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# **Section I**

## **Stress and rhythm**

# Unit 1 – Word stress

## A. Introduction

---

**Word stress** is the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a word. There are three levels of word stress – **STRONG**, **light** and unstressed. In this book we use the following symbols for these three stress levels:

- STRONG**      bold, capitals  
**light**            bold, lower case  
unstressed      no bold, lower case

**Example:** Pa **CI** fic **PLA**CE (Pacific Place)

### Why learn about stress patterns?

If you mispronounce a word, your listener can usually figure out what you mean. But getting the stress wrong can result in your listener misunderstanding your meaning and intention. It can even sound rude. Because it can cause confusion, your listener may miss part of what you are saying. Stressing the wrong syllables can also result in a poor mark in an oral exam, since markers consider pronunciation in their assessment of your performance, and stress is considered part of pronunciation.

### How is a stressed syllable different from an unstressed one?

The vowels in stressed syllables are spoken longer, louder and higher than those in unstressed syllables. Of these three features, **vowel length** is the most important.

So *Pacific Place* is actually pronounced like this: Pa **CI** fic **PLA**CE. The first 'a' is quite short, and the first **I** and second **A** take longer to say.

**Here are some examples:** (The syllables have been split according to the way they are pronounced)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>HAA</b> pi ness</li><li>• <b>mo</b> bile <b>PHOONE</b></li><li>• that's <b>RIIGHT!</b></li><li>• <b>AA</b> ni mal <b>RIIGHTS</b></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>CEEN</b> tral (Central)</li><li>• <b>LAAND</b> mark (Landmark)</li><li>• <b>What's</b> your <b>NAAME?</b></li><li>• <b>Let's</b> talk a bout <b>HUU</b> man <b>RIIGHTS.</b></li></ul> |
|---|--|

**Task 1: Word-stress practice.** With a partner or as a class, pronounce the words below, making sure you have the proper stress on each syllable. When you see the ◡ symbol, it means the sound at the end of one syllable is pronounced as if it were part of the following syllable.

	2 syllables		3 syllables		4 syllables
1	A·ble	21	with·OUT	41	ac·TIV·i·ty
2	AL·most	22	ad·DI·tion	42	un·A·IL·a·ble
3	AN·swer	23	al·READ·y	43	de·VEL·op·ment
4	COUN·try	24	com·MIT·tee	44	en·JOY·ment
5	FIN·ish	25	de·PART·ment	45	de·PART·i·ment
6	LAT·er	26	elec·LEC·tion	46	se·CUR·i·ty
7	MA·jor	27	how·EV·er	47	par·TIC·u·lar
8	MEAN·ing	28	im·POR·tant	48	po·LIT·i·cal
9	MIN·ute	29	re·MEM·ber	49	so·CI·e·ty
10	OF·fice	30	to·GETH·er	50	un·FOR·tu·nate
11	PEO·ple	31	po·SI·tion	51	A·ny·bod·y
12	a·BOUT	32	A·ny·thing	52	JAN·u·ar·y
13	FOR·GEE	33	DIF·fer·ent	53	NEC·es·sar·y
14	al·THOUGH	34	HOS·pi·tal	54	OR·din·ar·y
15	be·CAUSE	35	POS·si·ble	55	SEC·re·tar·y
16	be·TWEEN	36	PROB·a·bly	56	ec·o·NOM·ics
17	di·VIDE	37	SE·ri·ous	57	in·de·PEND·ent
18	en·JOY	38	SEV·er·al	58	in·for·MA·tion
19	ex·PLAIN	39	dis·a·GREE	59	FOR·tu·nate·ly
20	for·GET	40	un·der·STAND	60	COM·for·ta·ble

## B. Word-stress rules: common prefixes

### 1. Unstressed prefixes

- (a) Most words with prefixes have the main stress on the first syllable of the root word.
- (b) The prefixes **a-**, **ad-**, **be-**, **col-**, **com-**, **con-**, **cor-**, **de-**, **dis-**, **en-**, **ex-**, **for-**, **il-**, **im-**, **in-**, **ir-**, **ob-**, **per-**, **pre-**, **pro-**, **re-**, **sub-**, **sur-** and **with-** are always unstressed when they are used to form verbs (e.g. a **WA**-ken, ad-**MIRE**, be-**LONG**, de-**FINE**, ex-**PECT**, for-**GET**, in-**CREASE**, per-**FORM**, re-**WRITE**, with-**HOLD**).

### 2. Lightly stressed prefixes

The prefixes **out-**, **over-**, **un-** and **under-** are lightly stressed when used before a verb (e.g. out-**RUN**, o-**ver-DO**, un-**DO**, un-**der-GO**).

### 3. Strongly stressed prefixes

The prefixes **fore-**, **out-**, **over-**, **pro-**, **under-** and **up-** are often strongly stressed when they are joined to a one-syllable noun (e.g. **FORE**-ground, **OU**-look, **O**-**ver**-pass, **PRO**-gramme, **RE**-search, **UN**-**der**-pass, **UP**-grade [n]), but not when joined to multi-syllable nouns (e.g. **pro**-**DU**-ce, re-**GRET**-**ta**-ble).

**Task 2:** With a partner or as a class, pronounce the words in Table 1, making sure you have the proper stress on each syllable.

**Table 1:** Stress patterns – common prefixes

Prefix	Example
a-	a- <b>BOARD</b>
be-	be- <b>FINE</b> (v)
com-	com- <b>PLA</b> in
de-	de- <b>MAND</b>
dis-	dis- <b>PLAY</b>
en-	en- <b>ROL</b>
ex-	ex- <b>PORT</b> (verb) <b>EX</b> -port (noun)
in-	in- <b>VEST</b>
mis-	mis- <b>TAKE</b>
ob-	ob- <b>JECT</b> (v) <b>OB</b> -JECT (n)
out-	out- <b>RUN</b> (v) <b>OUT</b> -look (n)
over-	o- <b>ver-DO</b> (v) <b>O</b> - <b>ver</b> -pass (n)

Prefix	Example
per-	per- <b>SUADE</b> (v)
pre-	<b>pre</b> - <b>Hist</b> -or-y <b>PRE</b> -school
pro-	pro- <b>TEST</b> (v) <b>PRO</b> -test (n)
re-	re- <b>TYPE</b>
sub-	sub- <b>SIST</b> <b>SUB</b> -way
sur-	sur- <b>ROUND</b>
un-	un- <b>A</b> -ble
under-	un- <b>der</b> - <b>STAND</b> <b>UN</b> - <b>der</b> -pass (n)
up-	up- <b>GRADE</b> (v) <b>UP</b> - <b>grade</b> (n)
with-	with- <b>OUT</b> with- <b>IN</b>

# Unit 3: Sentence stress

## A. The rhythm of English

Just as English words have a rhythm of stressed and unstressed syllables, so do phrases and sentences – like the beat of a song.

### Quotations from Shakespeare

#### Phrases

	Quotation	Meaning	Source
1	a <b>SORry</b> sight	a sad thing to see, something regrettable	<i>Macbeth</i>
2	<b>bag</b> and <b>baggage</b>	things that are yours	<i>As You Like It</i>
3	As <b>dead</b> as a <b>doornail</b>	without any life at all	<i>Henry VI</i>
4	In the <b>twinkling</b> of an <b>eye</b>	immediately; quickly	<i>The Merchant Of Venice</i>
5	<b>We</b> few, we <b>happy</b> few, we <b>band</b> of <b>brothers</b>	men who fought in battle together	<i>Henry V</i>
6	<b>Eye</b> of <b>newt</b> and <b>toe</b> of <b>frog</b> , <b>wool</b> of <b>bat</b> and <b>tongue</b> of <b>dog</b>	witches' recipe for a spell	<i>Macbeth</i>

