



FREE AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE / 8700 / PAPER 1

# AQA English Language Paper 1 revision check

An original fiction extract, an exam question starter and focused practice for your next week of revision.

20 MINUTE STARTER / QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 / 12 MARKS

Start here Read Source A and attempt Questions 1 and 2. Aim for about 20 minutes altogether, then check your work. This is a revision target, not an AQA exam timing rule.

Extend your practice Questions 3 to 5 are optional tasks for later sessions. Allow extra time; these are not part of the 20 minute starter.

Use AQA marks Q1: 4. Q2: 8. Q3: 8. Q4: 20. Q5: 40, split into 24 for content and organisation and 16 for accuracy. Completing all five gives 80 possible marks.

Review and plan Use the original example answers, marking guide, skills tracker, seven-day planner and two revision cards. Ask a teacher or tutor to check uncertain level-based marks.

Student name

Date

## Print or complete on screen

Type in the answer spaces on screen, or print on A4 and write on the lines. If using the PDF, save a copy and check that your answers have been saved. Extra response pages are provided for the longer tasks.

This free practice pack follows the AQA Paper 1 question sequence used from 2026. It uses a shorter original source and does not reproduce the full exam conditions. It is not a grade prediction or an official AQA paper. The full AQA examination lasts 1 hour 45 minutes.

Original fiction, questions, model responses and revision cards © 2026 Progress Tutoring. Independent resource, not endorsed by AQA.

## Source A The spare chair

Original fiction by Progress Tutoring. Leila is about to give her first public reading at a community event.

1 At half past six, the rain had emptied the high street. Inside the community hall, rows of blue  
2 chairs faced a low wooden stage. Leila stopped in the doorway, pressing the folded speech  
3 against her coat. For a month she had practised every evening. Now the first sentence  
4 seemed to have slipped clean out of her head.

5 A caretaker was stacking cups beside a kettle. He nodded towards the front row, where a  
6 woman in a red scarf was reading the programme. There were perhaps twelve people in the  
7 room. Leila counted them twice, as though a different total might make standing on the  
8 stage easier. On the programme her name looked much larger than she remembered.

9 On the stage, the microphone waited, a thin black question mark. Beyond it, the chairs  
10 blurred into a single dark shape. Leila smoothed the paper. The edge trembled between her  
11 fingers. She could hear the soft, impatient tick of the wall clock, though nobody else seemed  
12 to notice it.

13 Yesterday, at the kitchen table, she had read the speech to an empty mug. The words had  
14 been ordinary then, belonging to her as surely as the chipped cup and the patch of sunlight  
15 on the floor. Her brother had listened from the doorway and asked her to read the last part  
16 again. Here, she could not remember what he had liked about it.

17 Then a chair scraped. The woman in the red scarf moved to the aisle and placed her  
18 programme on the empty seat beside her. "I'm saving that for my neighbour," she told the  
19 caretaker. "She hasn't missed one of these evenings in twenty years." Leila looked at the  
20 empty chair. Somebody expected it to be filled.

21 The caretaker set down his cups. "Whenever you're ready," he said. He did not look at the  
22 clock. The woman folded her hands in her lap and waited. Nobody whispered. Leila had  
23 imagined a room full of people waiting for a mistake; these people seemed to be waiting for  
24 a story.

25 She put her pages on the lectern. Her first words came out too quietly, but she tried them  
26 again. This time the caretaker stopped pouring. The woman lifted her face, and the room  
27 seemed to lean towards Leila. A man at the back lowered his umbrella carefully to the floor.

28 Leila reached the sentence her brother had liked. Her fingers still gripped the paper, and she  
29 did not yet dare to lift her eyes for long. But the next sentence was already there, waiting  
30 behind the one she was speaking. Outside, rain drummed on the windows. Inside, twelve  
31 people were listening.

Use the printed line numbers for Questions 1, 2 and 4. Keep this source beside the questions.

# Question 1 Finding and interpreting information

Your 20 minute starter | 4 marks | AO1

Use lines 1 to 8 of Source A. Answer all four items. Select one option for each item.

On paper, fill the circle beside your choice. On screen, use the answer dropdown. Each correct choice earns 1 mark.

## 01.1 Where is Leila? [1]

- ☐ A A community hall
- ☐ B A school hall
- ☐ C A theatre

My answer

Choose

## 01.2 What is the caretaker stacking? [1]

- ☐ A Programmes
- ☐ B Chairs
- ☐ C Cups

My answer

Choose

## 01.3 How long has Leila been practising? [1]

- ☐ A A month
- ☐ B A week
- ☐ C A year

My answer

Choose

## 01.4 Why does Leila count the audience twice? [1]

- ☐ A She is looking for her brother.
- ☐ B She hopes it will make speaking feel more manageable.
- ☐ C She is working out how much the tickets cost.

