

Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE French (1226)



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1226 1F Listening and Responding

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some good performances. Candidates were well prepared for the different test types although open-ended questions requiring candidates to answer in either English or French remain daunting for weaker candidates.

The questions which require the recognition of single lexical items (Q1-5, Q12-16) or short phrases (Q6-10, Q19-23) were well done although individual items of vocabulary caused problems. The vocabulary for the café in Q1-5 was well known with Q3 *une glace* causing the most difficulty. The vocabulary for TV programmes (Q12-16) was also generally well known with Q13 *les émissions sur la nature* and Q15 *les informations* proving the most difficult. Q6-10 were generally accessible to all candidates and were well known although the rooms (*la salle de bains* and *la cuisine* proved difficult for some in Q 8 and 9. The vocabulary for weather in Q 19-23 was less well known , particularly Q 21 *À Lyon il fait du brouillard*, and Q23 *À St Malo des vents forts*.

The questions that were intended to discriminate did so and whereas better candidates scored well in the overlap questions targeted at grades D and C (Q11, Q17, Q18 and Q24), weaker candidates found these more daunting. Q11 proved to be the most accessible although weaker candidates tend to choose their answers on the basis of single words rather than listening to the whole, this leads them to incorrect answers for example on hearing *Mon frère joue au tennis* many incorrectly ticked I. Likewise *Mon père aime regarder le foot à la télé* led weaker candidates to incorrectly tick C . This also applied to Q 17, again weaker candidates tend not to listen to the whole but to tick answers based on single word recognition, often the first word they hear, for example upon hearing, *On a un centre sportif*, they immediately put C in the Bien column without listening to the end of the sentence which was, *mais la piscine est toujours fermée et il faut tout réserver à l'avance*. Q24 proved difficult for all but the better candidates. It involved the use of paraphrasing e.g. in part (ii) matching *On a maintenant plus de chaînes et un meilleur choix de programmes* with answer F *la télé-satellite*. Candidates need to be trained to identify key vocabulary to lead them to the answers eg in part (iii) *chansons/écouter* to match with G *l'ipod*. In part (v) *trouver des informations/ faire du shopping* to match with A *À l'internet*.

Q18 required answers in French and was generally well done with the majority of candidates scoring some marks. Candidates across the board seem well trained in this type of question and there were some excellent scores. In part (a) *restaurant* was generally well known if a little difficult to spell. Some weaker candidates confused the French *travail* with the English *travel* and gave incorrect answers such as *car/bus*. In part (b) many candidates successfully communicated the idea of *jeudi*, however, many weaker candidates gave random answers and answers such as *samedi, lundi*, etc were not unusual. Candidates scored well on part (c) and do seem to be able to identify numbers successfully , incorrect answers included *22h30* and illogical answers such as *30h 00*. Part (d) 15 was also well done but difficult for weaker candidates who again often resort to illogical answers such as *reservoir* (presumably for hearing *recevoir*). Part (e) was well done by many candidates but incorrect answers would indicate that weaker candidates do not hear the correct sounds, with answers such as *manger à la tête* or *à la fête* (from *manger à l'hôtel*) even though such answers made no sense. Whilst for these questions, marks are awarded for

communication and candidates did score mark with incorrect spellings, it should be noted that poor spelling can lead to information not being communicated particularly where inaccurate spelling creates a new word in either English or French.

Q25-26 and Q27-28 required answers in English. Performance on these questions was better than in previous years but they continue to be a good discriminator. Whilst better candidates are able to listen to the whole, the performance of weaker candidates is characterised by "snatched" listening i.e. the recognition of a single key words around which they build incorrect answers, based often upon imagination rather than what is heard. Q25 proved surprisingly difficult. Many weaker candidates failed to identify/hear *les sciences* in part (a) and wrote down random subjects such as ICT, Art, Music etc. In part (b) many simply wrote down *medicine* (from *médecin*) even though it does not answer the question. *Teacher* and *scientist* (and even *chemist*) were common incorrect answers. Again there was evidence of mishearing with answers such as *in television/ in division* (presumably from *médecin*) This was also true in part (c) with answers such as *because he's intelligent* (a mishearing of *aider les gens*?) Some candidates wrote answers based on what one would expect rather than what was heard eg *the pay is good, it's interesting*. Q26 was generally well done with candidates needing to identify two from four possible answers. Again incorrect answers indicated poor listening skills and the mishearing of words eg *visiter les États Unis* was often rendered as *visit university* or *Tunisia Tunisie* or even *museums (musées)* and *friends (amis)* and *Disney (world)*. *Au bord de la mer* led to answers such as *visit his mum/ live near his mum* or *live on the border*. There were several weaker candidates who heard *grande maison* as *grands-parents*. Q27 (a) led to a variety of incorrect answers the most common being 15 (which was in the question) 13, 3 and 5. Again there were random answers such as 31, 41, etc. Some candidates lost marks by adding incorrect information such as *per month* (rather than *per week* as stated in the extract). Part (b) was very well done with the majority of candidates recognising the easy cognate *babysitting* but again the weakest candidates gave answers based on their own experience rather than what was heard eg *paper round, working in a shop* etc. This was also true in Q28 for example in part (c) common incorrect answers were *girls like shopping/ buying make -up/ going out*. Part (a) was well done. In part (b) many lost marks by writing *videos* rather than *video games*. There was evidence of candidates answering part (a) with information from Q27 (i.e. *babysitting, wash cars*), even though the questions were heard separately. candidates should be aware that information is not transferable between questions.

There were few rubric infringements but unfortunately in Q18, Q25-26 Q27-28 there are still some candidates who answer in the wrong language for which no marks are awarded.

As always the performance of better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the questions
- sound knowledge of core vocabulary
- listening to the whole rather than homing in on individual words
- identifying cognates and familiar words in unfamiliar contexts
- attention to detail
- applying logic
- reading over their answers

1226 1H Listening and Responding

Candidates performed well across the paper as a whole and there were some excellent performances. The questions that were intended to discriminate did so but the majority of candidates understood enough, and felt confident enough, to attempt the whole paper and there were very few blank answers. There was evidence of some good listening and exam skills. Many candidates had used the five minutes reading time well (underlining key words in the title, rubric and questions, annotating questions) generally using the time well to anticipate what they were about to hear. The performance of weaker candidates was characterised by lack of attention to detail, poor reading of the questions, “snatched” listening based on the identification of single words rather than listening to the extract as a whole, mishearing and imagination. There were still some candidates who were unable to cope with the demands of the Higher paper and for whom the experience must have been demoralising, these candidates would have possibly benefited from taking the Foundation rather than the Higher paper.