#### Sentences

	Quotation	Meaning	Source
1	<b>Woe</b> is <b>mine</b> .	I am in deep trouble.	<i>Hamlet</i>
2	<b>Off</b> with his <b>head</b> .	Chop off his head.	<i>Henry VI</i>
3	<b>All's well</b> that <b>ends</b> well.	Risk is fine if it turns out well in the end.	<i>All's Well That Ends Well</i>
4	<b>All</b> that <b>glitters</b> is <b>not</b> <b>gold</b> .	Things may not be as valuable as they look.	<i>Merchant of Venice</i>
5	His <b>hair</b> was as <b>white</b> as <b>snow</b>	completely white	<i>Hamlet</i>
7	<b>Come</b> and let <b>slip</b> the <b>dogs</b> of <b>war</b> .	Military leaders giving the order to destroy	<i>Julius Caesar</i>
8	Shall I <b>compare</b> thee to a <b>summer's</b> <b>day</b> ?	The poet's point is that her beauty is even greater than summer's.	<i>Sonnet 18</i>
9	O <b>Romeo</b> , <b>Romeo!</b> <b>wherefore</b> <b>art</b> thou <b>Romeo</b> ?	Where are you, Romeo?	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>
10	<b>Double</b> , <b>double</b> <b>toil</b> and <b>trouble</b> , <b>fire</b> <b>burn</b> , and <b>cauldron</b> <b>bubble</b> .	Witches song as they prepare a spell	<i>Macbeth</i>
11	<b>That</b> <b>which</b> we call a <b>rose</b> by any <b>other</b> <b>name</b> would <b>smell</b> as <b>sweet</b> .	It doesn't matter what name we use; it is what we are that counts.	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>

## B. Problems resulting from improper stress

Many students think that giving each syllable the same stress will make their speech more precise and clear, but the result is often the opposite. Native speakers often find this unnatural and therefore difficult to understand. And in addition to making comprehension more difficult, it can result in an unintended meaning.

The following three sentences have different meanings:

1. You **DON'T** understand. (You say you do, but you don't.)
2. **YOU** don't understand. (It's not me. It's you who doesn't understand.)
3. You don't under**STAND**. (You're missing the point.)

## C. Stressing information words

### Special terms 1 – information words vs. function words

**Information words** carry most of the meaning of the sentence (mainly nouns, main verbs and adjectives, but also adverbs, question words, negatives, and adverbial particles in phrasal verbs)

**Function words** show grammatical relationships (prepositions, conjunctions, determiners, auxiliary verbs and pronouns)

In English sentences, the stresses usually on the **information words**.

Most **function words** are stressed only for emphasis or when they come at the end of a phrase or clause. Some pronouns, however, are commonly stressed: possessive pronouns (*mine, hers, yours, theirs*) and demonstrative pronouns (*this, that, these, those*).

### Sentence stress examples

	Number in stress	N	V	Adj	Adv	Pron	Q
1	Our <b>school UN</b> iform is <b>OLD-FASH</b> ioned.	2		2			
2	Let's <b>SUM</b> marise <b>WHAT</b> we have de <b>CID</b> ed.		2				1
3	<b>WHAT</b> should we <b>TALK</b> about <b>NEXT</b> ?		1		1		1
4	Could you re <b>PEAT</b> what you <b>just SAID</b> ?		2				
5	Don't <b>GR</b> ee with you <b>comPLET</b> Ely.		1		1		
6	<b>WHY</b> do you <b>THINK</b> we should <b>WAIT</b> ?		2				1
7	We need <b>LOTS</b> of <b>PICT</b> ures in our <b>NEWS</b> paper.	3					
8	<b>SAL</b> ty food is <b>JUST</b> as <b>BAD</b> as <b>FAT</b> ty food.			3	1		
9	I <b>THINK</b> our <b>SCHOOL</b> needs a <b>BAND</b>	2	1				
10	<b>HOW</b> can we pro <b>MOTE</b> this <b>SER</b> vice?	1	1				1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>

The most commonly stressed parts of speech in the spoken sentences above are nouns and verbs, but in fiction, adjectives are very common in descriptive paragraphs.



# Unit 4: Linking vowels and consonants

## A. Introduction

Words are also affected by the sounds before and after them. We link syllables and words together to produce a natural rhythm. This requires us to change the sound of some syllables depending on the sounds they are used with.

**Table 15:** Phonetic symbols – vowels

/i:/	me, see	/ɒ/	lot, not	/ɜ:/	fur, bird	/aʊ/	cow, now
/ɪ/	hit, sit	/ɔ:/	all, saw	/ə/	about, a	/ɔɪ/	boy, i
/e/	men, ten	/ʊ/	foot, put	/eɪ/	da	/ɪə/	near, h
/æ/	cat, sat	/u:/	too, through	/aʊ/	th	/eə/	there
/ɑ:/	arm, aunt	/ʌ/	run, enough	/a/	five, my	/jʊə/	cure, pure

**Table 16:** Phonetic symbols – consonants

/b/	<u>bat</u> , <u>tab</u>	/l/	le <u>tt</u> er, <u>coll</u>	/t/	te <u>ll</u> , fa <u>t</u>	/tʃ/	<u>ch</u> ild, ca <u>ch</u>
/d/	<u>doll</u> , re <u>d</u>	/r/	ro <u>om</u> , ro <u>om</u>	/v/	ve <u>l</u> , ad <u>vice</u>	/dʒ/	<u>j</u> ob, la <u>rg</u> e
/f/	fa <u>ce</u> , te <u>ff</u>	/n/	no <u>t</u> , ma <u>in</u>	/w/	w <u>e</u> t, al <u>ways</u>	/ð/	<u>th</u> e, e <u>ith</u> er
/g/	ge <u>t</u> , e <u>gg</u>	/p/	pu <u>t</u> , ma <u>p</u>	/y/	yo <u>u</u> , pla <u>y</u> er	/θ/	<u>th</u> ing, w <u>ith</u>
/h/	he <u>lp</u> , be <u>h</u> ind	/r/	fo <u>r</u>	/z/	ze <u>r</u> o, plea <u>s</u> e	/ʒ/	mea <u>s</u> ure, usu <u>a</u> l
/k/	ca <u>r</u> , bla <u>ck</u>	/s/	le <u>s</u> s	/hw/	w <u>h</u> en, w <u>h</u> ere	/ŋ/	ri <u>ng</u> , ki <u>ng</u>
						/j/	she, fi <u>sh</u>

## B. Linking vowel to vowel

Vowel-to-vowel linking occurs both within and across words to allow words and syllables to be linked smoothly. This linking is used when a word or syllable ends with a vowel and the next word or syllable begins with a vowel. Some vowels are linked with a brief /y/ glide and some are linked with a /w/ glide.

1. When a word or syllable ending in an /i:/ (be), /eɪ/ (say), /aɪ/ (my) or /ɔɪ/ (boy) sound are followed by a word or syllable starting with a vowel, connect the two words with a /y/ glide.
2. When words or syllables ending in a /u:/ (blue), /əʊ/ (tow) or /aʊ/ (how) sound are followed by a word or syllable starting with a vowel, the two words are linked with a /w/ glide.

**Table 17:** Linking – vowel to vowel

	/y/ linking syllables		/y/ linking words
/i:/ be	appropri <sup>y</sup> ate associ <sup>y</sup> ate audi <sup>y</sup> ence be <sup>y</sup> ing cre <sup>y</sup> ate curi <sup>y</sup> ous enthusi <sup>y</sup> astic ge <sup>y</sup> ography immedi <sup>y</sup> ate peculi <sup>y</sup> ar re <sup>y</sup> ality vari <sup>y</sup> able	/i:/ be	be <sup>y</sup> early Try to be <sup>y</sup> active Don't be <sup>y</sup> ashamed He <sup>y</sup> advised me to join. Don't be <sup>y</sup> angry He <sup>y</sup> added my name. She <sup>y</sup> allowed me to go.
/aɪ/ my	anxi <sup>y</sup> ety bi <sup>y</sup> anna bi <sup>y</sup> ography bi <sup>y</sup> ology qui <sup>y</sup> et soci <sup>y</sup> ety tri <sup>y</sup> ump	/aɪ/ my	I'm <sup>y</sup> excited I'm <sup>y</sup> excited It's my <sup>y</sup> affair Please be <sup>y</sup> quiet. It's a my <sup>y</sup> -annual event.
/ɔɪ/ toy	beau <sup>y</sup> tiful coun <sup>y</sup> ty fo <sup>y</sup> il so <sup>y</sup> il to <sup>y</sup> il	/ɔɪ/ toy	toy <sup>y</sup> army toy <sup>y</sup> angels joy <sup>y</sup> and peace
/eɪ/ say	say <sup>y</sup> ing	/eɪ/ say	say <sup>y</sup> it again May <sup>y</sup> I come in? pay <sup>y</sup> a visit day <sup>y</sup> and night stay <sup>y</sup> or leave lay <sup>y</sup> an egg ray <sup>y</sup> of light say <sup>y</sup> a prayer way <sup>y</sup> of doing it a day <sup>y</sup> apart

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# **Section II**

## **Discussion skills and functions**

# Unit 4: Introducing a fact, opinion or idea

## A. Introduction

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You are expected to give your opinion in both the discussion and individual response. These opinions may be about your feelings, about an issue, or about something someone else in the group has said.

