

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/01  
Reading

## Key messages

- **Question 1:** Candidates must read the questions carefully and make sure they answer them correctly and clearly by picking the relevant information from the text and not just quoting the text. The number of marks allocated by the side of each question serves as a clear indicator of the number of ideas or points that need to be included in order to gain full marks. When an explanation or a justification is required, keeping to the words of the text is seldom enough to provide a full response. When the question requires the candidate to support the answer with an example from the text, the example should be written in full. Candidates who just give the line number where the example can be found will not be rewarded.
- **Question 2:** Some candidates did not read the rubric and compared the two texts instead of writing a summary of the positive and negative effects of smartphones on health and professional life. Others wrote an essay about all the advantages and disadvantages of smartphone instead of focusing on the effects on health and professional life and consequently often exceeded the word limit. Candidates should produce a structured response, stating each point briefly, rather than developing each point at length. There should not be any comments on the style of the texts and there is no need to write a lengthy introduction and conclusion.
- **Language:** Candidates need to allow time at the end of the exam to proof read their work so as to avoid careless grammatical and spelling errors.

## General comments

Most candidates responded positively to the topic of smartphones and many performed better in Question 2 than last year.

In **Question 1** some candidates did not answer the most difficult questions. In **Question 2** the candidates who performed well were those who took the time to write a plan in order to ensure they stayed within the prescribed 250 words limit and used a varied vocabulary and a good range of linking words, which indicated that they had been well prepared in the techniques and requirements of the examination. However, many candidates still need further guidance and training on how to write a good summary as this required an ability to identify valid points and to group them into concise and well written paragraphs. Candidates who write their plan on the exam paper before the summary must remember to cross it off; otherwise it will be part of the word count.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Question 1**

Candidates generally understood the text but occasionally struggled to answer the questions purposefully.

The range of questions provided opportunities for all candidates to perform according to their ability.

The most accessible questions were **(a), (c), (e), (f), (h)**, and the most challenging ones were **(b), (d), (g), (k), (n)**. The rest of the questions fitted in the middle band, where, as long as the text was well understood, the questions presented no major difficulty. Marks are awarded for each specific relevant point made by the candidate. When a question is worth more than one mark, it means that more than one relevant point must be identified. When a justification or explanation is required it is important that it is provided.

- (a) Candidates usually gave the correct answer. However, those who just said *se priver d'électricité* did not get a mark as the mark scheme required that they also mentioned the length of time. Some incorrect answers included *l'auteur compare une journée sans portable à une ineptie quasi-réactionnaire/à un mythe/à une privatisation d'électricité*.
- (b) Candidates had to convey two out of the three following points: the idea that connection is essential (or give examples of it)/the idea that it was now a way of life/the idea that it was part of progress/the development of society.
- (i) Most candidates scored one mark as they were able to identify one reason *la connexion est devenue indispensable*.
- (ii) Candidates often went on developing the first idea at length instead identifying another reason and as a consequence did not get the second point.
- (c) Most candidates answered that question correctly, but those who failed to make a comparison e.g. *les adultes l'utilisent pour leur travail* did not get a mark.
- (d) Many candidates found this question difficult. They needed to convey the idea that we live in a world which is more and more connected and the idea that mobile phones are now necessary. A good number scored 1 mark but very few scored two marks.
- (e) This was an easy question and the majority got 1 mark. Those who did not get the mark usually answered *les patients*.
- (f) This was another easy question which candidates answered well. There were a few clumsy answers e.g. *envoyer ses blessures/un photographe à des docteurs pour qu'il établissent un diagnostic*.
- (g) Candidates had to convey the idea that the author believes that very few people are going to take part in the event. Many failed to pick the relevant information in the text to answer this question, e.g. *il dit qu'il ne sera pas le seul à ne pas participer à cette journée/l'auteur parle à nouveau du mythe/il utilise l'exagération* etc.
- (h) Most candidates also answered this question correctly as they conveyed the idea that there was no proof that smartphones were harmful to health.
- (i) Most candidates understood the phrase and conveyed the idea that the mobile phone is supposed to be used as a tool and we should not be ruled by it/get addicted to it. A few candidates had difficulty in explaining it in clear French, e.g. *Cette citation veut dire que le téléphone doit tout faire pour vous, les humains doivent pas souffrir./Le telephone est fait pour qu'on l'utilise quand on veut mais des fois on a pas controle sur combien on l'utilize*.
- (j) Most candidates understood the phrase and conveyed the idea that it meant to go back in time. There were however a few incorrect answers, e.g. *utiliser la bougie pour allumer l'intérieur de la maison/Cela veut dire que pendant le moyenâge on utilisait des charettes et des bougies, mais maintenant nous somme au 21<sup>ème</sup> siècle et les temps on changé*.
- (k) As in the previous session this is the question where candidates did least well, either because they could not identify the techniques or failed to give an example of that technique or picked an incorrect example. A few misunderstood the question and identified three persuasive techniques instead of three techniques which stress the author's opposition to the day without mobile phones. Some of the examples given showed that candidates did not know the difference between a hyperbole and a metaphor. Candidates often explained at great length why the writer was against the day without mobile phones instead of identifying the techniques used to express his opposition. Many candidates identified rhetorical questions and scored 1 mark.
- (l) Many candidates explained what happened to the grandmother instead of identifying the reasons why the author mentions that story.

