



**BOTSWANA  
EXAMINATIONS  
COUNCIL**

**PSLE**

**PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**SETSWANA COMPOSITION AND LETTER WRITING**

**2025**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is aimed at presenting the Principal Examiner's observations about the 2025 candidates' responses to composition and letter-writing tasks. The report highlights both the strengths and weaknesses that candidates displayed in their work, hence appropriate utilization of the information would go a long way in improving teaching and learning.

## 2. GENERAL COMMENTS

Generally, the 2025 cohort seems to be at par with the previous one in regard to responding to the questions. Regarding the difficulty level of the composition and letter, it was established that they were clear and accessible, and the expectation was that almost all pupils would be able to write without any problem. This year's letter writing was an informal one, the topic was not beyond their level. However, it is worrisome to note that the same concerns that are raised year in and year out keep on recurring and for this year there is still a significant decline in performance on Communication, particularly on composition writing where they have been performing better in the previous years. In letter writing there has been significant improvement in terms of performance and quality work produced by most candidates as compared to the previous year. Despite all this, there is still low performance recorded in some centres in both dimensions. This is worrisome, because it could be an indication that the report sent to schools is not utilized to the fullest although it aims at giving educators feedback on students' performance and as a result assists students in improving their writing skills.

What continues to be of major concern in both composition and letter writing is that candidates do not seem to understand the difference between stating and explaining as stipulated in the guidelines. Explaining requires more than just mentioning, it requires substantiation or expansion of the main points. Candidates continue to display a tendency of stating or mentioning a point/idea without any supporting statements. This usually leads to production of skeletal work which is not very informative. In some instances, candidates produced a list of different unsupported main points within a paragraph rather than a discussion of one point which is elaborated on.



Of concern also is the issue of formatting for both the essay and letter. Each form of writing has its peculiarities, and candidates need to adhere to the given format for each form. The issue of handwriting continues to be of major concern. Learners need to write neatly and legibly including the shaping of letters to try and differentiate capital letters and small letters.

All in all, the general performance of candidates in Communication still needs some efforts to be improved. Let's keep on teaching them the best way of putting down, in writing, ideas in more logical way.

### **3. COMPOSITION WRITING**

The candidates were expected to write about "TIRAGALO YA LETSATSI LEO, E NE YA DIRA GORE KE LEMOGE BOLTHOKWA JWA GO NNA TSALA LE BANA BA BA SIAMENG" and they were expected to build their subject matter around the guidelines that were provided. The guidelines were to be used as a way of focusing the essay. It is very critical for the guidelines to be elaborated to show that there is a clear understanding of the process of essay writing. The candidates were also expected to showcase their communication and writing skills by using different aspects of the Setswana Language to sustain the interest of the reader. Some observations were made about essay writing as outlined below.

#### **3.1 Confinement to the Guidelines**

Most candidates built their composition around the guidelines provided and as per the requirement of each criterion. This resulted in them being able to showcase their wide range of language use and understanding. This was also demonstrated in the manner in which they presented fully fledged elaborated ideas. Most candidates provided more sentences per guideline which fulfilled the expectations of essay writing. It is expected that the candidates beef up their points to display good communication skills and knowledge of the Setswana language.

#### 4. COMMUNICATION

Candidates were expected to display an understanding of the topic by providing information on the activity that made them realise the importance of befriending a good person . They were expected to display their communication skills.

The following are the ways in which the candidates were expected to address the guideline.

##### 4.1 Elaboration of ideas:

**E ne yare letsatsi lengwe ka tlhaselwa ke bana bangwe ba bagolwane ke tswa sekolong. Bana bangwe ba ke tsenang le bone ba tswa ba siya mme Tshepo a sala go nthusa. Re ne ra felela re ba fenyha mme ba ntlogela. Se, se ne,sa ntemeotsha fa go nna le tsala ee siamaneg gole botlhokwa.**

##### NB:

The learner was expected to construct the topic sentence. In the example above, the topic sentence is, ***“E ne yare ke tswa sekolong ka tlhaselwa ke bana ba bagolwane”***

The second sentence which forms an elaboration supports the topic sentence thus, it is:

***“Tsala ya me Tshepo a sala go nthusa gore ba ntlogele.”***

##### Elaboration using examples:

**Bana bangwe ba bagolwane ba ntwantsha, ba nkgoga,ba nkgwela mathe le gone go ntshela ka mmu.**

##### NB:

The topic sentence is **“Bana bangwe ba bagolwane fa sekolo se tswa ba a ntwantsha ba ntira dilo tse di bosula jaaka go nkgogakgoga, ba nkgwela mathe le gone go ntshela ka mmu.**

##### Examples

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- i) ba nkgogakgoga
- ii) ba nkgwela mathe
- iii) go ntshela ka mmu.