In the discussion it is important to give your opinion tactfully, so that if it is different from that of the other members, they do not take this difference as criticism. Therefore, the wording, tone of voice and body language are all important. A number of different ways to give opinions are shown below. We have omitted the more formal expressions because the exam role plays are of informal situations, and even in university and business meetings, these formal expressions are very rarely used.

## B. Basic language patterns

---

### 1. Direct statement with modal verb

We use different modal verbs to show different levels of certainty. *Should* is stronger than *can* and *could*, and *must* is stronger than *should*.

- (a) We **should** use colour posters.
- (b) Many students **will** be young to help.
- (c) We **could** ask the A.C.U. for help.
- (d) We **need to** organise a fund-raiser.
- (e) Maybe we can get the Photography Club to take the photos.
- (f) We **must** ask some experts before we give the talk.

### 2. Direct statement with present simple tense

- (a) Sports **are** more effective than handouts.
- (b) July **is** the wrong time of year for an outdoor display.
- (c) It's the school's responsibility to provide healthy food.
- (d) I **like** some junk food, but I **don't** eat that much.
- (e) We **need** more information.

### 3. Opinion verbs

We can add opinion verbs to the statements in #1 and 2 above. Note that these opinion verbs can be omitted with no real change of meaning.

- (a) (I **think**) these activities are too dangerous.
- (b) (I **feel**) the students would find this boring.
- (c) (I **believe**) it would be illegal to upload past papers to our website.
- (d) (I **guess**) we should discuss the problems as well.
- (e) (I **suppose**) fewer rules would be better.
- (f) (I **assume**) everyone agrees with this.
- (g) (I **realise**) not everyone likes sports.
- (h) (I **imagine**) this will cost a lot of money.

#### 4. Opinion phrase and direct statement

Like opinion verbs, these phrases can be omitted with no real change of meaning. The first two sound too formal for a discussion among classmates or schoolmates, and are best avoided in the exam.

- (a) (**In my opinion,**) this will cost too much.
- (b) (**From my point of view,**) it would take too much time to organise.
- (c) (**The way I see it,**) we don't know enough about this to give a talk.
- (d) (**It seems to me,**) the best way to find out is to do a survey.
- (e) (**If you ask me,**) a play in morning assembly would be the most effective way to make our point.

#### Formal phrases to avoid

We list some formal functions here for reference, but we suggest you avoid them in student discussions. They are overused in these discussions and are rarely used in real life. When they are used, it is usually only for special emphasis.

There is nothing wrong with these phrases, but since (a), in particular, is used so much, you may want to avoid it. The other problem with (a) and (b) is that many students combine them with *I think*, but *In my opinion* and *I think* mean the same thing. It is just like saying *I think I think....* Use one or the other, but not both.

- (a) In my opinion,... ✗
- (b) From my point of view, ... ✗
- (c) It is my opinion/view/feeling that... ✗
- (d) I am of the opinion/view that... ✗

#### 5. Opinion tags used to get agreement

Normally the voice rises at the end of questions. When the purpose is to get agreement rather than information, the voice falls on the *is* word.

- (a) Some website are misleading, **aren't they?**
- (b) Facebook is a great way to touch, **isn't it?**
- (c) Public exams put too much pressure on students, **don't they?**

#### 6. Negative questions that show disagreement

In these questions, the voice rises on the final syllable.

- (a) **Isn't** that going to be too expensive?
- (b) **Why** do students feel bored if the talk is that long?
- (c) **Don't** we want the display to be attractive?
- (d) **Don't you think** we'll have more fun at a country park?
- (e) **Do you really** think the Principal will agree to this?
- (f) **Can't** we discuss that later?

#### 7. Negative questions that try to get agreement

In these questions, the voice rises on the final syllable.

- (a) **Isn't** it great when you find it all on one website?
- (b) **Don't you** hate it when people yell into their mobile phones on the bus?
- (c) **Doesn't** it bother you when salespeople follow you around the shop?
- (d) **Don't you** love it when there is a red or black rainstorm warning signal?
- (e) **Wouldn't** it be great if we could get a famous pop star to perform at the concert?
- (f) **Shouldn't** we ask some experts before giving our talk?

# Unit 5: Introducing reasons and examples

## A. Giving reasons

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The following words and phrases introduce reasons:

**Subordinating conjunctions:** *as, because, since*

**Prepositions:** *because of, due to, as a result of, for, owing to*

- *I think pollution is bad **because** we have too many vehicles on the roads.*
- **Since** we don't have much time, let's keep it simple.
- *I'll be leaving tomorrow **as/because/since** I have to be back at school on Monday.*
- *The road is flooded **because of/due to/as a result of** heavy rain last night.*

We can also turn these sentences around and use result words instead of reason words: *so, so that, so... that..., therefore, and as a result.*

- *I have to be back at school on Monday, **so** I'll be leaving tomorrow.*
- *I have to be back at school on Monday; **therefore** I'll be leaving tomorrow.*
- *I worked on my project all weekend **so that** I could hand it in on Monday.*
- *The pollution is **so** bad **that** they are considering leaving Hong Kong.*

Here are some other phrases we can use to introduce reasons:

1. The reason is that...
2. One reason is that...
3. The first reason is that ...
4. The main reason is that...
5. Another reason is that...
6. I could explain, ....
7. Well, you see, ....
8. Well, you see, ....
9. The point is, ....
10. Secondly, ...
11. Finally, ...
12. Well, the thing is, .... (informal)

**Question:** *Do you prefer to use the internet or the library for research?*

**Response**

I prefer to do research on the internet rather than in the library **for several reasons**. **The main reason** is that it is more efficient. I don't lose time travelling to and from the library and I can search for information more quickly. **Another reason is that** there is more information available on the internet. It's better than the world's biggest library. **A third reason is that** I can just cut and paste the things I find on the internet, including references. When I want to make notes in the library, on the other hand, there are two problems: first, the cost and copyright problems with photocopying, and second, the time it takes to write notes by hand. **Finally**, I feel that the information available on the internet is more up to date than the information I can get in the library.

## B. Introducing examples

**Table 28:** Introducing examples

	Function	Examples
1	: ..., for example.	I know many parents who use the internet: mine, <b>for example</b> .
2	For instance/example, ....	<b>For example</b> , we could use Facebook.
3	..., for instance/example,...	My parents, <b>for example</b> , are always using the internet.
4	Look at X, for example. ....	Look at how internet advertising has increased, <b>for example</b> .
5	What about ..., for example?	What about Facebook, <b>for example</b> ?
6	An example of this would be....	<b>An example of this would be</b> Twitter.
7	Let me give you an example....	<b>Let me give you a good example:</b> ...
8	Take X, for example. ....	<b>Take my parents, for example.</b> They are always on the internet.
9	Let's take an example: ....	<b>Let's take an example:</b> ... messenger.
10	... such as....	They can stay in touch through email and social networking sites <b>such as</b> Facebook.
11	... like....	They can stay in touch through email and social networking sites <b>like</b> Facebook.

