

FCE WF 2

In the First Certificate exam, you will be given **two writing tasks**, with **1 hour and 20 minutes** (80 minutes total) to complete both. Each task requires a text of **140–190 words**. In this lesson, we will look at essay writing because **the first task is always to write an essay**. You are given a prompt with two provided points and must add a third idea of your own. The tone must be formal. [In the second task, you choose one task out of three options. Options may include an article, a review, a report, or an email/letter (formal or informal). We will look at that task in a different lesson.]

The instructions (also known as the prompt) are always presented in the same format.

The essay will be graded on four criteria: **content, organization, language** and what Cambridge calls “**communicative achievement**”. There are 5 points possible in each criterion, and 3 points constitutes a passing mark for that area. So, you must get 12 of a possible 20 points to pass the writing portion of the FCE.

Let's look at each criterion in detail...

Content: Checks if you answered the task fully, addressed all parts of the prompt, and kept your information relevant to inform the target reader.

Look at the response (at right) to the sample question (above). Does it address all the points in the prompt? ☐ yes ☐ no

If not, which point is missing?

Organization: This assesses the logical structure and flow of your text. This includes paragraph structure and how effectively you use linking words and cohesive devices.

Your essay should have five paragraphs: an introductory paragraph, three body paragraphs and a conclusion.

The intro should identify the topic, give some brief, basic background and end with your **thesis statement**, which is the sentence that states your opinion. The introduction in the sample is acceptable, but it would not get full marks for several reasons: (1) It assumes info from the question: “*This is a complex question*”; (2) It lists what will be included in the essay but it does not include a clear statement of the writer's opinion in the thesis statement, and (3) the second sentence doesn't give an overview of the whole issue, but rather focuses on only one aspect (farming). The notes indicate that you must discuss animals in zoos and those that are endangered as well as one item of your own invention.

In your English class you have been talking about animal welfare. Now your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay using **all** the notes and give reasons for your point of view.

Animals deserve to be treated better than they are by man.
Do you agree?

Notes

Write about:

1. animals kept in zoos
2. wildlife under threat
3. (your own idea)

The treatment of animals in our world today

This is a complex question. Many people depend on animals to live, whether they eat meat or just keep an animal for its milk. This essay will consider farming, § the role of zoos and endangered wildlife.

When zoos first opened, they had a real purpose – to educate people. There was no television and § people got to see animals from other places. Now we don't have the same need for zoos and it is cruel to lock animals up there. § I think all zoos should be closed.

§ I think some farmers look after animals well, but many don't care about the conditions that their animals live in. The best farmers give animals plenty of space and fresh grass to eat.

§ I think we could treat animals better.

An excellent way to write a good introduction is to paraphrase the prompt—"Do animals deserve to be treated better than they are by man?"—and a very useful phrase is "There is much debate on...". For example, a better introduction would be:

There is much debate on the treatment of animals in modern society. Some people argue that modern industrial and scientific practices cause suffering and should be reformed; others believe that utilizing animals is essential for global food security and medical progress. In my opinion ...

The final sentence would present your opinion on the subject.

Why is this intro better? It opens with a clear statement of the topic of the essay. It offers a basic summary of the sides of the issue, and it ends with the writer's opinion.

The next three paragraphs are considered the body of the essay. Each paragraph should discuss one—and only one—idea. Using the sample as a guide, body paragraph #1 would discuss animals kept in zoos, paragraph #2 would discuss endangered animals, and paragraph #3 would discuss the idea that you add.

It is important to include linking words/phrases to improve the flow of your writing. Use them both within and between paragraphs. Here are some connectors to consider, categorized by the relationship they show:

- **addition** (to add more information): *and, also, furthermore, moreover, in addition.*
- **contrast** (to show difference or opposition): *but, however, although, despite, on the other hand.*
- **cause and effect** (to show reasons and results): *because, so, therefore, as a result, consequently.*
- **sequence** (to order events or points): *firstly, then, next, finally.*
- **summary** (to conclude or wrap up): *in conclusion, overall, to summarize*

The sample essay needs to be better linked. Choose a transitional expression from the list (a-e) below. Write the letter in the box provided.

- a) for this reason
- b) to sum up
- c) as well as discussing
- d) in this way
- e) as for agriculture

The conclusion should restate your thesis—in a new way—and leave the reader with a final thought. This is often a comment on the importance of the issue or a look to the future (e.g. what will happen if society doesn't act/change). In a longer essay, you may summarize the main points of the essay, but with the word limit in the FCE, this is often not possible.

The treatment of animals in our world today

This is a complex question. Many people depend on ¹ animals to live, whether they eat meat or just keep an ² animal for its milk. This essay will consider farming, ☐ the role of zoos and endangered wildlife.

When zoos first opened, they had a real purpose – to educate people. There was no television and ☐ people got to see ³ animals from other places. Now we don't have the same need for zoos and it is cruel to lock ⁴ animals up there. ☐ I think all zoos should be closed.

☐ I think some farmers look after ⁵ animals well, but many don't care about the conditions that their ⁶ animals live in. The best farmers give ⁷ animals plenty of space and fresh grass to eat.

☐ I think we could treat ⁸ animals better.

Language: The third criterion evaluates your command of grammar and vocabulary. To award a high mark for language, the examiner needs to see a good range of vocabulary in the answer. For this reason, avoid repeating basic words wherever possible.

Apart from its use in the title, the word *animal(s)* is used eight times in the essay. Which word could replace the word *animal(s)*? Write the number of the use in the text with its preplacement.

cow _____ creatures _____ goat _____ them _____ wildlife _____ they _____

Now replace the words *I think ...* with three of these phrases, changing the word order if necessary. Which one doesn't fit anywhere? Why not?

- a) *without a doubt* _____
- b) *personally speaking* _____
- c) *in my opinion* _____
- d) *it is true that* _____

Write a final sentence, to avoid a single sentence paragraph and improve the conclusion.

Communicative Achievement: The final area of evaluation measures whether your tone, register, and style are appropriate for a formal essay. It looks at your ability to hold the reader's attention and communicate straightforward or complex ideas clearly. Remember that your essay should be formal. Also, include a title for your essay.

Now it is your turn. Read the exam question below and write an essay of 140-190 words, following the advice given. Look back at 4.1 for useful vocabulary.

In your English class you have been talking about wildlife conservation. Now your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay using all the notes and give reasons for your point of view.

Not enough is being done to protect endangered animals.
Do you agree?

Notes

Write about:

1. which animals are under threat
2. why we need to protect these animals
3. (your own idea)