

Decoding PSLE English

This is the first of a series of articles aimed at taking the mystery out of PSLE English, in order to reassure parents that it can indeed be conquered through steady preparation and regular practice. Forthcoming topics will include strategies and practice tips covering key elements of the exam, e.g. composition, comprehension, vocabulary and spoken skills. But first and foremost it's critical that parents and students know what's expected in the English exam, so I have provided the following breakdown to help you identify where your child's strengths and weaknesses lie.

Paper 1: Writing – 55 marks, 27.5%

- The first part of this paper is Situational Writing (15 marks) in which students respond to a given scenario, e.g. e-mail, an advertisement, etc.
- The second part is Continuous Writing (40 marks) where students choose to write either a story based on a picture, or a report of a given situation.

Paper 2: Language Use and Comprehension – 95 marks, 47.5%

- Booklet A comprises 30 multiple choice questions for 30 marks. These test comprehension of both a prose passage and graphic/pictorial information, as well as punctuation, vocabulary and grammar.
- Booklet B consists of 50 open-ended questions for 65 marks. These include another comprehension passage, spelling and cloze (fill-in-the-blanks) passages.

Paper 3: Listening Comprehension – 20 marks, 10%

- 20 multiple-choice questions test students' ability to understand spoken English. Various texts will be read to them, including news items, instructions or stories.

Paper 4: Oral Communication – 30 marks, 15%

- Reading Aloud (10 marks) tests their fluency in reading with appropriate inflections, and also their competency in pronunciation and articulation.
- Picture Discussion (10 marks) assesses a student's ability to interpret what's happening in a given illustration, and to do so grammatically, with suitable word choices.
- Conversation (10 marks) tests the student's skill in oral expression through conversing with the examiner on a set topic.

Coming next month:

How to improve your child's composition skills.



Elly Sim is a Child Development Specialist (B.Sc) who was trained and qualified in the US in Child Development and Psychology. She co-founded the school Jan & Elly in 1995 and continues to design and develop its highly-acclaimed English programmes.

Ask Elly anything regarding your child's English language challenges. Email her at elly@jan-elly.com