

**2025 JC2 Preliminary Examination
GENERAL PAPER
Paper 2 Suggested Answers**

From Passage 1

1. According to the author, why are many shoppers ‘increasingly disillusioned’ (line 6) with online shopping? [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shopping promises variety (l.6–7) but often delivers frustration in the form of misleading images, vague descriptions, and unpredictable sizing (l.7–8) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many shoppers are increasingly disillusioned because they expected/ were looking forward to// were excited about a wide range of products that they could buy online, [1] but the products they bought were nothing like what was shown online/ fell short of what they looked like online// they were disappointed/ let down by/ dissatisfied/ felt cheated/ scammed by the actual product. [1] <p><i>**Note: answers which pick points from lines 2 to 6 = 0, because these do not illustrate disillusionment.</i></p>
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2. From lines 17–22, explain two ways in which the author uses language to depict the ‘hyper-competitive’ (line 17) environment of online retail. [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> constant churn of advertising, promotions and discounts (l.18–19) In this race to the bottom (l.19) forced to undercut their profit margins (l.19–20) Businesses slash prices to the bone (l.21–22) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The author uses the phrase ‘constant churn’ to show how businesses <u>have to continuously/ keep rolling out strategies</u> to attract consumers. [1] The author uses the phrase ‘race to the bottom’ to show how businesses try to outdo/ compete with one another <u>at huge cost/ with great losses// end up in financial ruin</u> in their quest to outdo one another. [1] The author uses the phrase ‘forced to undercut their profit margins’ to show how the businesses <u>have no choice/ are pressured to keep prices low/ reduce their profits</u>. [1] The author uses the phrase ‘slash prices to the bone’ to describe how businesses compete by reducing prices <u>to the point where they cannot survive/</u>
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	<p><u>barely earn profits</u>. [1]</p> <p><i>*Any 2 points for 2 marks.</i></p>
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3. Explain the author's use of the phrase 'endangered species' (line 27). [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brick-and-mortar shops are becoming the endangered species of the retail world. (l.27) Empty storefronts are now a common sight in city centres, as independent shops struggle to compete with global giants like Amazon. (l.27–29) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just as endangered species are dying out/ facing extinction/ becoming fewer in number, [1] brick-and-mortar shops are dwindling/ disappearing/ closing down in large numbers as they are losing consumers to online businesses/ people prefer online shopping. [1]
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4. What does the phrase 'quietly siphons' (line 34) suggest about the impact of online shopping? [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We lose a sense of shared space and a connection to our community, (l.33) ... life out of the very communities we live in. (l.33–34) as online shopping quietly siphons life out of the very communities we live in. (l.33–34) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It indicates that the communities' togetherness/ sense of closeness/ community spirit is removed/ taken away// energy/ exuberance/ vitality is removed [1] and this happens silently without people noticing/ before we know it. [1]
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5. How do the examples in lines 40–47 illustrate the author's argument that 'the planet's future is becoming dimmer' (lines 47–48)? [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was once a single item in a store now arrives in a shipping box that's bigger than the product itself, stuffed with padding that serves little purpose other than to increase waste. (l.40–42) Behind the cardboard boxes and bubble wrap lies a massive logistical operation that requires fleets of delivery trucks burning through fossil fuels, creating pollution and adding to ever-growing carbon emissions. (l.42–45) Millions of people order things that they do not need, buying items that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The huge/ tremendous/ humongous amount of packaging used for each parcel worsens the accumulation of waste/ leads to more waste. [1] Furthermore, carbon emission levels will never be reduced/ become even higher due to the colossal/ immense amount of fossil fuel required to transport/ ship the parcels. [1] Goods are thrown away untouched/ unconsumed/ still new, contributing to
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will sit in drawers or closets unused for months or, let's face it, years, before making their way to the overflowing landfills . (l.45–47)	more waste than we can cope with/ causing waste management problems/ causing a lack of space for waste disposal/ an overwhelming/ tremendous amount of waste. [1] <i>*Any two points.</i>
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6. Identify one way in which the final paragraph provides an effective ending to the author's argument. [1]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just because we can buy something with a click doesn't mean we should. So, next time you're tempted by the siren call of online shopping, take a moment to consider: is it really worth the cost? (l.49–51) 	<p>It is an effective conclusion because</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the author poses a question that makes readers reflect on the harmful impact of their online shopping behaviour. [1] the author makes a call for readers to take action to reduce the harmful effects of online shopping. [1] <p><i>*Any one point.</i></p>
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From Passage 2