- (m) In order to score 2 marks candidates had to mention two pieces of advice given by the author. Most candidates conveyed the idea that we had to adapt to change but very few conveyed the point of not taking part in the event.
- (n) Candidates did not perform very well in this question as they failed to identify the tone used by the author in the last paragraph of the text. A few mixed the words *ton* and *temps* and gave answers like *l'auteur nous parle à l'indicatif ex: 'il faut suivre – s'adapter'*.

## Question 2

Some candidates still do not seem to be aware of the change to **Question 2** which happened last year. In **Question 2** candidates are no longer required to compare the two texts but are asked to sum up a certain number of points across the two texts.

Those who compared the two texts did less well than those who followed the rubric and summed up the positive and negative effects of mobile phones on people's health and professional life.

As this question is a guided summary, it is important that candidates remember that their response should not exceed the word limit, as only the first 250 words are taken into consideration in the assessment. For the best results candidates should read carefully both texts and plan their answer, as planning not only improves organisation and helps the candidate to pick relevant points from the text, but also encourages the use of a more fluent and varied style.

There is no need to make a lengthy introduction and conclusion and to develop each point. There is also no need to mention from which text each point comes from and mentioning the title of each text. Quoting from the text or giving line references is equally not necessary. It is however important to mention the points which are relevant to the question. For instance, the mention of parents and young people and using the mobile phone for entertaining purposes or social networking was irrelevant to the question. Those who focused on the positive and negative effects of mobile phones on people's health and professional life scored highly in the summary content. It is equally important to be concise, to group ideas in paragraphs and to use linking words so as to enhance the natural flow of language. Candidates should use their own words rather than lift big chunks of texts, avoid narrating the content of each text and avoid repeating the same ideas or developing each idea at great length.

To improve, candidates should:

- Read the question carefully.
- Identify as many relevant points as possible.
- Organise and plan their response so that it is purposeful and fully relevant.
- Include several points in a sentence.
- Use a variety of linking words (e.g. *tandis que, par contre, cependant, alors que, de plus, pourtant, aussi, en effet, par conséquent, de ce fait, d'un côté, d'un autre côté, enfin, aussi, également, toutefois...*)
- Remain focused and avoid mentioning things which are not in the text or giving their personal opinion or extensively developing each point or quoting what the people in the text are saying.
- Avoid excessive switching into narrative or descriptive mode.

## Style and Organisation

Organisation is closely linked with content and some of the points mentioned above have a direct impact on it. The better candidates grouped and linked ideas, typically introducing several ideas into one sentence. The majority of candidates dealt with ideas in a series of short sentences, often following the same pattern, so that the overall effect was somewhat repetitive and at times laboured. A few picked points at random, losing focus now and again, thus making their answer hard to follow.

