

## Preparing for the Writing paper

When you do a writing task as homework or exam preparation, follow these procedures.

### Set aside the time you need

In the exam you will have about 45 minutes to do each task. At the beginning of your course, spend longer doing the task and working on the writing skills needed to produce a good answer. Nearer the exam, practise answering the question within the time allowed.

### Before writing

- Brainstorm your ideas, make notes and write a plan. Your plan should have a clear structure, divided into paragraphs or sections.
- Study the model answers in the units and in this Writing reference. Pay attention to the structure and layout of the answers, underline language you can use and read the suggestions and advice accompanying the answers.
- Compare your plan with the model(s). If your plan is different, do you have good reasons for answering the question in a different way?
- Use the resources at your disposal.
  - Try to use some of the words/phrases you have underlined in the unit, or copied into your notebook or from your photocopiable word lists. Take the opportunity to use new language in your answers: if you use it correctly, then you've learnt something and made progress; if you make a mistake, your teacher will give you feedback so that you can use it correctly next time.
  - Use a good learner's dictionary to check spelling, meanings and usage.
  - Try to include grammatical structures you have studied recently. This will reinforce your learning.
- In your plan, include vocabulary and grammatical structures you want to use.
- Read and incorporate your teacher's advice and suggestions on other pieces of writing you've done.

### When writing

- Follow your plan so that when you write, you concentrate on producing language to express ideas you've already generated.
- Avoid repeating the same words too often – use synonyms where possible (a good learner's dictionary will help you find some of these).
- If you need to correct something, cross out the mistake and continue writing – you won't lose marks as long as your corrections are clear. In the exam you won't have time to copy out your answer again.

### After writing

- Check what you've written: ask yourself, 'Have I expressed myself clearly?'
- Check for mistakes, particularly mistakes you've made in previous writing tasks, and correct them (see below).

### When your teacher hands back your written work

- Go through it carefully, checking your mistakes and your teacher's suggestions.
- Keep a section of your notebook or a computer file for noting your mistakes and the corrections. As an example, look at this extract from a student's work and the table in her computer file where she notes her mistakes.

*cancellation*  
The cancelling of our opening speech because our actor couldn't come was the first bad impression our guests had.

I think it would be a good idea during our next activity day to host Colin Briggs, the famous footballer. This would please the kids and many of their parents as well.

Mistake	Details	Correction
cancelling	Should use the noun when it exists, not verb + -ing	cancellation
the first bad impression our guests had	The collocation is 'make a bad impression on sb'	the first bad impression made on our guests
host	'Host' (verb) means 'to introduce guests or performers on a radio or television programme'	invite
kids	'Kids' is informal.	children

- Update your list after every writing task. When a mistake disappears from your writing, remove it from the list. When you do the Writing paper in the exam itself, check for the mistakes you know are or were on your list: in the exam you're more likely to repeat mistakes you've made before than make new ones.

## Essays

An essay is a piece of academic writing, produced for a teacher or lecturer, in which you have to discuss issues connected with a topic. You may previously have discussed this topic in class. You should express your opinions on the topic and the reasons for them.

You studied how to write essays in Units 1, 3, 9 and 14

### Exercise 1

Look at this writing task. Underline what you consider to be the main points and then answer the questions below.

You have watched a television discussion about methods governments could adopt to encourage people to take more exercise. You have made the notes below.

#### How can governments encourage people to take more exercise?

- better education
- free facilities
- exercise time at work

#### Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

'People already know the benefits of exercise but don't do enough about it.'  
 'Many forms of exercise are free.'  
 'Employers would benefit from a healthier workforce.'

Write an essay discussing **two** of the methods in your notes. You should **explain which method you think is more important** for governments to consider and **provide reasons** in support of your opinion.

You may, if you wish, make use of the opinions expressed in the discussion, but you should use your own words as far as possible.

- 1 Do you agree, on the whole, that governments have a role to play in encouraging people to take more exercise? If you do, what is your main reason? If not, why not?
- 2 How could education be used to achieve this aim?
  - Who should be targeted by an education programme? Children? Adults?
  - Where should this education take place? In school? On TV? Online?
- 3 What kinds of facilities could be made free?
- 4 How do you think employers and employees would react to the idea of 'exercise time at work'?
- 5 Do you agree or disagree with any of the three opinions expressed?

### Exercise 2

Which two of these three plans are appropriate for the essay task in Exercise 1? What are the problems with the other plan?

