

Useful language: formal and informal expressions

1 Decide whether A or B is more common in formal or informal writing.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1 A full forms: <i>does not</i> | <i>formal</i> |
| B contracted forms: <i>doesn't</i> | <i>informal</i> |
| 2 A phrasal verbs: <i>put off</i> | ..... |
| B single-word verbs: <i>postpone</i> | ..... |
| 3 A use of exclamation marks: <i>I couldn't believe it!</i> | ..... |
| B no exclamation marks: <i>I could not believe it.</i> | ..... |
| 4 A common words: <i>enough</i> | ..... |
| B less common words: <i>sufficient</i> | ..... |
| 5 A long words: <i>frequently</i> | ..... |
| B short words: <i>often</i> | ..... |
| 6 A active verb forms: <i>I took</i> | ..... |
| B passive verb forms: <i>I was taken</i> | ..... |
| 7 A full forms of words: <i>approximately</i> | ..... |
| B abbreviations: <i>approx.</i> | ..... |
| 8 A textbook expressions: <i>a limited quantity</i> | ..... |
| B conversational expressions: <i>a bit</i> | ..... |
| 9 A friendly, personal tone: <i>Please try to ...</i> | ..... |
| B distant, impersonal tone: <i>It would be advisable to ...</i> | ..... |
| 10 A complete sentences: <i>There was no sound.</i> | ..... |
| B incomplete sentences: <i>Not a sound.</i> | ..... |

Useful language: formal expressions

Complete the formal expressions with the words given.

1 Giving a reason for writing

writing reply apply saw

- I recently your advertisement in the newspaper.
- I would like to for the position of trainee chef.
- I am to inform you of a serious incident.
- In to your recent letter, I would like to make two points.

2 Describing yourself

suitable experience good knowledge

- I have had some of this kind of work.
- I am particularly at solving problems.
- I feel I would be for the job as I have the right skills.
- I have a good of information technology.

3 Complaining

complain pleased disappointed complaint

- I was extremely with the item I bought.
- I am writing to about the service in your shop.
- I wish to make a about the delay in delivery.
- I am not at all about the reply I received.

4 Requesting action

please like grateful must

- I would be most if you could send me an application form.
- Would you ensure that this does not happen again.
- I feel I ask you to make a formal written apology.
- I would therefore you to investigate this matter.



- 2 Decide whether each of these expressions is formal or informal and whether it usually goes at the beginning or the end of a letter.

Example: *Don't forget to write soon.* informal/end

Don't forget to write soon.	Yours sincerely,	Hi Susana
Well, that's all for now.	Best wishes,	I apologise for the delay in replying.
It was great to get your email.	Dear Sir/Madam,	Give my love to everyone.
I have received your letter dated June 5.	Lots of love,	I look forward to hearing from you.
Thanks (very much) for your letter.	Dear Stefan,	Sorry to be so slow getting back to you.
This is just a quick note to say ...		

- 3 Match the headings with groups of expressions 1–6. In each group there is one expression that is too formal for writing to a friend. Which is it?

Requesting information	Advising	Expressing enthusiasm
Changing the subject	Apologising	Expressing surprise

1 Apologising

Sorry about forgetting to tell you.
Please forgive me for making that mistake.
I would like to apologise for arriving so late.
It was silly of me to suggest that.

2

Can you give me an idea when it'll finish?
I would be grateful if you could tell me the cost.
I'd like to know if you've got a spare ticket.
Could you let me know what time you'll be here?

3

My advice to you is to consider it most carefully.
It'd be a good idea to try again.
I really think you should go somewhere else.
If I were you, I'd tell her now.

4

That reminds me, it's her birthday next week.
By the way, what's his name?
With reference to the accommodation, there are certain changes ...
Anyway, how's life in general?

5

Believe it or not, I've just won the lottery!
Funnily enough, we were both at the same primary school.
I was most surprised to discover that the price has risen.
You'll never believe this, but she's his cousin!

6

It's a really exciting place to go with friends!
I think it's great that everyone will be there!
I'm delighted to hear you won a prize!
I am extremely enthusiastic about learning Chinese.



Text layout; formal & informal language; error correction

1 Look at the exam instructions below.

- 1 What is the situation?
- 2 What did you expect from your evening at the theatre?
- 3 Should you write in a formal or informal style?

You recently attended this event at a city-centre theatre, but you did not enjoy it.

The perfect evening out!

- Top-class musical entertainment, with famous artists
- Excellent restaurant
- Discounts available for young people

Write a letter of complaint to the manager, saying what went wrong.

2  Look at this letter written by a First candidate. Find and correct the following (1-3):

- 1 poor layout. Where should it be divided into paragraphs?
- 2 two informal expressions, four contracted forms and four uses of informal punctuation. Change these to more formal language.

3 two mistakes each in verb forms, spelling and capital letters. Correct these.

