

Mastering General Training Writing Task 1

Exam Orientation: What it is · How it is marked · What to do when you see the question

FORMAT

Write ONE Letter

Respond directly to a real-life situational prompt adhering to 3 mandatory bullet points.

TIMING

20 Minutes Recommended

Complete at least 150 words efficiently without stealing time from Task 2.

OBJECTIVE

Functional Communication

Communicate clearly, appropriately, and effectively with a specific target audience.

What Is General Training Writing Task 1?

KEY REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ You write **ONE letter** in response to a given situation.
- ✓ You are given **three bullet points** telling you what to include.
- ✓ **Minimum length:** 150 words.
- ✓ **Recommended time:** about 20 minutes.

CORE PURPOSE

To communicate **effectively and appropriately** in a real-life practical situation.

Whether asking for information, complaining, or thanking someone, your tone and information must fit the recipient perfectly.

! You are NOT writing an essay. You are writing a letter for a specific purpose and audience.

Where Task 1 Fits in the Writing Test

Total Writing Test Duration: 60 Minutes (Two Compulsory Tasks)

TASK 1 — LETTER

33%

1/3 of your Writing Score

Recommended time: ~20 minutes | Min 150 words

TASK 2 — ESSAY

67%

2/3 of your Writing Score (Double Weight)

Recommended time: ~40 minutes | Min 250 words

 **Strategic Golden Rule:** Task 2 contributes twice as much to your score. Never let Task 1 eat into Task 2's time!

Anatomy of a Task 1 Question

EXAMPLE EXAM PROMPT

"You recently stayed at a hotel and were unhappy with the service. Write a letter to the hotel manager."

In your letter:

- > explain what happened
- > describe the problems you experienced
- > say what you would like the manager to do

Write at least 150 words."

WHAT TO IDENTIFY BEFORE WRITING

-  **Situation:** What happened (Hotel stay/poor service)
-  **Recipient:** Who you are writing to (Hotel manager)
-  **Purpose:** Why you are writing (Complaint & action)
-  **Three Bullets:** Your mandatory task checklist
-  **Word Count:** At least 150 words

The Three Types of Letters

PERSONAL / INFORMAL

Friendly & Casual

Who it's for:

Someone you know well — a close friend or family member.

Examples: Inviting a friend to visit, thanking a family member.

SEMI-FORMAL

Polite & Professional

Who it's for:

Someone you know professionally or respectfully.

Examples: A colleague, landlord, neighbour, or employer.

FORMAL

Distance & Respect

Who it's for:

Someone you don't know personally, or an official organisation.

Examples: Company manager, local council, university officer.

How Do I Know Which Style to Use?

CORE DECISION QUESTION

"Who am I writing to?"

Someone I know well



PERSONAL

Someone I know professionally



SEMI-FORMAL

Someone I don't know / Organisation



FORMAL



There isn't a fixed list of "formal people" — the **relationship and situation** determine the register.

What Can You Be Asked to Do?

Information & Explanations

- ✓ Request information
- ✓ Provide information
- ✓ Explain a situation

Feedback & Relations

- ✓ Apologise or explain mistakes
- ✓ Complain about poor service
- ✓ Give feedback or appreciation

Requests & Invitations

- ✓ Make a suggestion / recommendation
- ✓ Ask for help or action
- ✓ Invite someone to an event

Solutions & Preferences

- ✓ Thank someone for assistance
- ✓ Express an opinion, need, or preference
- ✓ Explain a problem & propose a solution

The Basic Anatomy of a Good IELTS Letter

1

Greeting

"Dear Sir or Madam," / "Dear Mr Smith," / "Dear John,"

2

Opening

State clearly why you are writing the letter.

3

Main Body

Respond to the **three bullet points** in separate paragraphs.

4

Closing

1 closing sentence at the end

5

Sign-off

"Yours faithfully," / "Yours sincerely," / "Best wishes,"



You DO NOT need to write an address at the top of the letter.

Three Bullet Points = Your Task Checklist

Rule: You must address ALL THREE bullet points — and develop each one, not just mention it.

WEAK RESPONSE (MERE MENTION)

Bullet: Explain why you were unhappy

"The room was dirty."

✗ Too brief, lacks expansion or supporting details.

BETTER RESPONSE (FULLY DEVELOPED)

Bullet: Explain why you were unhappy

"The room was not as clean as I had expected, the carpet was stained and the bathroom had clearly not been cleaned before my arrival."

✓ Clear detail, explanation, and logical expansion.

Formula: Mention Point → Explain Reason → Add Relevant Detail

What Does "Task Achievement" Mean?

CHECKLIST REQUIREMENTS

- ✓ Address all three bullet points
- ✓ Make the purpose of the letter clear
- ✓ Include relevant information
- ✓ Develop the points sufficiently
- ✓ Maintain an appropriate tone/register

THE ULTIMATE SELF-TEST

"If the recipient received this letter, would they clearly understand why I'm writing and what I want them to know or do?"

Run this mental check on every letter you write during practice.

The Four IELTS Assessment Criteria

25% Task Achievement

How fully, accurately, and appropriately the letter completes the given task.

25% Coherence & Cohesion

Organisation, clear paragraphing, and logical linking between ideas.

25% Lexical Resource

Range, precision, suitability of tone, and accuracy of vocabulary.

25% Grammatical Range

Variety, complexity, and grammatical accuracy of sentence structures.

The 20-Minute Task 1 Strategy

0–3 MIN

Analyse

Who am I writing to? Why? What register is needed? Identify the 3 bullet points.

3–5 MIN

Plan

Decide key details for each bullet point, paragraph structure, and opening/closing.

5–17 MIN

Write

Execute clear purpose, develop all 3 points, maintain tone, use logical paragraphs.

17–20 MIN

Check

Check 3 points answered, 150+ words, correct register, grammar, and spelling.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- ✗ Writing an essay instead of a letter
- ✗ Ignoring one of the bullet points
- ✗ Mentioning a bullet point without developing it
- ✗ Using the wrong register for the recipient

- ✗ Copying large amounts of the prompt text directly
- ✗ Writing bullet notes instead of connected sentences
- ✗ Writing fewer than 150 words
- ✗ Spending too much time on Task 1 and hurting Task 2

The Task 1 High-Score Checklist

TASK

- ✓ All 3 bullet points answered & developed?
- ✓ Is the purpose clear and relevant?

REGISTER

- ✓ Writing in the correct tone/style?
- ✓ Are greeting and closing appropriate?

ORGANISATION & LANGUAGE

- ✓ Organised cleanly into logical paragraphs?
- ✓ Checked grammar, spelling & punctuation?

EXAM MANAGEMENT

- ✓ 150+ words written in ~20 minutes?
- ✓ Full time remaining for Task 2?

What's Next — Course Roadmap

Today's Achievement: You learned exactly what Task 1 is, how it is marked, and what to do the moment you open the question prompt.

LESSONS 2–3

Tone & Structure

- Register & tone in depth
- Paragraphing structures

LESSONS 4–5

Functional Skills

- Developing bullet points fully
- Functional vocabulary

LESSONS 6–8

Band 7+ Mastery

- Criteria deep-dives
- Band 7/8/9 sample letters