**Task 37:** Fill in the blanks with words used to introduce reasons or examples.

I prefer to stay in Hong Kong during the summer holiday. (1) One \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ almost all of my friends stay here for the summer, (2) \_\_\_\_\_

we have a lot of time to do things together without worrying about studying. (3) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, we often go to the beach for a barbecue and get together for karaoke.

Another reason (4) \_\_\_\_\_ it's too expensive to go on a trip. A

\_\_\_\_\_ that there are so many things to do in

Hong Kong (6) \_\_\_\_\_ I just don't have time for during the school year. (7) \_\_\_\_\_

the country parks, for example. I like to go hiking in places (8) \_\_\_\_\_ Sai Kung and

Lantau, but the summer is the only time I have time to do this. (9) \_\_\_\_\_, I like to

stay in Hong Kong (10) \_\_\_\_\_ I need the time to rest after a stressful school year.

# Unit 8: Asking questions

## A. Memorised general questions vs. specific questions

We show a long list of question types for 14 different functions in Table 30 below, but the most important point to make about this list is that these should not be memorised questions used alone. Most of them are used before or after a statement that is part of the question. As we explained in other units, using memorised questions **alone** will get you no extra marks because even someone who speaks almost no English can use them.

- *What's your opinion?* ✗
- *What do you think?* ✗
- *How about you?* ✗
- *Any ideas?* ✗

Make the question specific:

- *Do you think computers are useful learning tools?* ✓
- *You think computers are useful learning tools, don't you?* ✓
- *Computers can be useful learning tools, can't they?* ✓
- *Don't you think computers are useful learning tools?* ✓
- *Computers are useful learning tools, aren't they?* ✓
- *Doesn't anyone think computers can be useful learning tools?* ✓
- *Aren't computers useful learning tools?* ✓

## B. List of functions and examples

**Table 30:** Functions and examples

	Function	Examples
1	Asking for agreement	(a) Don't you think...? (b) How / what about...? (c) .... Is this / that okay? (d) ..., wouldn't you say? (e) .... How about this / that? (f) Do / Would you agree that...? (g) .... Would this / that be okay? (h) .... Wouldn't / Won't that work? (i) What do you think about + <i>-ing</i> ? (j) Do you think ... will / would work? (k) .... Wouldn't that be a good idea? (l) Don't / wouldn't you agree that...? (m) .... Do / Would you go along with that? (n) .... Don't you think that will / would work? (o) .... That will / would work, won't / wouldn't it? (p) .... Do / Don't / Would/Wouldn't you agree with that? (q) .... Do / Don't you think that is / would be a good idea?



2	Asking if something is <b>correct</b>	(a) Is it true that...? (b) .... Is that correct? (c) Have I got this right? .... (d) .... Would that be right / correct? (e) I'd like to know if I have this right. ....
3	Asking someone to <b>do something</b>	(a) Would you mind + <i>-ing</i> ...? (b) Can / could / would you + bare infinitive...? (c) Would you be able to + bare infinitive...? (d) Who would be able to + bare infinitive ...? (e) Do you think you could + bare infinitive...? (f) Would anyone be willing to + bare infinitive...? (g) Would it be possible for you to + bare infinitive...?
4	Asking for more <b>information</b> or <b>clarification</b>	(a) In what way? (b) Can / Could you explain...? (c) Can / Could anyone tell me...? (d) Can / Could you tell me more about...? (e) Can / Could you tell us more about...? (f) Would you mind explaining that further? (g) What do you mean? / What does that mean by...? (h) (I'm sorry.) Could you please explain that again? (i) Would you mind explaining how that would work? (j) Can / Could you please / explain how that would work? (k) Why do you say that. / Why do you say + <i>that</i> -clause? (l) I'm not sure what you mean. Could you explain it again? (m) Could you give us an example / some / a few examples...? (n) Do you happen to know how/why/who/when/what + <i>that</i> -clause?
5	Asking for someone's <b>opinion</b> (also see section D on p.91 and section J on p.92)	(a) How do you feel / think that...? (b) How do you feel about...? (c) What's your opinion of...? (d) What are your views about...? (e) What do you think of / about...? (f) What are your feelings about...?
6	Asking for <b>permission</b>	(a) Can / Could we...? (b) Would it be okay if we discussed ...? (c) Would you mind if we moved on to the next point? (d) Good. We can move on to the next point then, can we?
	Questions about the <b>question</b>	(a) What do you think ... means? (b) Do you know what ... means? (c) Can anyone tell me what ... means? (d) You don't know what ... means, do you?
8	Asking someone to <b>repeat</b> something	(a) (I'm) sorry? (b) Excuse me? (c) Pardon (me)? (d) I beg your pardon? (e) I'm sorry. What did you say? (f) Could you go through that again? (g) (I'm sorry,) what was that (again)? (h) (I'm sorry,) would you mind repeating that?

		<p>(i) Sorry. I missed that. Could you say it again?</p> <p>(j) Would / Could you repeat what you said, please?</p> <p>(k) Could you say that again / one more time, please?</p> <p>(l) I'm sorry, when / who / where did you say that was?</p> <p>(m) Sorry, I didn't quite get that. Would you mind repeating it?</p>
9	<b>Suggesting</b>	<p>(a) Why not ...?</p> <p>(b) Why don't we...?</p> <p>(c) We could..., right?</p> <p>(d) Should we..., then?</p> <p>(e) How about..., then?</p> <p>(f) Could / Couldn't we...?</p> <p>(g) We could ..., couldn't we...?</p>
10	Asking if someone is <b>sure</b> about something	<p>(a) Really?</p> <p>(b) Do you really say...?</p> <p>(c) You're sure about that?</p> <p>(d) Are you sure / certain that...?</p>
11	Asking about the <b>task</b>	<p>(a) ... What do we need to...?</p> <p>(b) ... We have to..., don't we?</p> <p>(c) ... Aren't we supposed to...?</p> <p>(d) ... Do we have to need to...?</p> <p>(e) ... We're supposed to..., right?</p> <p>(f) ... Are we required to...?</p> <p>(g) ... We're / Aren't we expected to ...?</p> <p>(h) ... Do you think we're supposed to...?</p> <p>(i) ... (I think) we're supposed to ..., aren't we?</p> <p>(j) ... We should be doing / talking about ..., shouldn't we?</p>
12	Asking if someone has <b>understood</b>	<p>(a) .... Okay?</p> <p>(b) .... All right?</p> <p>(c) .... Is that clear?</p> <p>(d) .... Does that make sense?</p> <p>(e) .... Have I made that clear?</p> <p>(f) .... Know / see what I mean?</p> <p>(g) .... Do you know what I'm saying?</p> <p>(h) .... Do you know / see what I mean?</p> <p>(i) .... You know what I mean, don't you?</p> <p>(j) .... You understand my point, right / don't you?</p>
13	Checking that you have <b>understood</b>	<p>(a) So...?</p> <p>(b) You mean..., (right)?</p> <p>(c) That means..., (right)?</p> <p>(d) Does this / that mean...?</p> <p>(e) So am I right in saying...?</p> <p>(f) In other words, ..., (right)?</p> <p>(g) So what you mean is + <i>that</i>-clause..., (right)?</p> <p>(h) I'm not sure I understand. Does this / that mean...?</p> <p>(i) So what you're (really) saying is + <i>that</i>-clause..., (right)?</p>
14	Asking about <b>good points</b> or <b>bad points</b>	<p>(a) What are the good points / benefits / advantages of X?</p> <p>(b) What are the bad points / drawbacks / disadvantages of X?</p>

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**Task 41:** Try to get the other members of your group to agree with you by putting the following information in direct questions (Function 1).

1. We could invite other schools in the area to organise a dance with us.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The media put too much pressure on young women to be thin.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. I suggest we invite a speaker from the Health Department to explain the dangers of junk food.  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. I think we should promote the contest through posters and announcements.  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Task 42:** Try to get a member of your group to do something by following the statements below with one of the questions in Function 3.

