

Part 2 - Formal letter or email

Formal letters may be written to an individual or to an organisation. The purpose may be, for example,

- to **apply for** part-time or vacation **work** (application letter)
- to **apply for study** or **scholarship** opportunity (application letter)
- to **complain** about something (complaint letter)
- to **make suggestions** about something
- to **request information** (enquiry letter)

In many exam questions, you will be told what to include in your reply. Make sure that your reply answers any questions that you were asked in the task and takes into account any additional information that you have been told to mention. It is important that you include these in order to get a good grade.

How to write formal letters or emails

[1] Salutation or Greeting

- **(A) If you know the name** of the person you are writing to use the title (Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms) and the surname only. If you are writing to a woman and do not know if she uses Mrs or Miss, you can use Ms, which is for married and single women.
Examples: "Dear Mr Simpson," / "Dear Mrs Flanders," / "Dear Miss Skinner," / "Dear Ms Van Houten,"
- **(B) If you do not know the name** of the recipient of the letter begin with **"Dear Sir,"** / **"Dear Madam,"** (if you know you are writing to a man or a woman) or **"Dear Sir or Madam,"** or **"Dear Sir/Madam,"** (if you do not know the sex of the person you are writing to).

1 _____

2.1 _____

2.2 _____

2 _____

2. _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

[2] Body

[2.1] Opening

The first paragraph states the reason(s) for writing and, if needed, what you are responding to (an advert, a prospectus...). In addition, an opening paragraph is needed to make reference to previous correspondence.

Useful phrases for the opening

- I would like to apply for one of the scholarships I saw advertised in your prospectus. *[applying for a scholarship]*
- I am looking for an outdoor work during the summer holidays and I would like to apply for the position of hotel lifeguard assistant which I saw advertised in my university's student newspaper. *[applying for a job]*
- I have seen your advertisement for the post / vacancy / job of... advertised in the local newspaper on 16 June. I am writing because I would like to apply for the job. *[applying for a job]*
- I am the secretary of my college Science Club. I saw your advertisement for the exhibition "The Next 100 Years" and I am interested in organising a group visit. I was wondering if I could ask you some questions about it. *[requesting information]*
- I am writing (in order) to complain about the advertisement for your new game. Having just played the game, I realise that the advertisement is misleading. *[complaint letter]*
- I am writing with regard to ... I am writing with reference to... I am writing in response to...
- Thank you for /your letter of 9 May... /for your letter regarding...
- In reply to your letter of 8 May, ...

[2.2], [2. .] Main content

The rest of the body will be organized in paragraphs: that will make reading easier and the effect on the target reader will be better. For example, an application letter may have this layout and paragraphing:

- *Salutation or greeting*
- #1 Opening (first paragraph)
- #2 About you (age, where you live, education-training and/or work experience relevant to the job, languages ...)
- #3 Reasons for applying (why you are suitable for the job)
- #4 Conclusion (availability for interview, further questions, ... - if necessary)
- *Closing*
- *Final salutation*
- *Name and surname*

For any type of formal letter, **paragraphing is just a matter of common sense**, grouping ideas logically (covering two points or questions in one paragraph, two other points or questions in another paragraph...). You should aim for three to five paragraphs

Other useful phrases

Asking politely

- Could you tell me... ?
- I would be grateful if you could ...
- I would be interested in having more details about...
- I would like to know if/when/when/...
- I would like information on...
- Do you know if...?

Complaining

- I would like to complain about + noun or *-ing*
- ... is not what I expected / was expecting
- I am not satisfied with...
- I would be grateful if my money was refunded / if you could give me a refund
- ...

[3] Closing

The end of your letter is as important as the beginning. You usually state what you would like the recipient to do, make a reference to a future event, offer to help...

- I look forward to hearing from you soon / I look forward to receiving your reply
- I look forward to receiving a full refund (*in a complaint letter*)
- I would like to know what you are going to do about this situation (*in a complaint letter*)
- I would like to thank you in advance for this information (*in an enquiry letter -requesting information*)
- If you require/Should you need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me/feel free to contact me.

[4] Final salutation

Depending on how you started your letter (See "[1]Salutation or Greeting" above), you will end your letter with

- (A) Yours sincerely,
- (B) Yours faithfully,

[5] Sign your name and then print your name clearly underneath on another new line

Moe Szyslak
Moe Szyslak

Letter of application - useful phrases

Dear

I am writing to apply for a/the job of which I saw advertised in "The Guardian" newspaper.

