How to get the most from your Exam Skills Builder CD-ROM

**Student scripts**
Over 40 real student scripts from past exam papers, and recordings for the Speaking & Listening components. The scripts are provided both with and without the examiner marks.

**Examiner commentary**
Documents providing detailed examiner comments on chosen scripts for each paper. These documents include tasks, worksheets and skills development activities for use in class.

**Worksheets**
Referred to in the examiner commentary documents, these are photocopiable worksheets for students, based around specific exam skills for use in class or as homework.

**Past papers**
A range of complete past papers taken from three different sessions, providing a wealth of practice material.

**Mark schemes**
Mark schemes to accompany every past paper.

** Examiner reports**
An examiner report on each of the three sessions covered.
These resources work together in the following way:

- **Examiner commentary document**
- **Past papers**
- **Mark schemes**
- **Examiner reports**

Supported by:

For use in class with students:

- **Student scripts**
- **Worksheets**
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Agent Orange Part 1
Agent Orange Part 2
Crime in Brazil Part 1
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Ballet Part 1
Ballet Part 2

Speaker 1 – E-books
Speaker 2 – Martial arts
Speaker 3 – Creation
Pair 1 – The environment
Pair 2 – Video games

Pair 3 – Hotel complaints
Group 1 – Fat tax
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Group 3 – Nuclear bunker

Worksheet 1
Worksheet 2
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Worksheet 1
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Worksheet 4
Worksheet 1 (for Components 5 & 6)
Dear Producer,

Last night I listened to the broadcast of your interview with the editor of “World Wonders.” I am writing in response to your invitation for listeners to express their views.

I am pleased that you asked the editor some challenging questions with regard to the morality of certain records documented in his books, as some are certainly rather unappealing to the majority of readers. The cases you cited were prime examples.

But, the editor’s replies must be taken into account. It is true that certain parts of the books have been removed as a result of complaints. It is also a fact that people are actively discouraged from attempting to break those records which are harmful to their health. Many such records have been completely extracted in any case.

The decline in sales of these books is almost certainly due to the growth of the internet, rather than a lack of interest caused by the removal of particular content.

The “World Wonders” books really do fuel a passion for learning, which must only be a positive thing. It cannot be denied that there have been cases of inappropriate information set down under the label “records”, but the majority of facts in the books genuinely can be classed as that. The fact that the bulk of the books’ readers are young people is also significant, as anything which prompts them to learn and research new things must surely be encouraged.

It is certainly my view that such books should exist, as much good has come from their presence.

2(b) Of everything which can be seen to have an affect upon the world, it is most certainly the actions of people that cause the greatest changes. But when attempting to determine which has the greatest affect, whether the small actions of ordinary people or the big actions of important people, it is crucial to investigate the various ways in which all kinds of people have changed the world in the past, as well as continuing to change it in the present.

From the dawn of time, certain people have held positions of leadership over other people, either through force and tyranny, the inheritance of that position of leadership, or the consent of the governed. The actions of these leaders have clearly changed the world, but only, it must be remembered, through the obeying (or disobeying) of their orders by the people over whom they rule. The leaders could not have changed the world on their own.

To look at another area of human achievement, that of science and technology, those who make significant discoveries and create clever inventions can certainly be said to be great people, although the role of the ordinary person is equally important to their success. For example, the full implications of the fact that the earth orbits the sun would never have been realised had ordinary...
**Paper 3 - Session 2 - High 1**

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People continued to disbelieve this truth. The actions of ordinary people are also vital to discoveries of other kinds. For courageous explorers to set sail and discover new far-away lands, such as the Americas and Australia, would have been unimportant and changed nothing had it not been for the countless ordinary people who decided to settle in these lands, thereby establishing new nations, the very presence of which has changed the world profoundly.

It can be all too easy to give the total credit for changing the world to *important* people, with their big actions. But as can be seen from the evidence above the small actions of ordinary people are every bit as important. The world would not change much based simply on the performance of one or the other. Which changes the world: the small actions of ordinary people, or the big actions of important people? The answer is both.