### **Observations**

- Generally, some of the learners were able to provide an explanation as expected though some had some challenges.
- Some of the candidates stated the main points and explained the reasons in a different paragraph. The candidates, instead of explaining the incident digressed to talk about other things, and in the next paragraph they would then try to elaborate on the main idea.
- Some would start well with a topic sentence and then go on to state various incidents that made them realise the importance of having good friends without expanding on any of the stated events.
- Some of the candidates who tried to explain the events, just wrote a run-on sentence.

Candidates need to differentiate between stating/mentioning and explaining because explaining requires more than just mentioning. The main idea must be stated then followed by supporting points which serve to elaborate the main idea; thus the event that made them realise the importance of having good friends. The candidate needs to note that an explanation is done well if they start a paragraph with a topic sentence and then elaborate it with supporting sentences or examples as shown above. Supporting the main idea is very significant because it's a way of expanding the body of the essay leading to formation of proper coherent paragraphs.

#### 4.2 Mentions the time and place of the incident.

Candidates were to mention the time and place of the incident.

#### Observations

- Most of the candidates mentioned the time and place of the incident and there were few instances where they mentioned only one aspect either time or place.

From the responses generally, it was clear that the candidates were able to interpret and address the guideline effectively.

#### 4.3 Explain an incident that that made them realise the importance of having good friends.

Candidates were to give a clear explanation of the incident that made them realise the importance of having good friends.

#### Observations

- Quite a number of candidates managed to give a full explanation of the incident that made them realise the importance of having good friends.

#### 4.4 Explains a specific event from the incident that made them realise the importance of having good friends.

This guideline requires the candidate to give a detailed explanation of an event from the incident that made them realise the importance of having good friends. They were required to at least give a full explanation of the event. Even if the candidates could state many benefits and at least, they were to pick one benefit and fully explain.

#### Example

**Ka Motswana a rile, sekukuni se bonwa ke sebatladi, bana bangwe ba ne ba utswa madi a morutabana kante tsala ya me o ba lebeletse ka seokomelabagwe. E ne ya re morutabana a goroga, a batla madi a gagwe mme bana bao, ba supa fa e le nna ke a tsereng. Ke ne ka tshoga mo ke neng ka felelwa ka gore ke ne ke itse gore ga se nna**

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modiramolato. Tsala ya me Kabelo, o ne a bolelela morutabana fa e se nna yo ke tsereng madi. O ne a supa fa a ba bone ba a tsaya. E ne ya re fa ba phuruphutshwa a fitlhelwa mo go bone.

### **Observations**

- Most candidates were able to give a detailed explanation of the event that made them realise the importance of having good friends.
- Some candidate stated the event without an elaboration hence they lost a mark.
- Some of the learners elaborated their idea in a different paragraph which made them loose a mark.
- Some of the candidates just stated the importance of having good friends even going further to list them without making any attempt to at least pick one event and explain it clearly.

NB: As stated earlier, teachers must emphasize the difference between stating and explaining.

The candidate's inability to explain calls for interventions to assist learners in acquiring the skills of how to elaborate.

### **4.5 Creativity**

#### **Show some creativity in their writing.**

Many candidates are greatly challenged in creativity. Most of candidatures lose a mark for creativity. This area requires candidates to showcase imaginary skills to synthesize information and present it in a way that flows. This involves weaving the main attributes of the essay together to produce a coherent piece of writing. They were also expected to bring together the main attributes of the essay to produce a solid piece of writing that has coherence within and across paragraphs. It calls for the usage of various sentences, varied vocabulary, and thinking beyond the guidelines to ensure that the essay arouses the interest of the reader and at the same time ensures that there is a flow of ideas. Creativity also entails skilful use of language components



such as figurative language, ideophones, interjective, collective nouns, descriptive words, punctuation, use of rich diction/vocabulary for a particular effect. It also entails the ability to play around with Setswana words creating an exciting piece of work.

NB: There is an urgent need for teachers to instil this important skill on the learners. As they plan, they should priorities creative writing skills and give learners more practice.

## **5. COMMAND OF LANGUAGE**

This profile requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the different grammatical structures and their appropriate usage. Under this section the following attributes are considered.

### **5.1 Capitalization and Punctuation**

Most of the candidates are doing well in capitalization and punctuation. However, they still have a shortfall of not punctuating the demonstrative. They also continue to use commas even where they are not supposed to pause some did not use a comma at all where they were supposed to use it.

### **5.2 Descriptive vocabulary**

This requires candidates to use descriptive vocabulary thus words and phrases or both as a way of enhancing the essay. These should be outstanding words/phrases that give vivid picture of what has been described. These should create a picture in the mind of the reader as if the reader can see what has been described.

