

# IELTS General Prep

## Writing Session 1



# Writing Session 1

## Test format – General Training Writing (60 minutes)

Topics are of general interest.

There are two tasks:

- **Task 1** - A letter Writing. The letter may be personal, semi-formal, or formal in style.
- **Task 2** - An essay writing. The essay can be fairly personal in style.



# Writing Session 1

Writing Task 1 presents a situation to write a personal response in the form of an informal, semi-formal, or formal letter.

Minimum word count: 150

Time limit: 20 minutes

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Topics may include:

- Writing to a college accommodation officer about problems with accommodation.
- Writing to a new employer about time management problems they are having.
- Writing to a local newspaper about a plan to develop a local airport.
- Writing to a rental agency to sort out problems with the heating system in their house.



# Writing Session 1

The style of writing that test takers use depends on whom they are asked to write to (i.e. the audience) and how well they are supposed to know them.

Write in a style that is appropriate for the audience

- Writing to a friend (informal)
- Writing to a manager (semi-formal or formal).

Test takers do not need to include any addresses at the head of their letters.

Your work will be penalized if...

- *Your answer is too short, irrelevant, off-topic, or not written as full, connected text (e.g. using bullet points in any part of the response, or note form, etc.).*
- *You will be severely penalized for plagiarism*



# Writing Session 1

## Sample: Writing Task 1

You play a sport (e.g. football) for a local team. You recently heard that a player in your team is in a hospital.

Write a letter to your teammate. In your letter:

- Say how you feel about the news
- Ask about the treatment in the hospital
- Suggest some ways of cheering him/her up

Write at least 150 words.

You do **not** need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,



# Writing Session 1

## Assessment Criteria:

### 1. Task achievement

- How appropriately, accurately and relevantly the response fulfills the requirements set out in the task, using a minimum of 150 words.
- How appropriately your response sets out the context and purpose of the letter and its functions You should cover all of these in order to achieve good band scores.

### 2. Coherence and cohesion

- You are assessed on overall clarity and fluency of the message: how the response organizes and links information, ideas, and language. **Coherence** refers to the linking of ideas through logical sequencing.
- **Cohesion** refers to the varied and appropriate use of cohesive devices (for example, logical connectors, pronouns, and conjunctions) to assist in making the conceptual and referential relationships between and within sentences clear.



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## 3. Lexical resource

- This refers to the range of vocabulary the test takers have used and the accuracy and appropriacy of use in terms of the specific task.

## 4. Grammatical range and accuracy

- This refers to the range and accurate use of grammar, as manifested in the test takers' sentence writing.



# Writing Session 1

## Identify the type of letter

**Formal letters** deal with situations that are very oriented toward official business and are not particularly personal.

When writing a formal letter, you should imagine you are socially distant from the person who will read the letter, but that you still need to convince them to pay attention to what you are saying or asking.

The use of language will be highly formal. These kinds of letters address the recipient by title and by family name rather than the given name (if the family name is known).

Acceptable formal greetings include “Dear Sir,” “Dear Madam, and “Dear Ms. Lopez,” “Dear Doctor Sanyal,” and so on.





# Writing Session 1

## Identify the type of letter

In formal letters avoid contractions, using “cannot” or “will not” instead of “can’t” or “won’t,” for instance. Such letters also often have a clear statement of intention at the beginning of the letter and a polite statement thanking the reader for their attention at the end of the letter.

In general, a formal letter tone is exceptionally polite and uses “academic” sentence structure and word forms (no sentences beginning with “and” or “but,” and no contractions).



# Writing Session 1

## Model of a Formal Letter

**You recently read about a volunteer opportunity overseas. Write a letter to ask about applying. In your letter:**

- **discuss what you know about the programme**
- **explain why you are interested in the opportunity**
- **describe what skills you would bring to the position**

**Write at least 150 words. You do NOT need to write any addresses.**

**Begin your letter as follows:**

**Dear \_\_\_\_\_,**

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing this letter with regard to the volunteer opportunity for doctors I saw advertised in the Daily Mail. As described in the advertisement, the position you are seeking to fill is for a doctor with a desire to travel to Africa for six months of the year. I understand that the position would not require treating unusual diseases, but instead would primarily focus on general preventative measures and practices.