1. We need someone to contact the Biology Department at Hong Kong U.  
Miss Wong, \_\_\_\_\_
2. We need someone to do some internet research on Hong Kong snakes.  
Miss Wong, \_\_\_\_\_
3. Someone will have to contact the other schools to see if they want to participate.  
Mr Wong, \_\_\_\_\_
4. I guess we'll have to ask the Health Officer for permission.  
Mr Wong, \_\_\_\_\_

**Task 43:** Ask Candidates for more information (Function 4)

1. A: I don't think smoking is really a problem.  
B: \_\_\_\_\_
2. A: Maybe we could have a fitness competition.  
B: \_\_\_\_\_
3. A: I can think of many activities we could hold on English Day to get students to speak English.  
B: \_\_\_\_\_
4. A: Schools don't do enough to encourage students to speak English.  
B: \_\_\_\_\_

**Task 44:** Use the function in brackets.

1. I don't think the internet is very useful for exam preparation. (ask for an opinion)  
Mr Wong, \_\_\_\_\_
2. I think that sums up the discussion so far. (ask to move on)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. We can't do this without help from the Art Club. (suggestion)  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. The media create an unrealistic ideal of beauty. (ask if the other members understand)  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Simple past

Questions about things that happened in the past and were completed in the past:

- *Where **did** you go to primary school?*
- ***Were** you happy in Form 1?*

### 4. Present perfect

Questions about things that began in the past, and are still continuing, or that have recently been completed:

- ***Have** you **seen** their newest netbook computer?*
- ***Has** the law **been changed**?*

## C. Common errors when forming questions

### 1. Agreement – subject-verb

	Error	Wrong	Correct
a	Plural subject with <i>is</i>	What <b>is</b> the <u>advantages</u> of each sport?	What <b>are</b> the <u>advantages</u> of each sport?
b	Singular subject with <i>are</i>	What <b>are</b> your <u>opinion</u> about holding a 'casual dress day'?	What <b>is</b> your <u>opinion</u> about holding a 'casual dress day'?
c	Singular subject with <i>do</i>	What types of activities <b>do</b> your <u>school</u> offer?	What types of activities <b>does</b> your <u>school</u> offer?
d	Singular subjects – plural verbs	<b>Do anyone</b> know if <u>she likes</u> music?	<b>Does anyone</b> know if <u>she likes</u> music?
e	<i>This/that</i> with plural verb	Do you think <u>this</u> <b>are</b> going to work?	Do you think <u>this</u> <b>is</b> going to work?
f	Gerund + plural verb	<b>Are watching</b> English movies a good idea?	<b>Is watching</b> English movies a good idea?
g	Uncountable noun with singular idea and plural verb	<b>Are tourism</b> good for the economy?	<b>Is tourism</b> good for the economy?
h	Indefinite pronoun and plural verb	<b>Do anyone</b> think that these programmes are unhealthy?	<b>Does anyone</b> think that these programmes are unhealthy?

### 2. Wrong auxiliary verb choice

	Error	Wrong	Correct
a	Using <i>is/are</i> as an auxiliary verb in a non-continuous tense	<b>Are</b> you know their opening hours? Which food <b>are</b> you prefer?	<b>Do</b> you know their opening hours? Which food <b>do/would</b> you prefer?
b	Using <i>do/does/did</i> in the present perfect tense	Which country parks <b>did</b> you <b>visited</b> ?	Which country parks <b>have</b> you visited? Which country parks did you <b>visit</b> ?

### 3. Auxiliary verb missing – active voice

	Error	Wrong	Correct
a	Missing <i>do/does</i> in the present simple	Where $\wedge$ your class usually goes for the school picnic?	Where <b>does</b> your class usually go for the school picnic?
b	Missing a modal verb	Where $\wedge$ we take them?	Where <b>should/can</b> we take them?
c	Missing a linking verb	Which one $\wedge$ more convenient?	Which one <b>is</b> more convenient?
d	Missing <i>is/are</i> in the present continuous	Where $\wedge$ we going to get the money for this?	Where <b>are</b> we going to get the money for this?

### 4. Auxiliary verb missing – passive voice

	Error	Wrong	Correct
a	Missing <i>is/are</i> in the present simple tense	What level of education $\wedge$ needed?	What level of education <b>is</b> needed?
b	Missing <i>did</i> in the past simple tense	Why $\wedge$ I choose this book?	Why <b>did</b> I choose this book?

### 5. Determiner wrong or missing

	Error	Wrong	Correct
a	Missing definite article when the noun is defined by an <i>of</i> -phrase	What are $\wedge$ effects of pollution?	What are <b>the</b> effects of ( <b>this</b> ) pollution?
b	Missing determiner for a singular countable noun	Should we hold $\wedge$ photography exhibition?	Should we hold <b>a</b> photography exhibition?
c	Missing definite article	Do you have $\wedge$ bicycle?	Do you have <b>a</b> bicycle?
d	Unnecessary article	What's <b>the</b> special about the main character?	What's special about the main character?
e	Definite article instead of indefinite article	Do you think crime is <b>the</b> big problem in HK?	Do you think crime is <b>a</b> big problem in HK?
f	Indefinite article instead of definite article	Which is <b>a</b> most beautiful country park?	Which is <b>the</b> most beautiful country park?
g	Definite article instead of possessive determiner	Should we ask them to donate <b>the</b> old clothes?	Should we ask them to donate <b>their</b> old clothes?
h	Redundant possessive determiner	What kinds of <b>your</b> clothes do you like to wear?	What kinds of clothes do you like to wear?
i	Using a pronoun instead of a possessive determiner	Was <b>yours</b> book interesting?	Was <b>your</b> book interesting?
j	Possessive determiner instead of <i>the</i>	What is <b>their</b> reason for $\wedge$ visit?	What is <b>the</b> reason for <b>their</b> visit?

**Task 48: Proofreading:** Each line has one error which may involve adding, removing or changing one or more words. No. 1 has been done for you. The number in brackets refers to the error type above.

- are
1. What ~~is~~ the special facilities we would need? (1)
  2. Do you think light pollutions is a problem? (8)
  3. What questions are you like to ask him? (2)
  4. Should we cooperation with the Photography Club? (13)
  5. Do you have any informations to add? (8)
  6. What benefits of watching English television? (9)
  7. Which kinds of jobs did you applied for? (2)
  8. Is the discussion about fictions or non-fictions? (8)
  9. How to reduce pollution? (9)
  10. Why they spend their pocket money on these things? (3)
  11. What do we want the impression to be when they enter the entrance of the school? (1)
  12. What is the main pollution problems in Hong Kong? (1)
  13. Would rabbit be a good pet? (5)
  14. Who would this fundraiser beneficial? (13)
  15. Is Hong Kong the safe place for tourists? (5)
  16. What is the best month? (6)
  17. It isn't usually crowded with a lot of people? (7)
  18. Are you confidence that this will work? (13)
  19. In your opinion, do you think we should go ahead with this idea? (7)
  20. Are this information easy to find? (1)
  21. Do we have to pay money for that? (7)
  22. Wouldn't it give them a chance to relaxing? (13)
  23. How much is the courses? (1)
  24. What can we do to change their behaviours? (8)
  25. Have you ever used illegal softwares? (8)
  26. How can the price of food so high? (10)
  27. Was the happy at the end of the story? (2)
  28. What is your favourite sport? (5)
  29. Where did you see during your trip? (6)
  30. Which instrument do you want to learn? (3)
  31. Do you interested in holding a competition? (11)
  32. How much we should charge? (12)
  33. Would you like to take a first-aid course? (5)
  34. How much is the price? (6)
  35. What is the story talking about? (7)
  36. What is a best age to get married? (5)
  37. What kind of help we need? (3)
  38. What kind of information required? (4)
  39. How we can do better in the future? (12)
  40. Do you think the Principal can advice us? (13)
  41. How can we able to do this? (7)
  42. Will it be good for the economic? (13)
  43. What kind of people in the group? (9)
  44. How can this advertised? (10)

# **Section III**

## **Individual response**

## B. What you are expected to do in Part B (Individual response)

### 1. Ideas and organisation

- (a) **Listening.** Listen carefully to the question and answer it directly, rather than just repeating what was said in the group discussion.
- (b) **Opening and closing.** Try to have a clear opening which introduces your main point(s), and leave a few seconds for an appropriate closing, which may repeat or summarise your main point(s).
- (c) **Developing your ideas.** Support your opinions and ideas with reasons and examples. The key to speaking for the full minute is to give examples. No matter what the question is, there is no limit to the number of examples you can talk about.
- (d) **Signposts.** Link your ideas clearly with signpost expressions (e.g. *One example is...*, *First...*, *Another way...*, *Also...*, *Finally...*, *For example...*, *Another reason is that...*) to make it easy for your listeners to follow your ideas. In written English it is not often necessary to use signposts because we have so many formatting options: paragraphing, headings, boldface and italics, different font sizes, spaces, and so on. In speech, none of these are available so you may have to help your listener by using more signpost (linking) words, which can also help you to organise your thoughts.

