

# Examiners' Report Summer 2009

GCSE

GCSE Russian (1241)

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## Russian 1241 Paper 1: Listening and Responding

### Question 1-5 / 6-10

These questions posed very few problems for the vast majority of candidates. However, some candidates appeared not to know the word **собака** (question 8).

### Question 11

Responses to this question were variable and wherever possible credit was given to candidates, regardless of some poor spelling. Parts (ii) and (v) were most successfully dealt with. Part (i) proved difficult and for part (iv) a number of candidates appeared not to know **триста** and opted for “30” as their answer. Candidates should be reminded that where a number is required for an answer a figure rather than word is acceptable.

### Question 12

This question was tackled quite well by many able candidates although statement **д** proved the most challenging to place correctly.

### Questions 13-15

Questions 13 and 14 posed few problems but a surprising number of candidates of all abilities seemed not to know **мороженое**.

### Question 16

Although well answered by many candidates a number were unable to pick up the inference between **он решил стать врачом** in the transcript and **в больнице** (part iv) in the possible answers. Similarly in (v) between **это мне очень нравится** and **прекрасно**.

### Question 17

This question proved appropriate for the level of candidate it was aimed at.

### Question 18

The topic of weather seemed to be well known by the majority of candidates.

### Question 19

This question worked well for a large number of candidates.

### Question 20

This question appears to have been very challenging for all but the best candidates.

## Question 21

Once again, a small number of candidates could not be awarded any marks for this question as they answered in Russian.

- a) A number of candidates seemed not to know **день рождения**
- b) Given that **сорок** and **четырнадцать** do not sound similar a surprising number of candidates answered 40 instead of 14.
- c) A pleasing number of students were able to pick out the required cognate **энергия**.
- d) **Двести** was generally well known.
- e) Although a number of candidates had the gist of what was required for this question not all understood the significance of **самый** or the meaning of **нарисовать**.
- f) Again, many candidates were successful in picking out the cognate **рекорд**.
- g and h) These questions were consistently well answered. However, a number of candidates did confuse **фамилия** with family.

As in previous years, some candidates reduced their chances of picking up marks by not attempting the whole paper. Candidates should be encouraged to have an educated guess when all else fails.

With particular reference to question 21, candidates should read the questions carefully (underlining key words in the question is often a good idea) as marks were sometimes thrown away by answers being inappropriate to the question.

## Russian 1241 Paper 2: Speaking

This year's oral examination team was pleased to see a generally very high quality cohort this year and enjoyed listening to large numbers of enthusiastic and well prepared candidates. Generally speaking, the level of candidates' performance on this paper was particularly good this year and candidates and teacher-examiners alike showed good awareness of the importance of employing past, present and future time frames and of expressing and justifying opinions, in order to access the higher bands of the mark scheme. Teacher-examiners who were identified as exemplifying best practice for this paper were those who allowed their candidates time to expand and develop their answers, while being ready with structured questions to avoid the production of a monologue. Equally, the best teacher examiners re-phrased questions when candidates were struggling or unsure, or simply moved on swiftly to a different question. Repeating the same question or ploughing on with an obviously tricky topic is rarely in the interest of the candidate. By contrast, the small number of teacher examiners who allowed their candidates to produce a pre-learnt monologue for each topic did not serve their candidates' best interests, as candidates must engage in a dialogue on all three topics in order to access the full range of marks.

It was pleasing once again to see a number of well-prepared weaker candidates still managing to achieve good marks by being careful to include phrases in all three time frames. Equally, there were some highly impressive performances on show from candidates at the top end of the ability range, not only in terms of the range of grammatical structures and vocabulary produced, but also in the sophistication of their opinions and points of view. Aspect and verbs of motion continue to trouble all but the very best candidates.

