

AQA GCSE English Language Paper 2 writing tasks: speech and article

Here are two practice exam questions, modelled on the specimen paper published by AQA:

1. 'Music has no value when you're studying. It can be distracting; it can be too loud. Students should work in silence.'

Write an article for a broadsheet newspaper in which you explain your point of view on this statement.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
[40 marks]

2. 'Music has no value when you're studying. It can be distracting; it can be too loud. Students should work in silence.'

Write the text for a speech in which you explain your point of view on this statement.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
[40 marks]

The two questions only differ in that they require writing in a different form. Whilst different forms of writing can have different features, the ideas covered and the language techniques used are often very similar.

For these two questions, you could include any of these **ideas**:

- music can be distracting, but some students find it useful to concentrate
- music can be too loud, but there are ways to prevent this, e.g. headphones, silent spaces
- students work in different situations: for example, when they're at school they should stick to the school rules but there may be different expectations at home, or in a public place (such as a library), or at a friend's house
- a balance may be the best solution: some flexibility to work listening to music, when suitable, and some time to work in silence, particularly so students can learn to follow rules as appropriate, and to see which works for them.

Equally, both an article and a speech explaining the writer's point of view might include some or all of the following **techniques**:

- persuasive language (such as rhetorical questions and triples/rule of three)
- anecdotes or examples
- a mixture of informal and formal writing (tone or register)
- non-standard sentence structures (such as starting a sentence with a conjunction).

Task one

Read the following sentences. Can you work out which were written for a speech and which were written for an article? What are the differences? What clues did you use?

<p>What if some students actually find music useful to concentrate whilst they're working?</p>	<p>I ask you: what if some students actually find music useful to concentrate whilst they're working?</p>
<p>Headphones are the solution to all our problems. They allow the individual to listen to their favourite tracks, whilst those around them hear only silence.</p>	<p>It seems to me that headphones are the solution to all our problems. Why? Well, they allow the individual to listen to their favourite tracks, whilst those around them hear only silence.</p>
<p>In a school context, students should follow the rules. If the policy is no music, then that's just the way it is.</p>	<p>Schools have rules. Since we are a community, we should act as such, and be bound by its conventions. No music means just that.</p>
<p>A balance may be the best solution. And that's what wider society has found. Think quiet carriages on trains. And mobile phone areas in schools.</p>	<p>Compromise is key. But it has to come from both sides. Just think. One day, if everyone followed the rules, a quiet carriage on the train might be quiet.</p>

Task two

Read the table below, which is one way of organising the eight extracts into examples from an article and a speech. Look at how the same technique can be used to explore the same idea in both an article and a speech.

Can you highlight the features in the example columns which show the use of the technique named? One example has been done for you.

Once you have done this, see if you can identify how the examples differ and use the hints to help you explain why.

Technique	Idea	Article example	Speech example	How are they different?
Persuasive language (rhetorical question)	Music <i>can be</i> distracting, but some students find it useful to concentrate.	What if some students actually find music useful to concentrate whilst they're working?	I ask you: what if some students actually find music useful to concentrate whilst they're working?	<i>Look at the speech's first three words.</i>
Anecdotes/examples	Music <i>can be</i> too loud, but there are ways to prevent this, e.g. headphones, silent spaces.	Headphones are the solution to all our problems. They allow the individual to listen to their favourite tracks, whilst those around them hear only silence.	It seems to me that headphones are the solution to all our problems. Why? Well, they allow the individual to listen to their favourite tracks, whilst those around them hear only silence.	The speech example is more personalised to the individual speaker than the article. It uses the pronoun 'me' and also a brief question 'Why?', followed by the informal word 'Well', to do so.

<p>A mixture of formal and informal writing</p>	<p>Students work in different situations: for example, when they're at school, they should stick to the school rules, but there may be different expectations at home, or in a public place (such as a library), or at a friend's house.</p>	<p>In an academic context, students should follow the rules. If the policy is no music, then that's just the way it is.</p>	<p>Schools have rules. Since we are a community, we should act as such, and be bound by its conventions. No music means just that.</p>	<p><i>Comment on sentence lengths and word choices.</i></p>
<p>Non-standard sentence structures</p>	<p>A balance may be the best solution: some flexibility to work listening to music, when suitable, and some time to work in silence, particularly so students can learn to follow rules as appropriate, and to see which works for them.</p>	<p>A balance may be the best solution. And that's what wider society has found. Think. Quiet carriages on trains. And mobile phone areas in schools.</p>	<p>Compromise is key. But it has to come from both sides. Just think. One day, if everyone followed the rules, a quiet carriage on the train might be quiet.</p>	<p><i>Comment on conjunctions and sentence fragments.</i></p>

Task three

For the same writing tasks, complete the table with examples of the following (which wouldn't really work in the other form of writing).

Technique	Example	Why wouldn't this work in the other form?
Article clear/apt/original title (headline)		
Article a strapline		
Speech a clear address to an audience		
Speech a clear sign off		

Now, can you explain to your partner why each of your examples wouldn't really work in the other form of writing?

Task four

In summary, what have you learned from these activities about:

- the language techniques you could use in an article and the text for a speech
- the ideas you could cover in an article and the text for a speech
- the differences between writing an article and the text for a speech?

Now choose your favourite form, an article or the text for a speech, and, using the ideas above, write out an answer to the question. To make your writing as successful as possible, write for a specific audience (e.g. broadsheet article, such as the *Guardian*, or the text for a speech given to people your own age) and tailor the language, style and structure to them.

Suggested answers

Task one

The intended outcome is that students come up with lots of possible interpretations, since there's so much crossover between the techniques used and the ideas covered. There's no 'right' answer.

Task three

Technique	Your example	
Article clear/apt/original title (headline)	To listen to music, or not to listen to music: that is the question.	It wouldn't really work in a speech because it's a standalone sentence.
Article a strapline	Everyone has their own taste in music, but not everyone agrees when it's OK to listen to it.	It wouldn't really work in a speech because it develops the point made in the headline, just as straplines do in real newspaper articles.
Speech a clear address to an audience	<i>Speaker begins with loud rock music playing in the background which they gradually turn down after opening address.</i> Why are you playing that really loud music in the background you may ask? Or you may not ask, since you can't hear yourself think.	It wouldn't really work in an article because it makes direct reference to the speaker playing loud music and addresses the audience who are in the room with the speaker.
Speech a clear sign off	So ask yourself, here and now, whilst we are in this room together as a community: isn't compromise best? And shouldn't we avoid imposing our own rules on others when, really, there shouldn't be a conflict at all?	It wouldn't really work in an article because it addresses the audience who are in the room with the speaker.