7. Summarise what the author has to say about the positive effects of online shopping.

Write your summary in no more than 120 words. [8]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online stores have an almost limitless inventory, offering customers an unprecedented array of choices (l.1–2). Every product imaginable is just a search away (l.2) 	A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A positive effect is the inexhaustible/ unparalleled/ astounding/ tremendous [INTENSITY] range of goods that online stores provide. <p><i>*Many, huge variety – 0 marks</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> niche markets, satisfying the quirkiest of tastes (l.3) 	A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> including products for idiosyncratic/ non-mainstream/ unusual/ rare/ strange tastes. <p><i>*accept 'tastes'</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of information that consumers are empowered with (l.4) transforming them from passive buyers into active participants and enabling everyone to shop smarter, not harder (l.8–9) 	A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The availability/ exchange of information/ opinions/ details/ views [CAUSE] enable consumers to buy more wisely/ make better shopping decisions/ [EFFECT].
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it's all at your fingertips, available 24/7 and delivered to you within hours, or by the next day. (l.11–12) The ability to shop anytime, from 	B1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shoppers enjoy convenience in so many ways/ Online shoppers are unconstrained by location or time

anywhere (l.12–13)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> means you can manage your life with less stress and more efficiency. (l.13–14) 	B2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and makes our lives easier/ hassle-free/ less frazzled// we waste less time/ can make better use of our time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who struggle with mobility issues, lack of transportation or sensory sensitivities can shop from the comfort of their homes, finding products they need without facing physical obstacles. (l.14–16) 	B3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Those who have difficulty navigating/ moving/ the handicapped/ physically disabled [CONTEXT] can shop without encountering accessibility issues [EFFECT].
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> people with specialised needs, be it gluten-free food or adaptive clothing, can find exactly what they are looking for (l.16–18) 	B4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even those who have particular/ specific needs [CONTEXT] can also obtain just what they require [EFFECT]. <p>* Need to have reference to constraint</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shopping fuels an entire ecosystem of industries and jobs (l.19) 	C1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furthermore, online shopping gives rise to a staggering/ tremendous [INTENSITY] number of employment opportunities/ careers. <p>*Many / various fields - 0 Drive the demands of many industries - 0</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> spurs innovations in logistics and technology. Artificial intelligence and machine learning in retail help companies anticipate consumer demand, personalise recommendations, and streamline inventory management. (l.20–23) 	C2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It gives rise to/ encourages/ results in new creations/ inventions [CAUSE], which help businesses function/ operate more efficiently [EFFECT].
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rent, utilities and staff can often make the dream of entrepreneurship a financial mountain too high to climb. (l.23–24) anyone with a good idea and an internet connection can start a business. (l.24–25) 	C3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With online shopping, it is easier to become an entrepreneur/ the start-up costs for businesses is lower/ there are lower barriers to entry for businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In short, e-commerce has become an engine of economic growth. (l.25–26) 	C4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shopping fuels/ drives financial growth/ economic development <p>*Improve – 0 marks</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online shopping can actually be better for the environment. (l.27) 	D1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and also has a positive impact on/ lessens the negative impact on/ does good for the environment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual trips to physical stores are 	D2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since there are fewer visits to

reduced , helping to cut down emissions . (l.27–28)		physical stores [CAUSE], pollution is reduced [EFFECT].
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many companies now embrace sustainable packaging and carbon-neutral delivery options (l.28–29) 	D3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online businesses enthusiastically/ willingly [INTENSITY] adopt environmentally friendly practices/ measures [EFFECT]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By leveraging digital tools, businesses can track consumer demand in real time, ensuring that goods are produced only when needed. (l.29–31) 	D4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and can monitor what consumers want [CAUSE], reducing the problem of unsold goods/ and know exactly how much to manufacture [EFFECT].

Total no. of points = 15

Mark scheme

1–2 points	1 mark	6 points	4 marks	9 points	7 marks
3–4 points	2 marks	7 points	5 marks	≥ 10 points	8 marks
5 points	3 marks	8 points	6 marks		

From All Passages

8. Passage 1 states that ‘we constantly believe that if we have this or that product, our lives will be infinitely better’ (lines 9–10).

Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to support this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tough day at work? Search for a blazer that would make me appear competent. Had a bad date? Buy a skirt for a good one. (l.2–4) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It gave me the nagging sense that I was one purchase away from becoming the person I was supposed to be. (l.4–5) Surely, once I found the exact right sweater dress or pair of boots, everything would fall into place (l.5–6) <p>Common concept: trying to improve one's life by buying items</p>	<p><u>Paraphrasing of idea</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The idea in lines 2 to 4 states that the author used to/ would shop online for clothes as a solution to the real-life problems that she faced. [1] <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The idea in lines 4 to 5/ 5 to 6 states that the author believed that/ felt that her life would be perfect if she could just buy the perfect outfit. [1] <p><u>Justification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This supports the statement in Passage 1 because the author was buying more things in the belief that these purchases would improve her life/ believed that her problems in life were a result of not having the right material possessions. [1]
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9. Passage 2 states that ‘the ability to shop anytime, from anywhere, means you can manage your life with less stress and more efficiency’ (lines 12–14).

