

A FREE GUIDE FROM MENTORA

The PSLE English Starter Kit

A guide for parents

Preparing your child for Singapore's PSLE English Language examination.

Aligned to the latest MOE/SEAB PSLE English Language examination format,
with practical strategies used by experienced English educators.

MENTORA

PREMIUM ENGLISH RESOURCES · SINGAPORE

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The PSLE English Starter Kit
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What you will find inside.

Ten short sections — each one designed to be read in five minutes and used in a single conversation with your child.

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The PSLE English Language examination

Four papers. Two hundred marks. Roughly four hours.

The PSLE English Language examination is set by the Ministry of Education and administered by the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board (MOE/SEAB). It is made up of four papers, taken on different days, that together carry 200 marks.

TOTAL MARKS 200	PAPERS 4	TOTAL TIME ~ 4 hrs
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WHAT EACH PAPER TESTS

PAPER 1	Writing — Situational + Continuous	50 m	25%	1 h 10 m
PAPER 2	Language Use & Comprehension	90 m	45%	1 h 50 m
PAPER 3	Listening Comprehension	20 m	10%	~ 35 m
PAPER 4	Oral Communication — Reading + Conversation	40 m	20%	~ 10 m

The remaining pages walk through each paper, then offer practical writing tools.

Paper 1: Writing

50 marks. 25% of the total. One hour and ten minutes.

Paper 1 is the only writing paper. Children write two pieces — one short, one long. Quality, clarity and relevance matter more than length.

PART 1 · SITUATIONAL WRITING

14 marks

A short functional piece — usually a letter, email or report. The task is set in a real-world situation: inviting a friend to an event, reporting an incident to a teacher, or similar. Children must read the context carefully and answer three small questions: **Who is my audience? What is my purpose? What information must I include?**

PART 2 · CONTINUOUS WRITING

36 marks

A composition of at least 150 words on a given topic. Three pictures are provided, offering different angles on the topic — children must use at least one. The strongest pieces plan first: keywords, characters, climax, and a strong opening line.

A useful family rule

Never write a single word until two minutes have been spent planning. Two minutes saved early are ten marks saved later.

Paper 2: Language & Comprehension

The longest and most heavily weighted paper.

Paper 2 carries 90 marks and counts for 45% of the total. It is split into Booklet A (multiple-choice) and Booklet B (open-ended). Most parents are surprised by how varied the question types are.

BOOKLET A · MULTIPLE-CHOICE

25 questions · 25 marks

Grammar (Q1–10)	tense, agreement, pronouns, prepositions
Vocabulary (Q11–15)	choosing the most precise word
Vocabulary Cloze (Q16–20)	synonyms within a passage
Visual Text Comprehension (Q21–25)	posters, advertisements, infographics

BOOKLET B · OPEN-ENDED

50 open-ended items · 65 marks

Grammar Cloze (10 m)	choose the right word from a given list
Editing (10 m)	spot and correct spelling and grammar errors
Comprehension Cloze (15 m)	fill blanks using context clues
Synthesis & Transformation (10 m)	rewriting using a given word
Comprehension (20 m)	narrative passage; literal and inferential questions

Paper 3: Listening Comprehension

35 minutes. 20 multiple-choice questions. 10% of the total.

A paper that tests how well your child understands spoken English. The first seven items use a graphic representation; the rest are text-only. Each text is read aloud twice, with a short reading window beforehand.

WHAT GETS PLAYED

Each text — a recount, instruction, advertisement, conversation, news item or persuasive piece — is read aloud twice. There is a short reading window before each text where the child can study the questions.

HOW TO USE THE TWO READINGS WELL

FIRST READING	Listen for the main idea. Mark a tentative answer in pencil — but only lightly.
BETWEEN READINGS	Glance at the questions you were unsure of. Note one keyword to listen for.
SECOND READING	Confirm or change your answers. Trust the second listen on details — names, numbers, dates.

Paper 4: Oral Communication

The shortest paper — but often the most nerve-wracking.

Children are given five minutes of preparation time, then sit with two examiners for around five minutes. Pace, expression and natural speech matter far more than memorised answers.

PART 1 · READING ALOUD

15 marks

A short text read aloud to suit purpose, audience and context. Examiners listen for clear pronunciation, expression, and pace. Children should pause briefly at full stops and lift the voice on questions or strong emotions.

PART 2 · STIMULUS-BASED CONVERSATION

25 marks

Children are shown a photograph and invited to describe and discuss it. A clear response structure helps — the Mentora V-R-P-E Method, below, helps children organise their ideas during conversation. Examiners reward fluency and personality, not memorised answers.

THE MENTORA V-R-P-E METHOD

View → Reason → Personal Experience → Extension

Five powerful composition openers

A strong first line helps capture the reader's attention early.