#### Plan 1

- Para 1 Introduction: the importance of taking exercise – otherwise, heart problems, obesity
- Para 2 People of all ages need facilities that are freely available
- Para 3 Idea of introducing exercise classes in schools – problems, why it won't work
- Para 4 Conclusion: providing free facilities is the best thing governments can do

#### Plan 2

- Para 1 Introduction: the general consensus on exercise and the idea of a government role to play
- Para 2 How schools can do more to help solve the problem – more PE and sport
- Para 3 The part parents might play in supporting these initiatives
- Para 4 Benefits of more free facilities, e.g. swimming pools, bike paths
- Para 5 Conclusion: why education is more important

#### Plan 3

- Para 1 Introduction: the exercise I did as a child and how it has benefited me
- Para 2 Teaching young people about exercise: inadequacies in the current education system
- Para 3 Advantages of having free exercise facilities
- Para 4 Exercise time at work – impractical: loss of productivity
- Para 5 Conclusion: need for better education and free facilities

### Exercise 3

Read the sample answer below.

- 1 Which method in the notes does the writer not address?
- 2 Which of the two methods described does the writer generally agree with?
- 3 Why doesn't the writer agree with the other method?
- 4 What reasons does the writer give for disagreeing with one of the methods?
- 5 Does the writer include any of the opinions included in the task description? If so, which?

It is generally accepted that people today take insufficient exercise. This, combined with a poor diet, can lead to ill health and a poor quality of life. In view of this, it has been suggested that governments should act to encourage more exercise. I shall consider two of the proposed methods.

Probably the most important action governments could take would be to introduce an education programme into all schools. In addition to publicising the benefits of exercise, this would make exercise a compulsory part of the school curriculum and get young people used to following an exercise regime. In my view, however, for this to be truly successful, there should be a corresponding programme aimed at adults. If parents took part in an exercise programme put on by the school, they would be supporting what their children were being taught.

It has been suggested that if exercise facilities were free, there would be an increased public take-up. In theory, this seems an excellent way of encouraging adults to exercise, but in practice I am doubtful. It is based on the assumption that exercise depends on money, whereas in fact walking and cycling, two very effective ways of keeping fit, are free and can be fitted conveniently into most people's daily routine. Therefore, in my opinion, providing expensive extra facilities is unnecessary and would be a misuse of public money.

In view of the above arguments, I believe governments should introduce education programmes aimed at people of all ages because this is the most cost-effective means of achieving the desired goal.

Write a short first paragraph introducing the topic and your angle on it.

Discuss one of the three methods listed in the notes in the exam task. Give reasons for your opinion on this.

Discuss another of the methods, again giving your opinion supported by reasons.

Write a concluding paragraph summarising your opinions.

When you write an essay you need to make sure that the argument you are making is clear to the reader. This means that paragraphs should follow on clearly from each other and that sentences within paragraphs should be linked in a logical, easy-to-follow sequence. Below are some of the ways you can help the reader to follow your thinking. Examples are from the sample essay.

### Sentences which guide the reader

Include sentences or phrases that act as signposts to guide the reader through your essay. These often come at the beginning of a paragraph.

*I shall consider two of the proposed methods.*

*Probably the most important action would be ...*

*It has been suggested that ...*

*In view of the above arguments, I believe ...*

### Linking words and phrases

*In addition to publicising the benefits of regular exercise, this would ...*

*This seems excellent, but in practice I am doubtful.*

*It is based on the assumption that exercise costs money, whereas in fact walking and cycling are free.*

*Therefore, in my opinion, providing expensive facilities is unnecessary.*

*Governments should introduce education programmes because ...*

### Pronouns and other reference words to avoid repetition

*This, combined with a poor diet ...*

*In my view, for this to be truly successful, ...*

*If parents took part, they would be supporting what their children were being taught.*

*It is based on the assumption that ...*

*In view of the above arguments, ...*

### Lexical links

*Lexical links include synonyms, near synonyms and words from the same root.*

*governments should act – the most important action governments could take*

*benefits of regular exercise – used to following an exercise regime*

*get young people used to following – what their children were being taught*

*a programme aimed at adults – If parents took part*

### Exercise 4

Rewrite the second sentence using reference words or synonyms to avoid repeating the words in **bold**.

- When you engage in **physical exercise**, you **burn calories**.  
The more intense the **physical exercise**, the more **calories** you **burn**.
- Do you need to **relax after a stressful day at work**? You can **relax after a stressful day at work** by taking regular exercise.
- Exercise** can be fun. **Exercise** gives you a chance to unwind, by engaging in activities that you find **fun**.
- Find an **activity** you enjoy, and just do it. If the **activity** bores you, try something new.
- Vigorous aerobic activity means **you're breathing hard and fast**. If **you're breathing hard and fast**, you won't be able to speak more than a few words.

