

CPE

Writing Guide



languages

Part 1- Essay

- In part 1 of the writing exam you must write an essay.
- The essay is based on two short texts, which either present opposing or complementary viewpoints.
- There are two main points in each of these texts.
- You must summarise and evaluate the ideas expressed, adding your own ideas on the topic where relevant.
- The register used should be neither formal nor informal, and impersonal in tone.
- The word limit is 240-280 words.
- Write a clear plan.
- Do not write a draft copy and then a final copy. There is not enough time.
- Spend 45 minutes on the task:
 - 5-10 minutes to read and annotate the texts and make a plan
 - 30-35 minutes to write
 - 5 minutes to check your work

How to structure an essay

Introduction

Present the topic of discussion and ask questions the essay will answer.

P1: Content points 1 and 2 (paraphrased)
Evaluate and react (your opinion)

P2: Content points 3 and 4
Evaluate and react (your opinion)

Conclusion

Closing remarks (No new ideas)

Planning

Step 1- Text analysis

- Read both texts and decide if they are complimentary or contrasting.
- Underline the two key content points in each text.

Step 2 – Paraphrasing and summarising

- Brainstorm different ways to paraphrase and summarise the key points.
- What impressive structures can you use? Inversions, passives, collocations, expressions.

Step 3 – Evaluate and react

- Decide which points you agree and disagree with.
- Brainstorm your own thoughts and experiences on the subject.

Read the two texts below and then the model answer. Also, read the comments to see what the student did particularly well.

It isn't just the money

It is widely accepted that the happiest countries are also among the richest, but the reason for this is not immediately obvious. A glance around society proves that money in isolation does not bring happiness. It is clear that people don't derive genuine fulfilment from the shallow hoarding of consumer products, or even the purchase of high-end goods. However, whilst wealth on its own might not engender a feeling of happiness or satisfaction, what it does do is to facilitate access to products and services that promote a sense of well-being, such as health and education.

Chasing the yankee dollar

The concept that money brings happiness is flawed and naïve for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, being rich is only relative to the spending power of others within our circle, so inevitably we compare ourselves to this cohort. In other words, the desire is not necessarily to be wealthy but wealthier than others. In addition to this, we set ourselves goals, such as the purchase of a car or the acquisition of a house; on attainment of such achievements we feel a sense of satisfaction. Yet this is short-lived, and the endless cycle requires new goals and targets to make us happy; inevitably, these methods will never bring happiness.

The pursuit of happiness and wealth are two dreams and concepts that occupy much of humanity, but to what extent are the two interconnected? Can it really be argued that the acquisition of money and material goods is a prime signifier of fulfilment? Both texts (1) discuss the nature of these concepts, but from a different perspective (2).

The first passage (3) argues that people chase riches to feel superior to others and to attain a given target (4). I personally feel (5) this will resonate with many people because we are conditioned by society to believe that this is what gives our lives meaning. Having possession (6) of more and more items generates a temporary feeling of satisfaction, and acquiring these in the pursuit of status leaves the ever-present fear that other people will surpass our efforts.

In contrast, the second text (7) proposes that the interconnected nature of wealth and other services such as education and health means that inevitably money does result in happiness (8). Whilst (9) we might not exactly feel euphoric in the midst of some medical procedure or when standing in line outside the classroom door, I would agree that (10) having sufficient prosperity to take advantage of these services is a vital part of our sense of well-being. Were these services stripped away (11) or put beyond the reach of affordability, the negative impact on our mental as well as physical health would be considerable.

In conclusion, it could be argued that flash cars and mansions allow limited progress along the path to happiness. However, if those fundamental services, which are facilitated by money and taken for granted by us all, were ripped from our grasp, I have no doubt that levels of contentment would fall (12).

Comments on the model answer

- 1 A good reference to both texts in the introductory paragraph.
- 2 This signals a good early reference to the contrastive nature of the texts.
- 3 Focuses attention on the ideas in text 1.
- 4 Good paraphrase of text.
- 5 Clear shift to personal stance indicating evaluation.
- 6 Good use of a participle clause and helps maintain the link with the previous sentence.
- 7 Clearly marks the transition to the second text to give a balanced alignment.
- 8 Good paraphrase of text.
- 9 Good use of concessory clause.
- 10 A clear indicator of personal opinion.
- 11 Good use of inversion which suits the more formal style.
- 12 Re-states the writer's main argument.

