

Pre-tutoring Diagnostic Assessment

These tasks should take no more than **40 minutes in total**. Answers should preferably be written in the form you will use in the exam:

- **Handwritten** if no concessions apply (please ensure legibility)
- **Word-processed** if this concession HAS been applied

If word-processing:



Before You Start: Please Disable Spelling, Grammar and Autocorrect Tools

To make sure this assessment reflects *your* skills, not your computer's, please turn off the following features before you begin:

If you're using Microsoft Word:

1. Go to the File tab → Options
2. Click on Proofing
3. Untick:
 - ☒ *Check spelling as you type*
 - ☒ *Mark grammar errors as you type*
 - ☒ *Check grammar with spelling*
4. Click OK to save

If you're using Google Docs:

1. Click Tools in the top menu
2. Untick:
 - ☒ *Spelling and grammar check*
 - ☒ *Show spelling suggestions*
 - ☒ *Show grammar suggestions*
3. Then go to Tools → Preferences and untick:
 - ☒ *Automatically correct spelling*



Why?

This is a diagnostic task to see your current spelling, grammar and punctuation skills without help from autocorrect tools. It's not a test – just a way for me to see how best to support you.

Part 1: Reading

The following extract is taken from *My Family and Other Animals* by Gerald Durrell. In it, he describes his experiences of taking care of baby hedgehogs.

They are covered with a thick coating of spikes but these are white and soft, as though made of rubber. They gradually harden and turn brown when the babies are a few weeks old. When they are old enough to leave the nursery the mother leads them out and shows them how to hunt for food; they walk in line, the tail of one held in the mouth of the baby behind. The baby at the head of the column holds tight to mother's tail with grim determination, and they move through the twilight hedgerows like a strange prickly centipede...

Mine were always ready for food at any hour of the day or night. You had only to touch the box and a chorus of shrill screams arose from four little pointed faces poking out of the leaves, each head decorated with a crew cut of white spikes; and the little black noses would wave desperately from side to side in an effort to locate the bottle.

Most baby animals know when they have had enough, but in my experience this does not apply to baby hedgehogs. Like four survivors from a raft, they flung themselves onto the bottle and sucked and sucked and sucked as though they had not had a decent meal in weeks. If I had allowed it they would have drunk twice as much as was good for them. As it was, I think I tended to overfeed them, for their tiny legs could not support the weight of their fat bodies, and they would advance across the carpet with a curious swimming motion, their tummies dragging on the ground. However, they progressed very well: their legs grew stronger, their eyes opened, and they would even make daring excursions as much as 15 centimetres away from their box.

Read the extract carefully. Then answer the question below:

How does the writer, Gerald Durrell, use **language and structure** in this extract to convey his ideas and interest the reader? Support your answer with brief quotations.

Hints:

- Look for words or phrases that vividly describe the baby hedgehogs.
- Consider how the events are presented in order, and how the structure shapes your response.
- Think about the writer's thoughts and feelings about the hedgehogs, and how these are conveyed.
- Notice any humour in the description and how it affects the reader's enjoyment and engagement.

Part 2: Writing (approx. 250 words)

Imagine you are looking after someone or something for the first time (it could be a pet, a younger sibling, a plant, or another responsibility). Write the **first part of your diary entry**, describing your initial experience, thoughts, and feelings. Try to engage your reader with lively and descriptive language.