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This appeals to me on several levels. I find the medical work here fascinating, and I have always loved to travel. In the past, I have gone to various East African countries, but I very much look forward to visiting other parts of the continent.

My experience and skills make me an excellent fit for this position. As a general practitioner with experience treating everyday ailments, I believe I am well qualified to assist your organization's patients. Furthermore, my own patients have often commented positively on my manner. Finally, my superiors have frequently noted my ability to adapt well to new situations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours faithfully,  
Rachel Dale



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Semi-formal letters are used to express *closeness and familiarity* to the reader of the letter, while also putting this closeness and familiarity in a “formal” context such as business, customer service, or work.

Some topics of a semi-formal letter may include:

- talking to a co-worker about a work project
- writing a letter to a business where you’re a customer
- offering assistance to a supervisor



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## Model of a Personal, Informal Letter

You recently received an invitation to a dinner party at your friend's house. Write a letter to accept the invitation. In your letter:

- explain why you are accepting the invitation
- describe why you are looking forward to the dinner party
- offer to bring a dish to share

Write at least 150 words. You do NOT need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Dear Samantha,

I hope you're doing well. I am writing about the invite to your dinner party this Thursday night.

I'll be happy to come! It's been a while since we've seen each other, and I can't wait to hear about your new job. It will also be lovely to see John after all this time. And please tell him hello for me right away, and let

him know I look forward to seeing him. I've missed him so much.



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In fact, I'm looking forward to the party for a number of reasons. Beyond the pleasure of your company, I always love your cooking. The chicken that you made last time was delicious! With you in charge of the meal, we are guaranteed an excellent evening.

As for me, I would be glad to bring something to the table myself. Could I perhaps bake a cake for dessert, or bring a bottle of wine? Let me know.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

All the best,  
Rachel



# Writing Session 1

## **Activity: Is it a formal or an informal letter?**

**You play sport (e.g. football) for a local team. You recently heard that a player in your team is in a hospital. Write a letter to your team-mate. In your letter:**

- Say how you feel about the news**
- Ask about the treatment in the hospital**
- Suggest some ways of cheering him/her up**

Dear John,

I'm sorry to hear that you've fallen and fractured your leg. It is extremely unfortunate that you had this accident, especially when we are having a big match next week.

I understand that you're admitted in St. John's Hospital and will be there for a week. I hope you're being well taken care of at the hospital. Although there had been some complaints about St. John's in the past, I heard they have improved a lot. Did you get to consult their chief orthopaedic? His specialty is in sports medicine and he could probably suggest some specific treatments that will help you.



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And let me share some good news with you. Our university has granted a sports scholarship for your studies. I heard it from our coach and you should be getting a letter shortly. So it is not all gloom!

Do let me know if you need any help. I will visit you at the hospital next week.

Regards,  
Prasad





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## The Opening Greeting of the Letter

Your letter will probably need to be a reasonably informal letter to a friend or a semi-formal letter. The opening of your letter should reflect which one you are writing.

A friendly letter will open with Dear followed by a name which should then be followed by a comma, e.g.:

Dear John,

A semi-formal letter will also open with Dear and then be followed by a name, (if you decide that in the situation you would know the name) or by Sir (if it's a man), Madam (if it's a woman) or Sir/Madam if you don't know, e.g.:

Dear Mr. Phillips,

Dear Mrs. Phillips,

Dear Sir,

Dear Madam,

Dear Sir/Madam,

The question also might specify how you are to begin so follow what it says.



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## The Opening Paragraph of the Letter

In a semi-formal letter, it is important to state the reason for the letter straight away. You could use the following to help you:

I am writing to ask/ tell//inform you that...

I am writing to ask/inquire...

I am writing with regard to...

I am writing with reference to...

I am writing in connection with...

I am writing in response to...