Useful Phrases

Introduction

- Hardly a week goes by without another report of ... appearing in the media.
- Over the past ten years or so the media have frequently carried reports of ...
- The trend nowadays is towards (gerund)
- How has the public's opinion on this issue shifted over the last few years?
- This raises the issue of whether or not ...
- This issue strikes a chord with the vast majority of the general public.

Summarising Texts

- The first extract outlines the benefits/drawbacks of...
- The writer of the first text is a firm believer in...
- Not only does the first passage state that..., but it also claims that...
- The second extract argues/claims that...
- The second text puts forward the idea that...
- The writer/author of the second passage is highly critical of...
- The second text makes bold statements in support of...
- Both writers seem to agree that..., where their ideas deviate however is on the topic of...

Critical Examination

- A glaring omission from the first text is...
- While the writer makes some valid arguments in favour of..., she ignores the fact that...
- One area which the writer seems to have overlooked is...
- While I am generally in agreement with the majority of the first writer's points the obvious hole in their argument is...
- One major weakness in the writer's argument is that...

Stating opinion

- It seems to me that ... I would also say that ...
- I am convinced that ...
- I am inclined to believe that ...
- There is no doubt in my mind that ...
- In my humble opinion...
- As far as my opinions on the matter are concerned,...
- I am a firm believer in...
- On the whole, I tend to agree with... due to the fact that...

Concluding

- All in all it seems to me that ...
- The obvious conclusion to be drawn is that ...
- All things considered, ...
- On balance, I tend to believe that ...
- The prospects for the future will be bleak/grim unless ...

Emphasising

- **I would like to stress that** the research is still at an early stage.
- **It should be noted that** there are a number of alternative methods available.
- **It is worth bearing in mind** that 90% of the scientists researching herbicides in the US are employed by chemical companies.

Cause

- The research could **lead to** a cure for many serious illnesses.
- The fire **resulted in** damage to their property.
- He was **responsible for** the accident.
- The war **brought about** enormous social change.
- Poor performance in exams can **give rise to** stress and anxiety.
- Certain foods can **trigger** allergies.
- Passive smoking could **contribute to** the development of respiratory diseases among nonsmokers.
- Cost is often the deciding **factor** when choosing any product.

Describing causes

- One factor which has led to ... is ...
- One of the factors which has brought this about is ...
- The problem often stems from ...
- The situation has been exacerbated by ...
- ... has only made the situation worse.
- One consequence of ... is ...

Part 2- Article

- In part 2 of the writing exam you may have the choice of writing an article.
- The article is on a certain topic or discussion point.
- You are expected to present information and your own opinion.
- Create an eye-catching title and open with a thought-provoking statement to capture the readers' interest.
- The register used should be neither formal nor informal, but you can use first person pronouns and talk about your own experience or beliefs.
- The word limit is 280-320 words.
- Write a clear plan.
- Do not write a draft copy and then a final copy. There is not enough time.
- Spend 45 minutes on the task:
 - 5-10 minutes to plan
 - 30-35 minutes to write

When I took (1) a seat on a long-distance train journey recently, I was irritated to discover that I'd left my wallet at home. What really made me panic, though, was (2) the realization that I'd also left behind my mobile phone. Two hours without communication or music: how ever was I going to survive? (3)

And yet, as little as two or three decades ago, modern mobile devices such as these belonged to the realms of science fiction. Who would have thought it possible to bank, shop, watch movies, and listen to music and much more from something as minuscule as today's portable electronic products? Yet as with any technological development, the outcome for us all can be as damaging as it is beneficial (4). The instantaneous nature with which we receive so many products and services is truly astounding. In the case of music and literature, to name just two, you can carry in the palm of your hand the same amount of books and music that would have once been crammed into an entire room.

Communication via phone (5), text, messaging, email, video calls enables us to try (6) a million and one ways to track someone down. Yet it is this very method of communication that is (7) dramatically transforming our society into something almost unrecognizable. Younger generations have always sought to differentiate themselves from what preceded them, and classic examples of this (8) are clothing or music revolutions. Now this platform literally enables entire sectors of society to isolate itself from another, and to some extent can be seen to be causing factions within society (9).

Seldom would anyone with a love of culture argue (10) that having the world of literature and music at your fingertips is in anyway a treacherous path down which society is heading (11). Yet, whilst I embrace aspects of this technological revolution, I do feel it is having a detrimental impact on something that sets man apart from other species – the ability to converse (12).

