

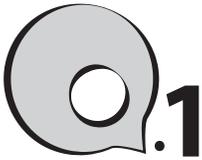


中學文憑試寫作課程
WriteBetterDSE.com

Sample DSE Model Essay



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	Explain the situation: when did it happen? Where were you? Why were you there? What was the problem (the lights went out)?
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expand on the problem: the lights went out because the power had gone off; other people joined us; no-one knew what to do. ▪ Explain how you tried to resolve the problem: went to the fire exit but were trapped inside; fire service took a long time, so everyone was sitting and waiting around.
Conclusion	Explain how the problem was resolved: fire service arrived and rescued us.

Model Answer

Trapped in a Building

Last Saturday I headed off to an interview in Wan Chai hoping to get an internship at The Standard. I arrived shortly before 11am, and the receptionist, an amiable woman called Ms Chan, offered to take me to the editor's office on the second floor. No sooner had we got to the second floor, all the lights went off.

We realised that the power had gone off in the whole building, and there seemed to be nobody inside but us. However, we were soon approached by four other people, who appeared to be very upset about the blackout. They said that the six of us were the only people in the building.

We tried to figure out what to do, but everyone seemed rather confused. Instinctively, we first rushed to the fire exits. To our dismay, however, we discovered that all the fire doors were locked shut and we were trapped inside. After a moment of panic, Ms Chan took out her mobile phone and called the Fire Service.

They promised to come over immediately, but it took them quite a while. While we were waiting, we sat in semi-darkness, trying to crack jokes about the power outage, but hunger and cold made humour difficult. To make matters worse, one elderly man among us was asthmatic, and the rest of us were seriously worried about him. We all felt helpless and tired.

Finally, after five hours we heard a stampede of footsteps running up the stairs; the people from the fire service had arrived and they rescued us from the building. What a relief that was!

(266 words)



Vocabulary

shortly before – a little before; just before (稍早於)

- I suggest that we arrive at the restaurant shortly before 19:30, because that's when I've booked the table.
- The speaker took a sip of whiskey shortly before he went on stage to calm his nerves.

amiable – friendly; kind (親切的)

- The monk showed us around the temple in an amiable manner, even though we weren't Buddhists.
- Thai people are known for being amiable – they always have a welcoming smile on their faces.

no sooner had we... - immediately; as soon as (我們到了...不久後)

- No sooner had I finished writing my answer in the exam, the invigilator told us that time was up.
- No sooner had I predicted that it was going to rain, the sun came out.

blackout – electricity failure (電力故障);

synonym: power outage

- The problem in blackouts is that many criminals use the opportunity to steal things from shops.
- I was really annoyed by the power outage because I was watching my favourite programme on TV.

figure out – to work out (what to do) (制定);

to solve (a problem) (解決);

to decide (想出)

- I want to go to university, but I'm not clever enough, so I've got to work out what else I can do.
- I lost my map, so I couldn't figure out how to get home.

instinctively – naturally; without thinking (憑直覺地)

- When we heard the earthquake tremors, we instinctively took cover under our desks.
- When my mum returned home after six weeks, she instinctively hugged me, and I did the same.

crack jokes – to make jokes (說笑話)

- The Irish are famous for their good humour and ability to crack jokes.
- John has a habit of cracking rude jokes at inappropriate times.

to make matters worse – to make the situation worse (更不幸的是)

- I got badly sunburnt yesterday, and to make matters worse, I have to spend all day in the sun again today.
- I lost my credit card yesterday. To make matters worse, the thief used it to spend \$500.

asthmatic – suffering from asthma (哮喘患者)

- Ricky has been asthmatic since he was young and finds it difficult to participate in sports.
- I heard the sound of her asthmatic breathing as she walked up the stairs.

a stampede of footsteps – the sound of many footsteps approaching (狂奔的腳步聲)

- When One Direction tickets went on sale, there was a stampede of footsteps heading to the ticket office.
- I heard a stampede of footsteps running along the corridor of my dormitory the other day, and I still haven't found out why.



Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list.

1. It's always useful to have a supply of candles so that you can find your way around the house in the event of a _____.
2. John knew that he shouldn't betray Jean, but he'd seen her taking drugs and knew he should report this. He was so confused and couldn't _____ what to do.
3. Amy was a/an _____ girl, who was always popular with adults for her polite and respectful tone.
4. _____ he die, my father gave me a watch as a gift to remember him by.
5. It's OK to _____ in a bar with your friends, but you wouldn't do it at a funeral.
6. Janice said she wouldn't marry me. _____, she's suggested that we break up.



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friendly greeting (Thanks for your letter, glad you're doing well, etc.) ▪ State that you are worried about his new hobby
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paragraph 1: Motorbike racing is dangerous <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ give statistics ◇ fun, but is it worth it? ◇ parents share your concerns ▪ Paragraph 2: Suggest an alternative sport <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ free-climbing ◇ because he used to enjoy watching it on TV ▪ Paragraph 3: Why free-climbing is better <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ safer ◇ better exercise ◇ just as exhilarating
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hope he will take your advice ▪ Friendly sign-off

Model Answer

Dear Andy,

Thanks for your letter. I'm really glad that you are enjoying America and making progress in your studies. I can also see that you are quite enthusiastic about racing. I am happy to know that you have enough free time to take up a sport, but, to be honest, finding out about your new hobby has made me worried sick.

