IGCSE English 0500 language techniques sheet

Name the technique, quote briefly, then explain the effect on the reader. Examiners reward the effect, not the label.

Language techniques and their effects

Simile / metaphor	"as cold as ice" / "the classroom was a zoo": creates a vivid picture and links two ideas so the reader feels a quality strongly
Personification	"the wind whispered": makes the setting feel alive, gentle or threatening
Hyperbole	"a million times": exaggeration for humour or emphasis
Onomatopoeia / sibilance	"crash", "sizzle" / "silent, slithering snakes": sound effects that make a scene immediate or sinister
Oxymoron / juxtaposition	"deafening silence" / wealth next to poverty: highlights contrast and makes the reader think
Pathetic fallacy	storms when a character is angry: setting reflects mood
Rhetorical question / direct address	"Don't we all deserve better?" / "you": involves the reader and persuades
Tricolon (rule of three)	"every day, every hour, every minute": rhythm and emphasis
Emotive language / statistics	"heartbreaking", "80% of students": stirs feelings / gives authority

Structure techniques

Short sentence	After long sentences it creates impact, shock or tension
Listing / repetition	Builds a sense of amount, chaos or determination
Shift in focus or time	Moves the reader from wide to close detail, or from past to present
Cyclical structure	Ending returns to the opening image, giving a sense of change or no escape

Paper 1 reading: step by step

Comprehension	Explicit = stated; implicit = suggested. Use your own words when asked; quote briefly when asked.
Summary (no more than 120 words)	1. Underline relevant points only. 2. Group similar points. 3. Rewrite in your own words as continuous prose. 4. Count words.
Writer's effects	Choose precise words → explore connotations → explain the effect on the reader → link to the writer's purpose.
Analysis sentence starters	The word "..." suggests... · This creates a sense of... · The reader is made to feel... · Perhaps the writer wants us to...

Writing formats

Speech	Greet the audience · direct address ("you", "we") · rhetorical questions · tricolons · strong call to action at the end
Letter	Dear… · state your purpose in the first paragraph · one point per paragraph · polite, clear ending · Yours sincerely / faithfully
Article	Catchy headline · engaging opening · balanced or persuasive paragraphs · a memorable final line
Report	Clear title and purpose · sections · formal, objective tone · recommendations
Journal / interview	Journal: first person, past events and feelings · Interview: questions and answers that reveal views

Directed writing (Paper 2 Section A)

Use	Pick the strongest ideas from the text(s)
Develop	Add your own reasons, examples and consequences
Evaluate	Judge the ideas: "This claim is weak because… / This is convincing, but…"
Format and register	Write exactly the text type asked for, for the right audience, in about 250–350 words

Composition (Paper 2 Section B, about 350–450 words)

Descriptive	One place or moment · all five senses · zoom from wide view to small details · vary sentence length · little plot
Narrative	Hook → build-up → problem → climax → resolution · few characters · show, don't tell · a satisfying ending

Punctuation that earns accuracy marks

Comma splice	✗ I was tired, I went to bed. ✓ I was tired, so I went to bed. / I was tired; I went to bed.
Apostrophes	its (belonging to it) / it's (it is) · the girl's bag / the girls' bags
Speech	"Wait for me!" she shouted. · New speaker, new line.
Colon and semicolon	Colon before a list or explanation: · Semicolon joins two related complete sentences;

Self-test (answers at the bottom)

1. Name the technique: "The old house groaned in the wind."
2. What is the maximum length of the Paper 1 summary?
3. Correct the comma splice: "It was late, we kept walking."
4. Give two features of a speech.
5. Explain the effect of the word "crept" in "Fog crept over the town."
6. How many words is a Paper 2 composition?

Answers: 1. Personification. 2. No more than 120 words. 3. "It was late, but we kept walking." 4. For example: direct address and rhetorical questions. 5. "Crept" suggests slow, silent, sneaky movement, making the fog feel threatening. 6. About 350–450 words.