

Writing guide

This writing reference section contains:

- 1 a **checklist** of key points you should be thinking about when writing for Paper 2.
- 2 a variety of **key expressions** you may wish to use as you attempt the different tasks in Paper 2.

Checklist

When writing any composition you will need to check that you have paid attention to the following points:

- Have you answered all the parts of the question?
- Have you answered the question directly?
- Have you communicated your meaning clearly?
- Have you written the appropriate number of words?
- Is your writing clear and easy to read?
- Have you punctuated your work appropriately?
- Have you organised your work appropriately, in paragraphs where necessary?
- Are there any mistakes of basic grammar, vocabulary, spelling, etc. that you can correct?
- Have you used a variety of grammatical structures and not only, for example, used the Past Simple in telling a story?
- Have you used a range of vocabulary and not only, for example, simple adjectives like *bad*, *happy*, *fast*, etc.?
- Have you used linking words/phrases like *however*, *so*, *in addition*, *as soon as*, etc. where appropriate?
- Have you used language of an appropriate style? Is it too formal/informal? (Remember *who* exactly the audience is that you are writing for.)
- Have you made your composition interesting/amusing where appropriate, so that reading it is an enjoyable experience?

Key expressions

Informal letter

There is more than one way to organise an informal letter, but here is one standard way:

14 Clivedon Road,
Finstock,
Oxford OX7 3BY
23/6/96¹

Dear Stuart,
Thank you very much for your

Best wishes,²
Robert

¹ The date can be written in various ways e.g. *23rd June 1996*, *June 23rd 1996*, *23 June 1996*.

² There are various ways of closing letters to friends depending on your relationship to them. Some of them are:

(With) best wishes,
All the best,
(With) love,
With all my love,
Lots of love,

Here are some useful phrases/expressions to use when writing informal letters.

TO BEGIN THE LETTER:

- **Thank you for your letter. It was great to hear from you.**
- **Sorry, I haven't written for so long. I've been really busy just recently.**
- **I thought I'd better write and let you know that ...**
- **This is just a short note to tell you that ...**

TO END THE LETTER:

- **That's about all my news. Do write soon and let me know what you've been doing.**
- **Once again, thanks very much for all your help ...**
- **I'm (really) looking forward to seeing you on ...**
- **Give my love to ...**

TO APOLOGISE:

- **I'm really sorry that we couldn't come to your party on Saturday, but unfortunately both of us had really bad flu.**

TO INVITE SOMEONE:

- **Why don't you come and stay with us next weekend?**
- **We're having a few friends for dinner on Friday night and we were wondering if you and Paula would like to come.**

TO RESPOND TO AN INVITATION:

- **Thanks for the dinner invitation. Paula and I would love to come.**
- **It was really kind of you to invite us for the weekend, but I'm afraid we've already arranged to go and see Jill's parents in Scotland.**

TO MAKE A REQUEST:

- **As you know, our car is at the local garage at the moment, and I was wondering if there was any chance that we could borrow yours while you are away next week?**
- **One of the reasons why I am writing is to ask a favour. Do you think you could find out how much a reasonable hotel would cost for bed and breakfast for two people for one night?**

TO CONGRATULATE SOMEONE:

- **Congratulations on getting the job! Does this mean you will be moving up north?**
- **Well done on passing your driving test first time! All you need now is a car!**
- **Jim and I just wanted you to know how pleased we were that you did so well in your university exams.**

Formal letter

There is more than one way to organise a formal letter, but here is one standard way:

14 Clivedon Road,
Finstock,
Oxford OX7 3BY
23/6/96

The Manager,¹
Leisure and Business Travel,
73 Chorleywood Road,
Rickmansworth,
Herts WD3 0QL

Dear Sir/Madam²,
As you are probably aware, my family and I

Yours faithfully,

Robert Smith

² If you begin the letter *Dear Sir/Madam*, you should end it with *Yours faithfully*. If you begin the letter *Dear Mr (or Mrs/Ms/Miss) Jenkins*, you should end it with *Yours sincerely*.

