

# MODEL COMPOSITIONS UNPACKED: ANNOTATED SAMPLES & EXAMINER COMMENTARY

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## Understanding PSLE Composition Assessment

The PSLE composition component carries 36 marks out of the total 50 marks for Paper 1 (Writing). This represents 18% of the overall English grade, making it a crucial component for achieving excellence. The composition is assessed on two main criteria:

| <b>Marking Criteria Breakdown</b> |               |  |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Component                         | Maximum Marks | Assessment Focus                                     |
| Content                           | 18 marks      | Relevance, development, creativity, coherence        |
| Language                          | 18 marks      | Vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation |

## Band Descriptors for PSLE Composition

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| <b>Band 1 (Excellent): 30-36 marks</b> |
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**Content:** Highly relevant, well-developed with creative and original ideas. Story shows clear structure with engaging plot development. Characters are well-developed and believable.

**Language:** Wide range of vocabulary used appropriately. Varied sentence structures with sophisticated connectors. Minimal grammatical errors that do not impede understanding.

### Band 2 (Good): 24-29 marks

**Content:** Relevant with adequate development. Some creative elements present. Story has clear structure but may lack sophistication in plot or character development.

**Language:** Good range of vocabulary with mostly appropriate usage. Some variety in sentence structures. Few grammatical errors that do not significantly affect meaning.

### Band 3 (Satisfactory): 18-23 marks

**Content:** Generally relevant but basic development. Limited creativity or originality. Story structure is present but may be predictable or underdeveloped.

**Language:** Adequate vocabulary with some repetition. Basic sentence structures with limited variety. Several grammatical errors that may occasionally affect clarity.

## Model Composition 1: "The Lost Phone" (Scored 35/36)

### Composition Question

Write a composition of at least 150 words about **something that was lost**. Consider the following points: How did it get lost? Was it found?

**Wait! Slow down, Snoopy!** I cried.

**Annotation:** Excellent opening with dialogue that immediately engages the reader. The exclamation creates urgency and introduces the main character relationship.

It was Snoopy's first outing at the park and the excited beagle was exploring his surroundings with great zest. Snoopy was chomping on flowers, sniffing at passers-by and barking at petrified birds. It took all my energy just to keep up with him.

**Annotation:** Setting and character establishment. Note the use of vivid verbs: "chomping," "sniffing," "barking." The word "petrified" shows sophisticated vocabulary choice.

It was only when Snoopy wandered off the footpath to take a leak by a tree that I had a chance to catch my breath. My weary legs were begging for respite, so I headed towards the nearest park bench. As I got near, a metallic object glinting in the sun caught my eye.

**Annotation:** Transition into the main plot. "Weary legs were begging for respite" uses personification effectively. "Metallic object glinting" creates visual imagery and builds

suspense.

## A mobile phone!

**Annotation:** Short, dramatic sentence for impact. This technique creates emphasis and advances the plot effectively.

I looked around the deserted park as I picked the phone up to examine it. It was a mint-condition matt black iPhone worth at least \$800. The wallpaper showed a picture of a smiling middle-aged lady. The person who had lost the phone must surely be in distress. Just then, Snoopy came bounding back. He yelped at my feet and hopped eagerly on his hind legs to get a look at what was in my hands. I squatted beside Snoopy and showed him my find.

**Annotation:** Detailed description of the lost object. The writer shows empathy by considering the owner's distress. Snoopy's actions are described vividly, maintaining character consistency.

"Well, what do you think?" I asked.

Snoopy sniffed at the phone gingerly. Then, he raised his nose up in the air and snorted in lungfuls of air. He repeated the routine once more taking a whiff of the phone and sniffing the air around him.

**Annotation:** Building suspense through Snoopy's mysterious behaviour. The detailed description of his actions creates anticipation for what will happen next.

Woof! Woof! Snoopy barked. Then he lurched ahead a few metres before stopping abruptly to turn and look at me. Before I could say anything, he barked again and sprang down the footpath like a bullet.

**Annotation:** Rising action with excellent use of action verbs: "lurched," "sprang." The simile "like a bullet" effectively conveys speed and urgency.

"Wait! Slow down, Snoopy!" I cried. Well, here we go again.

**Annotation:** Circular structure - returns to opening line, showing literary sophistication. The internal thought adds personality to the narrator.

This time, Snoopy ran without pause. No longer interested in investigating his surroundings, Snoopy seemed like he was on a mission. I sprinted to keep up with Snoopy. My legs were on the verge of giving out when a jogger came into view. Immediately, Snoopy started barking animatedly and running in circles around the surprised jogger.

**Annotation:** Climax building. "On a mission" and "on the verge of giving out" use figurative language effectively. The appearance of the jogger advances the plot towards resolution.

"Snoopy, stop!" I yelled, arms flailing wildly.