### 2. Vocabulary and grammar

- (a) **Vocabulary.** Try to use as wide a range of vocabulary as possible, but make sure you can use the vocabulary correctly. Most errors come from not knowing how to use words correctly rather than not knowing grammar rules.
- (b) **Grammar.** Some mistakes in grammar and sentence structure are understandable, but it is important that these mistakes do not make your meaning unclear. So it is better to keep your response simple and clear than to use more complex language that is unclear.
- (c) **Self-correction.** You should try to self-correct when you find yourself making an error in grammar or vocabulary. Some candidates worry that this may just draw attention to the error, but this is considered an advanced strategy and should help your mark.
- (d) **Paraphrasing.** Try expressing the same thing in different words when you have trouble finding the words to make a point. Practice this regularly. It is a valuable skill.

### 3. Communication strategies

- (a) **Non-verbal communication.** Use eye contact, posture, gesture and voice to catch your audience's interest and set yourself apart from ordinary candidates.
- (b) **Timing.** If you practice individual responses enough, you will find you can give a smooth, well organised answer that lasts one minute, leaving a few seconds for a short conclusion.
- (c) **Responding.** You must be able to show that you understood the question and that your comments are a suitable and appropriate response to the specific question.

### 4. Pronunciation and delivery

- (a) **Pronunciation.** Pronounce words carefully, paying special attention to word endings.



## Individual response 7: Problem + solution

**Question:** *What do you think can be done to make Hong Kong's parks more friendly to the elderly?*

**Modal verbs.** Every sentence in this response has at least one modal verb (*can, could, should, must, may, would, might*) or a semi-modal (*have to*). These are used to give opinions (*should, have to, must*), and to show levels of certainty from strong (*must, have to*) to medium (*should*) to weak (*may, might, could*).

**Signposts.** The speaker also uses clear signposts (*First, Second, Next, Finally*) to show when she is moving on to a new point. These signpost words are much more common in speech than in writing because your listeners do not have paragraphs and headings to tell them when you are changing topics.

Sample response	Comments
<p>I <b>can</b> think of a couple of things that might make the parks more convenient and interesting for elderly people.</p> <p>First, we <b>have to</b> realise that quite a few elderly people use wheelchairs. We don't see many of them in parks, but they <b>could</b> be because of the iron bars that block the entrances to keep out hawkers carts. We <b>should</b> not be blocking disabled people from using the parks like this. There <b>must</b> be another way to control hawkers in parks.</p> <p>Second, many elderly people <b>may</b> not have to use wheelchairs, but they <b>may</b> still have difficulty walking and worry about falling. Installing rails along the walkways <b>would</b> encourage more elderly people to walk without fear of falling. They <b>would</b> be more healthy as a result.</p> <p>Next, there <b>should</b> be more water fountains in the parks. It <b>might</b> be easy for young people to run to the other side of the park when they are thirsty, but it <b>may</b> take an elderly person a long time to do the same. In the hot weather this <b>could</b> be dangerous.</p> <p>Finally, I think there <b>should</b> be more activities in the parks to attract elderly people – perhaps more singing, music, tai chi, and so forth.</p> <p><b>While</b> I think our parks are pretty good in general, with our aging population, we <b>have to</b> think about changes like this. <b>Thank you.</b></p>	<p>General opening focusing on benefits</p> <p><b>First problem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reason</li> <li>• solution</li> </ul> <p><b>Second problem</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reason</li> <li>• solution</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• explanation</li> <li>• problem</li> </ul> <p><b>Solution</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reason</li> </ul> <p>• contrast – good but could be better</p>

## Individual response 8: Giving opposing views

**Question:** *What do you think of a 50-cent charge for plastic bags at check-out counters?*

When you are asked for your opinion and do not feel the issue is black and white, you can present both sides of the argument. This gives you more to talk about.

Note the signpost words and expression in boldface:

1. **To introduce opinions:** *I think..., I believe..., This should...*
2. **To show uncertainty:** *I'm not sure if...*
3. **To show contrast:** *But..., However..., a better solution would be....*
4. **Rhetorical question:** *Is there any reason why...?* (This can also be put in statement form – *There is no reason why...*)

Sample response	Comments
<p><b>I'm not sure if</b> this is an effective way to reduce plastic waste. I read recently that we dump 23 million plastic bags every day in our landfills. This is too many for sure. <b>But</b> one thing we forget is that most people probably recycle plastic bags by using ParknShop and Wellcome bags as rubbish bags. <b>When</b> they stop getting the bags from the supermarkets, they will end up buying more rolls of rubbish bags, <b>so</b> the amount of plastic going into the landfills may still be the same. <b>I think a better solution that would be</b> for the supermarkets to use biodegradable bags and continue to give them out for free.</p> <p><b>However, I believe</b> a 50-cent charge for plastic bags has some benefits. It can help raise awareness about the need to reduce waste and recycle, especially plastic waste. <b>This should</b> help ease the pressure on landfill sites.</p> <p><b>I think a better solution would be</b> to have a law requiring all plastic bags to be biodegradable. Bioplastic bags can decompose in 90 days into carbon dioxide and water. I read that France outlawed all non-biodegradable plastic bags in 2007 and Italy is doing the same by 2010. <b>Is there any reason why</b> Hong Kong can't do the same?</p> <p><b>So my final answer to your question is,</b> yes, <b>I think</b> the 50-cent charge is a good idea, but it is not the real solution to our problem.</p> <p><b>Thank you.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sure</li> <li>• something that has been overlooked</li> <li>• condition</li> <li>• unwanted result</li> <li>• alternative</li> </ul> <p><b>Opposing view</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• benefits of levy</li> <li>• alternative solution</li> <li>• question</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not the solution</li> </ul>

**Task 59:** Fill in the blanks.

**Individual response question:** Do you use the Internet for learning or enjoyment?

Actually I use it for neither learning (1) \_\_\_\_\_ enjoyment at the present (2) \_\_\_\_\_ . I use it mainly for communication and for (3) \_\_\_\_\_ the news.

(4) \_\_\_\_\_ I started Form 5, I stopped online gaming. In fact, I stopped playing all computer games. It (5) \_\_\_\_\_ taking too (6) \_\_\_\_\_ of my time in Form 4.

Also, I found (7) \_\_\_\_\_ for me, the Internet wasn't too useful for education, at least for my Form 5 subjects.

So now I use the Internet mainly for communication. I check e-mail, Facebook and MSN messages once (8) \_\_\_\_\_ day, reply to e-mail and log (9) \_\_\_\_\_ .

I found this was the only way to manage my (10) \_\_\_\_\_ properly and have enough time (11) \_\_\_\_\_ revision.

I also still read the news online every day to be up to (12) \_\_\_\_\_ with what's (13) \_\_\_\_\_ in the world but I wouldn't call this either learning (14) \_\_\_\_\_ enjoyment. It's just (15) \_\_\_\_\_ myself informed.

I still believe the Internet (16) \_\_\_\_\_ a wonderful educational resource, and I'm (17) \_\_\_\_\_ I'll use it a lot more (18) \_\_\_\_\_ the exams are over, for both learning (19) \_\_\_\_\_ online games, but I think for me, the Internet will always be more for communication and news (20) \_\_\_\_\_ for education and fun.

Thank you.

**Task 60: Individual response question:** *What sorts of school outings do you like?*

I like all sorts of school outings and I (1) \_\_\_\_\_ we had more of them.