Read the question below and then the model answer to the left. Also, read the comments to see what the student did particularly well.

A newspaper has asked readers to write an article on the current debate surrounding the impact of television on our lives. Write your article (280–320 words) for the comment and debate section of the newspaper giving your views on changing trends and their impact on our lives.

Comments on the model answer

- 1 The inclusion of personal experience engages the reader in an appropriate way for an article
- 2 The use of a cleft sentence draws readers' attention to a specific point
- 3 The sardonic tone underlines the writer's stance
- 4 Clearly highlighting stance
- 5 Use of nominalization to make phrasing more concise and easier to read.
- 6 Good use of pronouns to personalize the example and involve the reader, while at the same time broadening the frame of reference to include society at large.
- 7 Effective use of an emphatic device that helps convey the writer's stance
- 8 Clearly highlights exemplification
- 9 Good use of hedging.
- 10 Good use of inversion after a negative adverbial to create a more dramatic effect.
- 11 Interesting, emphatic choice of vocabulary.
- 12 Thought-provoking concluding sentence.

Structure

An attractive title

This should draw the attention of readers and indicate the article's theme.

An introduction

Clarify the theme and attract the reader's attention. This can be achieved through anecdotes and addressing the reader.

Main body paragraph

This is where the you can really develop your ideas.

Main body paragraph

Articles may also have subheadings for each paragraph, though this depends on where the article will be published and the level of formality therefore required.

Conclusion

Either a summary of the theme or a final opinion, recommendation or comment.

The title is essential when creating an article.

It should be a concise summary of the information presented in the article.

For example, if you are writing a description of a place, using adjectives can enhance the attractiveness of the place, before the reader begins reading the article, e.g. **"The Peace and Tranquility of an Island that Time Forgot"**.

If the task involves proposing a solution to a problem or your opinion, and so on, you can address your audience directly, e.g.

"What You Need to Do to Be Successful", or use a question such as **"Is Learning English Really Necessary Today?"**.

The title should not be too long and ideally reflect the style of the article – both formal or informal.

Useful language

Giving examples

For example/instance, ...

By way of illustration, ...

A good/classic/well-known example/illustration (of this) is ...

An example of this is the way in which ...

... illustrates this point/shows this point clearly.

This can be illustrated by ...

In the case of ...

Take ... (as an example)

such as ...

Note: Examples in articles can take the form of an anecdote or description of personal experience, and are often included without an introductory expression.

Cohesive language

Expressing similar ideas

Furthermore, ...

In addition, ...

Moreover, ...

Likewise, ...

Similarly, ...

Expressing opposing ideas

However, ...

On the other hand, ...

Nevertheless, ...

Nonetheless, ...

Expressing results

accordingly ...

as a consequence ...

hence ...

thus ...

for these reasons ...

consequently ...

Restating or explaining

in other words ...

in particular ...

that is (to say) ...

specifically ...

Concluding

All in all, ...

In brief, ...

In conclusion, ...

To summarize, ...

Contrasting two statements

Instead, ...

On the contrary, ...

Rather (than) ...

Agreeing partially

- This is partly true...
To a certain extent...
- Up to a point ...
- While it is true that..., this isn't always the case.

Qualifying Statements

- There is a tendency to...
- Usually, ... are inclined to...
- Generally speaking...
- Things appear to be...
- In a large number of cases...
- In some instances...

Purpose

- Therefore...
- With this object in view/mind...
- To this end...
- For this purpose....

Part 2- Review

- In part 2 of the writing exam you may have the choice to write a review.
- A review is usually about a TV show or film, a book, a restaurant or hotel.
- In addition to reviewing your particular choice, you may have to comment in a more general way on the topic.
- It can be a positive, negative, or balanced review. You have to make a recommendation at the end, which could be positive or negative.
- If you review a book or film, don't describe the whole plot (i.e. no spoilers!)
- A review is neutral in tone. Avoid contractions but do use colourful descriptive language.
- The word limit is 280-320 words.
- Spend 45 minutes on the task:
 - 5-10 minutes to plan
 - 30-35 minutes to write
 - 5 minutes to check your work

A newspaper has asked readers to write a review of a hotel they have recently stayed in. Write your review (280–320) for the travel section of the newspaper saying who you would recommend the hotel for and why?

Read the question and then the model answer to the left. Also, read the comments to see what the student did particularly well.