In reply to your letter, I am writing to... (if the question indicates that you have had a letter)

If the letter is a less formal one to a friend then you should open the letter in a friendlier way. E.g.:

Dear John,

Hi there! It's been so long since I've heard from you. I hope you and your family are doing fine. I'm pretty good in spite of working hard. Anyway, the reason I'm writing to you.....



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## The Substance of the Letter

Here are some ideas about to be used in the substance of the letter which will help you to answer the task well.

### Asking for Help

I would like you to...

I would be grateful if you could...

I need to ask your advice about...

I'd like to ask for information about...

What I'm looking for is...

### Complaining

I'm writing to express my dissatisfaction/annoyance/ about...

I'm writing to express my anger at...

I am not happy about...

... is not what I expected/was expecting.

I want to know what you are going to do about this situation.



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When complaining, don't get too angry. In a polite semi-formal letter, this should not happen. Also, do not over-exaggerate. If it's a reasonably small and understandable problem, do say that you're not satisfied but show that you understand and stay calm in your expressions.

## **Thanking**

I'm very grateful for...

I'd like to thank you very much for...

I very much appreciated...

## **Apologizing**

I'm very sorry that/about...

Please forgive me for...

I'd like to apologize about...

Please accept my apologies...



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## Ending your Letter

### For a formal letter, you could use:

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thanking you in advance for your help, I look forward to hearing from you soon.

### For an informal letter you could use:

If you need to know anything else, just get in touch with me as soon as you can. Thanks a lot for your help and I hope to hear from you soon.

Finally, you'll need to sign off your letter. **For a formal letter use:**

Yours faithfully, OR

Yours sincerely,

Remember the commas (it makes a good impression on the examiner if you use good punctuation) and spell "sincerely" correctly.



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**For an informal letter,** love is not always appropriate though English speakers use it a lot. The better would be to use:

Regards,

Yours,

Best wishes,



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## Important Instructions

- Don't copy any part of the question in your answer.
- Don't repeat yourself or the same ideas.
- If you are weak in English grammar, try to use short sentences.
- Think about the tenses of your verbs.
- If you have finished the exam with time to spare, proofread your writing response.
- Don't be irrelevant.



# Writing Session 1

## Example 1:

**You have decided to leave your current employment. Write a letter to your employer. Include the following in your letter:**

- Explain why you are writing**
- Explain why you have decided to leave the company**
- Tell your employer what you plan to do after leaving your present employment**





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Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am writing this letter in regards to terminating my contract with the organization as a Guest Service Agent. The employment contract states a requirement of two weeks' notice. Therefore, my last day of employment will be on 25th of May 2012.

The decision was made due to personal reasons, as my family and I will be migrating to Singapore. Recently my husband has been offered a managerial position in a five-star hotel, which we thought would be a better prospect for his career.

Once my family and I have settled down in Singapore, I plan to look for a “work at home” job. This would allow me to have flexibility with my time and I would be able to take care of my children too. Leaving the company is a great loss for me as I have learnt a lot and was given opportunities to grow.

Finally, I would like to thank you for the guidance provided during the period of my employment.

Yours sincerely,



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## Example 2:

**Your neighbour has a dog that is noisy at night. You can't sleep. Write a letter to your neighbour. In your letter:**

- describe the problem with the dog
- explain why it is important for you to sleep
- outline what your neighbour could do about the situation



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Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to you to bring to your attention a problem that I have been facing with your dog at night. As you may already be aware, your dog has started making small detours at night around the neighborhood, digging holes in the gardens and often making loud noises. I have been awoken by your dog's barks several times lately. I had to even consult a doctor and he prescribed some sleeping pills.

This wouldn't have been as big a problem for me if I wasn't in the middle of my exams, but since I am, it is crucial for me to get good rest and sleep during the right hours; I have morning exams to wake up to.

I would therefore be grateful if you could have your dog looked after by another member of your family away from this neighborhood, even if only until my exams are over, which will be in about three weeks' time.

Thank you for taking time to read this letter, I hope you will address this issue soon.