**S/A** Fluent. Well-constructed balanced complex sentences.  
**C/S** Logical, cohesive well-developed points.
4(a) I had never expected to be in a situation like this in my life. It all happened so quick I had been withdrawing money from the internal hole in cashpoint, when I heard the shouts, and then there was a scream followed by an uncontrollable wailing. It was only then that I saw them; four men dressed in black with balaclavas. They were armed, and were not afraid to use their weapons either. It was with dull thuds and the two security men dropped to the floor; they were dead before they hit the ground, each having received two taps to the head.

In the next instant the room burst into a sea of panic but these four were not amateurs they had done this before. Whilst three had held the room, the last man, the security system, sealing the whole place. We were locked in.

We were all huddled into a group in front of the cashiers' work consoles, their occupants nowhere to be seen. We were guarded by one man alone and were informed that if anyone tried anything, they would join the two by the door.

What the men who took the bank probably didn't realise was who I was. I had been in the SAS for 20 golden years. I was a legend back in Hereford.

I guessed the other three had gone to take care of the vault, which meant that it was a fair fight between my 'friend' and I.

The villain who was guarding over us, was stupidly more interested in the women in the room than the men, but who could blame him? His greatest mistake was him turning his back upon me. I was up like a shot and with lightning speed covered the 10 or so metres between him and me.

In one swift movement I took his life but his reflexes got the better of me and with his final movement he took another life with him, that of the woman who he was eyeing up.

To my dismay the room suddenly burst into a sea of panic once again. I acted quickly, swooping down and picking up the gun. I took to the corner and only just in time, as one of his comrades came sprinting out of the backrooms and beyond. Steadyng myself and following the target, I waited for my moment he had stopped to survey the room. I took a deep breath and let fly two shots he was gone from the world of the living even before the second shot hit him.

I made my way to the back room of the bank and was making my way along one of the corridors, when I heard the click of gun being cocked back. He must have somehow doubled back on me. He probably thought it was all over, but for me, the fun had only just begun.

CS 9 Some atmosphere, but became disappointing at the end.
SA 8 Fairly straightforward prose with some error
Part 2

Composition

Session 2, Paper 31, Questions 2/3/4

Guidance before the task
Candidates respond to one composition prompt from six alternatives (two for each type of writing).

It is not advisable to try to pre-prepare responses as candidates need to engage with the specifics of question set. Relevance is a thread running through the descriptors for content and structure. Almost half of the marks are for style and accuracy which are equally important across all three types.

Candidates should be aware of the need to consider the particular demands of the type of question they choose.

Typically, strong argumentative answers have an overall shape and offer a wide selection of developed and carefully linked ideas.

Successful narrative answers go beyond a series of events, balancing different parts of the story whilst creating convincing characters and situations through deliberately crafted detail.

Effective descriptive pieces do not confuse description with a story, but are not static, allowing for a little movement, creating atmosphere or tension.

Examiner commentary

CANDIDATE 1

Refer to script Paper 3 - Session 2 - High 1
Apart from the spelling slip with affect, this is a controlled opening, calmly setting out the ground which will be explored. The question is established with the acceptance that the actions of people have caused change over time and that in order to address the question, some of those changes will be considered. We are fairly convinced that this writer has some sense of direction here.

From the dawn of time has some sense of style and the sentence which follows is controlled and clear despite its complexity. The point offered in this paragraph is valid and logical – leaders can only change things when people react to their orders.

The next paragraph touches on scientific advances and perhaps might have taken the point further, but essentially reiterates the point that the great and the good rely on ‘ordinary’ people in order to advance their world.

Settlers are referenced as examples of ordinary people who changed the world, forming new nations in the US and Australia. The points are linked to each other and sentences within each paragraph are sequenced in a way which makes the argument clear to the reader.