In the dim and distant past (1), Sicily was well off the beaten track (2) of the international tourist market, but a robust tourism strategy (3) has thrown open the doors on some once little-seen gems (4). Unfortunately, floods of tourists on cheap flights have swamped some resorts beyond recognition, but with just that little bit more effort there are some delightful hideaways (5) to be found.

Castel Di Tusa nestled (6) within a charming bay on the Tyrrhenian coast is one such place. In theory, there should be little to draw the tourists here were it not for the 'Art Hotel', Artelier Sul Mare. The compelling pull of the beaches, shops and restaurants in the much larger Cefalu is that bit more (7) convenient for the hordes (8) pouring out of the airport, but those that persevere and seek out this peaceful oasis are in for a treat.

Each room has a contemporary style and an artist's take on a concept. It is as if you are staying in an art gallery. Whether you stay in the same room every night or experience the huge array of talent on display by hopping from room to room is your prerogative, but which ever you choose, drifting (9) to sleep in this peaceful utopia (10) is an experience to remember. Whilst (11) you might not have a swimming pool, gym and flat screen TV you can experience dinner in the stunning surrounds of the terrace on the edge of the shore.

If (12) you expect all the trappings of five star luxury this would not be the place for you, and unless (13) you have particularly cultured teenagers it would not be the most energizing of breaks for them, however for those that enjoy the charm of peaceful idyllic surroundings in the comfort of some truly stunning rooms then this is the place to go (14).

Comments on the model answer

1 & 2 Good fixed expressions engage the reader, offering an alternative to 'once' and 'away from'.

3 Neat use of a nominal structure as opposed to the more wordy 'strategy aimed at attracting tourism'.

4, 5 & 6 Evocative lexis frames the setting and suggests an approving stance.

7 This extension of the standard comparative form indicates a critical attitude, reinforcing the negative term 'the hordes'.

8 The use of 'hordes' has negative connotations, and contrasts the notion of mass-tourism with the fine atmosphere of the hotel in the review.

9 & 10 Use of ethereal noun and verb helps create an evocative mood that reflects the writer's positive view of the destination.

11 Good concessionary structure that compares the alternatives.

12 & 13 Use of the conditional 'if' and 'unless' clauses maintains the reader's interest and strengthens the concluding statement.

14 A good way of organizing the ideas to have maximum impact on the reader

Part 2- Review Structures

Review Structure

- **Always put a title.**
- A review should have **four or five** paragraphs.

Depending on what you have to review, you may change the structure slightly. Look at the two examples below of the review structure:

- On the right all the good and bad aspects have been separated into two paragraphs.
- On the left, the paragraphs deal with individual aspects of the hotel or restaurant, so the paragraphs may contain a mixture of positive and negative comments.

Note: In the model answer they have used the first paragraph to create intrigue and really hook the reader. They then introduce the name of the hotel in the second main paragraph. This is also acceptable and a great way to engage your reader.

Restaurant/hotel Review Structure

An attractive title

This should draw the attention of readers

Introduction

Introduce the name of the restaurant or hotel. You may want to say where it is, or other information such as the head chef and the cuisine served.

1st paragraph

Service- Very friendly but too slow to take order

2nd paragraph

Menu/Food- High quality but little variety

3rd paragraph

Atmosphere- great décor but music too loud

Conclusion

Conclude the review, indicating to the reader if your overall impression is positive or negative. Make a recommendation, either positive or negative.

Film/book/TV Review Structure

An attractive title

This should draw the attention of readers

Introduction

Introduce the name of the film or book. You may want to say who the author or director is, and when the film or book was released.

1st paragraph

A brief synopsis- but no spoilers!

2nd paragraph

All the things you liked (e.g acting, locations, plot...)

3rd paragraph

All the things you didn't like (e.g. Special effects, action scenes...)

Conclusion

Conclude the review, indicating to the reader if your overall impression is positive or negative. Make a recommendation, either positive or negative.

Useful phrases

Introduction:

Personal anecdote to grab attention. Introduce name of book/film, restaurant + location, course, TV show etc.

- **Seldom do I** find the time to..., however when I do take time out of my hectic schedule, I like nothing more than...
- **Being a** bit of a **book worm**, the news that ... had released a new book had me **dying to read it**.
- **Being a** bit of a **film buff**, the news that ... had filmed a new movie had me **itching to see it**. So last week I **popped down** with a friend **to check it out**.
- **Having never seen/read...** before, I approached ... with a sense of trepidation, not knowing what to expect. Soon however, all my fears were allayed.