Yours sincerely,



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## Example 3:

**You want to sell your television. You think a friend of yours might like to buy it from you. Write a letter to your friend.**

**In your letter:**

- **Explain why you are selling the television.**
- **Describe the television.**
- **Suggest a date when your friend can come and see it.**



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Dear Gary,

Hope you are doing well.

I'm doing fine, though my life is quite hectic at the moment because, as you know, I am moving abroad and there is so much to do!

There are a few things that I can't take with me because they are too big, so I am checking to see if any of my friends would be interested in buying them. One of the things I do not want to take with me is my television, and I thought you might like to buy it off me for a cheap price.

It's a 32 inch flat screen TV, and it's a Phillips model. It has a USB port so you can just plug in a thumb drive to watch movies or listen to music. It has great stereo surround sound.



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As you know, I'm leaving the country at the end of the month, which is only two weeks away. So if you wish to see it, it would be best to come on 20th or 21st. That would give me time to sell it elsewhere if you are not interested.

Ok, I look forward to seeing you. Let me know if you can't make it.

All the best,  
John.



# Writing Test 1

## Example 4

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task

**You and some friends ate a meal at a restaurant to celebrate a special occasion, and you were very pleased with the food and service.**

**Write a letter to the restaurant manager. In your letter**

- **Give details of your visit to the restaurant**
- **Explain the reason for the celebration**
- **Say what was good about the food and the service**

Write at least 150 words

You do **not** need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

**Dear Sir or Madam,**



# Writing Session 1

## Model Response

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you to express my delight with the excellent service and high quality of food that your restaurant provided us last Saturday night, on the occasion of my 50th birthday.

We were a party of twelve, which included my family, close friends and colleagues from work. Your staff went out their way to provide seating arrangements that were easily accessible, and did not interfere with other diners. I find that this is unusual in many restaurants these days. The waiters were extremely professional and polite, and were obviously experienced as they did not encroach too much on the proceedings.

Your current menu offers a great deal of choice, as does your wine list, and everything was available. There were no complaints about the quality or quantity of the dishes served, and the presentation of each dish was akin to the dishes produced in shows such as 'Master Chef'.





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I ordered the rack of pork ribs, which was deliciously succulent and, if anything, maybe slightly too large. Nevertheless, I managed to finish it!

I was similarly impressed with the large variety of local and International wines available. The wine that was ordered arrived at the correct temperature that each wine should be consumed at. The waiters were familiar with the etiquette of drinking and enjoying fine wines, and the service was paramount.

All-in-all, our group enjoyed a delicious meal at your establishment, and I had a very happy birthday.

Congratulations once again.

Yours sincerely

**Word count: 250**



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## Examiner's comment:

This is an answer written by a candidate who achieved a **Band 8** score. Here is the examiner's comment:

The response addresses all the bullet points very naturally, and expands fully on two of them. The reason for the celebration is covered at the beginning and the end, but could be more fully developed. The message is easy to follow, ideas are logically sequenced and all aspects of cohesion are well managed. The paragraphing is sufficient but could be improved: the three short, single-sentence paragraphs would be better combined into one. A wide range of vocabulary is fluently used to convey precise meanings. A wide range of grammatical structures is accurately used, with full flexibility and control. Punctuation and grammar are appropriate throughout, with no errors.



# Writing Session 1

## Home Assignment

### Practice Question 1- Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Write a letter to the newspaper editor about an experience you had at a restaurant. The experience can be good or bad. Describe your experience in detail and state whether or not you recommend others to visit the restaurant.

Write at least 150 words.



# Writing Session 1

## Home Assignment

### Practice Question 2- Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

A Formal Apology and Explanation

You have received a letter from your university of Albion demanding a reason for your absence from an exam. You were ill that day, but failed to submit the evidence. Write a letter to the Examinations Committee explaining your situation.

You should include:

- Apologies for the situation
- Identification for yourself (Name, Student Number, Case Number)
- An explanation of what had happened and any possible evidence you may have
- Possible resolutions to consider.

Write at least 150 words.





*Thank you*