The performance on the overlap questions (Q1, Q2, Q5 and Q7) was generally better than at Foundation level. However, the performance of weaker candidates was similar to that of Foundation level candidates (see Foundation level report). In Q1 many candidates scored full marks giving them a confident start to the paper. Q2 was also very well done and many candidates scored 4 or 5 marks on this question. In general candidates seem well trained to answer this type of question and understanding of and the ability to record numbers has improved over the years. Although answers are marked for communication and candidates did score marks with incorrectly spelt answers, the level of accuracy was generally better at Higher level. However, examiners did comment on poor spelling, lack of awareness of syntax .

Q5 was generally well done and again many Higher level candidates scored well on this question. For this type of question candidates need to be trained to identify key vocabulary to lead them to the answers eg in part (iii) *chansons/écouter* to match with (G *l’ipod*). In part (v) *trouver des informations/ faire du shopping* to match with (A), *À l’internet*.

Q7 was also well done but as at Foundation level weaker candidates tend not to listen to the whole but to tick answers based on single word recognition, often the first word they hear, for example upon hearing, *On a un centre sportif*, they immediately put C in the Bien column without listening to the end of the sentence which was, *mais la piscine est toujours fermée et il faut tout réserver à l’avance*.

The questions targeted at grade B and above (Q3, Q4, Q6,Q8,Q9 and Q10), proved challenging for weaker candidates as was to be expected. Q3 and Q4 were accessible by nature of the test type (putting a cross in the appropriate box). Q3 was generally well done with better candidates scoring well. Parts (iii) and (v) proved the most difficult with some candidates unable to match *On peut voir une très vieille forteresse qui date du 11ième siècle* in part (iii) with answer F *l’histoire* and *Si vous aimez faire des randonnées alors visitez la région de l’Atlas* with A *les promenades*. In Q 4 part (iii) proved the hardest, matching *Je dois tout payer moi-même* in the question with *Je dois payer la cantine, mes affaires, mes sorties* in the extract, which did involve some inference as appropriate at this level.

Q6 was a new test type and this in itself threw some candidates. It is a test type used by other Edexcel languages at this level. It should be noted that the text types used are not prescriptive and the Board reserves the right to include test types which are deemed appropriate for the level. Better candidates coped well with this question which involved paraphrasing. Again candidates should be trained to listen for linked vocabulary eg in part (i) (*Qui trouve sa maison trop petite?*) Jean-François says, *il n'y a pas assez de place et notre jardin est minuscule*, also both Valérie and Caroline use the word *grand/e* when describing their homes.

Q8 was also a slightly different format and required candidates to produce short answers in French. The expected answers were what would expect from Higher Level candidates aiming at grade B and above. Please refer to the mark scheme, for each question there were more than the required number of answers and allowance for a wide range of answers. As with Q2 answers are marked for communication and candidates did score marks with incorrectly spelt answers, However, examiners did comment on poor spelling, lack of awareness of syntax and the inability of some candidates to record their answers unambiguously or even write what they mean. Many candidates could not spell *chaises* and *chairs/chez* were the most common incorrect answers. Again as at Foundation Level weaker candidates mishear sounds, *un bar à fruit* was heard as *un parapluie*, *élèves* as *rêve*, *fruits* as *frites* leading to illogical answers, such as *5 frites pour 3 €*. Weaker candidates resorted to answers that one would expect rather than what was heard eg in part (a) *c'était trop petit*. Candidates also combined different pieces of information to produce incorrect answers eg *Avec l'aide du chef, nous avons changé les menus* became *changé le chef/ un nouveau chef*. Weaker candidates were thrown by the context, the vocabulary itself was not too difficult but the context was unfamiliar and they failed to recognise common items of vocabulary such as *tables, chaises, menus, posters*. Parts (a) and (c) required an indication of tense (past for a and present for c) and examiners commented on many candidates inability to either recognise or communicate the difference.

As always, the open-ended questions requiring answers in English are a good discriminator and Q9 and Q 10 proved difficult for weaker candidates. There were some excellent performances from the better candidates but only the better candidates were able to supply the detail and accuracy required at this level. Although candidates generally understood the gist of the extract, lack of attention to detail often cost them marks. Again the unfamiliar context seems to have thrown some candidates who failed to recognise simple vocabulary such as *la poubelle jaune, plastique, la poubelle verte est pour la nourriture* in Q9 (b), in fact many weaker candidates did not recognise the colours and incorrect answers included blue, black, red, orange etc Quite a few candidates rendered *trois poubelles* as *2 bins* in part (a).

Parts (c) and (d) led to incorrect answers based on mishearing ie in part (c) *acheter vert* was heard as *aspirateur* giving rise to incorrect answers such as *need to Hoover more often, need to buy a Hoover* and on expectation rather than what was heard for example in part (c) *it's boring/ it has to be done/ it takes a long time/ should be done often* in part (d) *it's a recycling company, it takes away rubbish*. Likewise *the green bin for paper* in part (b).

Q10 also contained familiar vocabulary in an unfamiliar context. Again please refer to the mark scheme. In part (a) weaker candidates failed to recognise first the time indication and secondly the common vocabulary in *les voitures électriques.... en ce moment sont chères mais à l'avenir (le prix va baisser) et elles seront moins chères*. Likewise in part (c) the core vocabulary *vélo* was not recognised/heard by weaker candidates (*j'ai l'intention de me déplacer en vélo électrique, c'est plus rapide qu'un vélo traditionnel*). Again this question gave rise to incorrect answers based on prior knowledge rather than what was heard *e.g buy/ get around/travel by electric car*. A common incorrect answer was *make/invent/sell an electric car*. Many candidates successfully answered part (d) although some candidates lost marks for incomplete answers eg *ban cars* instead of *ban cars from town centres*. Other candidates added incorrect information such as *ban electric cars from town centres* which again lost them marks. Lack of precision in answers such as *reduce the number of cars in town centres* also lost marks. Again there was evidence of weaker candidates inability to distinguish sounds and to associate French sounds with English words eg *accès* was heard as *relax* and incorrect answers such as *people should relax more in town centres* were common amongst weaker candidates. There were some candidates who rendered *ville* as *village*. Again weaker candidates answered using prior knowledge rather than what was heard with answers such as *improve public transport/ charge cars going into the town centre*, etc.

