

GERMAN LANGUAGE

Paper 8683/01
Speaking

Key messages

For candidates:

- The interests of the candidate should dictate the choice of the subject for the presentation, which should clearly refer to the culture or society of a German speaking country.
- It is important to structure the presentation to fit into the allowed three and a half minutes, and to express not only facts, but ideas and opinions.
- Candidates should focus on the questions asked of them and make sure they answer what is asked.
- Candidates should remember that they are expected to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections.

General Comments

All candidates had been well prepared for the requirements of the examination. They had prepared their material well and were able to talk for the required length of time on their chosen topic and sustain a further conversation on that same topic. In the general conversation section, they all made an effort to answer the questions they were asked, though it was clear that some questions were not well understood. Candidates were aware of the requirement to ask questions of the Examiner in both conversation sections and nearly all asked at least one question.

Quality of language varied, with some candidates fluently using an advanced range of structures and vocabulary and others struggling somewhat, as a result of gaps in their linguistic knowledge. Pronunciation was rather variable. It was mostly acceptable or even good, but several candidates had difficulty in making themselves clearly understood, and this is an area that could be worked on before future examinations.

Comments on Specific Sections

Section 1 (Presentation)

There was some variety in the topics offered, but food and drink and free-time activities seemed to be the most popular. Most candidates spoke for the required time of three to three and a half minutes and offered both ideas and opinions.

Pronunciation was variable but some candidates made a good attempt at intonation and expression and some spoke reasonably fluently and accurately, using an adequate range of structures and vocabulary.

Section 2 (Topic Conversation)

The candidates were nearly all very responsive and enthusiastic about their topics. Many of them made an excellent attempt to develop the ideas of their presentation in the topic conversation, and some were able to maintain the same level of language in this section as in the presentation.

Candidates should be prepared to ask the Examiner questions to seek information and opinions without necessarily having to be reminded to do so. In some cases candidates were reminded or prompted several times and this can restrict the mark for responsiveness somewhat, as spontaneity and natural interaction are then lacking.

Quality of language varied considerably in terms of accuracy and range, as is to be expected in any group of reasonably mixed ability. The best candidates, however, maintained a high level of accuracy and had a good range of structures at their disposal.

Section 3 (General Conversation)

This section can be more challenging for candidates, since they do not know exactly what they may be asked. However, conversations developed naturally from the Topic Conversations and there was no noticeable drop in standard compared to the Topic Conversation, except in a few cases.

Some candidates remembered to ask at least one question of the Examiner and to focus their questions on the subject being discussed, but several needed to be prompted.

In order to improve, candidates should be encouraged to have several general questions ready to use in any circumstances, in addition to the ones arising spontaneously from the conversations. *Was meinen Sie?* or *Sind Sie der gleichen Meinung?* are good stand-by questions.

GERMAN LANGUAGE

Paper 8683/21
Reading and Writing

Key Messages:

For **Questions 3 and 4** it is very important that candidates use their own words in their responses, as this paper is designed to test Writing as well as Reading comprehension. The guidance ***ohne längere Satzteile direkt vom Text abzuschreiben*** is highlighted in the instructions to **Questions 3 and 4**. Major lifting of textual material, including the mere re-arrangement of words in key phrases, cannot receive credit.

Some answers to **Question 5 (a)** were too long, and candidates did not heed the word-limit stated. The response to parts **(a)** and **(b)** of this question should together not exceed 140 words. This is an exercise in summary skills, which demands some ability to select, interpret and relate main points. Time management for this paper should therefore take account of the need to organise and plan an answer to this final question. It should be noted that this question asks for a summary and personal opinion, not just a personal statement.

General comments

All scripts were very clearly presented, and response to the two texts was generally good. However, candidates should make sure they label all questions clearly and make sure that later additions are clearly marked with asterisks or numbers, which correspond to numbers or asterisks in the main body of the text. It is also helpful if a candidate's answer sheets are properly fastened together; without using poly pockets.

Candidates must read the instructions given for each question carefully, paying particular attention to the words in bold (specific details and examples are listed in the next section). The number of marks allocated for each question serves as a clear indicator of how many separate ideas need to be included in the answer in order to gain full marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The purpose of this exercise was to find a word (or words) that fit(s) perfectly in the place of the one from the text/question. On the whole this question was completed quite successfully by candidates.

- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This was answered correctly
- (c) This was often answered correctly
- (d) This was often answered correctly
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 2

The purpose of this exercise was to change a sentence grammatically, with the help of a prompt. On the whole this question was completed to a satisfactory standard by most candidates.

This grammatical manipulation task requires a sound knowledge of German grammar and structures. In order to prepare candidates successfully, teaching should focus on subject/verb accord, passive and active voice, tenses, conjugation of verbs, separable verbs and sub-clauses with *dass*, *weil* etc.

- (a) Tense was a problem here, as some candidates used the past perfect in their answers.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question correctly and used many different, but correct answers.
- (c) The irregular verb (*an*)*sehen* presented a difficulty in this question for some candidates.
- (d) Many candidates did not manipulate the separable verb *ausgrenzen* correctly.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 3

In **Questions 3 and 4**, to show clear evidence of understanding, it is expected that candidates will rephrase the text to express their answers in their own words. Comprehension of the text was generally good, however many candidates restricted themselves to lifting the relevant section from the text. This can not gain marks on either content or language and has to be avoided.

- (a) Many candidates did not mention the fact that these figures refer to schools in Berlin.
- (b) Most candidates coped well with this question.
- (c) Some candidates concentrated on the ideal school system in Sachsen, and not in general; however this was not the question.
- (d) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (e) Most candidates managed to answer this question well.

Question 4

Again, comprehension of the text was generally good and most candidates managed to back up this comprehension by good grammatical and lexical knowledge in the production of the answers.

- (a) (i) Some candidates misunderstood part of the relevant passage from the text and suggested that it's the *performance*, not the school system that is unsatisfactory.
(ii) The majority of candidates managed to answer this part of the question correctly.
- (b) Many candidates answered this question correctly.
- (c) The majority of candidates answered this question correctly, but many did not mention that the children help each other and instead said that there is help available for the candidates. The common aims were often left out, even though the question asked for 4 points.
- (d) The majority of candidates managed to answer this question correctly.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 5

This question required the candidates to summarise the discussion about school systems in Germany in part **(a)** and then give their own opinion on the best school system in part **(b)**.

Candidates' clearly preferred option is to address **Question 5** in two distinct parts, indicating **(a)** and **(b)** in their response. However, if they should choose to write a 'combination' essay, thus covering both parts of the question in the one sequence, it is essential that personal views and ideas be made completely clear as such.

In their responses to this task candidates are required to summarise the main issues and arguments presented in the two texts in the form of continuous prose. A list of bullet points is not an appropriate format. It is clearly important to consider the question carefully for its direction. Both texts should be referred to, and candidates should expect to present an organised overview of the relevant elements, and how they relate to each other, extracting the main points from the detail.

It should be made very clear to candidates in preparation for this paper that the word limit of 140 encompasses both parts of the question, and that therefore the conciseness and effectiveness of their writing is likely to have a bearing on achievement. Some candidates wasted words initially by re-stating the outline of the task, without moving forward.

As a general point, candidates benefit considerably from advance practice in the skills of summary, which involve selection and analysis. It is recommended that candidates draft a plan before writing up their answer, which will help them to organise their delivery, and minimise the need for untidy crossings-out.

There were a good number of points to be made again this year, and many candidates were able to earn some five or six of the ten marks available for this summary part of the question. Candidates should aim to strike a good balance of selected textual points, drawn from the different approaches of the two texts for their overall relevance to the question. Some answers explored too much of the detail, some were too generalised or superficial and made little reference to textual points and some were personal opinion without any foundation in the texts.

Quality of Language

The quality of language ranged from excellent to very basic, with some candidates finding it very difficult to express their ideas in a comprehensible form. At the same time, there were again a good many candidates who were able to write both fluently and impressively, and their responses frequently made excellent and interesting reading.

When preparing for the exam candidates should revise adjective endings, tenses and verb endings as well as word order, prepositions and separable verbs.

GERMAN LANGUAGE

Paper 8683/22
Reading and Writing

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General comments

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Quality of Language

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GERMAN LANGUAGE

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- (a) This was usually answered correctly.
- (b) This was answered correctly
- (c) This was often answered correctly
- (d) This was often answered incorrectly ; incorrect answers included *gefilmt* or *erkannt*
- (e) This was usually answered correctly.