I am concerned about you because I know that motorbike racing, however thrilling, is a perilous sport. I've asked my friend Matt about it, and he completely agrees with me – he even told me that at the last motorbike race here in Hong Kong almost a third of the racers sustained injuries, and one man almost died! Don't you think that's chilling?! Please don't get me wrong – I understand the appeal of the adrenaline rush that comes with extreme sports, and I know that you find this feeling intoxicating. But would you really put your life at risk just to get your kicks? Mum and dad share my concern, and we all think you should give up your new hobby before it's too late.

I think you should take up a different sport, and the first thing that comes to my mind is free climbing. Remember how we used to watch free climbing competitions on TV with bated breath when we were kids, and you said you'd become a climber one day? Why not give it a try now?

I know you are currently hooked on the buzz of racing, but there are many reasons why free climbing is better for you in the long run. For one thing, it's much safer. Whether you practise in climbing gyms or outdoors, safety ropes and other climbing gear can protect you from injury. Climbing surely looks a bit hazardous, but I've read statistics showing that sports climbing injuries are not frequent at all. Free climbing also allows you to exercise all of your muscles and helps you stay in shape (unlike motorbike racing, where you just rely on the power of a machine, right?). I guess the student lifestyle can get pretty sedentary, so taking exercise is very important for your body and health. On top of all this, free climbing can be just as exhilarating as motorbike racing! Imagine overcoming steep vertical rock faces or hanging by your fingertips from an overhang, depending on nothing but your own strength and creativity. I think this is the perfect sport for a thrill-seeker who is smart enough not to risk his life for fun.

I do hope you'll take my advice or at least think about my suggestions. I know my opinion has always mattered to you. I miss you a lot and I can't wait to see you in December!

Love,
Jenny

(462 words)



Vocabulary

take up - to start (a new hobby etc.) (開始學)

- My mother has just taken up knitting because she wants to make my nephew a scarf.
- Many Asian children take up piano as a child, but they don't always continue with it into adulthood.

be worried sick - to be extremely worried (十分擔心)

- My father was worried sick when my brother didn't come home last night.
- The day before I went to Ocean Park I was worried sick about going on all the rides. But thankfully, my friends just wanted to see the animals.

sustain injuries - to get injured (遭遇受傷)

- The soldier sustained serious injuries in battle and died two days later.
- It's common for some people to sustain injuries when they take part in extreme sports.

intoxicating - amazing, indescribable (令人極興奮的)

- The first time I looked through a telescope and saw the stars at night was an intoxicating experience.
- Your first kiss is an intoxicating sensation that's difficult to forget.

get your kicks (informal) - to derive satisfaction (變得興奮)

- Some people get their kicks from playing sport, whilst others turn to less wholesome activities such as drugs.
- Bullies get their kicks from intimidating other people.

come to mind - to think of something without much effort (浮現腦海)

- When I think about people who have influenced me, the first one who comes to mind is my father.
- I'd like to recommend a good restaurant in the area to you, but nothing comes to mind at the moment.

with bated breath - in anticipation; tensely (屏着氣)

- The politicians waited with bated breath for the election results.
- On talent shows, the contestants wait with bated breath to see who will win.

stay in shape - to stay fit (保持身形)

- It's important to stay in shape in later life in order to avoid health problems such as diabetes.
- My brother says he wants to stay in shape, but he keeps eating sweets and other calorie-laden foods.

sedentary - inactive (坐着做的)

- Some people say that sitting is the new smoking. Indeed, a sedentary lifestyle does no-one any good.
- Office jobs tend to be quite sedentary, as they don't require you to move around much.

thrill-seeker (informal) - someone who likes extreme adventure (尋求刺激的人)

- My friend is a real thrill-seeker – he's just done a parachute jump for charity.
- I'm not much of a thrill-seeker – I'd rather sit at home and drink tea than go white-water rafting.



Exercise

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. Tom's life is definitely not _____ . He's always moving around and he goes to the gym at least five times a week.
2. I was _____ when I heard the news of the train crash because I knew that my mother was supposed to be travelling home on the train that very day.
3. It can be difficult to _____ new hobbies if you have a full-time job.
4. Many people _____ during the explosion, and some even died as a result of their wounds.
5. Many people watched the rescue of the Chilean miners _____ as they came out of their underground prison in 2010.
6. Our teacher asked us to think of things we'd like to change about the school, but nothing _____ . We like everything about it!



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain the circumstances under which you went to see the play. When / where / etc. ▪ Summarise your feelings
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Point 1: Summary of the plot <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ set in London / theme of growing up / troublesome adolescence. ◇ problem: realisation of plot was substandard + lots of disasters on the night ▪ Point 2: Technical faults <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ delays + interruptions ▪ Point 3: Problems of the play itself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ badly written + unnecessary swearing ▪ Point 4: The cast <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ bad casting for main character + inappropriate laughter ▪ Point 5: Problems with the sets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ unrealistic + scenery fell over
Conclusion	Summarise your view.

Model Answer

Review: The Life of Max

It was with great excitement that I went to the opening night of *The Life of Max*, a school play targeted at students and parents and performed last Saturday at the New Theatre in Hong Kong. The description of the play promised a great show, and I am always happy to see young actors make their first steps on stage. Much to my disappointment, however, the performance turned out to be nothing short of a complete disaster.