There were few rubric infringements, but unfortunately for the questions requiring answers in French or English, there were a number of candidates who answered in the wrong language, for which no marks are awarded.

As highlighted in previous years, the performance of the better candidates was characterised by:

- careful reading of the rubric
- listening to the whole rather than honing in on individual items of vocabulary
- attention to detail, giving full rather than partial answers
- expressing themselves clearly and unambiguously when writing in either English or French and relating their answers to facts in the extract
- applying logic
- reading over and correcting their answers.

1226 2F & 2H Speaking

An increasing number of centres have used CDs to record their oral examinations this year. We encourage centres to use this method as the quality of recordings is far better. The use of the same cassettes over a number of years means that the quality of sound diminishes each year and examiners reported that many recordings were difficult to hear clearly.

Details of how to send recordings on CD will be given in the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination.

Candidates built on previous years' performances in the oral test and clearly used classroom practice to perform well across most aspects of the examination. There was an even performance across the majority of rôle plays and the conversation section although examiners continue to report fewer candidates reaching the highest mark bands in the conversation.

Rôle play A

This generally provided a secure basis for marks and offered encouragement to most candidates to attempt the B rôle play. However there were a significant number of candidates who were unable to score full marks in this element of the examination and weaker candidates again found this element more demanding with poor pronunciation preventing communication being made.

It is evident that candidates are more aware of items of food and drink but many were unable to score well in familiar situations in this rôle play. All situations are well covered in textbooks and are taken from the minimum core vocabulary. Many found greater difficulty with items requested in A1, *ceinture* and *écharpe* were not widely known. A4, *peigne* was unknown and *brosse (à dents)* was badly pronounced or anglicised. *Dépliant* was rarely attempted and mostly incorrect in A6. A8, *tasse* and *assiette* were rarely heard, although *platte* was. The objects in A9 were difficult for almost all candidates and *un football* was very common. Items of vocabulary from the post office continue to cause problems despite their use in the rôle plays for a number of years with anglicised pronunciation of *timbre* and *envelope* the norm for the majority of candidates who attempted them. A12 proved difficult for some candidates who were only able to offer *j'aller* or similar sounding attempts but many even weaker candidates were successful with this rôle play.

Caisse continues to be a problem for many candidates, most commonly pronounced as *casse* or *cassé*, neither of which could be credited.

Learning of the minimum core vocabulary is essential for these common items that are in everyday use in survival situations and teacher-examiners should be aware that a variety of vocabulary is used over the twelve rôle plays.

There remains confusion where a candidate combined two responses. It is not necessary for teacher examiners to ask again for a quantity, colour or size. Teacher-examiners are reminded that responses may be combined without penalty. Where this occurred it had a negative effect on candidates who were confused that they were being asked to repeat an answer they had already given.

Rôle play B

The majority of candidates were able to experience some success in rôle-play B. The rôle plays challenged Foundation Level candidates and provided Higher level candidates with an accessible beginning to their speaking examination. Candidates should be advised that only rarely will one word utterances or short phrase without a verb satisfy the demands of the B rôle-play. Marks are lost if the required message is only partially completed. Candidates should check that they communicate the entire message indicated by the words and pictures on their card and ensure that they read the rubric carefully

Many candidates successfully answered the unpredictable questions. However *Vous voulez commencer quand ?*, *Comment veux-tu y aller ?* and *Cela a commencé quand ?* were poorly answered, even by a significant number of more able candidates at both levels. Candidates cannot be credited for their answer, however appropriate it may be when teacher-examiners rephrase the unpredictable question in any way.

A significant number of candidates offered items of vocabulary other than those indicated in the rôle plays and centres are reminded that where there is oblique candidates must offer one of items as part of the message required. This was particularly the case when candidates were saying how they are going to the cinema, where they work on Saturday or where they are going on holiday. Similarly, if more than one item is offered only the first will be marked, even if it is incorrect and the others correct.

Most candidates were able to attempt the four tasks although for a significant number the framing of questions and common question words are difficult and such tasks are often not clearly communicated, particularly when attempting such tasks as 'Ask what if you can go by one of these', 'Ask what time you have to get up tomorrow', 'Ask where your penfriend prefers to go' and 'Ask what platform' were particularly difficult for many candidates and few were able to master the use of obligation. However some more able candidates were able to get round this by alternative means. Task 4 continues to be a good discriminator within many of the rôle plays.

Although many candidates score highly, candidates should be aware that tense errors affect the communication of a task and that poor tense usage will reduce the marks gained. There was a considerable number of candidates at both levels who used infinitive or imperfect forms for the present tense of *er* verbs.

Vocabulary within *B12* was not widely known in and this situation proved to be the most difficult for candidates at both levels yet is included in most text books. A significant number of candidates asked for *un ère* and *plate-forme* was heard on many occasions. *Soif*, *fatigué* and *perdu* were found to be difficult as they were not within their usual context and the transference of vocabulary from one known context to another seems to be a difficult concept for the less able candidates. In *B10 jambe* proved problematic and examiners and moderators heard *jambon* on a number of occasions. in *B8 appareilt* was virtually unknown by candidates at both levels and *caméra* was often heard.

There were a number of centres where candidates expanded within this role play. This is not required and in some cases actually prevented the candidates from accessing the marks they were capable of as incorrect additions, causing confusion, negated the answer given.

Rôle play C

This was much more successfully attempted again this year and many examiners reported that teacher-examiners and candidates appeared at ease with the rôle play. Although many candidates were able to engage better examiners and moderators continue to report that the majority of centres do not encourage candidates to expand the rôle play and, therefore, prevent them from accessing the higher mark bands. There are opportunities within the bullet points, and one of the unpredictable questions is more open-ended, in order for candidates to expand and show what they are capable of. It must be remembered however that any expansion must be relevant to the rôle play in order to be credited.