Below are five tested opening techniques — each with a worked example. Children can practise rotating between them until each feels natural.

i. Sensory Description

“The smell of curry puffs drifted through the void deck, warm and unmistakable.”

ii. Direct Speech

“Run!” Mei screamed, her voice cracking as the kitchen door slammed shut.

iii. Question Hook

“Have you ever wondered what it feels like to lose everything in a single afternoon?”

iv. Action in Motion

“My fingers slipped from the railing just as the train pulled away from the platform.”

v. Reflective Opening

“Looking back, I never realised how much that quiet Thursday would change me.”

A reminder for parents

A strong opening helps, but content development and organisation matter more across the full composition. Treat openers as one craft move, not the whole game.

The situational writing formula

Three small questions, answered before any writing begins.

Every situational task can be broken into three small questions. Answer them on the question paper itself — in pencil — and the writing almost organises itself.

THE MENTORA A-P-C METHOD

A — Audience	Who is reading this — a friend, a teacher, a school principal, a shop manager? The audience decides the tone (warm and casual or polite and formal).
P — Purpose	What must the writing achieve — to invite, to apologise, to inform, to request, to complain, to thank? Name the purpose in one verb before starting.
C — Content	What information is essential — names, dates, times, places, key details from the stimulus? Underline these on the question paper. None should be missed.

THREE FORMATS TO KNOW WELL

Informal email or letter — to a friend or family member.

Formal letter — to a teacher, principal, manager or council.

Report — incident, lost-and-found, or observation.

Common grammar & synthesis pitfalls

Six small habits that, together, cost real marks.

These six errors appear in nearly every PSLE paper. Each is small on its own, but together they often make the difference between one band and the next.

1. Subject–Verb Agreement

‘The list of names *are...*’ → ‘The list of names *is...*’ The subject is **list**, not **names**.

2. Tense Consistency

Stories slip from past to present. Pick a tense and stay there — usually past.

3. Pronoun Reference

Avoid vague ‘it’ or ‘they’. The reader must always know exactly who or what.

4. Connector Choice

‘Because’ explains a cause; ‘although’ admits a contrast. Choose deliberately.

5. Word Order in Questions

‘Where the scissors are?’ → ‘Where are the scissors?’ Verb before subject.

6. Synthesis: Match the Word

If the prompt word is ‘whose’, the new sentence must use ‘whose’ correctly — not ‘which’ or ‘that’.

Vocabulary upgrade

Same idea, stronger word — chosen carefully.

PSLE markers reward precision — not big words for their own sake. Pick three each week and use them in conversation before they appear in writing.

said →	<i>remarked, murmured, insisted, replied</i>	nice →	<i>pleasant, agreeable, charming, gracious</i>
looked →	<i>glanced, gazed, observed, studied</i>	big →	<i>vast, immense, enormous, substantial</i>
walked →	<i>strolled, trudged, sauntered, paced</i>	small →	<i>tiny, petite, minute, slight</i>
happy →	<i>delighted, elated, thrilled, content</i>	got →	<i>received, obtained, acquired, secured</i>
sad →	<i>dejected, downcast, sombre, forlorn</i>	good →	<i>excellent, admirable, commendable, fine</i>
scared →	<i>alarmed, terrified, anxious, uneasy</i>	bad →	<i>dreadful, appalling, regrettable, poor</i>
angry →	<i>furious, irritated, exasperated, indignant</i>	very →	<i>remarkably, exceptionally, decidedly, particularly</i>

The richest vocabulary is the one your child actually uses — start small. Stronger words should fit the context naturally; they should never feel imported.

The final eight weeks

A parent's plan for the run-up — one small focus per week.

An eight-week plan for the run-up to the PSLE English Language paper. One small focus per week — a quiet rhythm, not a sprint.

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- WEEK 8** **Diagnose.** Print one full mock paper. Time it. Mark it together — kindly.
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- WEEK 7** **Compositions.** Write one piece. Read it aloud. Mark only the opening line.
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- WEEK 6** **Grammar.** Drill the six pitfalls (page 10) until they are automatic.
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- WEEK 5** **Vocabulary.** Build a personal word list of twenty 'upgraded' words — used out loud.
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- WEEK 4** **Comprehension.** One passage a day. Underline question words before answering.
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- WEEK 3** **Listening.** Play one podcast a day at dinner. Ask: what was the main idea?
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- WEEK 2** **Oral.** One photo a night. Three sentences. View, reason, personal experience.
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- WEEK 1** **Rest.** Sleep. Light revision. Confidence is built by calm, not cramming.
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FROM THE MENTORA TEAM

Mentora develops premium English resources for Singapore learners across Primary and Secondary levels. Visit mentoraedun.com for the latest titles, including the Mentora Composition Series.

Information accurate at point of publication. Parents should refer to official MOE/SEAB sources for the latest examination updates.