The Life of Max is set in London and deals with the universal theme growing up. It follows a teenager called Max as he changes schools, endures bullying, rebels against his parents and gets acquainted with the bewildering messiness of being an adolescent. The plot could obviously appeal to a wide audience, but its realisation was substandard, and the event itself was fraught with disasters.

To be fair, some problems were mainly technical and possibly the fault of the theatre, not the performers. The start of the play was delayed for two hours due to what was described to us as “unexpected technical problems”. Throughout this time, the theatre doors remained closed and the security personnel refused to let people in, despite the pouring rain outside. When the performance finally started, it was interrupted twice in the first ten minutes because of electrical faults.

Still, the most disappointing factor was the play itself, not the technical issues. I found the script to be poorly written and lacking in consistency (the characters kept changing their behavior without any logical explanation, and some disappeared from the story altogether). The script was also littered with unnecessary swear words. This appeared rather inappropriate given that the play’s target audience was students and their parents.

Probably the greatest problem with this production, however, was the cast. Giving the role of Max to an 11-year-old was an unfortunate decision, and the young actor’s rendering of a troubled 14-year-old was painfully unconvincing. To make matters worse, the boy kept forgetting his lines, and would often just stand on the stage with a perplexed look on his face. The students playing the role of Max’s parents also gave a bland performance, and the girl playing Max’s teacher caused a real scandal when she burst out laughing uncontrollably in the middle of a funeral scene (the laughter was evidently not part of the script). I had not expected such unprofessionalism from these young people.

Throughout the play, I was unimpressed by the sets, which were both unrealistic and unimaginative. But the true disaster happened when the scenery fell over in the middle of a forest scene! The actors just stood stupefied on the stage, leaving the audience in awkward anticipation. The play went on, but mistakes got even more frequent after this point.

(461 words)

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I am sure that I was not the only person in the audience waiting for the play to end. I have seen many school plays in the past, but never one as under-rehearsed and **amateurish** as The Life of Max.

Vocabulary

turn out – transpire; appear (最終成為)

- I thought I saw a UFO flying over my house, but it turned out to be a football.
- It turns out that you have to be 25 to hire a car in some countries.

nothing short of – completely (不包括既話)

- It was nothing short of incredible that Jane got a 5* in her exam, since she did no work all year
- The problems I've faced have been nothing short of a nightmare – no-one seems to have such bad luck as me.

endure - to experience smth (negative) (忍受)

- My neighbours were having a loud party last night, and when I couldn't endure it any more, I called the police.
- Some people have to endure poverty just because they don't have the education to lift themselves out of it.

be fraught with – to be filled with (negative) (充滿問題的)

- English grammar is fraught with difficulties, such as irregular past tenses and unpredictable prepositions.
- Becoming a pilot is a long process that's fraught with difficulties, such that only the best candidates are suitable for the job.

lack – not to have (缺乏)

- John's performance was fine, but he didn't think so as he lacks confidence.
- Small businesses lack the capital to succeed against big businesses.

be littered with – to be full of (usu. negative) (充斥著)

- Tim had obviously spent little time on his homework as it was littered with errors.
- History is littered with tyrants who harmed their people instead of protecting them.

**unconvincing** – unpersuasive; unimpressive (不能令人信服)

- Janice's sales pitch was good, but it was ultimately unconvincing as she forgot her figures when making the presentation.
- I thought that my essay was persuasive, but my teacher said it relied too much on out-of-date and predictable arguments that were ultimately unconvincing.

lines - the script (台詞)

- People who say that being an actor is easy should try learning hundreds of lines every day.
- The actor was embarrassed after he forgot his lines on his debut performance.

bland – boring (平淡無奇的)

- English food has a reputation for being bland and unexciting.
- My teacher's lessons are always bland: she just doesn't seem to have any enthusiasm for her subject.

amateurish – unprofessional (外行的)

- Our new CEO doesn't seem to have a clue what he's doing. He always forgets our names, which is in itself quite amateurish.
- The school production was quite amateurish – but what can you expect from 13 year-olds?

**Exercise**

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. One thing that Karl certainly doesn't _____ is money. His family is one of the richest in Hong Kong.
2. Yesterday, it _____ that the businessman had been committing fraud for years without anyone noticing.
3. The room was very _____: there were no pictures on the wall and everything was white.
4. The fact that Herschel built a forty-foot telescope to see further into outer space than any astronomer before him is _____ extraordinary.
5. I bought a science book the other day, but it was _____ errors. It even claimed that gravity was not discovered until 1823!
6. I can _____ most things, but if someone disrespects my family, I go crazy.



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	Overall impression: excellent and could win.
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Point 1: Best thing is its simplicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ clear, easy to follow and mentions Asian speciality dishes. ▪ Point 2: Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Consistent. A haiku? [俳句] ▪ Point 3: Change the title <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ something more eye-catching to get the judges' attention. Suggest an alternative. ▪ Point 4: Remove stanza 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ this will make the poem shorter and take away negative connotations
Conclusion	Restate your overall opinion

Model Answer

Dear Pat,

I must admit that I'm quite intrigued by your idea to enter the Golden Bauhinia Restaurant's competition with an advertisement in the form of a poem. The poem you've sent me is excellent in many ways, and with some **minor alterations** I think it could well win the competition.

What I like best about your poem is its simplicity. The text is clear and easy to follow, and your word choices **serve the purpose** well (I like the fact that you avoid **highbrow** poetic vocabulary, as advertisements are more effective when written in simple language). Your English sounds proficient enough, but the simplicity of language guarantees that it will be understandable to all tourists who see it, whether they are native English speakers or not. **On a related note**, it's good that you mention Asian specialty such as dim sum, but only those that are known to foreigners; it's also good that you avoid complex descriptions of the food that might confuse the reader.