The jogger stopped in her tracks, charmed by the odd but adorable dog who seemed to have taken an inexplicable interest in her. Snoopy darted back towards me. He leapt and barked, all the while attempting to wrest the iPhone from my hand with his muzzle. As the jogger watched in amusement, it hit me. The smiling face on the phone belonged to the jogger! Snoopy had followed the scent on the phone and tracked the owner down!

**Annotation:** Climax and revelation. "It hit me" effectively shows the moment of realisation. The explanation of Snoopy's actions resolves the mystery built up throughout the story.

"I didn't even realise I had lost my phone!" the grateful owner gushed after I explained where I had found it. "It must have slipped out of my pocket when I was resting on the bench."

**Annotation:** Resolution providing logical explanation for how the phone was lost. Direct speech makes the scene more vivid and believable.

I could not have been prouder of Snoopy. Sure, I could have turned in the phone to the nearest police post and it would have eventually wound up in the owner's possession anyway. However, that would have taken days, not minutes.

**Annotation:** Reflection showing character growth and moral awareness. The contrast between "days" and "minutes" emphasises the significance of Snoopy's contribution.

"There's a pet café ahead. Can I buy your clever dog a treat please?" the lady offered.

Snoopy, as if comprehending the question, yelped and wagged his tail expectantly. I nodded and agreed on Snoopy's behalf—he certainly deserved a treat for helping the lady recover her lost phone!

**Annotation:** Satisfying conclusion where the hero (Snoopy) is rewarded. The phrase "as if comprehending" adds humour and personality to Snoopy's character.

**Examiner Commentary:** This composition demonstrates exceptional storytelling ability with a well-structured narrative arc. The writer effectively uses the dog as both a companion and plot device, creating an engaging and believable story. The vocabulary is sophisticated without being pretentious, and the dialogue enhances character development. The circular structure (beginning and ending with the same phrase) shows literary awareness. Minor areas for improvement include occasional sentence structure variety, but overall this represents excellent work deserving of Band 1 scoring.

## Model Composition 2: "A Change in Attitude" (Scored 34/36)

## Composition Question

Write a composition about a time when someone's attitude changed for the better.

"I hate doing chores!" I grumbled as Mother handed me a duster. It was Saturday morning and instead of playing video games like my friends, I was stuck at home helping with spring cleaning.

**Annotation:** Strong opening with dialogue that immediately establishes the narrator's negative attitude. The contrast between desired activity (video games) and reality (chores) creates relatable conflict.

Mother ignored my complaints and continued sorting through old boxes in the storeroom. "These boxes have been here for years," she muttered, struggling to lift a particularly heavy one from the top shelf.

"Let me help you with that," I offered reluctantly, more out of obligation than genuine willingness.

**Annotation:** Shows initial character trait - reluctant helpfulness. The word "obligation" reveals the narrator's true motivation at this stage.

As I helped Mother lower the dusty box, its contents spilled onto the floor. Dozens of yellowed photographs scattered around our feet like fallen autumn leaves. Mother gasped and immediately began gathering them with trembling hands.

**Annotation:** Turning point introduced through the accident. The simile "like fallen autumn leaves" creates vivid imagery. Mother's reaction ("gasped," "trembling hands") signals the importance of these items.

"What are these, Mother?" I asked, curiosity replacing my earlier irritation.

Mother's eyes glistened with unshed tears as she held up a faded photograph. "These are pictures of your grandmother when she was young. I haven't seen them for so long." Her voice was barely above a whisper.

**Annotation:** Emotional revelation that begins the attitude transformation. "Glistened with unshed tears" is more sophisticated than simply saying "she cried." The whispered voice conveys deep emotion.

I picked up one of the photographs and studied it carefully. A beautiful young woman in a traditional kebaya smiled back at me, her eyes sparkling with joy. It was hard to believe this vibrant person was the same frail grandmother I remembered from my childhood.

**Annotation:** The narrator's engagement increases as curiosity develops. The contrast between "vibrant" past and "frail" present adds depth to the family history being revealed.

"Tell me about her," I said softly, settling down beside Mother on the dusty floor.

**Annotation:** Physical action (settling down) shows the narrator's changing priorities - comfort matters less than connection. "Softly" indicates growing sensitivity.

For the next two hours, Mother shared stories I had never heard before. She told me about Grandmother's struggles as a young mother, her sacrifices to provide for her family, and her unwavering determination to give her children better opportunities. Each photograph became a window into a life I had never truly understood.

**Annotation:** Time shift showing dedication to listening. The metaphor "window into a life" effectively conveys how the narrator's understanding is expanding.

"I wish I had spent more time talking to her when she was alive," I admitted, feeling a pang of regret.

Mother smiled sadly. "She would have loved that. But you can honour her memory by appreciating the family history she left behind."