### Exercise 5

Find sets of three words or phrases from the box which have similar meanings.

Example: *aim – goal – objective*

accomplish achieve active aim attain encourage  
endurance energetic goal inadequate inspire  
insufficient motivate objective scarce stamina  
staying power strenuous

### Exercise 6

Consider how you could organise these ideas for a paragraph about exercise time at work for the essay task in Exercise 1. Think about the ordering and linking of ideas and ways of avoiding repetition.

- I am not in favour of the idea of the governments requiring employers to provide exercise time at work.
- Employees would probably benefit from having exercise time at work.
- Employers cannot be forced to provide time for exercise.
- Some people say that the government should require employers to provide exercise time at work.
- The idea sounds attractive.
- Workers must take responsibility for their own health and fitness.
- The idea is impossible to implement.

## Other useful language

### Introducing your opinions

*(Personally,) I believe/think/feel that ...*  
*From my point of view ...*  
*In my view / opinion ...*  
*I would argue that ...*  
*As far as I am concerned, ...*  
*Interestingly, ...*  
*Arguably, ...*

### Introducing other people's opinions

It is often a good idea to show the reader how your own ideas contrast with the opinions of other people (e.g. *Some people say the Internet has ruined our lives, but in my opinion, the Internet has transformed the world for the better.*)

*Some people suggest/believe/claim that ...*  
*It is often/sometimes said/argued/suggested that ...*  
*It can be argued that ...*  
*According to many/some people ...*  
*It has been suggested that ...*

### Pointing out that something is obvious

When you need to express an obvious point as part of an argument, it is often useful to show that you are aware that you're not saying anything unusual.

*obviously clearly undoubtedly of course*  
*Without a doubt, ...*  
*Needless to say, ...*  
*It goes without saying that ...*

## Reviews

A review will require some description followed by a recommendation.

In a review, usually for an international magazine or newspaper, you are expected to express your opinion about something which readers may be thinking of seeing, doing or buying, e.g. a film, a concert or an exhibition. You can assume that the readers are people with similar interests to yours. You usually have to make a recommendation about the thing you are reviewing. Sometimes you will be asked to write about two things of the same type and to express your preference for one or them.

You studied how to write a review in Units 6 and 11.

### Exercise 1

Read the writing task below.

- 1 What things should you deal with in your review?
- 2 Who will read it and what style would be suitable?

You see the announcement below in an international magazine.

#### Where to buy clothes

Our readers are interested in clothes shops to visit when on holiday or travelling. We invite you to write a review for visitors to your town comparing two clothes shops. Please describe what sort of clothes they sell, comment on the quality of the service, the value for money and how fashionable they are, and give recommendations.

Write your **review**.

### Exercise 2

Read the sample answer below.

- 1 Does the writer cover all the points mentioned in the writing task?
- 2 How does the writer start the review?
- 3 What adjectives does the writer use to describe
  - the clothes?
  - the staff?
- 4 Does the writer use a formal or an informal style?
- 5 What do you notice about the layout?
- 6 Explain the writer's recommendations in your own words.

## Shopping in Linz

Buying clothes might not be the first thing you think of when visiting Linz, but there are some attractive boutiques in the old town and you can come away looking fashionable and stylish. Here are my favourites.

### Melanie's

Melanie's sells clothes for women and while it is a small shop, it has a wide range of styles. If you want to look really fashionable, it's certainly worth a visit. The shop has a selection of formal and casual clothes from some of the world's top designers, so they're not cheap. However, you can occasionally pick up a bargain. The staff are attentive and they'll help you to combine clothes and accessories so that you'll leave the shop looking like a million dollars, even though it may cost you a fortune!

### The Parallel

If you don't feel like spending so much, The Parallel is a good alternative. This shop belongs to some local designers and sells their unique range of clothes for women at competitive prices. The clothes tend to be in distinctive bright colours, but the quality is generally good, so the shop represents value for money. You'll have to look after yourself as, apart from the security guard, the only staff you'll find are on the cash desk. While they're polite and friendly, they don't have time to give much help.

### My recommendations

To sum up, for something really special, go to Melanie's, but be careful or your credit card will suffer. For bright clothes at a reasonable price, The Parallel is a better bet.

Make your review sound as authentic as possible: address the reader, give an introduction and mention the town.

Think about the details the reader will want to know and include them.

You can use a little humour to maintain your reader's interest.

You can divide the review into sections as here, but it is not always necessary.