From a more technical standpoint, I think the composition of your poem is remarkable – you're obviously pretty skilled in the art of poetry! In terms of structure, the poem has the necessary consistency, as all the **stanzas** have the same number of lines. Am I right that this is a haiku? Combined with the simplicity of expression, this type of composition gives the poem almost a sing-along quality. At any rate, it certainly sounds **catchy**.

One part of the poem that I don't really like, however, is the title – it sounds pretty drab compared to the playful tone of the rest of the poem. I guess you are right to include the restaurant name in the title, but I still think you should come up with a more engaging and **eye-catching**. How about "Golden Bauhinia – Chinese Lunch Madness", or something along those lines? I think the word "madness" adds a sense of excitement and **prompts** the reader to read on. In any case, if I were you, I'd think about the title carefully – after all, it's the first bit of your poem that the competition judges will see!

Another change that I would suggest is **eliminating** the second stanza. For one thing, I think the poem would be more effective if it were a bit shorter. More importantly, the second stanza contains the **somewhat** negative image of people talking loudly and making noise that makes one's "ears hurt". I think this part doesn't really advertise the restaurant appropriately, as people who don't like noise could be put off visiting it.

On the whole, I'm honestly impressed by your poem, especially its simplicity and composition. If you make the few minor changes I've proposed, I think you'll have a strong chance of winning this competition. In fact, I'd be surprised if you didn't win!

All the best,
Tim

(473 words)
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Vocabulary

minor alterations – small changes (輕微改動)

- My essay was good, but with a few minor alterations it could be even better.
- We need to make some minor alterations to our website after someone complained about its content.

serve the purpose – fulfill the purpose; be suitable (履行; 符合)

- It would serve the purpose of our trip to Beijing if we could visit the Great Wall of China. This would enable us to learn more about Chinese history.
- The school is building a new science block which should serve the purpose of improving our exam results in biology and chemistry.

highbrow - extremely posh; elevated (negative) (高雅的)

- I always struggle to understand old texts because they tend to use highbrow vocabulary.
- The restaurant was a little highbrow – I wasn't allowed in because I wasn't wearing a suit.

on a related note – on a similar point (相關的資料)

- The schools exam results for English were the best ever. On a related note, the results for liberal studies weren't bad either.
- I'd like to visit Tokyo. On a related note, did you know that my sister is living in Japan now?

stanza – paragraph of a poem (節; 段)

- Some poets split their poems into stanzas to make it easier for the reader to understand, whilst others do it for more stylistic reasons.
- Our company has asked a company to write a catchy jingle for us. I'm excited to see what they come up with.

catchy – memorable (悅耳易記的)

- Psy's music is very catchy – it's difficult to stop singing it.
- History is littered with tyrants who harmed their people instead of protecting them.

eye-catching – attention-grabbing (惹人注意的)

- Janet's dress was certainly eye-catching – it was bright pink after all!
- An eye-catching title can go a long way to ensuring that a book is successful.

prompt – make sb (want to) do smth (慫恿)

- I was prompted to start learning Japanese after I began to date a Japanese girl.
- As soon as I saw an advert asking for medical volunteers, I was prompted to apply.

eliminate – get rid of (擺脫)

- Deodorants are said to eliminate body odour.
- After a poor performance, the singer was eliminated from the competition.

somewhat – a little (有點; 稍微)

- I was somewhat surprised when I saw that I had been awarded a prize for my project. I did work hard, but I think others worked harder.
- It can be somewhat difficult to find conversation partners to learn English in Hong Kong.

 **Exercise**

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. Proofreading can help publishers to reduce the number of errors in a text, but it's almost impossible to _____ them entirely.
 2. John's success in tennis _____ me to start tennis lessons for myself.
 3. My dress didn't fit, but after my grandmother had made a few _____ it fitted perfectly.
 4. I was _____ disappointed to learn that my team hadn't gone through to the next round of the competition; but it's not the end of the world.
 5. Some people think that classical music is _____, but others say it is accessible for everyone.
 6. I listened to a song the other day and I can't get it out of my head. It's so _____.
-



Sample DSE

Q.5

Outline

Introduction	The who / when / where of the debate
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paragraph 1: Summarise the debate topic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ adoption laws + your position ◇ talk was difficult but also challenging ▪ Paragraph 2: Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ carefully prepared speeches, arguing that strict laws were a good idea. ◇ opposing team argued that strict laws put people off adoption ◇ both teams were eloquent, clear and on-topic ▪ Paragraph 3: Debate became heated <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ one opponent was rude, but our team handled it well
Conclusion	Outcome of the debate (who won and what was the prize?)

Model Answer

Last Saturday, the finals of the Hong Kong InterSchool Debating Competition took place in the City Hall. Along with two other team members, I had the honour of representing our school against other finalists from Yau Tsim Mong School. The debate started at 5 o'clock in front of a packed auditorium, and lasted for almost two hours.

The topic of the debate was "Adoption laws". The task of our team was to defend the position that adoption laws should be stricter, whilst the other team had to oppose this view. We found the task quite tricky at first, as some of us personally believed that adoption laws should actually be made simpler and less strict. Nevertheless, this difficulty served to make the debate even more challenging and exciting for us.