'At Home and Abroad' was once again the most popular topic this year, presumably for the easy opportunities it affords for a range of tenses and for discussing school trips to Russia. 'Education, Training and Employment' was also popular, as was 'Media, Entertainment and Youth Culture', with a number of candidates clearly having undertaken a pleasing amount of research into the life and times of a chosen celebrity. 'House, Home and Daily Routine' was a less popular choice this year, especially among learner candidates. Many candidates talked about the importance of exercise and were averse to fast food. All candidates were clear on the dangers of drugs and cigarettes. There was some impressive and pleasing vocabulary on offer when discussing these issues; candidates should remember that unusual items make them stand out and seem well-prepared.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the first topic (chosen in advance by the candidate) was generally very well done, although some weaker candidates were allowed to present their topic for well over the prescribed one minute maximum. The examination team continues to feel that it is a good idea for centres to allow their candidates to introduce their chosen topic, but it should be reiterated that allowing candidates to go beyond the prescribed one minute will not gain them any advantage. On the contrary, candidates can only access the higher marks by responding to a 'wide range' of question types. In addition, centres should note that the total time for the exam - **MAXIMUM 12 MINUTES** - should be split evenly across the three topics. Candidates are very unlikely to be able to access the highest marks if this is not the case. Equally, candidates are very unlikely to benefit from an exam that goes beyond the maximum permitted time. In most cases, this serves only to make candidates tire and flag. Teacher-examiners are strongly encouraged to use a stop watch to monitor the timing of their exams.

Centres are reminded of the importance of ensuring that their teacher-examiners are familiar with the procedures for this examination, as set out in the handbook. Once again this year, a small but significant number of candidates, both learner and native-speaker, were disadvantaged because they were not given the opportunity properly to fulfil the requirements of the mark scheme. Equally, centres are reminded of the importance of correctly completing the accompanying paperwork when submitting their recordings to the examination team. An LT3 form (available from the Edexcel website) must accompany the recording of every candidate, as must the completed attendance register. Recordings should also be clearly labelled and carefully checked before sending - several centres sent in blank cassettes this year, or accidentally recorded over a previous candidate's performance.

A number of centres submitted their candidates' performances on CD this year and this was very much appreciated by the examination team, who would encourage as many centres as possible to use this method. Centres are also reminded of the importance of ensuring that background noise is kept to a minimum while recording is taking place, as well as of the Edexcel stipulation that pausing the tape during a candidate's examination is strictly forbidden. Centres using cassettes should also be careful to ensure that sufficient room remains on the tape to record the whole of a candidate's performance before beginning the examination.

Finally, the examiners would like to thank the vast majority of centres and teachers for conducting the exam sympathetically and according to the instructions in the handbook, as well as for completing their administration effectively and accurately.



## Russian 1241 paper 03 Reading and Responding Examiner's report

The vast majority of candidates was well prepared and it was pleasing to note that almost all candidates attempted all the questions and many candidates achieved full or nearly full marks. However a minority of candidates lost marks through poor English or poor handwriting. Candidates should also ensure that they answer all questions fully.

Unfortunately a few apparently native speaker candidates lost marks through answering Question 9 in Russian.

### Questions 1 and 2

Posed very few problems for the vast majority of candidates.

### Question 3

Proved to be a good test for those aiming at grade C and above as candidates needed to extract detail and points of view from a text including different tenses.

### Question 4

This was challenging, but was attempted by most candidates and even the weakest gained some marks, which was pleasing.

### Question 5

This was accessible to the majority of candidates.

### Question 6

Provided few problems for those aiming at C or above. However candidates need to be encouraged to read the stimulus carefully for detail.

### Question 7

Candidates are clearly well trained for this type of test and many did well. However a surprising number wrote *электричеством* for (i), which although grammatically accurate, was not mentioned in the text. It was encouraging to see that even the weakest attempted the question and managed to gain some marks.

### Question 8

Was very accessible with pleasing results. Candidates however should be encouraged to copy carefully. *Бутерброд* was frequently misspelt and *джинсы* and *письмо* were common errors.

### Question 9

Required candidates to identify main points, recognise points of view and extract meaning from sometimes unfamiliar language. This challenging question was

generally well answered with even the weakest candidates gaining some marks. Candidates are clearly very familiar with this type of test.

(i) was accessible to most candidates, although many answered **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary** and unfortunately gained no marks. Other candidates answered very fully giving a lot of unneeded information from their (sometimes vast) knowledge of the history of space exploration!

(ii) caused few problems although several confused **astronomer** with **astronaut** or **biologist** with **scientist** and gained no marks.

(iii) was well done by most candidates and it was pleasing to see the number who answered **experienced pilots**. However a significant number guessed at **logic** or **leadership skills**.