Book and Film reviews:

Vocabulary to describe the book in general:

- A page-turner
- I couldn't put it down.
- Glowing reviews
- Brought a tear to my eye
- Like watching paint dry (boring)
- I was on the edge of my seat (exciting)
- Gripping (exciting)

Vocabulary to describe a film/TV series in general:

- An all-star cast
- An accomplished actor
- An unmitigated disaster (bad film)
- A dazzling display of his/her talents
- Brought a tear to my eye
- Like watching paint dry (boring)
- I was on the edge of my seat (exciting)
- A blockbuster (big commercial film eg Superman)
- Capture the audience's imagination.
- Spectacular set-pieces (main action scenes)
- The director evokes a magical atmosphere
- Brad Pitt gives a(n) (un)convincing performance as...
- The film is let down by a clichéd script.

Vocabulary to describe specific parts:

- A slow start
- A gentle introduction
- Gripping climax
- Nail-biting conclusion
- Cliff-hanger ending
- A shocking twist in the tail

Setting:

- The book/film is set in _____(place/time)
- The action takes place in _____ (place/time)
- The present day (now)
- An alternate reality where vampires / wizards walk the earth
- A sleepy village in the USA
- The bustling city of New York

Plot:

- The plot centres around / focuses on the adventures / lives of...
- The plot follows the adventures of (character name)

Characters:

- Villain / hero / heroine / anti-hero / main character / protagonist
- The characters are believable / well-crafted / a bit 2 dimensional.

Killer Lines when concluding

- Were I to sum up ... in one word, it would be...
- ... left a lot to be desired (wasn't good enough)
- ...more than lives up to the hype (is as good as everyone says it is)
- ... is by far and away the best ... you're likely to ... this year
- ... really raises the bar (sets a higher standard)
- ... sets the benchmark for other (others will be judges against how good it is)
- ... ticks all the right boxes
- ... holds up well in comparison with ...
- ...comes off badly in comparison with ...

Part 2- Report

- In part 2 of the writing exam you may have the choice to write a report.
- This task requires you to provide information about a situation in the present or past. You also have to suggest a future course of action.
- It has to be concise and well-organised. Use **headings** so that the reader can quickly find the information they are looking for in your text.
- Always end your report with a recommendation that will improve the situation.
- It is a formal paper, so avoid contractions and saying "I", "we" etc.
- The word limit is 220-260 words.
- Spend 45 minutes on the task:
 - 5-10 minutes to plan
 - 30-35 minutes to write
 - 5 minutes to check your work

Steps to take when planning and writing

1. Identify and focus on the purpose

Be clear with your objectives and audience before you start working. Who are you writing for? What do they already know? What do they need to know? Why do they read your report?

2. Collect your data and thoughts

Collect all relevant information. Gather your thoughts by writing notes. At this stage, don't worry about the general structure or exact wording.

3. Arrange the report thoroughly

Develop logical arguments under several headings and subtitles.

4. Focus on the target of the report first.

The report starts with the title and introduction, and the introduction starts with a motivational stage attracting the reader to read more.

5. Then you can focus specifically on the tasks in the topic

A report should be well organised and clearly arranged in sections.

6. End your report with a recommendation.

Reader should find here all important conclusions and recommendation according to the given topic

Report Structure

Title

Introduction

Focus on the aim of the report.

Subheading

Give the relevant facts about the current or past situation.

Subheading

Give the relevant facts about the current or past situation.

Subheading

Give the relevant facts about the current or past situation.

Recommendations and conclusion statement

Make your recommendations

The subheadings will depend on the content points you are given. However, normally they will be two distinct points and give recommendations, **or** it will say evaluate and give recommendations, which in essence is asking for strengths and weaknesses.

Part 2- Report

Introduction (1)

The purpose of this report (2) is to analyze the impact of the English language on our society. The report will comment on specific observations and focus on both the positive and negative effects that English has had (3).

Main areas of impact

Across the globe the English language has infiltrated virtually all facets of life and echelons (4) of society. However, it is in education and the world of work that (5) we are witnessing the most pervasive impact. To be able to function competently in both of these settings (6), there is an increasing requirement for proficiency in English. This (7) trend inevitably brings with it both positive and negative consequences.