I believe that our team performed very well, although we were initially very nervous (after all, none of us had competed in front of such a big audience before!). However, the moment the competition started, all our anxiety vanished and we were determined to win. We prepared our answers carefully, and we organised our ideas around one central argument – imposing strict adoption laws is the only way to ensure that adopted children be placed in an appropriate family. The other team defended an equally valid claim, stating that strict adoption laws only make the process of adoption longer, thus putting off many couples from the very idea of adopting. I am proud to say (if a bit immodestly) that our team's comments were always eloquent and clear, though our fellow contestants were quite successful in this respect as well. We tried to keep our answers simple, and we always managed to stick to the topic.

At one point, the debate got quite heated, after one of our opponents dismissed our arguments as "just stupid". Still, I think we handled this quite well. We pointed out that insulted comments do not prove anything unless they are supported by actual arguments. In fact, I think the strongest aspects of our performance at the competition was the fact that we managed to avoid personally insulting remarks throughout – we stayed calm and focused, and never lost our temper.

At the end of the debate, the judges took almost 30 minutes to announce their decision. This made learning the final result even more exhilarating for us – we could hardly breathe when we heard that we were to be crowned champions of the Hong Kong Inter-School Debating Competition! We were equally thrilled when we heard what the prize was – a one-week trip to London. However, the debating experience itself was perhaps the best prize of all.

(440 words)



Vocabulary

take place - happen (發生)

- The competition took place last week in the cafeteria.
- There are lots of events taking place across Hong Kong to mark its independence from Great Britain.

packed - busy; full (擠滿了人的)

- The concert hall was packed when the famous singer came to town.
- The MTR is always packed with commuters in the morning – you can certainly forget any hope of getting a seat.

tricky (informal) - difficult (negative) (困難)

- It can be tricky to know what to do the first time you meet the parents of your girlfriend or boyfriend.
- Playing the guitar is tricky at first, but you soon get used to what you have to do.

initially - at first (起初)

- Initially I was suspicious of Lesley, but I soon found her to be absolutely lovely and we became close friends.
- I initially wanted to study engineering at university, but after I won the poetry competition, I decided to study creative writing.

vanish - disappear (消失)

- All hopes of a victory vanished after our best player was injured and not allowed to play for the rest of the season.
- Experts have no idea what happened to MH370, but it's incredible that a plane can just vanish in thin air.

valid - reasonable; appropriate (合理的)

- Our physical education teacher told us we could only miss PE lessons with a valid excuse or a doctor's note.
- Some of the reasons for the war were not valid and have proved to be false.

put off - deter; make sb not want to do smth (使失去興趣(或熱情))

- If we increase the price on tobacco, people will be put off buying it.
- My mother tried to put me off skiing by talking about the potential accidents I could have, but I am still determined to take to the slopes.

eloquent - articulate; good at speaking (能言善辯的)

- Barack Obama is one of the most eloquent speakers of his generation. He always gets huge applause after his speeches.
- If you want to take a job in the public eye, you must develop an eloquent speaking style.

stick to - to stay with smth (忠於)

- The politician was criticised because he didn't stick to the promises he'd made before the election.
- I stuck to my beliefs, even when my friends were mocking me for them.

lose one's temper - to get angry very quickly (忿怒)

- It's rare that my dad loses his temper, but when he does we are all afraid.
- I have to confess that I lost my temper when I kept missing the net in basketball.



Exercise

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. I tried to find my wallet the other day, but it had just _____! I couldn't find it anywhere. In the end, I found it in my pocket!
2. The theatre was _____ on opening night: I've never seen so many people.
3. I was _____ swimming at a young age when I almost drowned.
4. Our teacher _____ when we wouldn't stop talking and stormed out of the room.
5. Martin Luther King's "I have a dream" speech is one of the most _____ defenses of civil rights ever written.
6. _____, I wanted to be an astronaut. But since I don't like small spaces, I decided to become a nurse instead. Quite a career change!



Sample DSE

Q.7

Outline

Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Friendly greeting ▪ Reason for writing: organised a surprise party for mother's birthday.
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paragraph 1: Organisation of event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ decided to hold a party in the garden with friends and relatives ◇ assisted by Surprise of Your Life, which mum enjoys ▪ Paragraph 2: Preparing for the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ invitations, decorations, band ◇ very stressful but had to stay calm ◇ mum's reaction at this stage ▪ Paragraph 3: The day itself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ film crew set up ◇ people are becoming grumpier ▪ Paragraph 4: Mum's reaction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ wasn't embarrassed ◇ dream come true to be on TV
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Everyone had a good time. ▪ Let's watch the show together when you visit.

Model Answer

Dear Shelley,

How are you? It's been a while since I last wrote to you, but now I just have to tell you about an exciting event that happened here last week. You won't believe it – I organised a surprise event for mum's 50th birthday, and the whole thing was filmed and shown on Surprise of Your Life, a national TV show!

I decided to organise a surprise birthday party in our garden, with a **live** band playing, and to invite all our relatives and mum's old friends. I was assisted by Lisa Lee, a presenter from TVB, who is now also one of the producers of Surprise of Your Life. I chose this kind of secret party because I knew how much mum loves surprises, and she always cries when she watches Surprise of Your Life.