(iv) There were many wild and/or imaginative guesses here including **live on Mars**, **eat upside down** and **get used to negative gravity**. Almost all candidates understood **жуть** but few understood **вместе** and did not gain the mark.

(v) presented few problems, many giving both reasons, but unfortunately gaining only 1 mark.

(vi) Most candidates did well on this question, but some answered **training**, which was not clear enough to gain a mark, or **physics exercises**.

(vii) This posed few problems. Some candidates answered **drink** and did not gain the mark. This indicates the need for accuracy and precision in answers.

(viii) This was generally well answered. However a surprising number of candidates did not understand **женщины** or **мужчины**, confusing them with **муж** and **жена**. Other candidates mentioned **women commanders**, presumably misunderstanding **команда**. Some said that there would be women in the team, without mentioning men. To gain the mark it should have been clear that both men and women were in the team.

## Russian 1241 Paper 4 Writing Examiner's report

### Question 1

Candidates were required to write a list of five sports. The question allowed a reasonably wide range of lexical items therefore few candidates failed to complete the grid. The vast majority of candidates scored full marks on this question as most could name a variety of sports. Many candidates chose to use the pictures as stimuli for answering this question thus not using far simpler vocabulary. However, this did not disadvantage the majority, who scored full marks. Very rarely were answers not accepted although there were

frequent misspellings. Commonly misspelt words included sports ending in -ball in English. Weaker candidates often wrote such items as *футбалл, баскетбалл, волейбалл* etc. There was some difficulty for weaker candidates in the spelling of words such as *теннис, хоккей* and *гольф*. Candidates across the ability range struggled with the accurate spelling of *регби*. Some candidates could not be credited with a mark for using *я катаюсь* without further qualification. Similarly there was some confusion and ambiguity with phrases such as *лыжать на коньках* and *конькаться на лыжах*.

Candidates must be reminded that they will not be credited with any marks for copying the example. However there were far fewer cases of this than in previous years.

### Question 2

This question was well attempted and there was a lot evidence to show that candidates have been well prepared for such a question type. On the whole vocabulary and structures were comfortable to the task and there was some evidence of the use of case endings. Many candidates were able to communicate the message even though they were unsure of the exact Russian equivalent of the bullet point. Some candidates, for example, wrote *автобус в 8 часов* for the first bullet point as *отправляться* was a more testing item of vocabulary. This was entirely acceptable.

Many candidates went into detail about the specific sights they were looking forward to seeing in St Petersburg, mentioning the Hermitage, St Isaac's Cathedral, the cruiser *Aurora* and the Peter & Paul Fortress. Despite these mentions of specific places, candidates only had to mention a generic place of interest in a city, such as a museum, park or shops to gain credit. St. Petersburg itself presented some difficulty to weaker candidates who did not attempt to transliterate the name of the city St Petersburg and just wrote in Roman script. Examiners did express some surprise about the lack of background knowledge from a large number of candidates who described looking forward to visiting the Kremlin, the Bolshoi Theatre and Lenin's Mausoleum. Candidates were not penalised for this factually incorrect information this does demonstrate the importance of learning about the culture and geography of the country as well as the language.

Some candidates did not read the instructions carefully and this led to some confusion over which tense the note should be written. Unfortunately, several candidates chose to use the past tense and could not answer all the required elements of the task. Some candidates did not grasp the fact that the task was a note to a Russian friend explaining their activities for a day. Some candidates said that they were going for three weeks; some travelled from Moscow or from England and many returned to hotels. Weaker candidates found the time frames/tenses difficult to manage.

The fourth bullet point was less successfully managed by some candidates with a surprisingly large number reading it as “**What** you are eating” as opposed to “**Where** you are eating”.

A large number of candidates scored full marks on this question and many wrote impressive, lengthy answers. Indeed, some answers were overlong and communicated a great deal of unnecessary detail which did not gain candidates any more credit.

### Question 3

Many candidates wrote very interesting and accurate pieces about how they spent New Year. Many candidates were able to tackle the question successfully and used the vocabulary available from the stimulus text to help them formulate their responses. However, there is still some misreading of the bullet points resulting in candidates losing marks for communication and content. Most students did, however, manage to respond in some way to all 5 bullet points using the stimulus to enhance the quality of their response.