**Annotation:** Moment of self-reflection and regret shows character growth. Mother's response provides guidance for positive action, facilitating the attitude change.

Suddenly, dusting and cleaning didn't seem like such terrible chores anymore. I spent the rest of the day helping Mother organise the photographs into albums, listening intently as she identified relatives and shared more family stories. My earlier resentment had completely disappeared, replaced by a genuine desire to preserve these precious memories.

**Annotation:** Complete attitude transformation clearly demonstrated. "Suddenly" marks the definitive change moment. The contrast between "terrible chores" and "genuine desire" shows the depth of change.

"Thank you for helping me today," Mother said as we finished the last album. "It means more to me than you know."

I smiled and hugged her tightly. "Thank you for sharing Grandmother's stories with me. I understand now why family is so important."

**Annotation:** Physical affection (hugging tightly) demonstrates emotional growth. The narrator's gratitude and understanding complete the transformation arc.

From that day forward, I approached household chores with a completely different mindset. Each task became an opportunity to spend time with Mother and learn more about our family's heritage. What had once seemed like a burden had transformed into moments of connection and discovery.

**Annotation:** Lasting change demonstrated through changed behaviour pattern. The

*transformation from "burden" to "moments of connection" provides satisfying closure.*

**Examiner Commentary:** This composition successfully demonstrates a clear character transformation arc with believable motivation and development. The writer effectively uses family photographs as a catalyst for change, creating an emotionally resonant narrative. The progression from resentment to understanding is well-paced and convincing. Dialogue is natural and advances both plot and character development. The language is mature and varied, with effective use of imagery and metaphor. Very strong work that clearly meets Band 1 criteria.

## Writing Techniques Analysis

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### Seven Key Techniques in High-Scoring Compositions

#### **1. Show-Don't-Tell Technique**

**Instead of:** "John was very scared."

**Write:** "John's hands trembled as cold sweat trickled down his forehead."

**Application:** Use physical manifestations, actions, and sensory details to convey emotions and states rather than directly stating them.

#### **2. Sensory Engagement**

**Instead of:** "The beach was nice."

**Write:** "The golden sand warmed my toes whilst seagulls squawked overhead and the salty breeze carried the sweet scent of coconut sunscreen."

**Application:** Engage multiple senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) to create immersive experiences.

#### **3. Varied Sentence Structures**

**Instead of:** "I went to the park. I saw my friends. We played football."

**Write:** "As soon as I arrived at the park, I spotted my friends. We immediately started an exciting game of football, laughing and encouraging each other."

**Application:** Alternate between simple, compound, and complex sentences for rhythm and flow.

#### **4. Precise Vocabulary**

**Instead of:** "The man walked quickly."

**Write:** "The businessman strode purposefully."

**Application:** Choose specific, vivid words that convey exact meaning and create stronger imagery.

#### **5. Dialogue with Action Tags**

**Instead of:** "'I don't want to go,' said John."

**Write:** "'I don't want to go,' John mumbled, staring at his feet and shuffling nervously."

**Application:** Combine speech with physical actions to reveal character and advance plot.

#### **6. Figurative Language**

**Instead of:** "The house was very quiet."

**Write:** "The house stood like a silent sentinel, its windows staring blankly at the street."

**Application:** Use metaphors, similes, and personification to add depth and sophistication.

#### **7. Circular Structure**

**Application:** Begin and end with similar phrases, images, or themes to create literary cohesion, as seen in the "Lost Phone" model where "Wait! Slow down, Snoopy!" appears at both beginning and middle of the story.

## **Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them**

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### **Content-Related Mistakes**



## **1. Weak Opening**

**Common Mistake:** "My name is John and I am going to tell you about the time I lost my phone."

**Solution:** Start with dialogue, action, or an intriguing situation that immediately engages the reader.

**Better Opening:** "'Where could it be?' I muttered frantically, turning my bag inside out for the third time."

## **2. Rushed Ending**

**Common Mistake:** "Then we found the phone and everyone was happy. The end."

**Solution:** Allow time for reflection, character growth, or consequences. Show the impact of events.

**Better Ending:** "As I watched Sarah's relieved smile, I realised that honesty really was the best policy. The warm feeling in my chest was worth more than any reward."

## **3. Flat Character Development**

**Common Mistake:** Characters who don't change or grow throughout the story.

**Solution:** Show character transformation through actions, thoughts, and dialogue. Create a clear arc from beginning to end.

# **Language-Related Mistakes**

## **1. Repetitive Vocabulary**

**Common Mistake:** Overusing words like "said," "good," "nice," "went."

**Solution:** Build a vocabulary bank of alternatives. "Said" can become whispered, declared, exclaimed, muttered, announced.