### **Examples**

**Ke tsala ya me o ne a le pelokgale, a ikemisetsa go nthusa fa batho ba ntwantsha.**

**Fa basimane ba ba ntwantsa, go ne go these batho go se na bobeo jwa lonao.**

### **Examples of language aspects that can be used as descriptive vocabulary.**

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| Language aspects           | Example   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Collective nouns           | <b>Matshwititshwiti a batho</b><br><b>Maphatšhaphatšha a metsi.</b> |
| Ideophones (maetsisi)      | <b>Pitiki! Ruthu!, Phashaa! Potoko!</b>                             |
| Assonance(poeletso medumo) | <b>Manontho, tonatona, kimakima</b>                                 |

### 5.3 Figurative language

Candidates are required to use figurative language appropriately to produce an outstanding piece of writing. This involves the appropriate use of proverbs, idioms, and poetic aspects such as simile, personification and metaphor.

#### Observations

A lot of candidates did not use figurative language. A few who tried to use proverbs and idioms made errors of inappropriate usage.

NB: Teachers should infuse figurative language in their lesson plans and teach it in a context, this will help learners to grasp them and use them appropriately in essay writing.

### 5.4 Compound and complex sentences

As in the previous years candidates still have difficulty in using both compound and complex sentences in their writing.

#### Observations

- Some candidates write short simple sentences.
- Some use more than one conjunctive in a long sentence.



- Some use both conjunctive and a comma when attempting to construct a compound sentence.
- Some candidates tend to write run-on sentences which oblige them to use more than one conjunctive in a sentence.

## 6. > CONTENT MANAGEMENT

The aim of this section is to establish whether candidates have attained the skills of taking all the different aspects of composition writing and merging them to produce a congruent piece of writing.

This focuses on the following.

### 6.1 Coherence of ideas within the paragraphs

It is very imperative to note that paragraphs should be constructed through adherence to the format. The expectation is that, each paragraph should discuss one idea that has been mentioned thus it should have topic sentence and supporting ideas. The supporting sentence should not be divorced from the topic sentence.

**Paragraph = Topic sentence + supporting sentences**

**Ka Motswana a rile, sekukuni se bonwa ke sebatladi, bana bangwe ba ne ba utswa madi a morutabana kante tsala ya me o ba lebeletse ka seokomelabagwe. E ne ya re morutabana a goroga, a batla madi a gagwe mme bana bao, ba supa fa e le nna ke a tsereng. Ke ne ka tshoga mo ke neng ka felelwa ka gore ke ne ke itse gore ga se nna modiramolato. Tsala ya me Kabelo, o ne a bolelela morutabana fa e se nna yo ke tsereng madi. O ne a supa fa a ba bone ba a tsaya. E ne ya re fa ba phuruphutshwa a fitlhelwa mo go bone.**

#### Topic sentence

- **Ka Motswana a rile, sekukuni se bonwa ke sebatladi, bana bangwe ba ne ba utswa madi a morutabana kante tsala ya me o ba lebeletse ka seokomelabagwe.**

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### Supporting sentences

- E ne ya re morutabana a goroga, a batla madi a gagwe mme bana bao, ba supa fa e le nna ke a tsereng.
- Ke ne ka tshoga mo ke neng ka felelwa ka gore ke ne ke itse gore ga se nna modiramolato.
- Tsala ya me Kabelo, o ne a bolelela morutabana fa e se nna yo ke tsereng madi.

- O ne a supa fa a ba bone ba a tsaya. E ne ya re fa ba phuruphutshwa a fitlhelwa mo go bone.

### Observations

This year, most of the learners wrote coherent paragraphs even though some wrote paragraphs made of fragmented ideas that were not even linked. Run-on sentences is still evident in some candidates' work.

#### **6.2 Introduction and conclusion**

The introduction should set the scene. In instances where a learner wrote one sentence or paragraph, it was acceptable. The conclusion should be a summary or a reflection on certain aspects of the essay.

### **Observations**

Generally, most of the candidates did well in the introduction and conclusion.

## **7. LETTER WRITING**

Candidates were expected to write a letter to their cousin to inform them that there were different competitions in their school which they took part in and became one of the winners. Candidates were expected to write an informal letter. Furthermore, the topic was appropriate to their level and



easy for them to comprehend because candidates always participate in various competitions in and out of school. Below are some of the problems that need to be dealt with.

## **8. CONTENT MANAGEMENT**

### **8.1 Address and date**

Candidates were expected to write a well formatted address and date. The date must be in Setswana.

