

# THE SRP ENGLISH EXAMINATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIRST 20 ITEMS IN PAPER 1 (1977 – 1980)

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This analysis deals with the first 20 items in Paper 1 of the SRP examination, all of which are of the multiple-choice type.

Items 21 to 40 of the paper focus on the verb (choice of tense, modals and verb patterns generally). The first 20 items in the paper deal with points of grammar and usage *not* involving verbs, though the particles of phrasal verbs are tested now and then, and one item involving a modal verb crept into the 1977 paper.

The results of the analysis are provided in the Appendix. There is considerable variation in the spread of points being tested from year to year and in their frequency, but a typical profile of the test content emerges as follows:

Prepositions	4 or 5 items
Definite & Indefinite articles	2 or 3 items
Determiners ( <i>some, any, much</i> etc.)	2 or 3 items
Question words	2 or 3 items
Phrasal verb particles	1 or 2 items
Relative pronouns	1 item
Reflexive or emphatic pronouns	1 item
Comparative/superlative adjectives	1 item

The remaining items range mostly over a variety of clause structures: clauses of time, condition, purpose, result, concession etc. The item tested is usually a conjunction or some other form of clause connector.

A more detailed breakdown of the most regularly recurring categories is given below:

## 1. Prepositions and Phrasal Verb Particles

### PREPOSITIONS

#### (a) Spatial Reference (9)

- (77) get *across* the river
- (77) climb *over* the fence

- (78) *at* the funfair
- (78) *into* the classroom
- (78) *within* that space
- (80) *in* the cupboard
- (80) *over* the fence
- (80) escaped *from*
- (80) enter *through* the window.

#### (b) Time (5)

- (77) *within* two days
- (77) be *on* time
- (78) *during* the tour
- (78) *within* five minutes
- (79) *within* 15 days.

#### (c) Manner (4)

- (77) *in* direct sunlight
- (78) *under* the doctor's care
- (79) *with* care
- (80) *by* train

#### (d) Tied to a Verb (5)

- (77) quarrel *over*
- (78) disagree *with*
- (78) end *with*
- (78) start *on*
- (79) call *on*

#### (e) Idiomatic (1)

- (78) *on* the spot.

## PHRASAL VERB PARTICLES (4)

- (77) bring *along* (a friend)
- (78) went *through* (the test paper)
- (80) look *after* (mother)
- (80) took *off* (aeroplane)

## 2. Conjunctions and Clause Connectors

#### (a) Time clauses

- (77) before
- (77) while
- (79) while
- (80) since

(b) *Conditional*

- (77) unless  
(79) if

(c) *Result*

- (77) (so) . . . . . that  
(79) such . . . . . (that)

(d) *Other*

- (78) Neither . . . . . nor  
(80) but

(e) *Concession*

- (78) even though

(f) *Purpose*

- (78) in order to

(g) *Noun Clause Construction*

- (79) that

**3. Determiners:**

- (77) Don't leave *anything* behind . . . .  
(77) It costs *a lot* . . . .  
(78) . . . too *much* homework . . . try to complete *some* . . . .  
(78) only *a few* members . . . not *many* liked the idea  
(79) . . . leaving *nothing* for the family  
(79) . . . a lot of advice but not *any* real help  
(80) . . . we don't have *much* time  
(80) you've *some* interesting German stamps. Haven't you *any* Japanese stamps?  
(80) Has *anybody* seen . . . ? There is *someone* here who . . . .

**4. Definite and Indefinite Articles (including zero article)**

- (77) . . . *an* instrument used for measuring – temperatures  
(78) – fried rice and *an* ice-cream.  
(79) in *the* tournament . . . with *the* championship  
(79) . . . to *the* ancient city of . . . on board *an* eight-seater Cessna.  
(80) . . . *an* accident . . . at *the* junction of . . . .  
(80) on *the* face . . . to *the* ground  
(80) *an* officer . . . in *the* navy.

Note the particular fondness for *an*, which occurs five times.

**5. Question Words**

- (77) Where's?  
(77) Who?  
(77) Who (reported question)  
(79) Where (reported question)  
(79) Who?  
(79) Why's?  
(79) What's?  
(80) (How many?)

Note the need for candidates to distinguish between the forms *what* and *what's* etc.

What overall conclusions can be drawn from these facts? Obviously certain areas recur regularly and there is a marked emphasis on prepositions. What is usually being tested here is the **meaning** of the preposition rather than any aspect of syntax. The same is true of the phrasal verb particles and to some extent also of question words. The particular test format used in this section of the paper precludes otherwise important aspects of syntax such as word order, though candidates' understanding of this is presumably revealed in Paper 2, which tests written production. **Implications for the Form 2 Scheme of Work:** In terms of examination strategy, a candidate who has a thorough grasp of:

- prepositions
- definite and indefinite articles
- determiners *some, any, much, many, a lot, a little, a few* etc.
- question words
- relative pronouns
- reflexive and emphatic pronouns
- comparative & superlative forms of adjectives (including the irregular forms *better/best, worse/worst, less/least* etc.)

could hope to score over 50% on this part of the paper, which represents 2/7 (or more than 25%) of the paper as a whole.

**SRP Examination: English Paper I: Analysis of Questions 1 – 20 (1977 – 1980)**

	1977	1978	1979	1980	TOTAL
Prepositions	6	10	3	5	24
Determiners etc. including indefinite pronouns	2	2	2	3	9
Definite/Indefinite articles (including zero)		2	2	3	7
Phrasal Verb Particles	1	1		2	4
Conjunctions/Clause Connectors	4	3	4	2	13
Superlative adjectives		1	1	1	3
Relative pronouns (including indefinite relatives e.g. <i>anywhere</i> )	1		1	1	3
Question tags	1			1	2
Question words			1	1	2
Emphatic pronouns			1		1
Impersonal / <i>t</i> construction			1		1
Sentence connectors ( <i>therefore</i> )		1			1
Modal verbs (assumption: <i>must be</i> )	1				1
<i>so = also</i> construction	1				1