Style relates to the range and complexity of structures and to the breadth and of lexis used. Few candidates were at the extremes of the scale: stylish or purposeful responses were rare, so were very poor responses with excessive lifting written in a basic and barely adequate language.

## Accuracy (Questions 1 and Question 2)

Generally, candidates tended to perform better in **Question 1** than in **Question 2** as their answers were shorter and they had the support of the text whereas in **Question 2** they had to produce their own language. But similar errors appeared in both questions:

- The use of the infinitive instead of the past participle or vice versa (e.g. *savoir comment l'utilisé/l'auteur veut dit, on a développer une addiction*);
- incorrect verb endings (*il dit que les personnes qui passe pas leur journée sans portable son minoritaires/un téléphone aurais états utile/il conseils les lecteurs/nous ne peuvent pas être esclave du smartphone/le portable permett de communiquer...*);
- failure to agree adjectives and past participles (e.g. *le téléphones est utiles/être privée d'électricité/les téléphones sont devenues des outils essentiel ...*);
- wrong gender (e.g. *la téléphone*);
- omission of *ne* when using the negative form;
- failure to use the subjunctive after *pour que, ne pense pas que...etc.*;
- incorrect use of pronouns and possessive adjectives (e.g. *ses proches n'ont jamais pu lui joindre*);
- failure to use the correct prepositions after certain verbs (e.g. *jouer des jeux...*);
- *s'en* was often written *sans* (e.g. *certaines ne pourraient pas sans priver*);
- using *par* + infinitive or *en* + infinitive instead of *en* + present participle (e.g. *permet de sauver des vies en demander un deuxième avis*);
- failure to include accents or apostrophes.

Many candidates favour the phonetical rendering to the detriment of grammatical accuracy (e.g. *c'est* sometimes spelt *cet/cette/ses/sait*; *est* often spelt *et* or *ai* and vice versa; *ce* spelt *se*; *ceux* spelt *ce/se*; *ça* spelt *sa*; *on* used instead of *ont*; *a* instead of *à* and vice versa; *eu* instead of *eux*; *les gents* instead of *les gens*; *sont* instead of *son* and vice versa; *n'y* instead of *ni*, etc.

Candidates should also be aware that a spelling error can change the meaning of a sentence (e.g. *Sur internet on peut faire la course* – instead of *faire les courses*)/*avec leur smartphone ils peuvent communiquer des informations à leurs collègues* – instead of *à leurs collègues*)

All these mistakes can be avoided if candidates take the time to proof read their work.

The language was generally appropriate but simple and unsophisticated. In **Question 2** the language was sometimes repetitive as candidates were often more concerned with making valid points than with improving the quality of their language.

To improve the quality of language, candidates should pay particular attention to the following:

- Agreement of adjectives and participles;
- correct verb endings;
- correct use of pronouns and prepositions;
- the difference between *a* and *à* ; between *et*, *est*, *ai* and *aie*; between *c'est*, *s'est*, *ses*, *ces*, *sait*; between *ce* and *se*; between *sa* and *ça*; between *été* and *était*; between *on* and *ont*; between *son* and *sont*;
- widening their knowledge of linking words and vocabulary;
- using a variety of complex structures;
- the importance of accents and apostrophes.

Concentrating on these areas should stand all candidates in good stead.

# FIRST LANGUAGE FRENCH

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Paper 0501/02  
Writing

## Key messages

To be successful in this paper, candidates need to select two titles (one from each section) and write a response that is relevant, well-structured and clear. Essays should be accurate with a use of idiom and appropriate vocabulary as well as be coherent with well-developed ideas.

## General comments

As in previous years, candidates were given a choice of 4 titles for the discussion and argumentative essay and 4 titles for the narrative/descriptive essay. Each essay was marked out of 25, comprising a maximum mark of 12 for style and accuracy and a maximum of 13 for task achievement. Centres should note that **Questions 1(a) and 1(b)** are for discursive essays; **Questions 1(c) and 1(d)** for argumentative essays; **Questions 2(a) and 2(b)** for descriptive essays and **Questions 2(c) and 2(d)** for narrative essays. Most candidates observed the rubric regarding the number of words used (350–500 words per essay).