Candidates who simply read the bullet points or information from the stimulus material will not score well. Expansion of a bullet point or the unpredictable question can be achieved quite simply by the use of, for example, a short phrase or by offering some extended description added to the basic response.

Centres are reminded that where there is a question mark within the tasks candidates are expected to ask a question. If a candidate produces a statement they are considered not to have conveyed the task successfully and often only the more able candidates were able to frame questions successfully. Many centres and candidates seemed unaware of this and this limited their ability to access the higher mark bands.

A significant number of candidates failed to read the rubric at the top of the card rendering some of the responses irrelevant during the rôle play, so that although they seemed to say a lot they cannot score marks for these elements. This is particularly the case where reservations have either been made or are being made. Teacher-examiner's knowledge of the situations was less than adequate in a number of cases and consequently did not respond adequately to the candidate thus causing confusion. Candidates may at times produce responses that are unexpected and teacher-examiners need to respond to these rather than just read out responses from the scenario.

The Teacher-Examiner handbook may be accessed three working days before the examination and centres are advised that teachers should familiarise themselves with the materials during this time.

The bullet points were on the whole accurately completed although *Logement ? Achats*, and *Repas ?* continue to cause problems for many candidates on all the occasions they are used.

The unpredictable questions continued to be a good discriminator within the more open question and many more able candidates were able to use the question to offer appropriate opinions and extend their responses. Candidates were able, on the whole, to answer the more closed question.

Question words however are still a major problem for many candidates who either are not listening carefully or are unaware of the true meaning of them. *Quand ? Comment ?* continue to be a problem for many candidates.

Vos details ... is still often very superficially dealt with, often producing just a forename. Details of a mobile telephone number and offering a passport were not seen as successfully completing the task nor were descriptions of the person or their family as they were not relevant to the situation.

However there were many excellent rôle plays. Candidates responded well to teacher-examiners who used the prompts thoughtfully and where encouragement and careful responding to their replies enabled them to expand effectively.

Conversation

There was a more than thorough preparation of the first topic in many centres, where an increasing number of teacher examiners asked an insufficient variety of questions throughout the centre, and there was a significant minority of centres who asked the same questions to all candidates which is against the spirit of the examination and means that there were no unpredictable questions asked. Where this happens, candidates are unable to score highly during this element as the questions were not varied enough and quite restrictive in form.

Naturally, the best conversations occurred when teacher-examiners listened to candidates' answers, and progressed in a natural way, rather than just working through the questions in the handbook.

Teacher-examiners are reminded that the specimen questions in the Handbook are merely suggestions. There were a large number of centres where the teacher examiners only asked the candidates these questions. It is against the candidates' interests to follow them slavishly with no personalisation of the conversation and these are often non-sequitur and can confuse the candidate when there appears to be a jump to another part of the topic. This penalised candidates who were unable to take the initiative and often only produced short responses. This is especially the case for candidates of a lower ability who were asked the same questions as a candidate taking the higher level conversation. Teacher-examiners should use the responses of the candidate to stimulate the next question.

The conversation is marked globally over the two topics and in an increasing number of cases candidates who were able to speak well, in a variety of tenses during the pre-learned, prepared section, were unable to offer responses to simple questions during the second topic. These candidates could not be awarded high marks.

The higher levels of the assessment criteria require a wide range of structure and vocabulary both in terms of the questions and responses.

There were many centres who were able to help candidates fulfil their potential through skilful questioning, enabling the candidate to expand and use more complex language, eliciting a range of structures, tenses, opinions and descriptions. It should be noted that a series of closed questions whilst helping some candidates to offer a response will not score other than in the lower mark bands.

Timing continues to be a concern and centres are reminded that candidates cannot gain credit for responses outside the time limits given in the rubric. Some centres went through all the specimen questions for both Higher and Foundation sections, regardless of ability or time taken to do so.

- 4-5 minutes Foundation Level conversation
- 6-7 minutes Higher Level conversation

These limits are for the whole conversation and not per topic. Similarly short conversations will prevent the candidates from demonstrating their ability.

The two topics should be given equal time. Candidates are disadvantaged if they are not allowed to show what they can do within the unprepared topic. Candidates should be given the opportunity to use appropriate structures and language within the time allotted for this part of the examination..

Examiners commented on an increasing number of packages and /or contents that were damaged upon receipt. Cassettes must be securely wrapped in bubble wrap, or similar, to avoid breakage in the post and it is important that the polybags provided by Edexcel are used to avoid the contents from being lost.

Marking

Where centres opted to mark their own candidates there were a number whose marks were out of tolerance and needed adjustment.

Many centres awarded full marks when there was ambiguity in a candidate's response due to poor pronunciation particularly in rôle plays A and B. The pronunciation of *caisse* was an example of this and *casse / cassé / casser* was often credited.

In rôle play B an incorrect tense often affected communication. Responses of a single word or verb did not convey the message or an unpredictable question was rephrased meant that the performance was often overvalued.

In rôle play C there was often insufficient expansion for higher marks to be awarded. Tense errors, responses without a verb, or the failure to ask questions when required, meant that marks were overvalued as communication needed to access the higher mark bands was not achieved.

In the conversation section Accuracy and Application of Language are dependent on the amount of French conveyed by the candidate and it is unusual for a candidate who scores in the lower ranges in communication to score highly for in these sections as there is not the breadth of language required. Centres also have a tendency to overvalue the performance of Foundation level candidates who appear to say quite a lot, but have mostly repeated much of what the teacher-examiner has said through a series of closed questions and total reliance on the teacher examiner's vocabulary.

Standardisation

There is evidence of insufficient internal standardisation within a number of centres. There were a number of cases where one or more teacher examiners in a centre have been over generous or inconsistent in their marking. Centres are encouraged to use previous year's examinations to help standardise their marking in preparation for the next series. Centres where internal standardisation has not taken place may affect the results of individual candidates. However many centres standardise excellently and are to be congratulated on their efforts.