The first bullet point was well addressed by most, with descriptions of a new year spent with family, friends, at parties or at home. Some candidates took the first Russian question to mean ‘how was your new year’ and simply gave responses such as *я провела новый год хорошо*. This was accepted as a legitimate interpretation of the Russian question in the letter although it did lead to short response to the bullet point from weaker candidates.

The vast majority of candidates described the presents which they received for New Year but weaker candidates did not always state from whom they had received them. This resulted in lower attainment for communication and content.

The third bullet point was well addressed by the majority and many candidates were able to use a variety of constructions to give their opinions about various aspects of the New Year celebrations. Some candidates failed to describe what they had enjoyed *больше всего* and many missed off the *почему?* at the end.

Weaker candidates did not quite fulfil the requirements of the fourth bullet point in that they wrote about what the weather was like at New Year and not about what the weather is generally like in January in their country. A large number of candidates described what the weather was like on New Year’s Day itself. Some candidates did not answer the task by responding in the past tense. The present tense was required here to describe the usual January weather.

The fifth bullet point was handled well by most candidates, with many recognising that there is a variety of structures which can be used to denote future time - *я собираюсь*, *я хочу* and *я буду* were all accepted. Many described their coming birthday in some detail. Some candidates did not mention their birthday but simply described what they intended to do later in the year. The future tense was less successfully formed by weaker candidates who did not put an infinitive in the future tense phrase.

Overall, there was a pleasant range of answers to this question. It was obvious that the best candidates had been trained to use a variety of connective phrases, ensure their use of verb tenses is accurate and address each bullet point appropriately. Many knew how to link their piece together into a coherent, interesting passage. They had a clear understanding of how to adapt the written work that they had done during their course of study to the specific requirements of the question in the exam. The very best answers were pleasant and easy to read and seemed as a whole to hang together. Tenses seem to be used with more success compared to previous years but there are still candidates who are having difficulty forming past and future constructions.

#### Question 4a

This was the more popular option of 4a and 4b as the security of the bullet points seems to help candidates to write a more structured piece. Many excellent answers were offered and these went beyond the minimum expectation in a variety of ways. A number of candidates did not understand the exact nature of the question and wrote a general essay on their own town and thus lost marks for not addressing the fact they should have written a comparison between life in the town and in the country. Candidates were also required to give their own opinion on where it is better to live. It would be useful for centres to continue to train candidates to recognise the tense that is required for each of the bullet points as there was some confusion from some candidates. Weaker candidates did not recognise that in the rubric the question asked candidates to use the past and future tense, and so lost marks for communication and content. Stronger candidates had clearly been trained to include past and future tenses in all their writing work and so worked these deftly into their answers to the four bullet points.

Several candidates did not take on board that the overall title about where it is better to live and some candidates wrote about last week and the future without any relevance to the question. Occasionally the task was treated as two separate tasks- 1) Town v Country and 2) What I did last year and will do in the future. Weaker candidates tended to write an essay on their town, which did score on some of the bullet points. The majority of students wrote that they prefer living in a town to living in the country while they are young and would consider moving to the country when they are older and have families or retire. Several candidates wrote that they prefer to live in a town, as there is a "Topshop" and a supermarket and transport is good. Many candidates stated the belief that life in a village is very boring, mainly for old people but one does not need shops because one could grow everything oneself.

The first, second and third bullet points were generally well handled. Candidates were able to describe advantages and disadvantages of the town and countryside in some detail, and some had access to an impressive range of structures to support this discursive-type essay writing, such as *с одной стороны..., с другой стороны, по сравнению с*. The first bullet point required candidates to talk about the issues of transport in town and country. Candidates of all abilities demonstrated good knowledge of transport types and stronger candidates wrote eloquently about the pros and cons of these means of transport. The point referring to shops was less well developed with weaker candidates transliterating the shops that are to be found in their own town. There was minimal evidence of specific shop vocabulary and very few candidates made reference to *универмаг, гастроном* or *супермаркет*. The third bullet point allowed pupils the opportunity to discuss leisure type activities available to residents of the town and the country. Many candidates used this point to discuss how they had spent their weekend and how they planned to spend a future weekend in an attempt to incorporate tenses. The answer did not respond to the requirement of the task. Most candidates do have a good bank of vocabulary to relate to the topic of *свободное время*.