The negative impact

Traditionally, English was seen as a subject in much the same way as Maths or Biology. However, with the recent introduction of bilingual education in many of our schools, its role has evolved and the issues around this have been magnified. Success in a school subject often hinges on (8) a student's ability in English. More affluent members of our society are able to pay for remedial help, a solution that is not available to all. Similarly, many people are finding it increasingly difficult to secure employment as more and more companies set English proficiency as a baseline (9) in their application procedure.

The positive impact

In an ever-shrinking world of increased cross-border trade (10), English is of paramount importance (11) if our society is to remain (12) competitive. A workforce more proficient in English has allowed us to remain so (13) through forging new agreements (14) with foreign companies and expanding our trade links into new markets. At a more local level, more widespread knowledge of English has also given our tourism industry a much needed boost as locals are in a much stronger position to communicate effectively with foreign visitors, creating (15) a much more welcoming environment for them when visiting.

Conclusions

The benefits of adopting English cannot be underestimated. However, some of these benefits have come at the expense of some members of our society. Those without a good level of English are increasingly being marginalized and disenfranchised (16). More support for the less affluent segments of our society would ensure that the benefits of speaking English trickle down to all (17).

As part of a globalization project at college, you have been asked to write a report (280–320 words) on the impact of the English language on your society. In your report you should describe the positive and negative effects English is having on your society and make recommendations to minimize any negative impact that English has had on society.

Comments on the model answer

- 1 Sub-headings signpost the information clearly.
- 2 Signals the intent of the report clearly.
- 3 Change of clause structure helps to avoid repeating 'society' again.
- 4 Interesting, ambitious use of vocabulary.
- 5 Good use of a cleft sentence.
- 6 Good use of fronting to maintain focus.
- 7 Avoids repetition.
- 8 Good alternative to 'depend on'.
- 9 Interesting choice of vocabulary.
- 10 Good use of fronting and interesting vocabulary.
- 11 Strong collocation.
- 12 Good use of more complex grammar.
- 13 Avoids repetition.
- 14 Interesting use of vocabulary.
- 15 Good use of adverbial clause.
- 16 Interesting choice of vocabulary.
- 17 Good use of hedging and more complex vocabulary.

Report- Useful phrases

Stating the purpose of the proposal

- The principal objectives of this report are to
- The objective of this report is to...
- The purpose of this report is to evaluate / explain / describe / analyse etc

Background information

- At the present moment,
- Comments made at the end of the questionnaires suggest...
- Following a survey among...
- Concerned members of the local community were invited to attend...
- A number of concerns with regard to XYZ were expressed by...

Recommendations and suggestions

- I would strongly recommend that...
- In the light of the results of the survey I would advise against...
- The best solution would be to...
- In order to improve it is necessary to..
- This will have a positive impact on ...

Final recommendations

- Implementation of the above ideas would result in...
- Provided that these recommendations are taken into consideration,...
- Should these suggestions be implemented, there will be a drastic increase/improvement in...

Development

- First of all,...
- In addition to this
- Furthermore,...
- Moreover,...
- In fact,...
- Last but by no means least,...

Part 2- Formal Letters

- In part 2 of the writing exam you may have the choice to write a formal letter or email. This may be to the editor of a newspaper, writing a letter of recommendation, or even a letter of complaint.
- It is a formal task, so avoid contractions and colloquial language.
- You should always be polite and respectful, even if you complain. A useful way to achieve it especially in formal letters is to use 'modal verbs', i.e., would, could or should.
- Do not include any addresses.
- The word limit is 280-320 words.
- Spend 45 minutes on the task:
 - 5-10 minutes to plan
 - 30-35 minutes to write
 - 5 minutes to check your work

Formal letter Structure

Salutation

Use **Dear Sir or Madam** if you **don't know the name** of the recipient.

If you know the name, use the appropriate title (Mr, Mrs, Miss or Ms, Dr, etc.) along with the surname (e.g. **Dear Mr Jenkins**).

If you are writing to a newspaper editor, then use **Dear Editor**.

Paragraph one

The first paragraph outlines the purpose of the letter and the reason for its sending.

Paragraph 1

In paragraph one deal with the first point included in the question. If the question doesn't include any specific points (like some letters of complaint for example) then you have to make up your own ideas.

Paragraph 2

Develop your next main point

Paragraph 3

Develop your final key point

Concluding

At the end, conclude the letter and finish any thoughts mentioned before, or specify any action the recipient should take, return money, send information, etc.