Examiner says

✔ Fluent writing with well-constructed, balanced and complex sentences. Points are logical and the overall argument cohesive.
✘ Might have explored the detail of the examples and argument a little further to consider the complexity of the question more specifically.
Similarly, in places vocabulary would have benefitted from further variation.
The final conclusion takes an equally balanced and measured view – whilst big people and their actions can be important, ordinary people are important too. Neither one would get far without the other. In changing the world, both have their part to play. The writing here is accurate and demonstrates some range of vocabulary, though does tend to repeat key words a little too often (big, ordinary, important). However, this is a feature of a measured style throughout which is convincingly reassuring and aware of its audience. It can be all too easy, we are told, to make the wrong judgement and question and answer technique is used to guide us safely to the right conclusion at the end.

There are very few slips in this piece overall – starting a sentence with But, using which instead of who, and the initial spelling error – making this consistently accurate writing which might have even delved a little further into the complexity of the argument it outlines. However, as it stands it is a Band One answer showing clear signs of deliberate planning and careful writing.

CANDIDATE 2

Refer to script Paper 3 - Session 2 - Medium 1

As an opening, this is not giving much away, but we want to read on to find out more. The description of events so far has some nice touches, using sounds to draw us in and create some anxiety as to what has happened. The description of the security guards’ fates though is a little less effective – it takes us a while to decide why there might have been four thuds and the speed or efficiency of their despatch is lost. As they were dead before they hit the ground, tap does not seem to have the necessary power or violence. There are one or two errors here and there already.

Detail is handled efficiently in the next paragraph – sea of panic is an interesting image and the writer brings us up to date with we were locked in.

A huddled and deserted cashiers’ area suggests a frightening idea. Sympathy is being created for the narrator here as he or she sounds vulnerable and in danger, making the information which follows less convincing.

The SAS background needed to have been hinted at before now, rather than using it as a sudden decision to get the central character out of there. Some vocabulary is redundant or ineffective, for example, he use of the word probably. Golden is not right for SAS action, however legendary in Hereford (a joke?).

Tension does mount as the villain is described as being more interested in the women. A hint of character in the aside, Who could blame him? might have gone further to give this narrator some life. Up like a shot and lightning speed are fairly clichéd. The description of the end result with the woman’s death is rather awkward.

The returning sea of panic is less effective this time – suggesting we are running out of ideas. The situation is turning now into fun. The question’s idea of being ‘forced’ is not evident. Arriving at this point

**Top tips for students**

- Planning your route through an argumentative essay before you start writing is very important. You need to have decided on your conclusion from the outset and be working towards explaining it to your reader from the start.
- When you read your work back at the end, watch out for words you have used too often and try to find alternatives (neat crossing out is fine).

**Examiner says**

☑ Does create some atmosphere.
☒ Climax is not fully effective.

**Top tips for students**

- Don’t just plan to get in to your story, plan to get out as well.
- Consider starting your narrative towards the end of the story.
from the initial opening observation, suggests that this is a narrative which was not properly planned. Surely this kind of situation would be fairly familiar if you had been a crack SAS legend in your time?

The narrative has taken over the writer – the candidate got into the situation efficiently and needed to get out somehow but got carried away with the heroics and gun battles.

This answer is disappointing by the end, having shown at various points some interesting features and competency. Careful planning before writing so that the candidate knew who the main character was beforehand would have allowed for a more sophisticated narrative. Many of the errors might also have been avoided, as the candidate would have been able to concentrate on how they were writing rather than trying to think of the next turning point as they were going along.

CANDIDATE 2
Refer to script Paper 3 - Session 2 - Low 1

The tone is matter of fact, but suited for a person from the medical profession there to work and having no time to check places out. At this point, we read on without noticing anything odd.

The rush of wetness surged my face is strange though, and does not quite create the sense of humidity that the writer seems to be trying for. The focus might have been safer on describing the effects of the humidity rather than on the tub and the aroma of lavender – we need the smells, feelings, reactions to what is there at this stage if we are to imagine the place.

We are given specific details about the vehicle which arrived to pick them up – transport system is not the right phrase. The mention of the Toyota is not made relevant. It is old, and not a limousine, but the significance of that is not developed. As the next point concerns the people, it may be that the decrepit car is suggesting something of their attitude (or condition) but we needed more details and description to understand that if so.