My answer

Choose

## Question 2 Language analysis

Your 20 minute starter | 8 marks | AO2 language

This passage repeats lines 9 to 12 of Source A.

9 On the stage, the microphone waited, a thin black question mark. Beyond it, the chairs  
10 blurred into a single dark shape. Leila smoothed the paper. The edge trembled between her  
11 fingers. She could hear the soft, impatient tick of the wall clock, though nobody else seemed  
12 to notice it.

How does the writer use language in these lines to present Leila's anxiety?

Explore selected words or images and their effects. You may also discuss a sentence choice if it helps your explanation. Use short quotations from these lines.

## Question 3 Structure

Optional extended practice | 8 marks | AO2 structure

Consider the order and focus of the whole extract, from Leila arriving to the moment she begins reading.

Explain how the writer's arrangement of the extract builds and then eases tension.

You could explore where attention is directed, the interruption of the present action by a memory, and what changes near the end. Explain how those choices affect the reader's sense of tension.

## Question 4 Critical evaluation

Optional extended practice | 20 marks | AO4

Limit your response to lines 17 to 31 of Source A.

In this section the hall becomes a welcoming place, and Leila's fear completely disappears.

How far do you agree or disagree with this interpretation? Evaluate how the writer presents the people in the hall and Leila's reactions. Use specific details and explain how the writer's choices support your judgement.

## Question 4 continued

Optional extended practice | Continue your evaluation here if needed.

## Question 5 Creative writing

Optional extended practice | 40 marks | AO5 and AO6

Choose ONE task for a local arts website's creative writing feature.

Either describe a place at dusk or at night. You may use the picture for ideas.



Optional inspiration for the description task.

**Or write the opening of a story in which someone arrives in an unfamiliar place.**

Use your own ideas and wording. Plan first and leave time to reread.

Marks Content and organisation: 24. Technical accuracy: 16.

My chosen task

**A brief plan**

### Question 5 your response

Optional extended practice | Write your chosen description or story opening here.

## Question 5 continued

Optional extended practice | Continue your description or story opening here.

# Check your starter answers

Q1 is marked by correct choices. Q2 uses levels for the quality of analysis, not one mark for each point.

## Question 1 answers

O1.1 A A community hall — 1 mark

O1.2 C Cups — 1 mark

O1.3 A A month — 1 mark

O1.4 B She hopes it will make speaking feel more manageable. — 1 mark

All answers come from the specified opening lines. Award 0 for an incorrect choice or more than one choice for an item. Q1 total: 4.

## Question 2 an original sample response

The microphone is presented as “a thin black question mark”. The metaphor turns an ordinary object into a sign of uncertainty, as though it is asking a question Leila cannot answer. Because it is waiting on the stage, it gives her anxiety a visible focus before she has even spoken.

The “impatient tick” personifies the clock as someone urging her to hurry. It seems to demand action while she is struggling to begin. Her attention to a sound that nobody else notices also makes her worry feel isolating: time has become another pressure in her mind, rather than something the audience is using against her.

## Reading levels for Questions 2 and 3

| Level and marks | What the response demonstrates                                                                  |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 4 7–8     | Precise analysis develops the effects of well-selected evidence. Terms are accurate and useful. |
| Level 3 5–6     | Clear explanations link relevant evidence to the question focus, using terms accurately.        |
| Level 2 3–4     | Some relevant evidence and comments on effects; explanation is uneven.                          |
| Level 1 1–2     | Basic observations or examples with little explanation of effects.                              |
| Level 0 0       | Nothing relevant to credit.                                                                     |

Apply the table separately: Q2 analyses language in the stated lines; Q3 analyses the arrangement of the whole extract. Look at the quality of explanation, evidence and terminology together. Do not award a fixed mark for naming a technique, adding a quotation or writing a set number of paragraphs.

This is Progress Tutoring’s condensed practice guide, not a replacement for AQA examiner standardisation. Alternative justified readings are welcome. Sample responses are illustrations, not guaranteed marks.

## Question 3 guidance

Use the reading levels on the previous answer page. Mark this response out of 8 for structure.

### An original sample response

The opening delays the public reading and keeps attention close to Leila's private fear. Although the hall contains ordinary objects and only a small audience, we encounter them through her anxious reactions. The reader therefore waits for the moment she must finally speak, sharing a tension that comes from anticipation rather than any real danger.

Before that moment arrives, the narrative moves back to yesterday's rehearsal at the kitchen table. This pause in the present action postpones the speech further. The familiar domestic setting also provides a contrast: the words belonged to her at home, but seem inaccessible in the hall. Returning from this memory makes the task ahead feel more difficult.