I like careers visits. I mean, I like visiting companies or organisations, rather than (2) \_\_\_\_\_ to the speakers from those places. For instance, (3) \_\_\_\_\_ big difference between a hotel representative coming to our school (4) \_\_\_\_\_ a talk and a class visit to a hotel to see how (5) \_\_\_\_\_. Sure the talk only takes 30 minutes while the visit takes a full afternoon, but the visit is far more interesting and informative, (6) \_\_\_\_\_ worth the extra time.

My school (7) \_\_\_\_\_ the Form 6 students to the Careers Fair every year, (8) \_\_\_\_\_ is a very good idea, because we can get (9) \_\_\_\_\_ about both careers and further education.

I also like field trips to study aspects of our natural environment. (10) \_\_\_\_\_, in Geography we can study rock formations and in Biology we can study water, vegetation, animals, and so forth. This is a far more interesting way to learn about our subjects than merely studying a textbook. And (11) \_\_\_\_\_ students sometimes visit companies like Vitasoy to see food processing first-hand. This is a relevant way to learn.

(12) \_\_\_\_\_ those are some examples of the types of school outings I like. Thank you.

- |                  |                     |                               |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. A. hope       | 5. A. does it work  | 9. A. a lots of informations  |
| B. wish          | B. does it works    | B. a lot of information       |
| C. like          | C. it works         | C. many informations          |
| D. want          | D. it is work       | D. many information           |
| 2. A. hearing    | 6. A. so that       | 10. A. Example                |
| B. I listen      | B. that it's        | B. Examples                   |
| C. hear          | C. so it            | C. For examples               |
| D. listening     | D. so it's          | D. For example                |
| 3. A. there's    | 7. A. is also take  | 11. A. As I know the Economic |
| B. there has a   | B. also takes       | B. I know the Economics       |
| C. there         | C. it takes also    | C. As I know the Economics    |
| D. there has     | D. also taking      | D. I know the Economic        |
| 4. A. to be give | 8. A. which I think | 12. A. So                     |
| B. to give       | B. which I think it | B. Then                       |
| C. to giving     | C. that I'm think   | C. Moreover                   |
| D. give          | D. and I think      | D. Besides                    |

## **Section IV**

# **Proofreading – discussions**

**Task 63: Common errors 1** – Discuss what information to put on an exam-prep website.

**Instructions:** Some lines are correct. The rest have only one error per line, but the error may involve one OR two words together. Underline the error and write the correction on the right.

A	Well, let's start by talk about what to include on the website. Maybe it could divide into subjects, and then divide each subject into sections, just like notes, tips and practice, or something like that.	1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____
B	That sounds good. First, which subjects we should cover?	5. _____
C	Why not all subject?	6. _____
B	Well, I was thinking about the amount of times this would I can imagine do this for two or three subjects, but not 1 or 5.	7. _____ 8. _____
D	Yes, that's a good point. We won't able to spend much time working on this website. We have to study too. Why doesn't we focus on English, Chinese and Maths?	9. _____ 10. _____
A	That sounds fine. Let's use English as an example. First, think about what kinds of notes could we put on the website.	12. _____ 13. _____
C	Well there have a lot of good grammar websites, there is no point in designing our own, isn't it? We could just list our favourite websites.	14. _____ 15. _____ 16. _____
B	Good idea. Maybe we could listing our favourite two or three, and write a brief report on what offers on each website.	17. _____ 18. _____
C	That sounds fine. Is everyone agree?	19. _____
A	Sure. I'm OK.	20. _____
D	That's sound good.	21. _____
C	So, for the grammar section we will list two or three of the best websites, along with a brief review of each. Does you know what? I think we could be used the same format for all three subjects. First, we could have a section with suggested websites and reviews, then a section on subject notes, then another sections on tips, and a final section on practice.	22. _____ 23. _____ 24. _____ 25. _____ 26. _____ 27. _____
B	In my opinion, I think a separate section on common errors or problems would also be helpfully.	28. _____ 29. _____
C	That's a not bad idea. In fact, it's an excellent idea.	30. _____

# **Section V**

## **Exam practice**

**(group interaction and individual response)**

**Task 71: Exam practice 1****Part A: Group Discussion** (Prep:10 mins; Discussion: 8 minutes per group of 4)

The extract below appeared in a newspaper report.

**Child-care services shortage**

Currently about 125,000 children aged six to 12 from low-income families need government-subsidised child-care services, according to community organisers. However, only about one per cent of this number receive a complete subsidy for such services, and less than three per cent receive partial subsidies. For the rest, families must pay a few thousand dollars a month for child-care services if both parents work.

In many cases the mothers can only find part-time jobs at odd hours paying as little as \$1,000 per month, sometimes less than they have to pay for child care. This makes it almost impossible for these families to afford child care, resulting in many cases in children being left at home alone, or mothers having to quit their jobs.

In 2008, the Labour and Welfare Bureau launched a three-year pilot programme which organises neighbourhood groups that take care of each other's children. But community organisers say that the government has to do more to improve and expand child-care services so that low-income families can have a decent chance to increase their income and improve their living standard.

Your group wants to write a letter to the editor of the newspaper examining the lack of child-care services and offering solutions. You may want to talk about:

- the present situation
- the problem
- possible solutions
- anything else you think is important

**Part B: Individual Response** (one minute per candidate; no preparation)

1. At what age do you think it is okay to leave a child home alone?
2. Do you think the taxpayer dollars should be used to subsidise child care for low-income families?
3. Do you know any families who have trouble finding affordable child care?
4. If a mother can make \$4,000 a month at a part-time job and has to pay \$2,000 a month for child care, is it worth working?
5. Do you think it is acceptable to leave a ten-year old child at home alone?
6. Do you think it is acceptable for eight-year olds to go to school and back home alone?
7. Do you think spending government money for free child care would help the economy?
8. Do you think the government should provide free child care for all families regardless of income?
9. Do you think it is better for mothers to work or stay at home when the children are young?
10. Do you think the government programme that encourages neighbours to look after each other's children will work?



## Vocabulary and ideas for the discussion

**The present situation:** As mentioned in the article, complete child-care subsidies are available to only one per cent of needy families and partial subsidies to less than three per cent. That means over 120,000 children aged six to 12 from low-income families are at risk of being left at home alone if their parents cannot afford \$2,000 or more a month for child care.

**The problems:** Child care is too expensive for many low-income families; this increases the risk of children being left at home alone; this in turn increases the chance of home accidents; this means one parent may have to give up her job because the family can't afford child care; a single parent may have no choice but to leave her children home alone while she works; increased subsidies may eventually require increased taxes.

**Possible solutions:** increased subsidies for low-income families; subsidised child-care services in government housing estates; neighbourhood groups that take care of each other's children; making child care free for all families in a primary and secondary school education is free.

### Individual response: sample answers

#### 1. At what age do you think it is okay to leave a child home alone?

I think the age of 11 is fine. An 11-year-old child is capable of looking after themselves and younger brothers and sisters, if necessary, as long as they are taught not to do dangerous things like cooking. If 11-year-olds are not capable of staying at home alone then their parents need to teach them how to be independent. Perhaps some parents baby their children and don't teach them how to be self-sufficient.

I learned to look after my younger brother when I was about seven or eight. I could easily have stayed at home alone with him at that age for a few hours without my parents' needing to worry. But they didn't let me do that until I was 11 just to be safe.

I don't think children under about seven years old should ever be left alone at home for any reason. They just wouldn't know what to do if something went wrong. Perhaps they wouldn't even be big enough to open the gate if there were a fire. Thank you.

#### 2. Do you think taxpayer dollars should be used to subsidise child care for low-income families?

I think this is a very good use of taxpayer dollars and I think the existing programmes should be improved and expanded. I realize the government is trying to do something about the problem while keeping spending down, but doing more would improve safety in the home, reduce stress for working parents and allow more women to contribute to the economy.