Here are some useful phrases/expressions to use when writing formal letters:

TO REQUEST INFORMATION:

- **I am writing in response to your advertisement in Friday's edition of The Times. I would be grateful if you could send me a copy of your summer brochure.**
- **I am writing to enquire whether you could let me have some information about your pension scheme.**
- **I would like to know more about the type of accommodation that you can provide.**

TO MAKE A COMPLAINT:

- **I am writing to you about an unfortunate incident that took place in your shop on Tuesday.**
- **I have now been waiting a month for a replacement.**
- **To make matters worse, we were told that there was no record of our reservation.**
- **I would be grateful if you could refund the cost of the holiday as soon as possible.**

Discursive composition

Here are some useful words/phrases/expressions to use when writing a discursive composition:

- **It is often said that** children watch too much television. **However, in my opinion,** television can have an important educational role.
- **Firstly,** it has been clearly shown that passive smoking can seriously affect your health.
- **Although a number of people think that capital punishment is an effective deterrent, it is also the case that** a number of people have been sentenced for crimes they did not commit.
- **From my point of view,** we all need to take responsibility for the environment.
- **While it is true that** learning a foreign language can be hard work, **on the other hand** it might mean you can get a better job in the future.
- **Finally, it is important to remember that** you can often be delayed for several hours at the airport.
- **On balance then I feel that** boxing should be banned.

Narrative

Here are some useful structures/phrases/expressions to use when writing a narrative composition:

- **I was eating an ice-cream and Sarah was sunbathing when** we first saw the shark.
- **I was just about to open the door, when** I heard a shout from the kitchen.
- **By the time** I got to the house, Peter had left.
- **As soon as** John arrived, we got in the car.
- **We had been playing cards just before** it happened.

¹ With more formal letters the address of the person or company you are writing to should be on the left-hand side of the page, positioned below the address of the sender.

- **It wasn't until** I got home **that** I realised how much I wanted to see him.
- **After waiting** for some time, I decided to leave.
- **A few seconds later** there was panic.
- **Eventually** everyone went home.

Descriptive (people)

Here are some useful structures/phrases/expressions to use when writing a description of a person:

- **She is in** her twenties.
- **She looks like** her mother, but in many ways **she takes after** her father.
- **She's got** short blonde hair and blue eyes.
- **He (generally) wears** casual clothes, like jeans and sweat shirts.
- **He's (quite)** well-built and **he's got** a beard and a moustache.
- **She is very** easy-going and rarely gets angry.
- **She is (much) more** flexible **than** I am.
- **He is not (nearly)** as interesting **as** his brother.
- **She used to** smoke, but she doesn't anymore.
- **The first thing you notice about her is** her smile.
- **You can tell** he has suffered a lot **by** the expression on his face.

Descriptive (places)

Here are some useful structures/phrases/expressions to use when writing a description of a place:

While Chicago is perhaps most famous for its gangsters of the twenties and thirties, it must also be remembered that it is the centre of American commerce and transportation. O'Hare airport is the busiest airport in the world. Forty-four million passengers pass through it every year. **Chicago is also a** great inland port. **It makes** steel and refines oil, but it also stands on the edge of the Great Plains. So the cereals and beef from the prairies pass through the city.

Chicago has a population of over three million including a wide variety of different ethnic groups, who celebrate their own festivities at different times of the year.

The city has a powerful personality of its own which is very American. It has the two tallest skyscrapers in the world and much of its architecture is magnificent and very original.

There are many interesting things to see and do in Chicago, including visiting some of its beautiful parks and impressive museums.

Reports

You may, for example, be asked to write a report for school or for your employer. Here are some useful words/phrases/expressions to use when writing a report:

- **As I was asked, I spoke** to a number of tourists about their opinions of the island.
- **I found that** there were a variety of opinions on the subject. Most people I talked to thought that smoking should be banned in all public places. **However,** a small number felt that this was quite unreasonable.
- **Having talked to** a number of young people about what they do in their free time, **I discovered that** there were three main areas of interest.
- **I contacted** over fifty different organisations **and had replies from** forty-three of them.
- **As a result of my inquiries, I would like to make a number of points. Firstly ...**
- **One of the most positive aspects of** the resort is the wide variety of restaurants which cater for a range of tastes.
- **There are a number of ways in which** the facilities for disabled people in this town could be improved. Firstly ...
- **In conclusion, then, I strongly recommend that** video cameras are installed throughout the Kingsway Shopping Centre to help reduce the level of crime.