The scrape of the chair redirects attention to the woman and her absent neighbour. This is a turning point because the audience starts to become a group of people with their own habits and expectations, rather than an anonymous threat. The reading then begins in stages: the first attempt is too quiet, she tries again, and only afterwards do the listeners respond. That sequence lets the tension ease gradually.

At the end, the focus broadens to the people listening. The rain recalls the opening, but the contrast has changed from an empty street to a room offering attention. Leila is still gripping the paper, so the release is incomplete: the reader sees a first step towards belonging rather than an instant cure for her fear.

### What to look for

**Whole extract** Choose moments that explain the changing tension. You do not need to cover every paragraph.

**Order and effect** Explain why the memory is placed before the speech, what changes with the chair movement, or why the listeners become the final focus.

**Keep the focus** A close discussion of the word "impatient" belongs in Q2 unless you connect its placement or recurrence to the organisation of the extract.

These are possible ideas, not compulsory points. Credit other supported analysis of the extract's arrangement.

## Question 4 guidance

Evaluate the interpretation using only the stated later section. Mark out of 20 using the quality of the judgement and supporting discussion.

### An original sample response

I agree that the hall becomes more welcoming, but not that Leila's fear completely disappears. The woman's small action makes room for a neighbour. The empty chair now suggests that someone belongs here and is expected, rather than simply representing another person who might judge Leila. This gives the hall a human warmth that her earlier impression lacked.

The caretaker's "Whenever you're ready" is reassuring because he allows her to choose the moment. The detail that he does not look at the clock challenges the pressure Leila has been feeling. The writer contrasts what she imagined — people waiting for a mistake — with people waiting for a story. That correction encourages the reader to question her fearful view of the audience.

However, the account of the reading keeps traces of anxiety. Her first attempt is "too quietly", and she must try again. The ending still shows her fingers gripping the paper and her reluctance to lift her eyes. These physical details make it unconvincing to claim that all fear has vanished. Her achievement is that she speaks while nervous.

The room seeming to "lean towards" her and the final emphasis on listening suggest an attentive audience. The writer makes connection possible without pretending it is effortless. The section is therefore hopeful: the place feels more welcoming and she is beginning to trust it, but confidence is still developing.

### Evaluation levels

| Level and marks | What the response demonstrates                                                                               |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 4 16–20   | A convincing judgement tests the view through perceptive discussion of methods and carefully chosen details. |
| Level 3 11–15   | A clear judgement is explained through relevant evidence and the writer's methods.                           |
| Level 2 6–10    | Some judgement with partly supported comments on details or methods.                                         |
| Level 1 1–5     | A simple opinion or account of events with limited support or evaluation.                                    |
| Level 0 0       | Nothing relevant to credit.                                                                                  |

A different position can succeed if the interpretation is tested through the text and its methods. Do not require a balanced essay, a particular phrase such as "I agree", or a fixed number of quotations. These condensed descriptors support practice rather than formal grading.

# Question 5 marking and examples

Mark content and organisation separately from technical accuracy. Add the two scores to give a total out of 40.

## AO5 content and organisation out of 24

| Level and marks | What the response demonstrates                                                                   |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 4 19–24   | Distinctive, convincing writing with sustained task focus and deliberate, coherent organisation. |
| Level 3 13–18   | Clear, engaging writing develops ideas through an effective sequence.                            |
| Level 2 7–12    | Relevant ideas with some useful details and ordering.                                            |
| Level 1 1–6     | A basic response with limited development or organisation.                                       |
| Level 0 0       | Nothing relevant to credit.                                                                      |

## AO6 technical accuracy out of 16

| Level and marks | What the response demonstrates                                                                                 |
|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Level 4 13–16   | Sustained grammatical control; vocabulary, sentence range and punctuation are used accurately and effectively. |
| Level 3 9–12    | Mostly secure grammar and spelling, with varied sentences and usually controlled punctuation.                  |
| Level 2 5–8     | Some accurate boundaries and spelling; range and control are uneven.                                           |
| Level 1 1–4     | Frequent errors and limited control of sentences, punctuation or spelling.                                     |
| Level 0 0       | Nothing to credit.                                                                                             |

## Illustrative description opening

Amber light pooled between the wet cobbles. Beyond the last lamp, mist gathered under the bridge and blurred the windows on the hillside. A traveller stood beside a suitcase, caught between the warmth of an open doorway and the blue distance of an unfamiliar town.

## Illustrative story opening

Maya paused outside the glasshouse. Through the misted windows, leaves pressed flat against the panes, hiding the paths beyond. She had been told that the building was empty. Before she could touch the handle, a warm light flickered on between the trees.

These brief openings illustrate choices, not complete 40-mark answers. Judge the whole response against the task. Devices and ambitious vocabulary earn credit when they work; a semicolon is not a requirement. Use AQA's full published grid for formal marking.