This paper generated some exceptional work with some candidates successfully writing two convincing and coherent pieces of work incorporating a wide range of structures. The best essays for **Section 1** featured clear and relevant introductions and a suitable conclusion for the title set avoiding unnecessary repetition. Pertinent illustration and exemplification are very much encouraged and duly rewarded. For **Section 2** candidates who achieved good or very good marks for content wrote essays featuring an outstanding description or narration which engaged the reader throughout. In both sections, when less able candidates ran out of ideas, they tended to resort to padding and could only be awarded very modest marks for content. Some of the answers submitted had no proper introduction or concluding remarks while others simply repeated the title set as their conclusion.

In descending order of popularity, this cohort chose: **Section 1: Question B, Question C, Question D, Question A; Section 2: Question C, Question A, Question B, Question D.**

In assessing the *quality of language*, the best essays combined high levels of accuracy, fluency and complexity. Most of the work was characterised by a fair level of accuracy despite some clumsiness and occasional lapses in clarity of meaning. Weaker essays tended to be simple and laboured. There were essays where poor language meant that ideas were not well communicated. There were a number of recurrent weaknesses and errors with the following seen often:

- Misspelling of common words e.g. la **plus part**, les **proffesseurs**, rester chez **soit**, le **future**, les **réseaux**, le **government**, néan**mois**, **example**.
- Omission of accents.
- Use of **sa** instead of **ça**.
- Disregard for appropriate register: chose, truc, les vieux.
- Overuse of **il y a**, **ça**, **cela**, **aussi**.
- Use of **tu** form instead of the **vous** or **on** form.
- Confusion between homonyms **on/ont**, **ce/ceux**, **ses/ces**.
- Use of **qui** in contexts where **ce qui** was required.
- 'le plus... le plus' instead of plus... plus.
- l'**harcèlement** instead of **le harcèlement**.
- Inconsistencies in adjectival and subject-verb agreement.
- Inappropriate conjunctions at the beginning of paragraphs: **mais encore**, **ensuite**, **aussi**.
- Anglicisms: characters for **personnage**, **sauver de l'argent** for **économiser de l'argent**.
- Confusion between the indirect object pronoun **leur** and the possessive adjective **leurs**.

- Conjugation first person singular past historic e.g. 'j'alla', 'je trouva' and errors with irregular verbs: 'je pouva'.
- Confusion between past tenses (past historic, imperfect and perfect).

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1**

##### **Question (a)**

**« Vivre dans un monde sans frontières. » Selon vous, quels en sont les aspects positifs et négatifs ?**

This question produced a mixture of responses; some candidates illustrated their ideas by making reference to current world news: migration of Syrian refugees and the European Union free movement. One great benefit that most candidates developed was that people would be able to move freely around in a world without borders which would abolish the bureaucracy around visa applications. Furthermore, there would be a better, more equitable world where people would be able to share more successful economies across the world, however, some did argue the case for the dangers of reduced security and overpopulation. The general sentiment expressed was that although the concept sounds beneficial, it still remains a utopian ideal and if borders were to disappear current problems such as racism or hate crime would find another excuse to exist.

##### **Question (b)**

**« À l'avenir, il ne sera plus nécessaire d'aller à l'école pour suivre des cours. » Quels sont les avantages et les inconvénients d'une éducation à domicile ?**

This question was by far the most popular question and generated some good responses. A fair number of candidates disregarded 'à l'avenir' which was important in understanding the question fully. In order to do well, candidates should have mentioned that in the future, technology will enable children to follow lessons at home and not require attendance at school at all. There was a vast variety of ideas offered, all very relevant. The main advantages of home-schooling were pupils could go at their own pace in the comfort of their home without any pressure from the class or peer pressure and therefore they could feel more relaxed; some candidates also mentioned the associated reduction in carbon footprint as young people would not need to travel to get to school and also the saving in paper as most courses would be online. However, the main drawback was also well-developed: a school being a social playground where children interact with each other and is an essential part of the growing up, something which cannot be taught via a computer.