Administration

Many centres continue to provide an excellent service in this area. However some points to note are summarised below:

- Cassette boxes and tapes should be labelled meticulously. It is helpful to use the inlay in the Instructions for Conduct booklet. Each should be labelled with Specification Name and Number, Centre name and number, candidate name and number, level of entry, order of recording and name of teacher examiner.
- Cassettes should be numbered sequentially across the centre, not by individual teacher examiners.
- Cassettes should be rewound to the start of side A.
- Cassettes should be dispatched with the Optems or Attendance Register. The L3s should be in a different package.
- Candidates' performance should not be split between sides of the cassette or on two different cassettes.
- Foundation and Higher-level candidates should be recorded on different cassettes.
- Where CDs are used they must be formatted appropriately prior to dispatch.
- Mp3 files are best format and many candidates can be recorded on each CD.

- CDs must be labelled appropriately with centre name and number, teacher examiner and level of examination
- CD inserts must include track number, candidate name and number
- L3 mark sheets for each candidate should be arranged in candidate number order across the whole centre.
- The top (white copy) of the Optems for 2A centres should be sent to Edexcel. The second copy (yellow) should be sent to the Moderator and the third copy (green) should be retained by the centre.
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- Centres should adhere to the time limits for sending materials to examiners and moderators.
- The conversation section has time limits to be observed.
- Introductions on tape or CD of candidates should be effected as briskly as possible in the interests of allowing the candidate to begin speaking.
- The microphone should favour the candidate rather than the teacher-examiner. Centre should be aware that where automatic recording levels are achieved by some tape recorders candidate details are at times inaudible.
- Parcels should be securely packaged for posting using protective bubble wrap or similar for the protection of the tapes.

Conclusion

Although reports on examinations invariably highlight difficulties, it must be stressed that the majority of teacher-examiners prepare and carry out this element of the examination successfully.

Many candidates were well prepared for the examination and there was evidence of excellent examining technique.

Examiners and moderators would like to thank teacher-examiners for their efforts this year.

1226 3F Reading and Responding

Candidates' performance reflected the fact that the vast majority had been entered at the appropriate level and had covered the linguistic material required. There were no indications that the time allocation was insufficient for them to complete the set tasks, and very few were unable to make it clear what they wanted markers to consider as their answers.

Question 1

This was designed to enable candidates to show their knowledge of basic vocabulary. The vast majority performed well in identifying the locations, though there was some confusion between *salle à manger* in (iii) and *salon* in (v).

Question 2

This required candidates to pair signs showing locations with sentences referring to what could be done at each. This caused few problems, most candidates scoring very well.

Question 3

This involved reading a short text and selecting the correct adjective for each person according to the qualities demonstrated in the text. Parts (i) and (ii) were particularly well answered. *Ennuyeux* and *gentil* were not as well known as the other adjectives.

Question 4

This was a more demanding question which required candidates to read a short text and to select the correct words to complete a gapped text. Few failed to score at all, but there was evidence of some guessing.

Question 5

This was well done by the majority who correctly managed to pair the statements concerning actions to take to protect the environment with the appropriate pictures.

Question 6

Again this question was done well, but it was surprising that a small number did not appear to be able to recognise easy vocabulary items such as *ballon* and *trousse*.

Question 7

Candidates were generally able to pair the statements with the jobs. *Caissier* and *conduire* seemed to cause the most problems.

Question 8

This question, required candidates to understand a short text about Mathilde's interests and then to select answers from multiple choice options. Very few failed to score at all. Vocabulary items such as *ne ... plus* and *ennuyeux* were clearly not recognised by some. In questions targeting the higher grades available at Foundation level candidates are expected to show the ability to cope with tenses other than the present, and this was the case here.

Question 9

Candidates were generally able to cope well with the demands of this question which required them to answer questions in English based on a short text. Very few gave answers in French.

Copying of items from the text was not always performed very well with various versions of *Bordeaux* for instance being offered in (a), though poor spelling was not penalised. Nearly all answered (a) correctly, though *Paris*, *Belgium*, *on the border*, *Bordeaux in Paris* and even *Bulgaria* were given as answers.

Candidates must take care to read questions accurately. The answer to (b) "When did she move?" was often given as *Paris*. Other errors included May 15th, 1 year old and 20 years ago.

Part (c) was generally well answered, but some gave answers in French, and some only gave one answer. Others felt the need to embellish answers which lost them a mark, as in "*She likes nature*".

Part (d) was generally well answered, though some confused *natation* with *équitation* and others gave her present hobbies.

In part (e) a few mentioned the hobbies she had as a child.

In part (f) some gave answers referring to fumes or pollution, but the majority scored well despite some poor English spelling.

In (g) the majority understood that she wanted to have children, but *mari* was often interpreted to be a place or a name.

1226 3H Reading and Responding

The vast majority of candidates were appropriately entered at Higher level, though there were a few who would have been better advised to have taken the Foundation level option. There were no indications of the time allocation for the paper being inadequate.

Question 1

This was a crossover question and therefore also a part of paper 3F. It involved reading a short text and selecting the correct adjective for each person according to the qualities demonstrated in the text. Parts (i) and (ii) were particularly well answered. *Ennuyeux* and *gentil* were not as well known as the other adjectives.

Question 2

This was a crossover question. It required candidates to read a short text and to select the correct words to complete a gapped text. Few failed to score at all, but there was evidence of some guessing. Performance was generally better than in the Foundation paper.

Question 3

This question targeted the ability to read a variety of very short texts and to identify the correct title for each. Very few failed to score at all and a full range of marks resulted. A wide range of topics was covered within the overall framework and this allowed past, present and future events to be presented. Candidates seeking access to higher grades need to be able to demonstrate their ability to cope with such tasks.

Question 4

This question was aimed at those at the top end of the ability range. Candidates were required to read an article about a singer and to demonstrate their comprehension by selecting six correct statements and two adjectives to describe her by deducing her qualities from the whole text, justifying their selection with evidence from the text. A full range of marks was awarded with the best candidates achieving high scores.

