



Writing Part 2: informal letter

Overview: A series of steps, both pairwork and teacher-led, to raise awareness of dealing with communicative task writing and to show a way of producing effective answers.

Part of exam: Writing Paper (Paper 2) Part 2

Language/Skills Practised: writing an informal letter; brainstorming; ordering ideas; making recommendations; opening and closing a letter

Materials: one copy of each worksheet per student

Time: 45-60 minutes

Preparation

Copy the worksheets. You could also write your own sample answer to provide a model for the students.

Procedure

1. Ask your class how much they know about the nature and requirements of this part of the writing paper, and what challenges they feel it represents. For a more general class, discuss the importance of communicative tasks in writing. The discussion may include examples of real letters and emails that students have sent and received recently: who were they to and what were they designed to achieve?
 2. Give each student a copy of Worksheet 1 and ask students to work in pairs. Ask them to read through the letter, and check together they are clear about the sort of information they will need to provide in their replies. Tell the students there is nothing to write at this stage – in fact, as in the exam, it is important that they do not start writing before they have carefully planned what they are going to write.
 3. Give each student a copy of Worksheet 2. Working together, they should make notes for each of the content points that they need to address. Emphasise that it is notes, not sentences, that they should write at this stage.
- Encourage students to focus on generating ideas, not detailed language points. Also encourage students to think about why the ideas they come up with might be suitable for inclusion in the letter.
4. Each pair should now compare notes with another pair. Take any questions at this point about comprehension of the task requirements. Point out that if students have more ideas than they need, they can select the best ones for inclusion in the letter.
 5. Now discuss what the end product is going to look like. What does Aunt Sylvie expect to get? She will be expecting a letter that is polite, clear and concise. She will know who it's from and what it is about. She will be able to make recommendations about entertainment and places to eat for her students.
 6. Establish that the letter will need a suitable opening and closing and will need to address the points in the rubric in the same order as the notes. They will need to separate their ideas into paragraphs, using a maximum of 190 words. They should aim to write around 80–85 words for each of the two main content points, leaving them 20–30 words for the opening and closing.
 7. Students should now continue working in the same pairs, using their shared plan (Worksheet 2) to convert the notes into sentences. Set a specific time limit for this, and keep it relatively brief.
 8. When their drafts are ready, go through each point in turn and discuss the language required. All ideas are different and valid. The important aspect here is establishing the function that is required in terms of communication and thus the language 'tools' or 'equipment' that is suitable. If you have prepared your own model answer, you may wish to extract your structures and functions as examples to use here. Elicit or supply useful language and write it on the board.
- For example:
- Aunt Sylvie asks for ideas about entertainment. Such ideas can be introduced with phrases*



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like 'Students might like to try ...', 'Another good option is ...', '... is great fun.', etc. Aunt Sylvie also asks for recommendations about places to eat. What language can we use for recommendations?

9. Students now improve and redraft their letters. (This can be done in class or for homework).
10. Pairs exchange their letters with other pairs and look for errors. Take queries about corrections at this point. You might like to extract a collection of some of the more interesting errors and distribute this for discussion.
11. Finally, get everyone to review the letters as whole pieces of communication, imagining they are Aunt Sylvie. Do they have all the information they requested?



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Make notes here. Don't write sentences at this stage.

IDEAS

Entertainment in my town for young people:

Idea 1: _____ Notes: _____

Idea 2: _____ Notes: _____

Idea 3: _____ Notes: _____

Good restaurants/cafes in my town for young people:

Idea 1: _____ Notes: _____

Idea 2: _____ Notes: _____

Idea 3: _____ Notes: _____
