

HOW TO WRITE A HIGH SCORING KCPE COMPOSITION

English composition is one of the areas that give KCPE candidates, parents and teachers sleepless nights because it is considered challenging. Unlike other papers, English composition is not a multiple choice test and call for a candidate's creativity in writing. Many parents have been asking me for model KCPE compositions. However I would like to point out that different people including well seasoned writers have their own way of writing that distinguishes them from others. Trying to copy somebody else style of writing goes against the grain of creative writing and is highly discouraged. Learners should be gradually assisted in honing their creativity and writing skills through constant practice. Each attempted composition should be marked and the learners clearly shown where they have erred and the best way of avoiding such mistakes. It should be remembered that practice makes perfect and one way of ensuring that information is retained in the mind is through repetition of learning experiences.

Before I suggest some themes that KCPE candidates can practice, it is necessary we review the KCPE composition examinations for the last couple of years as shown below.

KCPE English composition 2006:

We had come to the end of the term. There was a holiday before us. My friends and I decided to try something new.....

KCPE English composition 2007:

As soon as the bell for break rang, I rushed out of the classroom to look for my friends. I was eager to tell them the story.

KCPE English composition 2008:

When we arrived in the school at 3 o'clock from the standard eight educational tour, we were surprised to find other pupils at parade.....

KCPE English composition 2009:

It was half time and our team was leading. We were all excited. We rushed and gathered round the games captain and the team coach

KCPE English composition 2010:

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited.....

KCPE English composition 2011:

We lined up on both sides of the road from the school gate ready to welcome a Member of Parliament (MP). It was a school prize giving day.....

English composition 2012

When I knocked on the door, nobody opened immediately. I was just about to leave when my aunt came to the door smiling.....

English composition 2013

When we arrived at school that morning, two women and a man were talking to the headteacher near a car parked outside the office. When the car left, the headteacher announced that our school had been chosen as the cleanest in the county. "The County Director of Education will be sponsoring a school trip this Saturday" he said.....

A major observation made after analysis of these past KCPE composition test is that apart from the 2009, 2011 and 2013 test, all the others are open compositions. That is, the candidate is given a free hand to decide on what to write on.

The 2006 KCPE composition required candidates to write on how they spent a school holiday. They could write on life in a farm, a visit of some relatives in town, a game park, or any other activity.

The 2009 and 2010 composition have something in common in that they required a candidate to write on something that is exciting, it could be a wedding, a visit to the show, a school festival, or any other interesting activity a candidate would come up with. All a candidate is required to do is master two or three themes he/ she can confidently write about and connect it to the beginning of the composition.

A close scrutiny of best KCPE best composition over the last years show that a candidate need to be imaginative and come up with a captivating story from the input given. A good command of the language is also essential. The latter is displayed by use of vocabularies, phrases and idiomatic expressions that relate to the theme of the composition. Knowing the appropriate phrase or idiomatic expression to use is not enough as one has to know its meaning so as not to use it out of context as is observed in some KCPE compositions. A candidate need to have variety in sentence structure and still communicate fluently, expressing the feelings and emotions in such a way that they can be shared with the reader. This is only possible if a candidate read widely especially the recommended story books, taking a critical look at how different phrases, idiomatic expressions and vocabularies are put into use.

Some of the best KCPE compositions narrate the candidates own experience. Writing on own experiences help one to practice on expression of own ideas and go a long way in promoting originality that is in short supply in most primary school compositions.

Some common composition themes and expected vocabularies that a KCPE candidate can practice on are shown below. The list is not exhaustive and more can be added.

Festivals

Programme schedule, adjudicators, culture, sample official competition, drama, music, rehearsal, curtain raiser, stage, fashion, hall, set piece, celebrate, costumes, recite, audience, master of ceremony culture, drama, sample, auditorium, theater, marshal, value, character, actor, actress, troupe, master of ceremony, audition.

Games

Referee, goal post, games master, lane official, pitch, football field, first half, second half, extra time, dribble, pass, dodge, penalty, penalty kick, handball, injury time, result, free kick, middle field, fixture, final, tournament, fans, opponents, coach, referee, cheering, spectators.