Signing off

Yours faithfully if you **don't know the name** of the recipient.

Yours sincerely if you **know the name** of the recipient.

[Your name]

Part 2- Letter to an Editor

Read the exam question below and then the response.

You have recently read a newspaper article which stated that 'most people in society are far too reliant on convenience food and this is having a detrimental impact on people's diets'. You decide to write a letter (280–320 words) responding to the points raised and expressing your own views.

- You may be asked to write a letter to the editor of a newspaper.
- This is usually in response to an article you have read.
- This is all about giving your opinion and supporting it with reasons and examples.
- A balanced argument is best, since it allows you to use a wider range of vocabulary and cohesive devices.

Comments on the model answer

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to (1) the article on changing diets in society and would like to share my views. Whilst (2) some interesting issues are raised that will no doubt encourage enthusiastic debate, some of the points expressed are fundamentally flawed and somewhat exaggerated (3).

Having said that, I would be inclined to agree that a proportion of our society does, unfortunately, represent the caricature depicted in the article. Yes, there is an element of society that is dependent on pre-packaged microwave food (4) to provide necessary sustenance in a quick and simple form; however (5), to assume that this means people do not prepare fresh food at all, or that fast food alone is to blame for an increase in illnesses, is quite frankly ludicrous.

Many packaged foods in fact provide people with a more than adequate nutritional balance and actually save people money, whilst at the same time cutting down on waste. It is a well-known fact, which the article fails to acknowledge (6), that frozen vegetables provide higher levels of vitamins than many fresh products due to the deterioration in levels of nutrients as the fresh product ages (7).

As far as people not being willing to prepare food is concerned, I'm afraid I again have to take issue here (8). Yes I too am 'guilty', for want of a better word, of opening packets of ready-made food but at the same time I frequently concoct (9) my own dishes. The world is not black and white, and thus should not be viewed so one-dimensionally.

To sum up (10), I, in common with many others, do not fall into the category of polar opposites suggested by the article. Whilst (11) we may at times enjoy convenience, many of us equally derive great pleasure from our creativity in the kitchen. I look forward to following subsequent articles on related issues.

Yours faithfully

- 1 Good use of letter writing conventions.
- 2 Concessionary clause helps set out writer's viewpoint.
- 3 Good use of more emphatic lexis.
- 4 Paraphrased the wording in the question.
- 5 The writer skillfully disagrees with the magazine: *Having said that ... Yes, there is an element of society ... however ...*
- 6 The writer has tried to add a variety of structures.
- 7 The paragraph as a whole contains examples that successfully support the writer's main argument.
- 8 Appropriate use of register to politely disagree with someone.
- 9 More vivid alternative to 'prepare'.
- 10 The use of a concluding phrase shows good organization.
- 11 Good use of a concessionary expression to acknowledge a contrasting view.

Part 2- Formal Letter of Complaint

- You must write a letter complaining about a product or service that didn't match your expectations. Be creative with the problems, but always maintain a formal register and be polite.
- After providing information in the main body paragraphs about the problems you experienced, specify any action you want taken in the final main paragraph.

Read the exam question and the model answer below. Notice that in the question we have some reference to main content points (the food and service). However, you have to be creative and invent the specific problems.

Read this extract from a letter you have recently sent to a friend:

.... Oh, and by the way, don't go to Barry's Restaurant for your birthday. We went there last night - the service was awful and the food was a disaster! I complained to the head waiter but he asked me to put it in writing ...

Write your letter of complaint to the restaurant manager (around 220-260 words)

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to express my dismay with regards to my experience of your restaurant yesterday. I chose 'Joe's Diner' to impress three of my most important business clients, after having read a glowing review in "Best Restaurants in Britain 2020". Sadly, the reality failed to live up to my expectations.

First of all, as stated in the guide book, you did have a variety of set meals on the menu. However, only two meat dishes and one fish dish were on offer yesterday, which deeply disappointed my guests. Nonetheless, we chose a starter, a main dish and a dessert à la carte. This was no easy task though, since many of the items on the menu were unavailable. In the end we had no other choice than to opt for the onion soup and seafood salad for starters.

On top of that, the main meals were not served at the same time; in fact, about five minutes after a rump steak was put on the table for one of my clients, still none of the others had been served. I asked your staff to bring all the other meals as soon as possible and in another five minutes only two, including my grilled salmon, were brought to us. When the final dish, the steamed trout, was put on the table, the client who had ordered the rump steak had almost finished.