Will they think of us as... aliens from out of space? does not seem to fit the context or help to give any idea of the place or people. By the end of the first page, apart from facts about the car, we have nothing descriptive yet.

In the next paragraph, there is an attempt to offer scenery and appeal to the senses as the car takes the beach road. Some lack of range is suggested in vocabulary such as tranquillness and covered with.

Arriving at the guesthouse, we are told that the people are kind and cheerful, and then find out what they were wearing, but they are treated as women and guys with no attempt to focus on any individuals or details drawing the eye specifically. The information about what the men wore gives us few clues to help us imagine them or react to any kind of atmosphere. The colours here could have been picked out by examples of individual touches and quirks noticed. I never saw anyone... (and the earlier They always had a million dollar smile...) suggests that the narrator wanted to seem as though reflecting on this experience. If so, that needed to be made clearer to the reader.
and planned more carefully.

The final paragraph sounds more like the findings of the report than the end of a description and does not seem to follow the sequence of points so far – we have seen little evidence to support this. The facts here are not adding to the atmosphere in any way. Mistakes in the final section do not help the overall impression, but generally the writing has been clear and fluent (if a bit plain).

**Tasks**

1 **Examiner says…**

In pairs, groups, or as a class, students read, discuss and consider responses in some detail:

- The rank order of the three scripts is given according to their mark for content and structure (though marks are not mentioned at this point).
- Students read the ‘Examiner says’ boxes for each script, looking for comments related to content and structure.
- Students scan the mark scheme descriptors to try to find where they can match with the ‘Examiner says’ comments (noting that different types of writing have their own descriptors and highlighting some of the similarities and differences as they occur).
- For at least one of the scripts, students suggest the band they think it achieved – and explain in their own words (or as if explaining to another student) why it did not get any higher (or any lower) mark.
- Ideas and explanations are pooled as a class and compared with the actual marks and reasons for one or more scripts.
- Suggestions are made as to how that script could move up to the next band.

**Extension Activity**

Students position their own answer or an answer from a classmate within the rank order amongst the sample scripts. They suggest an ‘Examiner says’ box to match this answer or an explanation of what it does well and would need to do to get a higher mark.

2 **Comparing and contrasting**

Having read examples of interesting openings from novels and short stories, students read just the opening paragraph(s) of each of the narrative scripts in this section.

For each of the narratives, students consider the information given to the reader in the opening and how interested they might be to read on.

The relevant section of each commentary can then be considered. Students write their own opening for one of the titles, attempting to hook their reader and interest them in reading on.
Skills Ladder (1)

Improving your reading

It is important that the ideas and arguments that you offer in your answer are based on the details of the text you have just read, but you cannot do this by simply copying out points word-for-word.

Putting ideas in to your own words can help a little, but to improve your skills (and marks!) you need to go a few steps further:

To show that you have understood this text, you will need to use these ideas as part of your argument.

The more convincing the argument you offer using these ideas, the higher you will go!

Look at this skills ladder:

You can use this ladder to help you develop your reading skills.

1. Find examples in the script(s) you have in front of you to fit at least two different ‘rungs of the ladder’.
2. Choose one of the examples which is not at the top and rewrite it to move up one rung. Can it go up again? If so, rewrite the last version to reach the next rung up, and so on. (Stop when you get to the top!)
3. Check that any examples you had at the top of the ladder are rooted in the text, by tracing it back down the ladder a step at a time until you get to ground level.

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Extension
Use the ladder below to create your own skills ladder for **writing**.
Check it’ chart

1. Look at the first paragraph of each of the following three scripts:
   Paper 3 - Session 3 - High 1; Paper 3 - Session 3 - Medium 1; Paper 3 - Session 3 - Low.
2. Explain why you think that the high level script is better than the other two.
3. Complete the ‘Check it’ chart below for each script.

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Re-draft one or more of the openings to **keep** what’s good, **change** what’s wrong and **add** what’s missing.

________________________________________________________________________
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Share and compare new versions with someone else. Re-draft your opening in the light of your discussion. Write your final version of the opening below.

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