In Section B, most were able to choose at least one correct adjective and very few were tempted to give a reason inappropriately in English. Often unsuitable or incomplete answers were given as the reason for assigning a particular quality: e.g. for (i) *elle a passé son bac* (without referring to the fact that she took it early), *elle joue du violon*, *elle a abandonné ses études*, references to *bouddhisme*, and for (ii) *sa famille a trouvé refuge à la campagne*, *elle a choisi de le faire à l'épaule*, *elle va faire sa première tournée* and references to *bijou*.

Question 5

This was a crossover question. This was well done by the majority who correctly managed to pair the statements concerning actions to take to protect the environment with the appropriate pictures.

Question 6

This was a crossover question. It required candidates to understand a short text about Mathilde's interests and then to select answers from multiple choice options. Very few failed to score at all. Vocabulary items such as *ne ... plus* and *ennuyeux* were clearly not recognised by some. In questions targeting the higher grades candidates are expected to show the ability to cope with tenses other than the present, and this was the case here.

Question 7

This question was designed to target Grade A. The question required a magazine article to be read and questions to be answered in English to demonstrate comprehension. The best candidates scored well. Very few answered inappropriately in French.

In (a) answers often lacked the necessary precision. *Journée*, as in previous years, was thought by many to mean "journey".

In (b) many scored a mark, though again some did not give sufficient information by not referring to the army in their answer.

In (c) most referred to the purchase of souvenirs rather than realising that *souvenir* in this context had another meaning.

In (d) the best candidates gained both marks, though many did not refer to the fact that the experience was frightening and mentioned dictators in an incorrect context.

In (e) many interpreted *voyaient* as "travelled" or stated that military service was for boys without the fact that this was unfair.

A large number gained a mark for (f). There was evidence that both *guerre* and *usine* were generally well known by better candidates.

In (g) a large number guessed that an answer concerning the equality of women was appropriate or that the text referred to women fighting on the front line.

In (h) answers were often marred by a reference to "journey" for *journée*, though the best managed a mark.

1226 4F & 4H Writing

As in past years, centres are to be congratulated on preparing their candidates for the requirements of this examination. Examiners noted how well candidates responded to stimulus material, and how resourceful they were. There were a few areas of concern, but on the whole most candidates had the opportunity to achieve their potential on these papers.

Paper 4F Question 1

Candidates were asked to write ten items of vocabulary. Most were able to write five means of transport, but five types of weather turned out to be more of a problem. The pictures were given as suggestions, and many candidates found them useful. It was quite in order to choose items which were not illustrated, as long as they were plausible in the context. No marks were awarded for copying the stimulus. Candidates were expected to write just one response in each box. Common errors included misspelling a word in such a way that the meaning changed to something inappropriate: *orange* for *orage*, and *vend* for *vent*, for example. There was some interference from Spanish, and English words were sometimes used by weaker candidates, especially *aeroplane*. Apparently random words were also in evidence, especially for the weather; one candidate, for example, gave *oreille*. It was disappointing that many candidates left blank spaces in their responses to this question.

Paper 4F Question 2

This question required candidates to supply five nouns and five correct present tense verbs. Examiners again noted a further slight deterioration in performance since last year, and few candidates scored full marks for this question. Some centres had however prepared this question very well. The nouns were very accessible, and there were hardly any misinterpretations of the graphics. Candidates were not penalised for such misinterpretations. A significant number of candidates gave *bag* for *sac*, and *party* for *fête*. The verbs were much more variable. Many candidates had trouble with the irregular verb *aller* and the regular -ir verb *choisir*; others wrote past participles; a few simply copied the infinitives. Centres are once again recommended to give attention to this question in preparing for next year's paper.

Paper 4F Question 3

Candidates benefited from having the stimulus in English, and most attempted all four bullet points. This proved to be a very accessible question. The task was intended to be completed using the present tense only, but many candidates successfully used other tenses. On the other hand, many candidates' knowledge of tenses was such that a good deal of ambiguity was expressed. As in past years, some candidates confused *il y a* with *c'est*. *Je n'aime pas* frequently came out as *je n'ai pas*, and *le cours* and *la cour* were used interchangeably. The correct form of *commencer* was seldom encountered.

Paper 4F Question 4(a)/Paper 4H Question 1(a)

For both Foundation and Higher candidates, this question was less popular than the alternative. However, outcomes were fairly comparable. Candidates generally responded fully and relevantly to the stimulus, although for some tenses were an issue, particularly the Present Tense. Some candidates lacked key words such as *sain*, *sainement* and *santé*. It was pleasing to see that candidates were expecting to express opinions, and most did so successfully, with many giving coherent reasons as well. Those who think that teenagers are a race of couch potatoes would have been heartened by the response to this question. A large number of Higher Tier candidates scored sixteen or more out of twenty, and most kept to the word limit this year. Exceeding it often led to boring, inaccurate or irrelevant writing, thereby excluding candidates from the 'pleasant to read' marking category. The best candidates expressed a cohesive and logical argument very successfully, using more complex language fluently.

As in past years, there tended to be a lack of ambition with regard to complex structures, and some candidates scored relatively higher on Question 2, where they used such structures more frequently and more convincingly.

Paper 4F Question 4(b)/Paper 4H Question 1(b)

There were some very good responses to this question, and many achieved excellent marks while keeping to the word limit. Use of the bullet points ensured that most attempts were well-ordered and logically constructed. However, a number of candidates omitted to refer to the first bullet point, which required them to say whether or not people ate well in their own country. Others (copying the stimulus) referred to *ton pays* rather than *mon pays*, which was at best ambiguous. The best answers responded in roughly equal measure to all the bullet points, using three tenses, adjectives and more complex structures such as object pronouns, subordination and linking. Weaker candidates included irrelevant material, or lists of food and drink. Candidates' linguistic resources were generally satisfactory, although misuse of tenses sometimes led to ambiguity. Most candidates used *aller* plus an infinitive to convey the future tense, but sometimes a hybrid tense such as *je vais allé* was the result. Other problems included copying parts of the stimulus without manipulating the language at all. Lack of relevant vocabulary was a problem for some; many wrote *vegetables* instead of *légumes*. There was at times a lack of variety of vocabulary, for example, an overuse of *jouer*, *faire*, *manger* and *boire*. Sometimes, a desire to write down long paragraphs of pre-learned material led to an imbalance in the response.