And it doesn't have to cost that much. I like the idea of the government's neighbourhood support child-care project, which depends on volunteers to look after neighbourhood children. This gives everyone a chance to contribute when they have time and gives people who have recently moved to Hong Kong a chance to get to know other people in the neighbourhood. I think we need more good ideas like that. If the government could change them from a voluntary basis to a minimum-pay basis that would be even better and still keep costs down.

With a large number of primary schools having closed and many secondary schools starting to close, finding space for child-care centres should not be a great problem. It would be nice if these closed schools could be used to provide quality, low-cost or even no-cost child-care services for all parents who want them. Thank you.

**Task 84: Exam practice 14****Part A: Group Discussion** (Prep:10 mins; Discussion: 8 minutes per group of 4)

The extract below appeared in a sociology journal.

**Hong Kong's falling fertility rate**

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of a population is the average number of children each female has in her whole life.

Hong Kong's TFR fell from 3.46 in 1971 to 0.98 in 2006. This was partly due to women getting married later, which, in turn, resulted in more women choosing not to get married.

By 2006, 24 per cent of women aged 45 to 49 were unmarried, compared to only 10 per cent in 1981. Since nearly all births in Hong Kong are to married couples, this removed almost a quarter of the female population from the fertility pool. Reasons given for this choice include greater equality between men and women, rising educational levels and social status for women, longer working hours and the cultural preference among Hong Kong women for a partner with a higher social status and income than they have.

Furthermore, as marriages between Hong Kong and Mainland partners increased, accounting for 55 per cent of total marriages in 2006, there were about four times as many Hong Kong men marrying Mainland women as there were Hong Kong women marrying Mainland men. By 2006, almost 40 per cent of total births in Hong Kong were to women from the Mainland.

This, combined with changes in lifestyle, which mean most couples in Hong Kong choose to have only one child or no children to remain childless, as a result of less concern than in the past about being able to support themselves when they grow old, has changed the pattern of population growth in Hong Kong.

You are working on a project on population trends in Hong Kong and are now planning a unit on fertility rates. You may want to talk about:

- why Hong Kong women are choosing to get married later in life, or not at all
- why more couples are choosing to have only one child or to remain childless
- how Hong Kong's fertility rate could be increased
- anything else you think is important

**Part B: Individual Response** (one minute per candidate; no preparation)

1. Do you think Hong Kong's falling fertility rate is a healthy or unhealthy trend?
2. Is there anything the government can do to increase the fertility rate?
3. Why do you think Hong Kong women are getting married later in life than in the past?
4. Why do you think more HK women are choosing to remain unmarried than in the past?
5. Why do you think families are getting so much smaller than in the past?
6. Do you think a declining fertility rate is a good sign or a bad sign?
7. Why do you think rich countries almost all have a falling fertility rate?
8. Why do you think poor countries tend to have a high fertility rate?
9. How do you think your parents decided how many children they would have?
10. Do you ever talk to your parents about how they decided how many children they would have?

## Vocabulary and ideas for the discussion

**Why Hong Kong women are choosing to get married later in life, or not at all:** It is harder for HK women to find their preferred partners because of (1) increasing gender equality, (2) rising education levels among women, (3) rising social status of women, (4) a higher proportion of women in the workforce, (5) long working hours, (6) the tradition of looking for a male partner with higher social status and income, and (7) more HK men than women finding partners in the Mainland.

**Why more couple are choosing to have only one child or to remain childless:** (1) the high cost of raising children in HK; (2) better family-planning knowledge and contraception methods than in the past; (3) a higher proportion of women in the workforce; (4) lower infant mortality rate than in the past because of better hygiene and health-care services; (5) the lower infant mortality rate, in turn, reduces the need to have more children as insurance against old age; (6) more personal and financial freedom with a smaller family, as a smaller proportion of married couples spent on child-rearing.

**How Hong Kong's fertility rate could be increased:** (1) the legal child or family allowance (monthly payment per child); (2) less stress on guaranteeing job titles for parenting, such as paid and job-protected leave from work covering childbirth or adoption, and during child illnesses or when changing schools; (3) free or subsidised childcare and education; (4) housing allowances for all families with children; (5) free health care for mother and child.

## Individual response: sample answers

### 1. Do you think Hong Kong's declining fertility rate is a healthy or unhealthy trend?

I don't think it's so black and white. The trend is healthy in some ways and unhealthy in others. First let's look at the unhealthy trend. It's bad for the economy. It results in a steadily aging population, which at some point means fewer people in the workforce and fewer people paying taxes. We just have to look at the effect on primary schools and now secondary schools in HK to see how it affects the school. One fifth of primary schools have been closed and soon we'll have 20 per cent fewer secondary schools I suppose. That means teachers and school support staff losing their jobs. And it affects all the neighbourhood businesses that depended on the closed schools.

But it is a healthy trend in some ways too. Fewer babies and a declining population means less stress on the environment. Part of the reason for the aging population is that the life expectancy in HK is one of the highest in the world, so that's a good thing. Finally, population rates tend to fall as the standard of living increases because people feel they can save enough money to look after themselves in their old age instead of depending on their children. So a declining population shows HK's success in raising the standard of living. Thank you.

### 2. Is there anything the government can do to increase the fertility rate?

Yes, there is, but it wouldn't be cheap. Basically the government can pay couples to have children and make laws forcing employers give them more days off with pay to look after their children.

I think the main reasons women are having fewer babies are concerns about money, loss of their position at work, and loss of freedom.

First, money. It seems that it is much more expensive to raise children today than in the past even though education is basically free. Many developed countries pay mothers to have babies and offer many benefits like free childcare. Maybe HK should do the same.

Second, position at work. I think many women are worried that if they take time off work to have a baby once or twice, they may lose the chance to be promoted since their bosses may worry about relying on them too much. So maybe we need stronger laws to protect both pay and position in the workplace for women who choose to have babies.

Third, freedom. Many parents who cannot afford a helper may have trouble looking after their children after work because of HK working hours. This may affect their job choices and even whether the mother works. The solution to this, as in my first point, is for the government to offer free childcare for all children. It would be expensive, but if society wants more babies, everyone must contribute. Thank you.

# Topics that can also be used for debate

## Conflict debating

### Suggested debate format

**Time:** 3 minutes per speaker

#### First Affirmative (1A)

1. Define the topic if there are words or phrases that may mean different things to different people or if the topic as a whole could mean different things to different people. Choose a definition that would be reasonable to the average member of the audience.
2. State your team line: i.e. why the topic is true for the affirmative side and why the topic is false for the negative. The team line is repeated by each speaker to emphasise your stand and to show consistency as a team.
3. Give a brief outline of what each team member will talk about.
4. Give the first half of the affirmative's case.

#### Second Affirmative (2A)

1. Repeat the team line.
2. Rebut 1N's main arguments. (approx 45-60 seconds)
3. Give the second half of the affirmative's case.

#### Third Affirmative (3A)

1. Repeat the team line.
2. Rebut all remaining arguments from 1N and 2N not covered by 2A. (2 to 2½ minutes)
3. Summarise the affirmative's case.
4. Close by appealing to the audience to accept the affirmative's team line.

#### First Negative (1N)

1. Accept the definition or challenge it by explaining your alternative. The key is to explain why your definition is more reasonable than the affirmative's.
2. State the negative's team line.
3. Give a brief outline of what each team member will talk about.
4. Rebut some of the main points made by 1A. (45 to 60 seconds)
5. Give the first half of the negative's case.

#### Second Negative (2N)

1. Repeat the team line.
2. Rebut 2A's main arguments and any from 1A not covered by 1N. (approx 1 minute)
3. Give the second half of the negative's case.

#### Third Negative (3N)

1. Repeat the team line.
2. Rebut as many of 3A's points as possible and any main points made by 1A and 2A not rebutted by 1N or 2N. (approx 2 to 2½ minutes)
3. Give a brief summary of the negative's case.
4. Close by appealing to the audience to accept your team line.

#### Notes

1. Debaters speak in the following order: 1A, 1N, 2A, 2N, 3A, 3N.
2. Neither 3A nor 3N can introduce any new arguments. They can only rebut the opposition's arguments and summarise their team's arguments.
3. If you lack time to rebut all of your opponents' arguments, choose the most important ones.