I am 26 years old and at the moment I am studying ... at Having studied English for over seven years I am a fluent speaker of the language. My qualifications also include Proficiency certificates in both French and German. As far as experience is concerned, I have worked as for As for my character, people tell me I am

I feel I would be suitable for this job because This will give me the opportunity to I would also like the chance to....

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours ...

Name

OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

Range: It is important that you use grammatical expressions and vocabulary appropriate to the level of the exam. Even if there are no mistakes in your writing, you will not be able to get a good grade if you use only the language and vocabulary that you learnt at elementary level.

Formal language

- Use full verb forms and not contractions (*do not* instead of *don't*, *would like* instead of *'d like...*)
- Formal vocabulary, usually not using phrasal verbs.
- More complex sentence structure.

Connectors: All good writing makes good use of connectors. You need to use some of the connectors that are more specific to formal language.

FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 1 - MODEL QUESTION

TASK

You see this advertisement in a student newspaper.

Lifeguard assistants wanted

We are looking for someone in August to assist our lifeguards, provide supervision during beach activities and observe swimmers.

Write to the Lifeguard Manager, saying what your experience and qualifications are and stating the reasons why you are suitable for the job.

Write your **email** in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 1 - MODEL ANSWER

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am looking for outdoor work during the summer holidays and I would like to apply for the position of lifeguard assistant, which I saw advertised in my university's student newspaper.

I am 20 years old and at present I am studying Physical Education. I am a strong swimmer and have recently had first aid training. I very much enjoy working with people and for the last two summers I have been working as an assistant ranger in a National Park, where I had to provide information to the public about using the park and provide emergency assistance to park users. Now I am looking for something different.

I think I would be a suitable candidate for the position because I have been described as calm in a crisis and someone who works well with others.

I am available for the whole of August and would be happy to attend an interview at any time. I look forward to hearing from you at any time in the near future.

Yours faithfully,

Ivan Ivienev

[+/- 175 words]

FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 2 - MODEL QUESTION

TASK

You recently helped organise a college ski trip and you have received this email from a parent of one of the students who went.

I understand you were one of the organisers of our son's ski trip. I have to say my husband and I were extremely dissatisfied with the arrangements. My son has informed us that the ski slopes were poor, the lessons were fewer than promised and the accommodation was inadequate.

Can you please give us a satisfactory explanation?

Yours sincerely,

Nora White

Write your email in 140-190 words in an appropriate style.

(semi) FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 2 - MODEL ANSWER

Dear Ms White,

First, let me apologise for any disappointment your son experienced on our ski trip. It is true that there were several concerns. Since we had been led to believe by the company that there would be sufficient slopes for both beginners and advanced skiers, we were extremely upset when this turned out to not to be the case. It was also unfortunate that lack of snow meant that artificial snow had to be used instead.

As for the question of lessons, if you look at the letter we sent you, you will see that only five one-hour lessons were included in the price and that extra hours would have to be paid for separately.

In relation to accommodation, I am not quite sure what you are referring to. I know that in one room there were not enough beds but this was not the case in your son's room.

We would like to assure you that we take all complaints seriously. We have already decided that next year we will change the company and the location for our trip and we hope that your son will consider joining us again.

Yours sincerely,

Ernest Omate

[+/- 195 words]

FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 3 - MODEL QUESTION

TASK

You see this announcement in an English-language college prospectus.

Scholarships

Every year, two scholarships are offered to candidates from overseas who can show how our one-year course in English and American studies would help their career.

Scholarships cover fees, accommodation and food, but not transport or personal spending money.

To apply, write a letter explaining why you think you deserve a scholarship.

Write your **letter** in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

FORMAL EMAIL/LETTER 3 - MODEL ANSWER

Dear Sir/Madam,

I would like to apply for one of the scholarships I saw advertised in your prospectus.

At present, I am training to be a secondary school teacher of English and I finish my course at the end of June. However, I feel I still have a lot to learn about the language and culture of the English-speaking world and would benefit considerably from a course in an English-speaking country.

The reason I am applying for a scholarship is that I cannot afford the cost of studying abroad. I have no income except for my student grant, so if I am fortunate enough to be given a scholarship, I would have to work part-time to save some personal spending money. My parents will borrow some money for my airfare if I am successful.

I would appreciate being given the opportunity to study at your college and would be very grateful if you would consider my application.

Yours faithfully,

Pedro Gadicto

[+/- 160 words]