#### **Observations:**

Most candidates were able to write a well-formatted address and the date. However, there were candidates who did not get a mark for this criterion because of the errors that they committed ranging from punctuating their addresses, failure to use title cases and failure to include the

### **8.2 Opening and closing salutations:**

The opening salutations was supposed to be;

- Ntsalake
- Dineo
- Ntsalake Dineo

#### **Opening salutation**

Almost all candidates got the opening and the closing salutations correctly.

#### **Closing salutation**

The closing salutation was

- Ntsalao
- Ke le
- Some punctuated closing salutation with full stops

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In cases where the learners feel that they did not write appropriately and cancel, they should be advised to write the salutations on the same line where they have cancelled NOT skipping some lines. This makes them to lose a mark.

**NB:** Address and salutations are straight forward criterions which learners cannot miss it is worrisome as some candidates did not do the correct format, hence losing a mark.

## **9. COMMUNICATION**

Under this profile candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the topic. They are expected to address the topic in a straightforward and communicative manner which does not call for assumptions or speculations.

### **9.1 Mentioning the time/date of the competition.**

Candidates were expected to give clear evidence of when the competitions were held.

#### **Observations**

Most candidates clearly mentioned the time the competitions were held, and they managed to get a mark.

### **9.2 Explaining the competitions they participated in.**

Candidates were expected to provide detailed information on the competitions that they participated in. Even if they stated various competitions, at least one was to be fully explained.

#### **EXAMPLES 1: explaining main idea with ideas/supporting points:**

**Ke ne ke tseneletse kgaisano tsa mabelo a makhutshwane. lobelo lo, ene ele la selekanyo sa dimithara tse di lekgolo. E rile lobelo lo simolola ka ithoma kopele go fithela le wela.Ke ka tlala ka boitumelo go bo ke ne ka nna mmapodi.**

#### **Ntlha ya botlhokwa:**

- Ke ne ke tseneletse kgaisano tsa mabelo a makhutshwane. lobelo lo, ene ele la selekanyo sa dimithara tse di lekgolo.

#### **Katoloso ka mogopolo:**



- E rile lobelo lo simolola ka ithoma kopele go fithela le wela.Ke ka tlala ka boitumelo go bo ke ne ka nna mmapodi.

## **EXAMPLE 2: explaining main idea with examples**

Ke ne ke tseneletse dikgasano tse di farologaneng jaaka mabelo, kgwele ya dinao le mmabontle.

### **Mogopolo**

- Ke ne ke tseneletse dikgasano tse di farologaneng

### **Dikai**

- Mabelo

- kgwele ya dinao

- mmabontle.

### **Observations:**

As in composition writing, even here candidates had shortfalls. They were able to come up with competitions that they participated in.

### **9.3 State what they intend to know that they won the competitions:**

Candidates were to state what they intend to know that they won the competitions:

Observations:

Most candidates were able to come up with clear intentions now that they won.



## **10. COMMAND OF LANGUAGE**

The candidates were expected to display knowledge of the different aspects of language such as tense, correct register, correct spelling appropriate orthography and variation of sentence openings.

### **10.1 Tense**

There has been a significant improvement in the use of correct tense. The expectation was that candidate should be consistent in the use of tense and they should use correct tense agreeing with the topic. Almost all candidates used the correct tense.

### **10.2 Register:**

On the aspect of register candidates are expected to use appropriate diction for the task and it involves the use of Setswana throughout even in writing the names of subjects. The use of vulgar language is unacceptable.

### **Observations**

There was a great improvement in the aspect of correct register in that almost all candidates never faulted in this area.

### **10.3 Spelling**

A lot of candidates still lose marks because of wrongly spelt words. There is a need to advise them to proof-read their work after writing to check for spelling mistakes. Some of the errors indicated that candidate did not go over the work.

### **10.4 Orthography**

Most candidates still have a problem of not knowing which words are written conjunctively and those that are written disjunctively. There is a need for consideration of the

utterance/ pronunciation to establish how the word should be written. Particular attention should be devoted to the use of sounds: flh/g, tlh,th/tlh. Major emphasis should be on teaching the candidates the correct orthography as it has been evident that regional dialectal differences have been an influence in the way candidates use vocabulary.

### **10.5 Sentence opening**

There has been a significant improvement in the verification of sentence openings. Candidates need to continue to be exposed to various sentence openings to eliminate monotony in them writing.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

Centers are encouraged to take note of the comments on the different aspects stipulated in the report especially areas such as creativity and elaboration of guidelines which are critical in portraying the uniqueness of the communication skills of a candidate. They are also to revisit the format of formal/informal letter and salutation because some candidates lost marks in these simple and straightforward areas. One other point of concern is that there are issues of vulgarity and expression of love affairs which surfaced on the candidates work. Hopefully, effective utilization of the comments is likely to yield positive outcome on teaching and learning process.