Question 2

The purpose of this exercise was to change a sentence grammatically, with the help of a prompt. On the whole this question was completed to a satisfactory standard by some candidates, but many misunderstood the meaning of the original sentence and therefore found it challenging to manipulate the sentence correctly. This grammatical manipulation task requires a sound knowledge of German grammar and structures. In order to prepare candidates successfully, teaching should focus on subject/verb accord, passive and active voice, tenses, conjugation of verbs, separable verbs and sub-clauses with *dass*, *weil* etc.

- (a) Word order was a problem here, as candidates did not place the infinitive at the end of the sentence.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question correctly.
- (c) The separable verb *aufklären* presented a difficulty in this question for many candidates.
- (d) Many candidates misunderstood the original sentence and included *keine* in their answer.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question correctly.

Question 3

In **Questions 3 and 4**, to show clear evidence of understanding, it is expected that candidates will rephrase the text to express their answers in their own words. Comprehension of the text was generally good, however many candidates restricted themselves to copying the relevant section from the text. This cannot gain marks on either content or language and has to be avoided.

- (a) Many candidates did not mention the improved quality of the CCTV footage.
- (b) Most candidates coped well with this question.
- (c) Some candidates concentrated on the aspect that criminals would turn themselves in after having seen themselves on the Internet; however this was not the question.
- (d) Many candidates did not understand the verb *abzielen* and restricted themselves to copying long passages from the text in order to answer the question.
- (e) Most candidates managed to answer this question well.

Question 4

Again, comprehension of the text was generally good; however too many candidates restricted themselves to lifting the relevant section from the text (see **Question 3**). This cannot gain marks on either content or language and has to be avoided

- (a) Some candidates misunderstood the relevant passage from the text and suggested that it's the *Datenschützer* who try and invade people's privacy.
- (b) The majority of candidates managed to answer part of this question correctly.
- (c) Many candidates left out the fact that it is the face that is scanned in the photographs, not just the photograph.
- (d) Only very few candidates managed to answer this question correctly. Candidates did not understand the idea that it is difficult to define what abnormal behaviour is.
- (e) The majority of candidates managed to answer part of this question correctly.

Question 5

This question required the candidates to list the advantages and disadvantages of surveillance technology in part (a) and then give their own opinion in part (b).

Candidates' clearly preferred option is to address **Question 5** in two distinct parts, indicating (a) and (b) in their response. However, if they should choose to write a 'combination' essay, thus covering both parts of the question in the one sequence, it is essential that personal views and ideas be made completely clear as such. Some candidates misunderstood **Question (b)** and talked at length about the use of social media and personal cameras.

In their responses to this task candidates are required to summarise the main issues and arguments presented in the two texts in the form of continuous prose. A list of bullet points is not an appropriate format. It is clearly important to consider the question carefully for its direction. Both texts should be referred to, and candidates should expect to present an organised overview of the relevant elements, and how they relate to each other, extracting the main points from the detail.

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GERMAN LANGUAGE

Paper 8683/31
Essay

General Comments

The essays were well distributed amongst the five topics in this series, although as always there was a range in the level of response.

It is pleasing to note that many candidates took time to plan and organise their ideas before starting to write. Almost all candidates attempted to provide an introduction and a conclusion and organise their points into paragraphs. The best candidates demonstrated insight and backed up their opinions with well chosen evidence. Less successful candidates trotted out well-worn ideas on the topic area whether they were relevant to the actual title or not. Candidates should study the essay question carefully so that they are clear about what they are being asked to discuss.

Some candidates have an excellent command of German and achieve marks for Language in the Very Good category. They have an impressive array of vocabulary at their disposal, both general and topic-specific and are ambitious in their use of structure. Some of these are semi-native speakers whose errors are generally of a phonetic nature. There are also candidates who have a wide ranging vocabulary but whose grammatical knowledge is so rudimentary that it impedes the effective communication of all but the simplest ideas. Any candidate, however competent, can make mistakes, so it is a good idea to leave some time at the end of the examination to check for avoidable language errors.

Common errors:

- confusion between *man / Mann* and *das / dass*
- nouns without articles
- confusion between *wenn, wann, als*
- confusion between *vorher, bevor, vor*
- confusion between *mehr, mehrere*
- confusion between *ob, obwohl*
- word order after subordinating conjunctions
- confusion between *als* and *wie* in comparative constructions
- use of superlative: adverb used as an adjective

Question 1

Freunde sind wichtiger als Familie. Stimmt das Ihrer Meinung nach?