## Summarising

To summarise, ... All in all, ... To sum up, ... In summary, ...

## Proposals and reports

In both proposals and reports, you are expected to write in clearly organised sections and include factual information leading to a suggestion, recommendation or conclusion.

### Proposals

When you write a proposal you are trying to persuade readers to follow a course of action. Your reader may be someone in a superior position to you, in which case you will need quite a formal style; or you may be writing for colleagues or fellow members of a club, in which case the style will be a little less formal – you can address your readers more personally, using contracted verb forms. In both cases the format should be the same. You have to make a persuasive case for action(s) that should be taken, based on factual information.

You studied how to write a proposal in Units 5, 8 and 12.

### Exercise 1

Read the writing task below.

- Underline the things you must deal with in your answer.
- Who is going to read the proposal? What would be a suitable style?

You are a member of the Students' Council at the college where you study. The principal of the college wants to make it easier for first year students from other countries to fit into college life and has invited you to send in a proposal with practical suggestions. You have been asked specifically to consider improving the range of social activities on offer and appointing student advisers to help new students.

Write your **proposal**.

### Exercise 2

Read the sample answer.

- Has the writer dealt with all parts of the task?
- Find examples of where the writer has avoided repeating vocabulary from the exam task by rephrasing or using synonyms (e.g. *making* → *facilitating*). Why is this a good approach?
- Underline phrases used to introduce suggestions and recommendations, e.g. *I would suggest ...*

### Proposal for integrating new students from other countries

#### Introduction

The purpose of this proposal is to suggest ways of facilitating overseas students' integration into this college.

#### Overseas students' problems

There are two difficulties which newly arrived students have. Firstly, they are unfamiliar with the academic system in our country. Secondly, they often find it difficult to integrate on a social level with other students and the general population here.

#### Social activities

Judging by recent figures, it is clear that social activities organised by the college are not well attended. It has been noted that very few new students from other countries attend, especially in their first year. This may be partly due to poor publicity, but, more seriously, it may be because there is not a wide enough variety of activities attractive to foreign students. I would recommend asking new students themselves for their ideas on the kinds of social activities they would enjoy and I suggest we should invite these students to take part in organising new activities.

#### Student advisers

It would also be a good idea, in my opinion to instigate a new advisory system. This, more than anything, would overcome students' problems with both the academic system and social aspects of their life at the college. A more experienced adviser or mentor would be responsible for helping new students from other countries to understand our system by giving them guidance and advice, while also introducing them to other students and helping them to make friends.

#### Conclusion

I suggest that we ask for volunteers to help with all the areas mentioned above.

## Reports

When you write a report your reader may be, for example, your manager at work or a teacher, in which case you will need a more formal style; or you may be writing for your colleagues or members of your club, in which case the style will be a little less formal – you can address them more personally, perhaps using contractions). In both cases the format should be the same. You will have to give some factual information and you are often asked to make suggestions or recommendations. You must organise your report carefully and one way of doing this is to divide it into sections with headings.

You studied how to write reports in Units 2, 4 and 10.

### Exercise 1

- 1 Read the task below. Underline the parts that tell you what points you must cover in your report and who will read it.
- 2 How formal should this report be?
- 3 When you write about what you like and dislike, do you think you should refer mainly to educational matters, to personal experiences, or to both?

You have been studying in an English-speaking country for some time as part of an educational exchange. The director of the exchange programme is interested in improving the experience for future students. He has asked you to write a report outlining why you have been doing the exchange, describing what you like and dislike about it and making recommendations for how it could be improved.

Write your report.

### Exercise 2

- 1 Read the sample report. What things did the writer like and dislike about the programme?
- 2 Find examples of formal style in the sample report.

## Pegasus educational exchange programme

### Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline my reasons for doing the exchange, the positive and negative aspects of the experience and to make recommendations for improvements.

### Reasons for doing the exchange

I have been in New Zealand as part of the Pegasus programme for the last nine months. I participated in the exchange in order to do an MA in Environmental Science at the University of Auckland. At the same time I had the opportunity to improve my English.

### Positive and negative aspects

For me, the benefits of doing this exchange far outweigh the disadvantages. The main professional advantage is the opportunity to exchange ideas with teachers and students from another part of the world (I come from Portugal) and with an entirely different outlook on environmental problems. This has allowed me to see such problems from a variety of angles. As a result, I believe that I will return to my country with innovative solutions to local problems. In addition, I have acquired improved language skills and increased cultural awareness.

The negative aspect from my point of view is that the programme does not receive enough financial support and, as a result, it has been very expensive for me. This is a problem which is likely to discourage prospective exchange students from participating in the programme.