Identify one specific idea from Passage 3 which can be used to undermine this statement. Justify your answer. [2]

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost immediately, I found myself with a lot more free time and mental energy. (l.12–13) • Shopping for clothes in person took more effort, but it was a contained activity. (l.13–14) • I wasn't spending hours trying to imagine what I might wear if I were someone completely different. (l.14–15) • I wasn't constantly taking stock of what I lacked. (l.15–16) <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if they didn't fit, or I hated them, I never returned them because the whole process felt too daunting. Printing a return label? Going all the way to the post office? I have but one wild and precious life to live! (l.7–10) <p>Contrasting concept: Online shopping is time- or energy-saving vs. Online shopping is time- or energy-wasting</p>	<p><u>Paraphrasing of idea</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea in lines 12 to 16 states that the author was much less busy/ less preoccupied once she stopped online shopping. [1] <p><u>Justification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This undermines the statement in Passage 2 because online shopping left the author constantly anxious/ obsessing about what else there was to buy// the author wasted a lot of time thinking about what to buy// the author wasted a lot of time when shopping online. [1] <p><u>Paraphrasing of idea</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The idea in lines 7 to 10 states that the author felt that the process of returning the items seemed too complex/ troublesome/ challenging. [1] <p><u>Justification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This undermines the statement in Passage 2 because online shopping did not actually help shoppers to save time or effort/ help to ease their load/ help them be more productive but instead created more trouble. [1]
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10. The reading passages cover a range of views about the impact of online shopping.

How far do you agree that online shopping is beneficial?

Support your answer with reference to:

- the ideas and opinions from at least one of the reading passages

- **examples drawn from your own experience and that of your society. [12]**

QUESTION ANALYSIS

A range of views on the impact of online shopping:

From Passage 1

- addictive, encourages impulse buying but satisfaction is fleeting (paragraph 1)
- cumbersome to return items (paragraph 1)
- cutthroat, hypercompetitive business environment (paragraph 3)
- endangers brick-and-mortar shops, especially the small ones, siphoning life out of communities (paragraph 4)
- workers' health and dignity are compromised (paragraph 5)
- staggering environmental impact due to waste from packaging and unnecessary purchases (paragraph 6)

From Passage 2

- tremendous variety of products and information (paragraph 1)
- convenience for consumers (paragraph 2)
- fuels an entire ecosystem of industries and jobs (paragraph 3)
- easy to start a business (paragraph 3)
- benefits the environment through a reduced carbon footprint (paragraph 4)

From Passage 3

- without online shopping addiction, there is more free time and mental energy (paragraph 3)

INTRODUCTION

- In a modern and technologically advanced society like Singapore, shopping online is a norm for many people, chiefly due to its convenience. Furthermore, many of Singaporeans' eclectic tastes in goods can be satisfied online, making this mode of purchasing even more attractive.
- However, it is undeniable that this easy access to shopping has also encouraged an unhealthy level of consumerism and unnecessary waste.
- As such, online shopping is greatly beneficial, but its problems have also become more apparent over time.

OBSERVATION 1

For many Singaporean consumers, the benefits of online shopping are clearly evident in the tremendous variety of products and information (Passage 2, paragraph 1) and convenience (Passage 2, paragraph 2) that it offers.

- Given that a fast-paced and hectic life is the norm in Singapore, the convenience that online shopping offers is a lifesaver for time-strapped Singaporeans.
- The ability to shop online for daily necessities from the comfort of home or even on-the-go removes some of the hassle of everyday life for frazzled Singaporeans juggling work and family commitments. Time freed up from trudging to the supermarket or waiting in line to buy dinner home can go a long way to make life a lot more manageable and less frustrating.

- For example, with NTUC Fairprice, Foodpanda and Grabmart offering speedy grocery delivery from within two hours to the next day, this ensures that stocking up on household essentials can be easily ticked off our daily list of responsibilities.
- The Singapore Digital Society Report in 2023, found that seniors are embracing online transactions, with 78 per cent using e-payments in 2022. With an increasingly ageing population, online shopping helps many elderly Singaporeans with heavy items that can be difficult to carry home or to avoid the crowds that can be challenging to navigate with the reduced mobility that comes with age.
- Pragmatic Singaporean consumers feel somewhat assured that they are getting value for money as they are able to compare numerous products, prices and reviews before making a choice that they are happy with. The 'kiasu'-ness and fear of missing out in many a Singaporean consumer is also assuaged when they feel that they have snagged a good online shopping deal. With rising costs of living, the competitive prices online help Singaporeans to stretch their dollar too.
- Mundane everyday needs aside, the convenience of online shopping means that Singaporeans can indulge in the fun of retail therapy, unconstrained by time or day.
- In fact, many Singaporeans enjoy social commerce, such as livestream sales, so much that it is expected to be worth more than S\$11 billion by 2029.
- **Admittedly, with so much convenience and variety, online shopping can become addictive (Passage 1, paragraph 2)** for some Singaporeans who have issues with self-control. For these Singaporeans, online shopping leads to grave financial difficulties and has consumed their lives. As such, rather than being beneficial, it is a source of pain that requires help to break free of.
- While online shopping is clearly problematic for those who are addicted to it, the rest of us are able to keep it within reasonable control.
- **For most Singaporeans, online shopping's convenience and variety offer a reprieve from or an occasional indulgence in the midst of our frenzied lives, making it more beneficial than problematic.**