Dear sir,

I'm writing to you to complain about the musical last night. I was looking forward to seeing your show but I have to say that it was a very disapointing evening. Firstly, my favourite singer Carmen Sánchez didn't perform, without any explanation being given. In addition, the show should started at 19.30 as it said in the newspaper, not 20.15! I was sure that discounts were available because I have read that they were, but the tickets office didn't offer them. So I had to pay full price for the ticket. What a terrible shock! After the show I was hungry so I went upstairs to the restaurant, but I was very surprised to find it was closed!

I hope you understand how I feel about this. It certainly wasn't a perfect evening out so I want to have my money back!

Yours Faithfully,

Emilio Ricci



3 Study the exam instructions below and the model letter written by Felipe, a very strong First candidate.

- 1 Is Felipe's letter the right length, and written in a suitable style?
- 2 Where does he deal with the three points in the advertisement?
- 3 What else does he say about himself?
- 4 What has he sent with his letter? Why?
- 5 What does he suggest to the employer?

You have seen this advertisement in an English-language newspaper.

CHILLI PEPPER CAFÉ
Waiter/Waitress required

The person we are looking for will be:

- good with people
- prepared to work long hours
- experienced in this kind of work

Apply to the manager, Ms Harrison, saying why you are suitable for a job at our café.



Tip! You don't have to write any postal or email addresses in either letter or email tasks.

Write your **letter of application**.

Letter begins
Dear Ms...

Correct structure
for current job

Be polite to
the employer

Say where you
saw the ad

Formal linking
expressions

Don't use 'will
until you get
the job!

Be helpful

Dear Ms Harrison,

I wish to apply for the post of waiter at the Chilli Pepper Café, as advertised in the newspaper on October 22.

For the past two years I have been working at McDonald's and there I have gained wide experience in dealing with people. Cooking is the only hobby I have, and so I am very interested in different kinds of food. In view of the fact that I am used to working long hours, I believe I am ideally suited for this job.

Another reason for applying is that your café is only five minutes away from my home. Consequently, I would have only a short distance to travel every day.

I enclose a copy of my curriculum vitae, which will give you further details of my career to date.

I hope this information will be sufficient for you to consider my application. If you need further details, please do not hesitate to contact me. For an interview I could make myself available at any time.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,
Felipe Martin

How to layout your formal letter

Their (recipient's) address

Your (sender's) address

Date

Dear Sir or Madam, OR
Dear Mr/Ms X,

Re: (give a one line summary of what the letter is 'Regarding')

A short introduction which summarises why you are writing the letter.

I am writing to you with regard to...

I wish to express my opinion that...

Start with your most convincing argument that will be hard to disagree with.

Firstly, I wish to draw your attention to the fact that...

I am sure you will agree that...

It is undeniable that...

Use a connective to link your ideas and then delve further into the issue.

Moreover, the issue at hand has even more serious ramifications in terms of...

Furthermore, one must not forget that...

Not only this, but also...

Indeed, I feel it is my duty to bring to your attention that...

Ensure that your final point has some kind of emotional appeal and finishes with a thought provoking message.

Finally, it only remains for me to urge you to reconsider your viewpoint...

Lastly, I implore you to see the validity of my argument...

I am grateful that you have taken the time to read my letter and hope that you now feel compelled to

If you started the letter with
'Dear Sir or Madam' then you
end with:

Yours faithfully,

If you started the letter with
'Dear Mr/Ms X' then you end
with:

Yours sincerely,



Step 1: Salutation

If you don't know the name of the person you are writing to, use **"Dear Sir or Madam,"** whereas if you know the person's name you write **"Dear Mr Smith"** or **"Dear Ms Smith"**. Use the title **"Ms"** if you don't know if the woman is married or unmarried.

Dear Sir / Madam, (if you don't know the name)

Dear Mr or Mrs X (if you do know the name)

To whom it may concern

Step 2: The opening paragraph

When beginning your formal email/letter, it's essential that you **explain** to your reader your **reasons for writing**.

Here are some suitable phrases to do that:

I am writing to apply for the position / role of ..

I am writing in reference to your recent advertisement..

I am writing to complain about...

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with...

Step 3. The next paragraphs (main content)

In the next paragraphs, you give more details about why you are writing. Give relevant information, but don't expand too much.

Use **linking structures** to make your letter flow." **Moreover**", **"Furthermore"**, **"In addition"** are all good examples of words that can be used to link sentences together.

Use **formal vocabulary** – avoid simple obvious words and look for more advanced vocabulary and formal phrases.



Step 4: The last paragraph

Here is where you want to create a lasting impression on your reader. You can **ask any questions** but also highlight some **form of action** you want them to take. Take a look at these different ways to do that:

I very much hope you will...
I look forward to hearing from you soon.
I would appreciate it/ be grateful if...
I trust you will...

Step 5: Closing and signing off

When signing off, look at how you started your email. If you don't know the name of a person you can sign off with ***"Yours faithfully,"*** and if you do know the name of the person you should use ***"Yours sincerely,"***. Your full name a surname, should then be written under this.

Yours sincerely, (if you know the name of the recipient)
Yours faithfully, (if you don't know the name of the recipient)