### Recommendations

I strongly recommend that the programme organisers should make interest-free loans available to people wishing to participate in an exchange. This would allow considerable numbers of talented students to benefit from something which they would otherwise be unable to do.

Give your report a title. Organise it in sections with section headings.

Outline the purpose of the report.

Avoid just repeating the words used in the task.

Use vocabulary and collocations appropriate to formal writing.

Explain the reasons for recommendations you make and the consequences of problems you mention.

## Making suggestions and recommendations

## formal

*I would suggest* + verb + -ing  
*I would suggest including this information on our website.*

*I suggest* that ... + clause  
*I suggest that we ask for volunteers.*

*should* + infinitive without to  
*Its activities should be advertised more widely.*

*I would recommend* + verb + -ing  
*I would recommend canvassing students' ideas.*

*I recommend* that ... + clause  
*I recommend that we start a social club.*

*It would be a good idea* + to infinitive  
*It would be a good idea to instigate a mentoring system.*

## less formal

*Why not* + infinitive without to  
*Why not phone one of your friends?*

*Why don't we/you* + infinitive without to  
*Why don't we just send them an email?*

*How about* + verb + -ing  
*How about meeting up after work tomorrow?*

*Let's* + infinitive without to  
*Let's have a party.*

*It might be a thought* + to infinitive  
*It might be a thought to put on some sun cream.*

## Emails and letters

You may be asked to write an email or letter responding to a situation described in the task. You must use a style which is suitable for the person you are writing to, for example the editor of a newspaper or magazine, the director of a company or college. In your email or letter, you may have to include **factual information** and your own viewpoint in relation to this.

The types of letter you may have to write include

- a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine
- a letter of **application**, or giving a reference for someone applying for a job
- a letter to the **directors** of an organisation
- an informal letter to a friend.

You studied how to write letters in Units 7 and 13.

## Exercise 1

- 1 Read the writing task below, underlining the points you must deal with in your answer.
- 2 Write a paragraph-by-paragraph plan for the letter. When you have finished writing your plan, check that you have included all the points that you have underlined.

The company you work for is planning to move its Australian head office to a new city. Your manager has asked you to write to local estate agents to inquire about suitable premises in the city. Your letter should explain:

- what your company does
- what area of the city the company would like to be located in
- what kind of premises the company is looking for.

Write your **letter**.



## Exercise 2

- 1 Read the sample answer below. Has the writer included all the points you underlined?
- 2 How would you describe the style of the letter?
- 3 Has the writer included anything which is not in the instructions? Why (not)?

Dear Sir/Madam

The managing director of my company, Secure Logistics, has asked me to contact you with a view to finding new business premises. We are currently located in a medium-sized town, but, due to recent growth in our business, we now require larger premises in a more convenient part of the country.

Secure Logistics is an established freight transport company specialising in the movement of valuable goods. We have an expanding fleet of lorries and, for this reason, we need to be located in a secure area on the outskirts of a large city with convenient transport links both to other parts of the country and to the rest of the world. We require a large parking area for our vehicles as well as extensive secure storage facilities for our goods.

In addition to this outside area, the company also needs a large office building for up to eight hundred staff. This will be our new headquarters, so we require large open-plan offices, which will be used as a call centre for customers, and a number of smaller offices for managers.

We would consider moving into an existing facility of the kind I have described, but if suitable premises cannot be found, we would be prepared to purchase an area of currently unused land on which to construct our own buildings.

I hope I have described what the company is looking for in sufficient detail, but if you require further information, please contact me at the above address. I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,

[signature]

Use the first paragraph to state clearly the reason you are writing.

You will need to add substance to the information provided in the writing task by using your own ideas.

Think of a natural way to finish the letter.

## Starting and finishing letters

If you know the person's name,

- start with
  - *Dear Susana* (if you would use their first name when you speak to them)
  - *Dear Mrs Emmett* (if you don't feel comfortable using their first name).
- finish with:
  - *Best wishes, Regards, Kind regards* (if you're writing to someone you know fairly well)
  - *Love or With love* (if you're writing to a close friend or a member of your family)
  - *Yours sincerely* or *Yours* (if you're writing to someone you don't know well).

If you don't know the person's name,

- start with *Dear Sir, Dear Madam* or *Dear Sir/Madam*
- finish with *Yours faithfully*.

## Adding extra points

formal	informal
Firstly, Secondly, Finally, In addition, Moreover, Furthermore, What is more,	Besides, Also, Another thing (was that ...) Apart from this/that,