This question had many answers and this was very important for candidates to select just a few of them and develop their findings with exemplification, not just enumerate a list of advantages and disadvantages.

##### **Question (c)**

**« De nos jours, les jeunes sont trop influencés par les autres. » Partagez-vous ce point de vue ?**

This was a question where candidates could easily relate but the approach some candidates chose may have been too narrow and simplistic and some candidates quickly ran out of ideas.

As teenagers grow to young adulthood, they are constantly in search of role models; these can be celebrities, parents, friends and so on. The influences that role models have on young people is tremendous and can be either be positive or detrimental. Some candidates successfully developed the idea that such influences have always existed but today this was more significant because of the pervasive presence of social media. Detailing the benefits and drawbacks of the internet was off topic; however, illustrating the effect of influence via social media platforms such as Instagram was perfectly acceptable. Candidates should avoid writing the same way as they speak; this is a written essay and they need to demonstrate their ability to use more sophisticated sentence structure.

### Question (d)

**« Les jeux vidéo conduisent à la violence. » Êtes-vous d'accord ?**

Candidates were not short of video games examples although these were not always used to their full potential. Talking about one's experience was acceptable ('I play games but not all the games I play are violent and I do not become violent') but it was important to widen the topic and develop the reasons why video games could lead or could not lead to violence. On one hand there have been recent findings to prove that most people who played graphically violent games such as 'Call of Duty' did not resort to violence. On the other hand, the playing of certain violent video games is often used as the reason for shockingly violent youth crimes, for example the school shootings in the USA. Some candidates suggested that although video games are given age-related ratings, the role of parents to monitor their children's games was essential in order not to encourage aggression amongst them. Most candidates also discussed that people who became violent could not differentiate virtual world to reality. Nevertheless, video games are a great means of entertainment and cannot be blamed for bringing more violence to the world.

### Section 2

#### Question (a)

**Vous arrivez seul(e) sur une île. Décrivez vos sentiments, vos pensées, ce que vous voyez...**

This title required candidates to give a description of themselves on an island using senses: hearing, sight, smell, taste and feel. Some candidates were able to give a description using well-developed arguments illuminated with appropriate details. Some good essays described the candidate waking up on the beach in pain, disorientated, unable to remember what had previously happened. More able candidates could engage the reader with some imaginative writing. There were essays which lacked form and depth and quickly converted the descriptive task into a narrative one.

#### Question (b)

**Vous venez d'emménager dans un nouveau logement. Décrivez ce que vous voyez en entrant, vos impressions, vos émotions, etc.**

Different types of accommodations were chosen from a luxurious apartment in a capital city to a dormitory in a boarding school. Some descriptions were too focused on description of objects in the accommodation and some candidates were unable to create an atmosphere and there was no progression or movement: 'in the lounge I could see a red sofa and a TV; the bedroom was quite small'. However, more able candidates started from the front door of the new accommodation to slowly progress to the different rooms highlighting and detailing some of the features and at the same time expressed their feelings.

#### Question (c)

**« C'était dangereux mais je n'avais pas le choix. »**

Although there is no specific requirement about where to locate the given sentence it is advisable **not** to install it at the start of the essay as it misses the opportunity to build up suspense. Some of the stories were effective and well-balanced, with the theme of rescuing a friend from danger or being a secret agent fulfilling a mission being common. To be more effective, the narrative needed to be set in the past tense which proved to be somewhat challenging for some candidates who struggled to juggle between the past historic and the imperfect tenses. The most engaging essays were able to use detailed descriptions of danger to build up suspense in order to make the reader believe that they would not be successful in achieving their goal.

#### Question (d)

**En allant à l'école, vous êtes témoin d'un incident très étrange.**

There was a mixture of responses for this question with the most engaging essays avoiding long descriptions of mundane daily events: 'I got up, I had breakfast, I brushed my teeth, I got dressed'. Most stories were centred on witnessing a crime or a robbery in broad daylight. Some of the stories written were thoroughly entertaining and successfully achieved the desired effect. However, some essays focused on an unusual event in the school which was not relevant to the title question.