However, the straw that broke the camel's back was when the desserts came. Never in my life have I seen such a pitiful excuse for a mango sorbet. Dare I say it was more akin to a Mango soup.

On paying the bill, I complained about the slew of inconveniences to your head waiter, but he asked me to contact you directly in writing. I feel that a refund to the tune of at least £200 would be appropriate. Should this demand not be met, you shall be hearing from my lawyer.

I look forward to receiving a satisfactory reply within 14 days.

Yours faithfully,

Jane Smith

Useful Phrases

Listing Problems

- First of all,
- **Not only was** there a hair in my wife's soup, **but** the main course **also** arrived cold.
- On top of that...
- As if that was not enough...
- To top it all off...
- The straw that broke the camel's back was...

Complaining Expressions

- The standard of the... was not up to scratch.
- The... was not up to the expected standard.
- The... left a lot to be desired.
- The... failed to live up to our expectations.
- We were left bitterly disappointed by...
- The quality of the customer service we received was woefully inadequate.
- The... was an absolute disgrace. (v.strong)
- Overall, our visit to your (restaurant) was an unmitigated disaster from start to finish.

Requesting Action

- It seems only fair that you should... (offer a full refund)
- I would appreciate it if you...
- I would be grateful if you...
- Should these demands not be met, you will be hearing from my lawyers.
- I expect to receive compensation to the tune of (€2000) for the...

Making Recommendations

- I strongly recommend that your organisation...
- It would be advisable to...
- I suggest re-evaluating your procedures regarding...

Sign off

- I look forward to receiving your reply.
- I expect to receive a prompt reply to this letter.
- Yours faithfully,

Different ways to say...

Bad

- Awful
- Appalling
- Dreadful
- Wretched
- Terrible
- Sub-par
- Rubbish

Shocked

- Taken aback
- Astonished
- Astounded
- Speechless
- Stunned
- Staggered
- Lost for words

Angry

- Irate
- Cross
- Infuriated
- Seething
- Indignant
- Enraged
- Mad

Part 2- Letter of Recommendation

A friend of yours has applied for a job as a Regional Manager. The company has asked you to write a **letter** (280–320 words) of recommendation for your friend. In your letter you should refer to the characteristics of your friend that would make them suitable for this role and describe any relevant experience your friend has.

Dear Ms Powell,

I am writing to you regarding your request for a reference for Daphne Varnava, with respect to her application for the position of Regional Manager. I have had the pleasure of knowing Daphne for ten years in both a social and professional capacity.

As well as being a joy to work with, Daphne is also a highly motivated individual who has demonstrated an inordinate amount of initiative on numerous projects. As a result she works well autonomously and constantly strives to achieve an optimum level of performance in all tasks she undertakes. Whilst being highly adept at working independently, she occasionally finds it hard to collaborate with members of her team on account of her ambition. Having said this, she has been instrumental in ensuring that a strong work ethic is fostered within the group.

Daphne embraces the task of rectifying errors and never shies away from the situation. For this reason, whenever Daphne has encountered a setback in her work, she has swiftly identified the most appropriate and effective solution. Even when faced with particularly arduous challenges, she has the drive and tenacity to successfully cope with the situation.

During her time here, she has consistently commanded the respect of her colleagues, drawing on leadership skills that have enabled many projects to keep on track against the odds. On account of her effective delegation and her assertiveness, she has regularly formed and managed a number of high performing teams. She is clearly ready to take the next step up the managerial ladder.

It is for the above reasons that I highly recommend her for employment. Without doubt Daphne will be a tremendous asset to your organization.

Should you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Elena Tofini

- You may be asked to write a letter of recommendation for a colleague or friend.
- It may sound appropriate to only compliment your friend, but you must include some negative points as this allows you to show a wider range of vocabulary.
- Just remember to try to convey the negative as a positive.
 - e.g. "Thomas does not always complete projects on time owing to his perfectionist nature".

Different ways to say...

Good

- Splendid
- Outstanding
- Tremendous
- Stupendous
- Wonderful
- Superb
- Marvellous

Nice

- Courteous
- Likeable
- Cordial
- Considerate
- Cordial

Happy

- Cheerful
- Merry
- Jovial
- Joyful
- Delightful