The preparations for the party were not easy. Lisa and I wrote guest **invites**, phoned everyone to make sure they were coming, prepared garden decorations and made plans for the band's performance. I soon realised that I was in over my head, but I had to stay calm as the crew was filming me all the time! Worse still, mum was getting angry because I wouldn't tell her why I was spending so much time on the phone and sending so many text messages. At one point I really thought I'd **bitten off more than I could chew**, and I was **on the brink** of giving up. Luckily, Lisa and dad persuaded me to continue.

On the day of mum's birthday, dad took her out for a drink, just as he did every year. As soon as mum was out of the house, Lisa and the filming crew arrived and helped with the final arrangements. The guests were arriving one by one, and were all taken to the garden. The plan was for dad to **pretend** to be sick, so that mum would go home with him and arrive at 9pm sharp. I got **the jitters** while waiting, it seemed as if the moment would never come. Finally, just after 9 o'clock, mum walked into the garden, and everyone shouted "SURPRISE!". People threw **balloons** in the air, and the band started playing Happy Birthday. Mum seemed completely **bewildered** for a moment, and then laughed out loud and actually leaped for joy! You should have seen her!

She was so surprised that it took her a while even to notice the cameras all around her. Some people would feel embarrassed to appear on TV in such a way, but not mum. Remember how she always said she wanted to have her face on TV, if only to appear in a **commercial**? I guess this was her chance. She was **overjoyed** to see the filming crew, and she was perfectly natural in front of the cameras: a real TV star!

We all had a **fabulous** time. I wish you could've been there with us, but at least we can watch this episode of Surprise of Your Life together when we come to visit you in Canada.

Love,
Nicky

(513 words)

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Vocabulary

live – occurring at the time; not recorded (現場)

- I love listening to live music – even when the band makes mistakes, the atmosphere is still great.
- If you go to a zoo, you can see a live dolphin performance. It's so much more fun than watching nature documentaries!

invites (informal) – invitations (邀請函)

- John has sent out the invites, but he made a mistake when he wrote our address, so who knows who'll turn up?
- Sending out wedding invites can be expensive: first you have to design them, then you have to post them.

be in over one's head - to be in a situation that's too difficult to cope with (應付不來)

- I took this new job because I was confident I could do it, but now I see the skills it requires, I realise that I am in way over my head.
- New parents often feel that they are in over their head because they don't know how to deal with babies. But they soon get used to it.

bite off more than you can chew – to have taken on too many responsibilities and be unable to deal with them all successfully (嘗試做能力以外的事)

- I agreed to book the room, invite the speakers, write the posters and send the emails. But I think I should have delegated as I feel that I've bitten off more than I can chew.
- I was eager to get started on the new project, but when I saw how much work it involved, I soon discovered that I had bitten off more than I could chew.

be on the brink – almost (幾乎)

- I was on the brink of leaving my girlfriend, when I decided that I still loved her and really wanted to make our relationship work.
- The country is on the brink of collapse after numerous civil wars and famines.

the jitters – nerves (緊張不安)

- It's common for people to get the jitters on their wedding day – it's one of life's most important events, after all.
- Getting the jitters before exams is natural, but try to find ways of managing them.

bewildered – really confused (困惑)

- I have to say that I was bewildered by the claim that the employee was rude, as she is usually so polite.
- Sandra started crying for no apparent reason and we were all bewildered as to what had caused her to be upset.

commercial – advertisement (廣告)

- There are too many commercials on TV nowadays, such that it's difficult to watch a show for ten minutes without being interrupted by companies trying to sell their products.
- Some people think that companies shouldn't design commercials aimed at children, as they are likely to ask their parents to buy them lots of new products.

overjoyed – extremely happy (狂喜)

- I was overjoyed at the news that I was going to be a grandparent for the first time.
- Keith was overjoyed that he'd passed his English exam. He didn't get a high mark, but he was proud of himself.

fabulous – wonderful; excellent (妙極)

- The weather last week was fabulous, and we had a great time in the sun.
- Some sports stars have fabulous skills that make their rivals jealous.



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Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. Yun was _____ to hear that her visa application had been accepted: it was always her dream to live in the USA.
2. _____ comedy can be extremely funny, but it can sometimes go wrong, and when that happens the comedian doesn't have anywhere to hide.
3. My mum always gets _____ before she flies. I tell her it's safe, but she can't shake off that nervousness.
4. I think I _____ when I agreed to be the captain of the debating team. It's not just about being a good speaker – there are also a lot of administrative tasks associated with the role.
5. I had always wanted to do a Masters degree, but when I realised how hard the material was, I knew that I was _____.
6. My brother looked like he was _____ of crying when he heard the news, but he fought back the tears.



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	Explain what 'Working Week' is generally and what you did specifically (teacher)
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paragraph 1: Details of placement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ worked as English teacher in HK primary school ◇ tasks involved teaching and liaising with teachers in order to prepare well ▪ Paragraph 2: What I learnt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ planning skills ◇ how to teach enjoyable and useful lessons (mention the results, e.g. students could say goodbye in English)
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summarise how you felt at the end ▪ Would recommend the scheme to others.

Model Answer

Last month our school organised a 'Working Week' scheme, with the aim of allowing students to gain their first experience of the world of work. Students were able to choose from five different jobs (reporter, teacher, restaurant cook, flight attendant and photographer). I took part in the scheme as a teacher, and I got to understand all the benefits of this type of work placement.