OBSERVATION 2

According to passage 2, online shopping is beneficial as e-commerce has become an engine of economic growth (lines 26-27).

- While it may seem as if e-commerce is nothing but beneficial to retailers, online shopping can be harmful and an incredible hassle especially for business owners.
- Given Singapore's internet penetration rate of almost a 100 percent, online shopping is available to practically all Singaporeans and allows many consumers to buy and return at whim, mostly at the businesses' expense.
- Generally, consumers want their goods delivered quickly and returned fast, so that they can enjoy more shopping. CNA reports that local retailers complain about high return rates, especially right after a flash deal.
- **However, even though the hassle is costly, e-commerce is still beneficial overall to local retailers in generating income due to stiff competition in a saturated market.**
- Online shopping allows Singaporean retailers to reach out to vast markets and hold their own against overseas businesses (such as Amazon, Taobao and Shein) because their consumer base is now unlimited thanks to the reach of the Internet.
- Many local companies such as Love Bonito, Shopee and Lazada deliver internationally. Even RedMart, a local online supermarket, delivers local goods offshore. The significant earnings generated from overseas demand are a great help in offsetting any costs incurred through online platforms.

- In this manner, local malls and shops experiencing reduced footfalls can still engineer enough revenue to stay afloat in a challenging economy via their online portals. In fact, more income could be generated by online sales than actual brick-and-mortar shoppers.
- E-commerce also allows business owners to cut retail overhead costs such as rental and storage space if need be and still remain operational.
- Furthermore, the 24/7 round-the-clock availability of online shopping means that business owners are still earning profits even while they sleep.
- Advertising online is also cheap, much cheaper than print advertisements or advertisements placed at strategic locations such as MRT stations. Again, given that Singapore's internet penetration rate is practically 100 percent, business owners can constantly reach out to consumers, increase the number of potential consumers and catalyse more sales.
- **Thus, while online shopping might be a hassle for business owners in some ways, it is still a vital engine of growth in business models today because it brings in much revenue, and enables businesses to expand beyond local shores.**

OBSERVATION 3

However, it is undeniable that the environmental impact of e-commerce is staggering (Passage 1, paragraph 6) and this is a growing problem in Singapore as online shopping becomes more popular.

- Singapore already faces a waste disposal problem, as our Pulau Semakau landfill is likely to reach capacity by 2035, and the huge amounts of packaging that come with online shopping are definitely contributing to the growing waste problem.
- Also, monthly online shopping deals entice the many bargain-hunting Singaporeans, who cannot bear to miss a good deal, thereby encouraging a never-ending cycle of consumerism. Furthermore, the stressful lifestyles of many Singaporeans also push them to use online shopping as an avenue of stress relief, resulting in the purchase of many unnecessary items that are eventually discarded without much thought, given that they were purchased at a bargain.
- The low levels of recycling, due to Singaporeans' lacklustre attitudes towards environmental sustainability unlike in other countries like Japan, further contributes to the waste problem. Many Singaporean consumers are unlikely to take the extra step of disposing the online packaging materials or repurpose items that they had bought online on a whim, as it is not yet a societal norm to do so, nor are such wasteful practices seriously frowned upon.
- **Hence, environmental damage arising from online shopping is indeed a huge concern in Singapore.**
- Having said that, there is a growing recognition in Singapore on the environmental stress arising from online shopping, with some efforts made to reduce the damage, at some nodes in the online shopping process. For instance, to cut down the carbon emissions and pollution arising from door-to-door delivery, many online platforms like Lazada and Shopee now offer delivery to centralised parcel collection points instead. These are often offered with reduced shipping fees to incentivise customers to select these options.
- **While such efforts are indeed a positive step, they are but a small part of the entire process of online shopping, so from the environmental angle, online shopping may be more harmful than beneficial.**

CONCLUSION

- In conclusion, as evident from developments in Singapore, online shopping does offer a range of short-term gains for consumers and businesses in terms of convenience. However, these gains may need to be reconsidered to avoid longer-term environmental harm.