Most candidates could provide more evidence for the importance of the family than they could for friends. The more thoughtful candidates discussed the factor of age in relation to the question and considered the situation of people with unsatisfactory families. Nearly all candidates disagreed with the stance taken in the title.

Question 2

*„Das Leben auf dem Land ist nichts für Jugendliche – ich finde es furchtbar langweilig.“ Natalie, 16 Jahre.
Finden Sie das auch?*

Although there were a few enthusiastic supporters of life in the country, most agreed with Natalie. They pointed out the adolescent need for independence which is more difficult to achieve if you live in the country, especially with regard to transport, School and jobs.

Question 3

Freizeitaktivitäten sollten in der Schule angeboten werden, damit wir lernen, unsere Freizeit vernünftig zu verbringen.

Few candidates exploited this question fully. They concentrated on why or why not School is the right place to learn about leisure activities but rarely explored the idea of why one should have worthwhile hobbies. Cultural differences in the candidates' own experience of Schooling added interest and variety to the essays.

Question 4

Je gefährlicher die Waffen, desto sicherer der Frieden. Stimmt das Ihrer Meinung nach?

A surprising number of candidates clearly enjoyed the challenge of this title. They demonstrated a good grasp of history and current affairs as well as the necessary vocabulary to express their ideas. They generally disagreed with the assertion in their conclusion but often for very different reasons.

Question 5

Das Recyceln hilft wenig gegen Umweltverschmutzung. Es gibt uns nur den Eindruck, dass wir etwas Nützliches machen. Was meinen Sie?

Most candidates stoutly defended recycling as a useful measure to curb pollution and provided relevant factual detail. They were generally less effective in tackling the second half of the question which was intended to give them the opportunity to discuss consumption and resources more generally.

GERMAN LANGUAGE

Paper 8683/32
Essay

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The essays were well distributed amongst the five topics in this series, although as always there was a range in the level of response.

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Question 2

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- use of superlative adverb instead of adjective

Question 1

Die Beziehung zwischen einem Kind und seinen Eltern ist wichtiger als alle anderen menschlichen Beziehungen. Finden Sie das auch?

There are plenty of points to be made about the parent child relationship and some candidates concentrated on this to the exclusion of other relationships. Most agreed about the importance of the relationship between a child and its parents. The more thoughtful candidates pointed out that relationships with other adults within and outside of the family can be equally important, especially for children with unsatisfactory parents.

Question 2

Ist es billiger auf dem Land oder in der Stadt zu leben? Was meinen Sie?

Many candidates appear not to have much experience of living in the countryside but thought that on balance it was probably cheaper to live in the country than in the town. Considerations included the increased temptation to spend money in the city as well as the relative costs of housing. However several candidates pointed out that the issue of transport and the cost of commuting into town from the countryside made the issue less clear-cut.

Question 3

Die besten Freizeitaktivitäten sind auch die teuersten. Was halten Sie von diesem Standpunkt?

This title was designed so that candidates could explore the merits of those leisure activities which require significant infrastructure against low-cost hobbies available to anyone. Any candidate at this level should have the vocabulary to briefly discuss sailing, horse riding, golf or racing cars, for example, but many seemed very limited in their choice of pastimes to write about. Some candidates ignored the superlatives in the title and just gave the cost of a number of hobbies.

Question 4

Der Krieg wird in den Medien oft zu romantisch dargestellt. Was halten Sie von diesem Standpunkt?

In den Medien was meant to cover film and books as well as journalism, but some candidates limited themselves to television news. This title was less frequently tackled than the others on this paper but those who rose to the challenge generally had the ideas and the necessary topic specific vocabulary to produce an interesting essay.

Question 5

Jedes Jahr wird die Umweltverschmutzung schlimmer und wir können nichts dagegen tun. Teilen Sie diese Meinung?

Many candidates had clearly prepared this topic. They had good topic specific vocabulary but were not necessarily capable of manipulating their knowledge to best advantage. Few elaborated on the first point that pollution is getting worse and many launched into rather naïve descriptions of “environmentally-friendly” behaviour without questioning whether it could be effective. Some were more optimistic than others for the future of the planet.