## **2. Run-on Sentences**

**Common Mistake:** "I went to the shop and bought some bread and saw my friend and we talked about school and then went home."

**Solution:** Break complex ideas into separate sentences with proper punctuation and conjunctions.

## **3. Inconsistent Tense**

**Common Mistake:** Switching between past and present tense within the same narrative.

**Solution:** Choose one tense (usually past for narratives) and maintain consistency throughout.

# **Examiner Insights and Strategic Guidance**

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## **What Examiners Look For**

### **Content Excellence Indicators:**

- **Clear narrative structure with beginning, middle, and end**
- **Believable character development and motivation**
- **Creative and original plot elements**
- **Effective use of dialogue to advance story**
- **Emotional resonance and reader engagement**
- **Coherent progression of events**
- **Satisfying resolution that addresses the question requirements**

### **Language Excellence Indicators:**

- **Wide range of vocabulary used appropriately in context**
- **Varied sentence structures and lengths**
- **Effective use of literary devices (metaphor, simile, personification)**
- **Accurate grammar and punctuation throughout**
- **Smooth transitions between paragraphs and ideas**
- **Consistent tense and point of view**

- Natural, believable dialogue

## Strategic Approach to Composition Writing

### **Phase 1: Planning (5 minutes)**

1. Analyse the question and identify key requirements
2. Choose which picture(s) to base your story on
3. Brainstorm plot outline: beginning, conflict, climax, resolution
4. Identify main characters and their traits
5. Consider what writing techniques to incorporate

### **Phase 2: Writing (45 minutes)**

1. Write a compelling opening (5 minutes)
2. Develop the middle section with rising action (25 minutes)
3. Create satisfying climax and resolution (10 minutes)
4. Ensure minimum word count is exceeded (5 minutes)

### **Phase 3: Reviewing (10 minutes)**

1. Check for grammar and spelling errors
2. Ensure consistent tense throughout
3. Verify that all question requirements are addressed
4. Confirm logical flow and coherence
5. Add any missing punctuation or improve word choices

## Practical Application Framework

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### Weekly Practice Schedule

#### **Week 1-2: Foundation Building**

- **Day 1-2:** Study model compositions and identify techniques used
- **Day 3-4:** Practice show-don't-tell exercises
- **Day 5-6:** Work on vocabulary expansion and precise word choice
- **Day 7:** Write one complete composition focusing on basic structure

### **Week 3-4: Technique Integration**

- **Day 1-2:** Practice dialogue writing with action tags
- **Day 3-4:** Work on sensory description exercises
- **Day 5-6:** Focus on varied sentence structures
- **Day 7:** Write composition incorporating multiple techniques

### **Week 5-6: Advanced Applications**

- **Day 1-2:** Practice figurative language and literary devices
- **Day 3-4:** Work on character development and transformation arcs
- **Day 5-6:** Focus on compelling openings and satisfying endings
- **Day 7:** Write polished composition under timed conditions

## **Self-Assessment Checklist**

### **Content Assessment (18 marks)**

- Does my story have a clear beginning, middle, and end?
- Are my characters believable and well-developed?
- Is there a clear conflict and resolution?
- Have I addressed all requirements in the question?
- Is my plot creative and engaging?
- Does my story flow logically from one event to the next?
- Have I included emotional depth and character growth?

### **Language Assessment (18 marks)**

- Have I used a wide range of vocabulary appropriately?
- Are my sentences varied in structure and length?
- Have I included effective literary devices?
- Is my grammar accurate throughout?
- Are my paragraphs well-connected with smooth transitions?
- Is my tense consistent throughout the story?
- Does my dialogue sound natural and advance the plot?

### **Final Recommendations**

Achieving excellence in PSLE composition writing requires consistent practice, strategic application of techniques, and careful attention to both content development and language precision. The model compositions presented in this guide demonstrate that high-scoring writing combines compelling storytelling with sophisticated language use.

Remember that improvement comes through deliberate practice. Focus on mastering one technique at a time before attempting to incorporate multiple advanced elements. Regular self-assessment using the provided checklists will help identify areas for improvement and track progress over time.

Most importantly, develop a genuine appreciation for storytelling. The best compositions emerge when students are genuinely engaged with their narratives and invested in creating meaningful, memorable stories that resonate with readers.

### **Conclusion**

Excellence in PSLE composition writing is achievable through understanding examiner expectations, mastering key writing techniques, and consistent application of strategic approaches. The annotated models and examiner commentary provided in this guide offer concrete examples of what distinguishes exceptional writing from merely adequate responses.

Use this resource as both a learning tool and a reference guide. Return to specific sections as needed during your preparation, and remember that each writing session is an opportunity to refine and improve your craft.

With dedication, practice, and application of these proven strategies, students can develop the skills necessary to excel in PSLE composition writing and beyond.