I chose the job of an English teacher in a Hong Kong primary school, as my **ambition** has always been to become a teacher of English. I worked in the school for one week (on weekdays only), and I taught three one-hour lessons every day. My task was to teach both grammar and vocabulary to students, and to **encourage** them to try and speak to me in English. I worked closely with the school's English teacher, Miss Wong, a friendly young woman who eagerly supported my interest in teaching. We met **on a daily basis**, so that she could assist me with class preparations and the selection of teaching materials. Her advice was **invaluable** to me, as I had no previous experience with teaching.

I thoroughly enjoyed my placement, but I must also admit that I found it more **demanding** than I had expected. Before I got this job, I had believed that a good English teacher could just appear in the classroom and use his or her knowledge to teach the class, without any special preparations. However, on the very first day of my job placement, I realised the importance of making good lesson plans in advance – I failed to do this on my **first day**, and the lessons were a disaster. On the following days, I carefully planned each **segment** of the lessons, and everything went well. Making lesson plans ended up taking me more time than the actual classes, but I got to like both the **planning** and the teaching. My students seemed to enjoy the classes and they did not **refrain from** asking me questions; I think they really learned something from me. On the last day of my placement the students said good-bye to me in English, using some phrases I had taught them. This made me feel really proud.

On the whole, this job placement gave me a great **sense of achievement**, and it **cemented** my decision to become a teacher (even though it made me realize that teaching is much more demanding than it seems). I would recommend participating in the 'Working Week' scheme to all my **peers**, as it is a unique opportunity to get work experience while still at school.

(435 words)



Vocabulary

ambition – desire (often professionally)

- You can't become a leader in your field unless you have the drive and ambition to succeed.
- My ambition was to become a doctor, but I wasn't good at science so I couldn't go down that path.

encourage – persuade in a friendly manner (鼓勵)

- The reason that I am a successful actor now is because my mum encouraged me to take drama classes as a young child.
- I'd like to encourage all of you to make the most of your lives: don't die with regrets.

on a daily basis - every day (每天)

- In Africa, children die from preventable diseases on a daily basis.
- I make a budget of the money I've spent on a daily basis.

invaluable – valuable (無價)

- The advice our parents give us as children can be invaluable in later life.
- In the event of a fire, knowing where the fire exits are can be invaluable – it could save your life.

demanding – difficult; challenging (費力的)

- Being a teacher is a demanding job: you have to write lesson plans, teach, mark homework, meet parents and much more.
- Chemistry is a demanding subject, but if you want to study medicine at university you need to know it.

segment – part (段)

- A good lesson plan is divided into segments, each with their own aim.
- Some news channels have a segment for the weather forecast each hour.

refrain from - stop; not start (避免)

- The newspaper couldn't refrain from criticising the government, even when they weren't doing anything wrong.
- The cabin crew asked us to refrain from smoking on the flight as it was against the Aviation Code.

cement – to make more sure; to strengthen (鞏固)

- I think that a holiday together could really cement our relationship.
- Only by repeating what we've learnt and revising it often can we cement our knowledge and ensure that it stays in our memory.

sense of achievement – feeling that you have achieved something worthwhile
(成功感)

- The sense of achievement I got when I graduated from university was significant. I was so proud of myself.
- Of course, you can read the summaries of novels on Wikipedia, but there's a sense of achievement from reading one cover to cover oneself.

peers – friends; people the same age (朋輩)

- Some teenagers take drugs because they want to impress their peers, rather than because they actually enjoy the effects of the narcotics themselves..
- Everyone wants to be recognised for their achievements before their peers.



Exercise

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. I do wish that people would _____ listen to music too loudly on the MTR. It's not pleasant to hear music blaring out from headphones.
2. Going to tutorial centres can be a good way to _____ the knowledge you've learnt in school.
3. _____ is not necessarily a bad thing, but it can be negative if you're so eager to progress in your career that you forget about your family.
4. My new job is very _____ - I have to work from 9am to 9pm.
5. One thing that everyone hates is to be embarrassed in front of their _____. These are people we hope to impress, so we don't like to feel ashamed before them.
6. My head master _____ me to apply to Oxford or Cambridge, but I'm not sure I'm clever enough.



Sample DSE



Outline

Introduction	Reason for writing: dog abuse next door; hope the SPCA will take action
Main Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Paragraph 1: Early suspicions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ heard a dog squealing ◇ asked neighbour, but was assured dogs were fine ▪ Paragraph 2: Confirmation of initial suspicions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ witnessed behaviour of eldest son (e.g. kicking dogs) ◇ was told to 'mind my own business' by owner ▪ Paragraph 3: Urgency of the matter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ abuse heard this morning ◇ saw a dog bleeding and took it to my home. ▪ Paragraph 4: What the SPCA should do <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ act quickly to protect the dogs and give them medical care ◇ find new homes for the dogs
Conclusion	Reiterate the seriousness of the situation and repeat the call to action.

Model Answer

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to draw your attention to what seems to be serious dog abuse happening in the house of my neighbours, Mr and Mrs Smith. I am writing to you as I am deeply concerned about these dogs and I know that the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is able to take appropriate action to protect abused pets.

I first became suspicious that animals were being **maltreated** in the Smiths' home earlier this year, when **incessant** squealing started coming from their house. Being a dog owner myself, I knew that the amount and intensity of this squealing was not common with healthy dogs. One evening I asked Mr Smith if his dogs were sick and if I could help in any way, but he just shrugged his shoulders and said that the dogs were fine. I did not want to **intrude** further, and decided to believe him.

