

General

The aim of this question is to test candidates' ability to write a continuous response of about 150 words in German. Examiners will not count the words and everything a candidate writes will be assessed. However, it should be stressed that a piece of 150 words will be able to access the full assessment criteria and if it is well crafted could attract full marks. In many cases, overlong pieces tend to become repetitive and often irrelevant and communication starts to deteriorate due to growing inaccuracy. Candidates should be encouraged to write about 150 words.

Candidates select one writing task from a choice of three, each with bullet points (or questions within in a short stimulus) which must be addressed, although not necessarily in equal measure.

The 20 marks available for this question are sub-divided into:

10 marks	Communication and Content
5 marks	Knowledge and Application of Language
5 marks	Accuracy

The mark grids are printed on page 13 of the Specification (Issue 1).

The grade descriptions for grades A, C and F are printed in the specification on pages 23 – 24. These give a general indication of the required outcomes at the specified grades. The 3rd paragraph in each set of descriptions refers to the writing. Here the description of the required outcomes in writing at grade A:

They write for different purposes and contexts about real or imaginary subjects. They express and explain ideas and points of view. They use a variety of vocabulary, structures and verb tenses. Their spelling and grammar are generally accurate. The message is clear but there may be some errors, especially when they write more complex sentences.

Task : Sie wollen an diesem Wettbewerb teilnehmen.

GEBURTSTAG

Schreiben Sie einen Aufsatz über Ihren besten Geburtstag !
Der beste Aufsatz gewinnt € 1 000 – also los!

Schreiben Sie einen Aufsatz (ungefähr 150 Wörter) mit folgenden Informationen:

- Wie Sie Ihren letzten Geburtstag gefeiert haben
- Warum es die beste Geburtstagfeier war
- Was Sie mit den € 1000 machen würden.

Commentary

The essay is well constructed: the candidate deals with all the bullet points and in the order given. This is a strategy to be recommended as it makes for a more coherent piece of writing. This candidate has written 140 words, so there would have been scope to add a little more detail in one of the bullet points, but this piece of writing can access the full assessment criteria.

Communication and content:

The mark for Communication and content will be awarded first. Examiners will read the essay through and consider to what extent the response

- a) is clear (Communication)
- b) addresses all aspects of the task (Content).

Communication

Information relating to all 3 bullet points is communicated clearly. We learn

1. s/he celebrated his/her birthday

at a concert; given by his/her favourite band; in London; with family

and in addition, s/he stayed in a London hotel, in his/her own room

2. it was the best birthday celebration because parents paid for everything

3. the prize money would be spent on a guitar (and we learn why) or possibly a world trip

However, there is an occasional contextual ambiguity:

.....*weil meinen Eltern hat nichts über es gesagt.*

..... *Nächstes Jahr wurde ich nach College gehen*

...*also habe ich keine Ahnung.*

and the 3rd paragraph would have been more immediately clear had the candidate written something along the lines, of *wenn ich die € 1 000 gewinnen würde.....*

We need to consider the descriptor in the 5 – 6 band *Mostly clear communication with some ambiguity* as well as the descriptor in 7-8 band: *Clear communication with occasional ambiguity*. On balance, given the weight of what has been communicated, the descriptor in the 7-8 band fits the level of communication better, but since we have considered the 5 – 6 band, a mark of 7 is more appropriate.

Content

As can be seen above, the candidate has covered all aspects of the task relevantly and has included some extra, relevant detail in bullets 1 and 3. Bullet 2 is perhaps a touch thin but nevertheless the candidate has expressed and explained his/her point of view.

The descriptor in the 9 -10 band is appropriate here: *The response is relevant and fully addresses all aspects of the task*. However, we would be looking at a mark of 9 here as there is scope for more detail in point 2.

Overall mark **Communication and Content**

We have to look for the *best fit* mark here i.e. one that best reflects the candidate's performance in both communication and content. A mark of **8** was awarded.

Knowledge and application of Language

This assessment grid rewards candidates for the range of both vocabulary and structures which they attempt to use. In addition, it rewards their use of a range of tenses. It is important to stress here that the accuracy of these structures is assessed separately in the *Accuracy* grid.

The range of structures and tenses is considered in relation to the defined list of **Linguistic structures for German** (Appendix 1 on pages 29 – 30 of the specification).

Range of vocabulary:

Unfortunately, apart from the attempt at the idiomatic phrase *ich habe keine Ahnung*, there are no examples of more sophisticated lexis here. The vocabulary is adequate for the task but it is both pedestrian and repetitive. The criterion in the 3 - 4 band *adequate range of.... structures, with some repetition* is appropriate here. We would consider a mark of 3.

Range of structures:

The candidate starts the essay with inversion and there are several examples throughout the piece. S/he tries to extend sentences by using coordination (but this is limited to *und*), subordination (just one *weil* clause) and one infinitive construction with *umzu*. *Also* is used conjunctively at the end of the piece. We have a couple of negatives: *nichts* and *keine*. Adjectives are used both predicatively and attributively, but the range of adjectives deployed is actually quite narrow and although a superlative form is used, this is *best_* which is given in the task. The candidate has tried to link the piece by using adverbial phrases of time.

It is fair to state that whilst this candidate has indeed used a variety of structures, these tend to be the less complex or less sophisticated ones. Reference to the list of Linguistic structures demonstrates that the candidate could have enhanced the writing by the use of e.g.

- a variety of subordinating conjunctions over and above *weil*
- relative clauses
- modal verbs
- separable verbs
- comparative and superlative forms other than those used in the task

The criterion in the 3 - 4 band *adequate range of.... structures, with some repetition* is appropriate. We would consider a mark of 4.

Range of tenses:

Bullet points 1 and 2 require a response in the past tense and the candidate uses the imperfect of the high frequency verb *sein* (although repetitively and always in the same form) as well as verbs with both *haben* and *sein* in the perfect tense. In the response to bullet point 3, the candidate uses the present tense and the conditional.

This candidate has therefore used a good range of tenses backed up with adverbial phrases of time, although the variety of verbs is somewhat limited (*sein, wohnen, kaufen*). The criterion in the 5 band would be appropriate here: *use of a range of tenses to vary sentences*.

Overall mark **for Knowledge and application of Language**

The best fit mark here across the range of vocabulary, structures and tenses would be **4**.

Accuracy

Here we assess how accurate the candidate has been in his/her in the range of language used.

As far as verb formation is concerned, there is generally good subject/verb agreement, although *meinen Eltern* is followed by a singular verb on both occasions - a major error. The correct auxiliary is chosen in the perfect tense forms but there is a problem with the past participle of the high frequency verb *fahren*. The use of *wurde* (instead of *würde*) leads to ambiguity and constitutes a major error.

Spelling is not always very secure e.g. *ich hore, eignes, velleicht; gehen* is used inappropriately instead of *fahren*. There are frequent problems with gender e.g. *einen neuen Gitarre*, and in general, the piece of writing does not demonstrate a sound understanding of the case system and endings. There is a high incidence of error.

The 3-4 band is appropriate here and since we are not looking towards a mark of 5, we should discount 4. A mark of **3** should be awarded.

Conclusion

This piece of writing would score $8 + 4 + 3 = 15$.

Candidates aiming for higher marks should be reminded to

- check that all bullet points are addressed appropriately
- use a wide range of vocabulary and idiom
- include more complex structures e.g. subordinating conjunctions other than *weil*, pronouns, modal verbs etc.
- avoid repetition (will not demonstrate a good range of syntax and/or vocabulary)
- include a range of tenses and time references
- link ideas by using e.g. adverbs of time and place
- express and justify ideas and points of view
- use comparisons