Shopping

Window shopping, short change, shop-lifting, shop manager, shop attendant, entrance, exit, left luggage, price tag, number tag, carrier bag, shopping basket, queue, tills, shelves, cashier, trolley, display, counter

Celebration

Celebrate, master of ceremony, bride, bridegroom, bridesmaids, wedding gown, best man, reception, servers, bouquet of flowers, procession, feast, couple, cards, decorate, balloons, ushers, flowers, invitation cards.

Activities at house

Chores wash, clean, milk, cook, mend, wipe, mop, brush, polish, split curtains, draw curtains, paint, repair, slash, neighborhood, to fence, gate, homestead, hosepipe

Accident

Traffic light, zebra crossing, pedestrian, road safety, side-walk, yellow line, bend, speed limit, traffic rules, traffic police, accident victims, stretcher, ambulance, first aid, fracture bleeding, injury, bruise, bandage, speeding, head on collision, windscreen, wipers, dashboard, speedometer, safety belt, bonnet, brake, acceleration, front wheel, rear lights.

Drug abuse

heroin, bhang, cocaine, hallucination, dependence, withdrawal, trafficker, addiction, smoking, alcohol.

Health

Laboratory, blood specimen, diagnose, signs, symptoms, recover, disinfect, test tube, stethoscope, prescription, laboratory assistant, laboratory test, contagious, infection, epidemic, gloves, syringe, sample, dose, vaccine, persist, lose weight,

lose appetite, suffering from, HIV/AIDS, epidemic, disposable, sample, inoculate, inoculation, lab coat .

Agriculture shows

Show, stand, guests, exhibitions, arena, crowd, acrobat, acrobatic dancers, company, grade cattle, demonstration, plots, restaurants, parade, speech, judges, prize winner, official opening grade cattle, restaurants, guard, speech, parachute, display, runners up, supply, vegetables.

Entertainments

Information, video, stereo, television, screen, vision, video cassette recorder, power button, remote control, video cassette, DVD, Compact Disk (CD) player, microphone, earphone, speaker, volume, amplifier, dial, press, channel, eject

Hobbies

Pleasure, leisure, leisure time, concentrate, endure, alert, discover, talent, skill, knowledge, aware, excel, determine, relate, materials, relax, experience, conducive, novel, stamps, hobby, develop.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND PHRASES

The following are some of expressions which a candidate can use in writing compositions under the following:-

1.The express sadness, confusion or terrifying moments.

-Scared half to death.....

-That was the time hell broke loose.....

-A cry of horror escaped me at the sight of

-Anger blocked my throat.....

-A chill ran down my spine.....

-Eyes were as red as berries.....

-Fight tooth and nail.....

2.THE EXPRESS JOY.

-The joy I had knew no bounds.....

-Build castles in the air.....

-Tears of joy rolled down my cheeks.....

-I jumped in ecstasy.....

-The vibrant smile on the face expressed incredulous joy.....

-Crowd applauded thunderously.....

-I walked tall.....

-Ripped of joy filled my heart.....

3.WEDDING

-Wild cheers rent the air.

-Everyone was dressed to kill and looked gorgeous

-Smiled broadly exposing their egg – shell white teeth.

-The bride and the bridegroom exchanged vows as the congregation cheered thunderously.

-The maids and the flower girls were beautifully dressed and they looked spick and span.

-The bride swayed her hips left to right, her beautiful dress sweeping the floor.

4.ROBBERY

-My teeth rattled as my feet buckled at the sight of

-Felt a strong grip on my neck followed by a smack.

-They were armed to the teeth like soldier in a battle field.

-Victims were frog – marched to the police car and driven away at a terrific speed.

-The man had a protuberant stomach, thick mustache and eyes as red as berries.

-My heart palpitated as I waited anxiously

-The thieves were apprehended by the police.

-I heaved a sigh of relief.

5.FIRE

-We helplessly fought the raging fire without success.

-The charred remains were taken to the morgue.

-Thousands of sparks nose making the sky look like a huge glistening city.