The fourth bullet point relating to *экология* was the least successfully answered. Candidates seemed to have fewer vocabulary items on the topic of environment / ecology at their disposal, although even weaker candidates were able to recognise that the stimulus had given them two words (*воздух* and *шум*) which they could then use in a sentence such as *в городе много шума и в деревне нет шума*. There was some confusion of the word *шум* which candidates felt they needed to get

into their work but without always knowing what it meant. More candidates showed evidence of knowledge of *тихий*. Stronger candidates could move away from noise issues to talk about *зрягный* aspects of life. More able candidates showed evidence of good use of the stimulus and initiative in dealing with the question using words / phrases which they had not previously encountered.

The majority of candidates used some very good and complex vocabulary and structures. Particularly impressive was the use of constructions involving *который, чтобы, однако, хотя, поэтому* and other connectives. Many candidates showed an ability to use some quite complicated grammatical constructions as well. There were examples of learner candidates using the conditional, compound conjunctions, gerunds and correct case forms after various prepositions and verbs. This was very encouraging.

The main issue relating to this question involves the use of tenses. Candidates have to be aware that the requirement is to demonstrate competency in all tenses. It is evident that teachers are really encouraging all candidates to try to address all of the bullet points in question 4 but this has to be backed up with secure grammatical evidence.

#### Question 4b

This question was considerably less popular than 4a. Many candidates did very well with the title. The majority of candidates who attempted this question made a valiant effort and showed an ability to narrate events and express opinions with confidence. Many wrote pleasant and entertaining accounts, which made for interesting reading. Many of the accounts were anecdotal which made the reading process much more pleasing. However, in some cases failure to address all points led to candidates losing marks and very often was the case that candidates did not address the part of the question '*и что будет?*'

There were a number of excellent and very detailed answers and many candidates demonstrated a substantial knowledge of vocabulary which they could use in an essay on the topic of *к врачу*. The majority had a wide range of structures at their disposal which they used to convey their message effectively. Many have been trained to ensure that they include the past, present and future tenses in their answers to unstructured questions such as this and this should be further encouraged.

Occasionally, answers did not seem to offer very much detail about the visit to the doctor and this meant that they were not as successful.

There were very few answers to this question written by weaker candidates and the majority of the answers were from non-learners or heritage speakers of Russian.

Some unusual vocabulary and reasons for visiting the doctor were described.

Alongside the more common description of broken limbs and fainting there were accounts relating to swine flu and food poisoning (sushi or baking a cake with soda instead of salt) It seems that studying for exams is a principal reason for not feeling very well.

The majority of candidates used very good and appropriate vocabulary and structures. Particularly impressive was the use of constructions involving *который, чтобы, однако, хотя, поэтому* and other connectives. Many candidates showed an ability to use some quite complicated grammatical constructions as well. There were examples of learner candidates using the conditional, compound conjunctions, gerunds and correct case forms after various prepositions and verbs. This is very encouraging. Stronger candidates make appropriate and secure use of tenses and opinions to enhance their writing.

Overall, answers to 4a and 4b were impressive when the requirements of the task were addressed. Many weaker candidates wrote full answers to 4a which showed a sound grasp of tense usage and a good relevant topic vocabulary. The standard was very high in many cases. Candidates have clearly been trained to answer these questions and this is a credit to teachers.

As in recent years there are a larger number of candidates who have some knowledge of Russian but whose main language is another Slavonic language. Often their written work is highly influenced by these languages and accuracy suffers as a result. Spelling shows evidence of being more phonetic and inaccurate. A small number of answers this year were written entirely in the Roman alphabet, or in a language that had no recognisable Cyrillic letters. Such responses can gain no credit in a Russian writing examination. Centres are encouraged to ensure that candidates have a sufficient grasp of written Russian to enable them to perform to their best in this paper.

### **Advice and Guidance**

- Read all rubric carefully
- Ensure answering all questions
- Candidates must include past and future tenses in their answer to access the higher mark bands
- Check verbs endings carefully
- Check spellings carefully
- Consider handwritten form of letters
- In question 1 make sure that examples are not copied
- Look at the title of each question as a clue

Beware writing a generic essay in question 4

## Statistics

### Overall Subject Grade Boundaries

Grade	Max. Mark	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
Overall subject grade boundaries	100	87	74	61	49	41	33	25	17	0



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