Paper 4H Question 2(a)

Far fewer candidates attempted this question than the alternative, and on average they responded slightly less successfully to this task. Understanding the stimulus for this question caused a number of problems. Several candidates did not realise that they had to talk about a town in the future; by simply describing the town they live in now, they were not fulfilling the demands of the question. This was an open-ended task which allowed candidates more choice in the way they dealt with the question but a few candidates took this too literally and only just touched upon the topic. A few compared town and country – a title which they had perhaps taken from a past exam paper. Candidates cannot score high marks if they do not address the question.

On the other hand, many candidates produced highly successful, coherent, well-linked pieces, developing them with opinions and reasons. Some candidates clearly liked the question, producing creative and imaginative responses. The best candidates used their knowledge of a variety of topics, such as home town and the environment, to paint a coherent picture of a future town and to express their opinions. Some weaker candidates took the opportunity to include pre-learned material, not all of which was entirely relevant. For them, opinions tended to be formulaic and restricted to likes and dislikes.

It was encouraging to see that the vast majority of candidates kept to the word limit. Those few who did exceed it often penalised themselves by including irrelevant material or by increasing the incidence of error in their work. Some candidates had difficulty with the future tense. *Il y aura* was often rendered as *il sera*. As in past years, modal verbs such as *vouloir*, *pouvoir* and *devoir* were poorly manipulated. The past imperfect tense was used appropriately by the better candidates, which was encouraging. Past infinitives, emphatic pronouns and object pronouns were seldom encountered, although candidates in certain centres produced phrases using *après avoir/après être*; *ayant* with a past participle; *avant de* with an infinitive; *en* with a present participle; and the present subjunctive.

Paper 4H Question 2(b)

This task was very accessible to candidates, and some responses were exceptionally good and lively. Examiners were struck by the variety of celebrities mentioned, and the enthusiasm of the candidates to describe them. The best answers were coherent, well-linked pieces which followed the bullet points carefully and which included opinions and reasons.

Weaker candidates misinterpreted the stimulus and did not realise that they were supposed to have met the celebrity they were describing. Others did not appear to understand *célèbre*, and wrote about their mother or father. Some treated *célèbre* as if it were a noun. The language of such candidates was frequently over-ambitious and they did not really have the resources to tackle this question. Some candidates used pre-learned material to explain the circumstances of the meeting; for instance, a road accident or a shopping trip. This worked only when it was made relevant to the title; weaker candidates did not relate it to the task set. The linguistic strengths and weaknesses described above were also evident in this question. In addition, careless use of *il* and *elle* by some candidates led to much ambiguity; and few candidates knew the difference between *dire* and *parler*.

The more prescriptive and tighter structure of this question was perhaps better suited to the average candidate. There were many excellent submissions with a wide range of higher structures and idiomatic vocabulary.

General points

- It was pleasing to see that the vast majority of candidates observed the rubric for these papers. They kept to the word count recommendations and did not answer all the optional questions. Candidates who failed to observe the rubrics were given no advantage, and they may even have penalised themselves.
- If candidates want to write out a draft version of their work, they should do so on the blank pages of the answer booklet, and then write the best version in the correct place. The rough version should then be crossed out.
- The use of supplementary answer sheets should be avoided. It delays the marking process, and suggests to candidates that it is acceptable to write more than the word limits require. The blank space at the foot of certain questions can often be used instead.
- Some candidates answered both the options (a) and (b), thinking that the placing of a cross in the box at the top was sufficient to indicate which was their selected answer. They should always cross out the discarded response, so that examiners have no doubt as to what they intend.
- Candidates should always write in ink (preferably black), and not pencil.
- Candidates should be reminded of the importance of neat handwriting and good presentation in their answers.
- Candidates should not write in the margins or in the 'Leave blank' column.
- Unlike in past years, a number of candidates appeared to have been inappropriately entered for the Higher Tier of the examination. It would be regrettable if their GCSE French course ended on a discouraging note because they did not have the capacity to deal with the second question.

1226 4C Written Coursework

For this, the penultimate year of the specification, coursework was again much more popular than the examination. As in the past, it was pleasing to see that the vast majority of centres benefited from this choice, with candidates producing good work according to their potential, and teachers administering and assessing the work very successfully. There were some splendid submissions, especially where candidates were writing creatively about their own experiences. Different entry patterns in the last few years have meant that again there were very few low-scoring candidates. There were very few examples of poor or incomplete work and illegible or incomprehensible units. At the higher end, there were fewer examples of excessively long submissions.

Tasks

The best tasks allowed candidates to use a variety of tenses, structures and vocabulary in each unit of work. They demonstrated linking, opinion and logical argument. Weaker candidates were able to write simple sentences and paragraphs without too much adherence to stimulus material.

Examples of successful topics and tasks this year included:

- Use of minimal stimulus, such as bullet points
- Use of English stimulus, as in the new GCSE French specification
- Differentiated tasks for candidates of different abilities
- Holidays
- Work and leisure
- Work experience
- School and future plans
- A restaurant visit
- A review of a film, a TV programme or a book (but only the best candidates were successful here)
- Creative, personal and imaginative pieces of work
- Current affairs and social issues

Poorer tasks did not encourage candidates to use more than one tense. Language was consequently repetitive, with excessive reliance on the stimulus, and there was little standardisation of task choice within the centre.