However, my **initial suspicions** were confirmed last week, when I witnessed a disturbing scene in front of the Smiths' house. As I was passing by their yard, I saw their eldest son, a **stocky** 13-year-old boy, kick one of the dogs forcefully in the stomach. The dog shrieked from pain and the boy laughed out loud. He kicked the dog again, this time hitting it in the head. When I shouted at the boy to stop, Mr Smith came out into the yard. He told me to mind my own business and leave his son alone.

It wasn't until yesterday, though, that I fully realised the urgency of the matter. Having been woken up by dog squealing that was more **intense** than ever, I decided to go to the Smiths' yard and try to help the poor animals. What I saw there was perhaps the most disturbing and **heartbreaking** sight I had witnessed in years – one of the dogs was lying on the ground, looking weak and **emaciated**, with bleeding wounds all over its body. To my horror, I soon saw that its tail had been cut off and was still bleeding! I took the dog to my own home, and I decided to ask you for help. WriteBetterDSE.com

For all the reasons described above, I hope that your organisation is able to act quickly. I believe the matter is urgent, as two more dogs live in the Smiths' house, and these dogs' lives may well be at risk. To ensure the animals' **welfare**, the dogs should be taken from the Smiths as soon as possible. Another thing that SPCA could do to help the animals, especially the one currently in my home, is to provide them with proper medical care until they fully recover. I would suggest that you then find new owners for the dogs, or place the animals in one of the SPCA's dog shelters. As for the one I rescued yesterday, my wife and I would be happy to keep it.

I sincerely hope that you will take my letter seriously and help me stop this outrageous animal abuse and cruelty. I am looking forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours faithfully,
Chris Wong

(519 words)

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Vocabulary

maltreat – to treat badly (虐待)

- It's a crime to maltreat children – and rightly so since they are vulnerable and cannot protect themselves.
- The inquiry found that the prisoners had been maltreated and recommended that the prison staff be punished.

incessant – without a break; constant (不停)

- It can seem to parents that babies cry incessantly during the night, thus not allowing them to get any rest.
- There is incessant noise coming from my neighbours house and I just don't know what to do about it.

intrude - to go somewhere without invitation (干涉)

- I didn't want to intrude on the conversation of the couple sat next to me, but when they mentioned my teacher, I asked them how they knew him.
- Parents shouldn't intrude too much in the lives of their children, although if they know that they are in danger, then it can be appropriate to take action.

initial suspicions - first suspicions (最初懷疑)

- When I saw a body in the street, my immediate suspicion was that it was dead, but it turned out it was a homeless person sleeping.
- My initial suspicions were that the students had cheated, but none of them admitted to it.

stocky – broadly built (矮胖)

- Stocky children can be bullied at school, and some are called "fat".
- The man found it difficult to find clothes to fit him: he wasn't tall, but he was stocky, so trousers were either too long or too thin.

intense – powerful; strong (強烈的)

- Yolanda's first love was intense, but it didn't last: he left her for another woman.
- When I hit my nail with a hammer, the pain was intense. I had never felt anything like it.

heart-breaking – moving; sad (令人心碎的)

- Some people find Titanic to be a heart-breaking film, and I have to admit that I did shed a tear when Jack sank into the ocean.
- Divorce can be heart-breaking for the parents as well as the children.

**emaciated** - thin through lack of food (瘦弱)

- Hardly a day goes by when we don't see pictures of emaciated children on our TV screens. It's time the developed world did more to help those in poverty.
- Sue's teacher wondered if her parents were treating her well, as she always looked emaciated when she turned up to class.

welfare - well-being (福祉)

- A parent's primary concern is the welfare of their children.
- Despite criticisms, the zoo maintained that it was looking out for the welfare of all its animals.

outrageous - terrible (駭人的)

- The decision to stop funding the extra-curricular clubs at our school was outrageous, and parents and students alike raised their objections.
- Living costs increased 100% last year – an outrageous rise.



Exercise

Complete the following sentences with one of the words or phrases from the list

1. My friend has a/an _____ cough that won't seem to go away.
2. Although I didn't ask John if he had a new job, my _____ were that he'd been promoted as he was spending more money than usual.
3. It was _____ to see my friend die. I couldn't believe I'd lost such a wonderful person.
4. The government exists to promote and protect the _____ of its people.
5. I found his behaviour to be _____ - never in my life had I witnessed such reckless actions.
6. Although it is usually inappropriate to _____ in other people's business, sometimes we have to do it if they are behaving in a way that is harmful to themselves or others.



Answer

Q1.

1. blackout / power outage
2. figure out
3. amiable
4. Shortly before
5. crack jokes
6. To make matters worse

Q2.

1. sedentary
2. worried sick
3. take up
4. sustained injuries
5. with bated breath
6. came to mind

Q3.

1. lack
2. turned out
3. bland
4. nothing short of
5. littered with
6. endure

Q4.

1. eliminate
2. prompted
3. minor alterations
4. somewhat
5. highbrow
6. catchy

Q5.

1. vanished
2. packed
3. put off
4. lost his/her temper
5. eloquent
6. Initially

Q7.

1. overjoyed
2. Live
3. the jitters
4. have bitten off more than I can chew
5. in over my head
6. on the brink

Q8.

1. refrain from
2. cement
3. Ambition
4. demanding
5. peers
6. encourages / encouraged

Q9.

1. incessant
2. initial suspicions
3. heart-breaking
4. welfare
5. outrageous
6. intrude