-Tongues of fire roared like an angry monster.

-The buildings were reduced to ashes. Scores of fire victims lay groaning in pain and agony.

-The fierce fire spread rapidly.

-Thick smoke billowed from the burning house.

-Thick clouds of smoke formed up in the sky.

6.ACCIDENTS

-The injured writhed and groaned in pain and agony.

-The vehicle was reduced to nothing but a mangled wreck.

- Heard a screeching of breaks.....
- Searing pain stubbed their nerves.
- Sombre mood engulfed the onlookers.
- Some flying debris got lodged into my.....
- Glass shattered and few pieces found their way into my eyes.
- The blast lifted the bus off the ground, sending passengers flying in all directions.
- Bled profusely at the rate of a leaking pot.....

7.IDIOMS

- To lose heart
- To throw dust in the eye.
- To live from hand to mouth
- To show a white flag
- Thick in the head
- A red letter day
- To take a French leave
- Make a mountain out of an anthill
- To smell a rat
- To turn tables
- To bury the hatchet
- To sweep the board
- The lion's share
- Golden voice
- To make both ends meet

(Discuss the meaning of the above idioms with the candidates and have them make sentences using each of the idioms)

8.SIMILES

- As ugly as a scarecrow
- As honest as a mirror
- As heavy as lead
- As stupid as a pot
- As harsh as truth
- As humble as a worm

Again, the list is not exhaustive and more can be added. KCPE Candidates are advised to have a look at the best KCPE compositions found in this website to see how these expressions, phrases and vocabularies are well used to earn a candidate a high score.

Even before a learner is asked to write a composition on any of the given themes, it would be important to ensure that the learner knows the meaning of the vocabularies associated with the theme. One of the ways of ensuring this is by asking the learner to make sentences using each of the vocabularies. This would be the beginning of writing a composition.

It should be noted that it would be very difficult to use all the given vocabularies in one composition. Never the less, learners should aim at using as many vocabularies as possible. A learner could be asked to write a second composition on the same theme after some time but this time instructed to use different vocabularies from the ones used in the first composition. This would encourage creativity as there are different ways carrying out a task, composition writing being one of them.

CHOICE OF COMPOSITION THEME

These are some of the themes one can write on when given an open composition. It is however important to make sure that whatever you write on is smoothly connected with the beginning of a composition given. For example the 2010 KCPE composition could go something like this

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited looking forward to the interesting day ahead that was to be spent in a game park.....(***one then writes on a visit to the game park***)

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited almost not believing that I was going to be involved in my cousin's wedding.....(***then one writes about a wedding ceremony***)

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited and prepared myself quickly so as not be left by the school bus that was to take us to Nakuru Agricultural show.....(***then one writes about a visit to the agricultural show***)

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited. I was eager to accompany my parents to the supermarket to purchase goods to take to my grandmother.....(***then one writes on a visit to the supermarket or shopping***)

The day I had been waiting for finally arrived. I woke up excited, little did I know that I was to witness one of the most serious accidents in our area.....(***Then one writes about an accident***)

It should be noted that even for guided composition like the one for 2013 KCPE examination, a candidate can still choose to write on a different topic so long as it is

smoothly changed at the beginning. A candidate could for instance decide to approach the composition as follows

We lined up on both sides of the road from the school gate ready to welcome a Member of Parliament (MP). It was a school prize giving day.....

However little did we know that the occasion was never to be. We had waited for two hours when suddenly it begun to rain heavily.....(Then one can write about an accident during the rains, adventure of going home late after the rains, going shopping after the MP failed to come among many other themes one can think about.

As can be seen by now, one can write on almost any theme from such a beginning of a composition and most KCPE compositions are like that. Though almost all the composition in the last few years have been such that candidates have been given the beginning of a story which they are required to complete, different instructions could be given. These may include being given a title of the composition, an ending to a composition or even writing a letter. So candidate should learn about them too.

Other than the vocabularies given, candidates need to select some expressions, similes and idioms that may be used in each theme. I encourage a candidate to discuss with others and their teachers the similes, expressions and idioms that may be used in each of the themes given.