Applications

You may be asked to write an application, which could be for a job, scholarship, etc. It might be a letter or it might be part of an official form. Here are some useful expressions to use when writing an application:

- **I am writing in reply to your advertisement for a** sales assistant in the Evening Standard on 13th November.
- **I have always been interested in working with** tourists **and this is one of the main reasons why I am applying for this job.**
- **I have done a lot of work with** children over the past few years.
- **I have a lot of experience of** selling, particularly in the field of computers.
- **I recently completed a course in** marketing, which I believe will be very relevant for this job.
- **I can speak** French and German fluently and am due to take the Cambridge First Certificate of English examination in June.
- **I am available to start work from** the 15th May.
- **I would like to apply for the FPT scholarship which I** read about in the Education Today magazine.
- **Having this scholarship would mean that I could** spend a further year studying in Britain.
- **I would be very grateful if you would consider my application for this scholarship.**
- **Please don't hesitate to contact me at the above address if you need any further information.**

Word pattern guide

(sb = somebody, sth = something)

able be able to do

account take into account

accuse accuse sb of -ing

add add sth to sth

admit admit to -ing, admit that ...

advise advise sb to do, advise sb on, advise (sb) against sth

afraid afraid of

agree agree with sth/sb, agree on sth, agree to do

apologise apologise for sth

apply apply for, apply in writing

approve approve of

argue argue about sth, argue with sb

ask ask sb sth, ask sb to do sth, ask sb about sth

bad bad at sth, bad for sb

believe believe sth/sb, believe in sth/sb (God)

blame blame sb for sth

capable capable of doing

care care about, care for

claim claim to be, claim that ...

complain complain about

congratulate congratulate sb on

continue continue doing, continue to do

deal deal with

decide decide on, decide to do, decide that ...

demand demand that ..., demand sth, a demand for sth

deny deny -ing, deny that ...

depend depend on sth/sb

despite despite sth/-ing, despite the fact that ...

difference make a difference

difficulty have difficulty in doing

do do your best/homework/the ironing/the housework/the cooking/an experiment/research/do you good

dream dream of -ing

encourage encourage sb to do sth

enjoy enjoy yourself, enjoy sth/-ing

exam take/do/have/fail/pass an exam, sit (for) an exam

explain explain sth to sb, explain that ...

fond be fond of sth/-ing

forget forget (about) sth, forget to do, forget doing

fun be/have fun, make fun of

good good at sth, good for sb

have have a party/a good time/a meal/a bath/a plan/an

idea/an argument/a family

help help sb (to) do, help sb with sth

homework do your homework, have homework to do

insist insist on

in spite of in spite of sth/-ing, in spite of the fact that ...

insist insist on sth/-ing, insist that ...

interest have/take/express an interest in sth

interested interested in

keen keen to do, keen on -ing

know know about sth, know how to, be known as

let let sb do sth

listen listen to (music)

look look after, look for, look at, look forward to -ing

make make sb do, make the beds/a mess/a decision/a difference/a complaint/a fortune/a mistake/a noise/a phone call/a suggestion/friends/make fun of

manage manage to do

object object to

occasion on this occasion

part take part in, be a part of sth

pay pay for sth, pay sb

persuade persuade sb to do, persuade sb that ...

prefer prefer to do sth rather than (to) do sth else, prefer sth/-ing to/rather than sth/-ing

prevent prevent from -ing

protect protect from

recommend recommend (that) sb do

refer refer to sth/sb

refuse refuse to do

regret regret (not) -ing, regret sth, regret to inform you ...

rely rely on

remind remind sb of sth/sb, remind sb about sth

say say sth (to sb), say that ...

sentence sentence sb to

share share sth with sb

stop stop to do, stop -ing, stop sb from -ing

succeed succeed in

suggest suggest sth/-ing (to sb), suggest that ...

suspect suspect sb of, suspect that ...

think think about, think of

time spend time -ing, spend time on sth, in time, on time, it's (about/high) time

touch in touch with sb

work work as/on/in sth