# Your AQA Paper 1 skills tracker

Record the starter first. Leave optional tasks blank until you complete them; a blank is not a zero.

R Need help I need an explanation or a model.

A More practice I can begin, but need a prompt or another attempt.

G Confident I can do this independently and explain my choices.

| Question and focus                | AO  | Score                     | Confidence                          |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Q1 Find and interpret information | AO1 | <input type="text"/> / 4  | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |
| Q2 Analyse language               | AO2 | <input type="text"/> / 8  | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |
| Q3 Analyse structure              | AO2 | <input type="text"/> / 8  | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |
| Q4 Evaluate a view using evidence | AO4 | <input type="text"/> / 20 | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |
| Q5 Content and organisation       | AO5 | <input type="text"/> / 24 | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |
| Q5 Technical accuracy             | AO6 | <input type="text"/> / 16 | <input type="text" value="Choose"/> |

Starter total Q1 plus Q2  / 12

Optional full pack total when all tasks are complete  / 80

## Priority 1 one specific AQA question skill

## Priority 2 one specific AQA question skill

Keep provisional marks separate from confidence. This short source and practice pack have not been standardised as an examination; neither total converts to a GCSE grade.

# Your seven day AQA revision plan

Use the starter to choose a priority. Work on longer optional tasks in separate sessions and allow more time when needed.

Week starting

| Day | Suggested practice                                                                                         | My task and completion          |
|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1   | Q1 and Q2 starter<br>Complete the reading starter, then mark Q1 and review the quality of Q2.              | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 2   | Improve Q2 language<br>Rework one explanation. Link an exact word or image to a precise effect.            | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 3   | Try Q3 structure<br>Track the opening, the memory and the ending. Explain their effects on tension.        | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 4   | Try Q4 evaluation<br>Test both parts of the interpretation. Develop a judgement using methods and details. | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 5   | Plan and attempt Q5<br>Choose a description or story opening. Allow time to develop it and reread.         | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 6   | Review Q5 and retrieve<br>Check AO5 and AO6 separately. Then try the two cards with their answers covered. | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |
| 7   | Review with support<br>Revisit your tracker. Ask about uncertain marks and choose your next practice task. | <input type="text"/><br>Not yet |

One improvement I can explain

My next AQA practice task

# Two sample AQA revision cards

Practise each question skill before looking at the answer.  
These cards do not add marks to your starter.

AQA P1 Q2 TRY IT

## Language and its effect

“The corridor swallowed her footsteps.”

How does the verb “swallowed” shape your impression of the corridor? Try an analytical comment linking the word to an effect.

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This short prompt practises Q2 language analysis. A full Q2 answer is marked out of 8.

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AQA P1 Q3 TRY IT

## Structure and tension

At first, Tomas counted the empty seats. A door slammed at the back. Every head turned.

Explain how the shift from Tomas’s private action to the whole room’s reaction changes the tension.

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This short prompt practises Q3 structure. A full Q3 answer is marked out of 8.

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## Printing your cards

Print this card page and the next answer page only. Use A4 at 100% or Actual size, double-sided with a long-edge flip. Cut along the outer border and centre line. The answers are mirrored so the question codes match.

Check that the card codes match before cutting. For single-sided practice, keep the answer page separate.

# AQA revision card answers

Match each answer to the question code on its front.  
Answers swap left and right for double-sided printing.

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>AQA P1 Q3 ANSWER</p> <p><b>Structure and tension</b></p> <p>Attention shifts from one person to everyone reacting to a sudden sound.</p> <p>The interruption breaks the stillness and widens the focus. Because the cause is not revealed, the reader shares the room's uncertainty.</p> <p>Check Have you linked a change in focus or order to tension?</p> <p>Remember Calling "slammed" a powerful verb analyses language. For Q3, explain the placement of the interruption and the wider reaction.</p> <p>Progress Tutoring   GCSE English Language</p> | <p>AQA P1 Q2 ANSWER</p> <p><b>Language and its effect</b></p> <p>"Swallowed" suggests that the corridor consumes the sound, giving the space a powerful, unsettling presence.</p> <p>The verb makes an ordinary setting seem active, as though it can absorb the person's presence. That association explains the impression.</p> <p>Check Have you discussed the exact word and its effect in this context?</p> <p>Remember Naming personification alone does not explain the choice. Other interpretations can work if the wording supports them.</p> <p>Progress Tutoring   GCSE English Language</p> |
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## Keep practising with Progress Tutoring

Choose your next AQA question skill using the tracker. For more support, visit [progresstutoring.co.uk](https://progresstutoring.co.uk).

## Alignment references

AQA Paper 1 sample questions first examined in 2026

AQA sample mark scheme

AQA updated questions answers and commentaries