Conversational exchanges are well sustained.

Level 4

Pronunciation and Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronunciation of familiar words is clear and accurate.• Stress and intonation are sufficiently appropriate to convey meaning.• Fluency is sustained, with some hesitation.
Communication strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A range of expressions and strategies is used to maintain interaction and to respond purposefully to others.• Some features of body language support communication.
Vocabulary and language patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vocabulary is appropriate.• Language patterns are mostly accurate and appropriate. Any errors made do not impede communication.
Ideas and organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most information and ideas are relevant and clearly expressed and developed.• Topics are often expanded on with explanations or detail.• Conversational exchanges are sustained.

Level 3

Pronunciation and Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronunciation of most words can be understood.• Some stress and intonation patterns help convey meaning.• Fluency is evident in response to prompting.
Communication strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some expressions and strategies are used to respond purposefully to others.
Vocabulary and language patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A range of simple vocabulary is used appropriately.• Simple language patterns are used accurately and appropriately. Errors do not usually impede communication.
Ideas and organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some ideas and information are relevant and expressed clearly.• Detail is added to some responses.• Conversational exchanges are sustained when prompted.

Level 2

Pronunciation and Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pronunciation of familiar words can usually be understood within the overall context.• Stress and intonation are used appropriately with simple utterances.• Fluency is evident in response to very simple prompts on familiar topics.
Communication strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic expressions and strategies are used to respond purposefully to others.
Vocabulary and language patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A small range of simple vocabulary is used appropriately.• Some basic language patterns are used accurately in brief exchanges.
Ideas and organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some relevant simple information and ideas are expressed successfully.• Some ideas and information are expanded on briefly.• There is brief participation in conversation when prompted.

Level 1

Pronunciation and Delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some simple familiar words are pronounced accurately enough to be understood.
Communication strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some very basic comprehensible responses are given.
Vocabulary and language patterns
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Several examples of simple vocabulary are used appropriately.• A few simple formulaic language patterns are used appropriately.
Ideas and organization
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic relevant information is offered when the topic is very familiar.• Some brief responses or statements are made when repeatedly prompted.