Examples of less successful tasks included:

- Tasks which relied too much on the use of writing frames
- Tasks where the outcome was practically identical across a class or year group
- Tasks which did not specify that opinions and reasons had to be expressed
- Letter to a penfriend - when no specific topic was specified
- Tasks where the theme overlapped two topic areas
- Daily routine
- Home town - for this topic candidates need to be aware of the need to give personal opinions and to use a wide range of tenses. Repetition of *on peut* and *il y a* should be avoided.
- Biography of a famous person or member of the family

- Descriptions of house or family - although these areas are suitable for the weakest candidates
- The environment - for candidates without the resources to deal with this. Too much material which had apparently been borrowed from course books was in evidence here.
- Interviews, for example, with a celebrity - these did not allow candidates to use linking
- Hotel booking letters - especially if just copied from a stimulus
- Hotel complaint letters - likewise
- CV and letter of application
- Health issues - for candidates without the resources to deal with this
- Je me présente - often very dull writing was produced here
- An accident

Successful stimulus material was brief, often in the form of title plus bullet points, or even just a title by itself. Some centres used past exam papers (Specification 1226 Paper 4) to good effect. Most stimulus material was in French, although moderators noted some in English. Often, centres chose safe and predictable topics, and only the better candidates were able to develop these quite unpromising titles into good pieces of work that fulfilled the criteria for higher marks. Some centres appeared unsure of the difference between stimulus and reference materials. The latter might include textbook pages or grammar worksheets which help candidates with a particular piece of vocabulary or with a more complex structure. They only became a problem when candidates copied whole chunks of language from them - and sometimes the same copied work was seen across a whole centre. Moderators are looking to see how individual candidates manipulate the language to make it their own.

Candidates in a few centres were penalised because they had not been asked to fulfil the specification requirement of writing three units of work from three different topic areas. Where candidates had written two units from one topic area, only the better of the two marks was taken into consideration, and the other mark was discounted. Clearly this had a serious effect on the overall marks of such centres. This was however far less of a concern than in previous years. Centres are reminded to check the specification carefully before setting tasks.

The excessive length of submissions was an issue in some centres. It is quite possible to obtain good marks for work which meets the specification demands: 250-350 words overall for grades G-D, and 500-600 words overall for grades C-A*. The three units of work should be of roughly equal length, including the one done under controlled conditions.

Only a tiny minority of centres did not meet the requirements for controlled conditions, and they too were penalised by having the marks of one unit discounted. Controlled conditions work must be done in the classroom and under the supervision of a teacher. Stimulus material and a dictionary are allowed; reference materials, notes or first drafts of the work are not permitted.

Hardly any centres had arranged for candidates to draft their work. If candidates do make drafts of their work, these must not be corrected by the teacher. Feedback should only be given in the form of general comments; the use of form CFS1 is

designed for this purpose. Drafts should be clearly identified and should be included with the sample. Moderators are instructed to ignore final drafts in those cases where first drafts have been marked with specific corrections.

Candidates are encouraged to use ICT when composing their coursework. They are however urged to check spellings carefully, especially accents. The use of Internet translation devices is not permitted, and centres are asked not to authenticate work produced in this way. Centres should make candidates aware of the dangers of using online translation resources such as dictionaries.

When not using ICT, candidates must ensure that their handwriting is legible. Candidates should use pens, not pencils. Photocopies of work are not acceptable; neither is the use of correction fluid.

Assessment

On the whole, this was very well done by centres. Some were slightly generous but consistently so. Internal standardisation was usually successful. The three marking grids provided in the specification were well used, although sometimes too much credit was given to work copied from a stimulus, to pedestrian or formulaic work, and to work which was too short to meet the criteria. It is necessary to take into consideration both the length and type of task when awarding a mark for Communication and Content. Here too use of linking needs to be considered, and the extent to which the candidate expresses a logical argument. Under the heading of Knowledge and Application of Language, consideration must be given to the amount of ambiguity produced by poorly formed verbs. Tenses used as an afterthought, rather than being integral to the piece, are unlikely to help the candidate gain high marks here. In the Accuracy grid, it should be noted that the majority of verb forms have to be correct in order to achieve three or more marks. Correct use of accents, for example on past participles, is crucial. To gain four marks or more for Accuracy implies use of more complex language, not simply the absence of error.

Administration

Most centres were extremely helpful in following the requirements of the Instructions for the Conduct of the Examination (the ICE booklet), which are issued well in advance of coursework deadlines. When centres failed to do this, it held up the moderation process and in some cases penalised candidates. As in past years, there were various specific problems, and centres are again asked to note the following:

- The sample should arrive on or before the deadline. A significant number of samples arrived late this year.
- The latest version of form CF1 (coursework front sheet) should be used. It can be downloaded from the Edexcel website.
- It should include the candidate number and be signed by the teacher and the candidate. Centres should note that unsigned work is rejected.
- It should contain an accurate word count and an indication of topic areas chosen.
- Addition of marks should be carefully checked and double-checked.
- Transfer of marks from CF1 to OPTEMS should also be carefully checked and double-checked.

- The OPTEMS form should be completed in full, without error, and should be signed on every page.
- The top copy of the OPTEMS should be sent to Edexcel, not to the moderator.
- If separated, OPTEMS pages should be placed in their correct order.
- Absent candidates should be marked X not zero.
- The sample should be arranged in candidate number order.
- If a sample candidate is absent, then the work of the next candidate on the list should be included.
- The work of the candidates with the highest and lowest marks in the centre should be included.
- The work of a candidate awarded zero should always be included.
- Work in the folder should be in the same order as on the front sheet.
- There should be no loose pages – especially ones with no name on.
- Stimulus material should be submitted – not references to pages in a textbook, or the textbook itself.
- It is unhelpful to moderators if work is covered in ticks and other marks.
- When moderators request additional information or folders, these should be provided promptly.
- When sending coursework through the post, centres should ensure that the full amount of postage is paid.
- The use of Recorded Delivery is not always helpful, as many moderators are working teachers who are not at home to sign for packages
- When moderators point out anomalies and inaccuracies on CF1 and OPTEMS forms, it is the responsibility of centres to inform Edexcel about any changed marks.

2009 Statistics

Paper 1F - Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	37	32	27	22	17	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 1H - Listening and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	37	31	25	20	15	12	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 2F - Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	27	22	18	14	10	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 2H - Speaking

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	40	34	28	23	17	14	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 3F - Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	37	31	25	20	15	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 3H - Reading and Responding

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	35	29	23	17	13	11	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 4F - Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	32	28	24	21	18	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	59	50	40	30	20	10	0

Paper 4H - Writing

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Raw Boundary Mark	50	39	33	27	22	16	13	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	35	0

Paper 4C - Written Coursework

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Raw Boundary Mark	60	51	45	39	33	27	21	15	9	0
Uniform Boundary Mark	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	20	10	0

Overall Subject Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Total Uniform Mark	360	320	280	240	200	160	120	80	40	0

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