

Writing

letters

Tips for the Writing test

As you remember, in Writing test of General Training Module there are 2 tasks:

Writing Task 1 - to write a letter.

Writing Task 2 - to write an essay.

Writing a letter must not take you more than 20 minutes, so there will be 40 minutes left for the essay. Usually, not all of us are good in writing letters, not to say essays, forget in English! Well, SURPRISE – there is a technique to it, making writing so simple, a monkey could do it. So let's get down to business.

First, some general guidelines

You will receive two Answering Sheets to write on – one for the Writing Task 1, meaning letter, and one for Writing Task 2, meaning essay. Keep your writing neat, clean and nice-looking. Leave blank line between paragraphs and don't write on margins of the Answering Sheet. Don't make a mess even if you have made a mistake – just cross it out once.

If there are instructions that say that you need to write about a number of things (let's say A, B, C) – do it, write about every one of them. It is important for your score. You need to show the examiner that you read and understood the instructions; otherwise he might think that you didn't.

Here is an example of such instructions:

- Describe the situation
- Explain your problem
- Suggest solution

One of the most typical mistakes is to copy task instructions. It is absolutely forbidden, wastes precious time and people lose points for it. You can use what is written in task instructions only if you write the same in other words.

Length is very important. So if you can not reach the words limit (150 for letter, 250 for essay), try to be closer to it.

These simple rules apply to both letter and essay. Stick to them, and your work will leave good impression on the examiner.

Tips for Writing Task 1 - Letter

Types of letters

Test may ask you to write only one of **4 types** of letters:

- **Complaint / Request (of information) letter**
- **Job application letter**
- **Personal letter**
- **Formal business letter**

There are rules how to write a letter of each type. When a letter is graded by IELTS examiners, its structure, vocabulary and fluency of language are equally important. So I will show here a model for every one of the letter types together with phrases and forms of speech, and the only thing you need to do is to insert your specific topic information in it. I also supply you with examples to demonstrate what your letter should look like.

Complaint

This is a letter you write to complain about something. It could be something you have purchased or a bad service that you have received, or an accident that happened to you. You must describe it and demand appropriate actions from relevant people.

There are **4 paragraphs** in this type of letter. They should look like this:

1. Start with “Dear Sir/Madam,“ (or write person’s name if it was given in task instructions)

Explain shortly (in one or two sentences) what you are complaining about.

“I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the tape recorder that I purchased in your store.”

2. Explain in more details

- a) What happened, what the problem is.

“I purchased a tape recorder in your store on 12/3/2005, just 3 days ago. After a few times that I used it, the “Play” button broke off”.

- b) What are you unhappy about.
“I was very surprised to see the new improved model with 2 years of warranty breaking so soon and for no reason at all.”
- c) What did you do to resolve the situation.
“I contacted your store immediately in order to return the tape recorder and spoke to the shift manager. He refused to replace the tape recorder and suggested that I had it repaired.”
- d) How do you feel about the problem.
“You can imagine how receiving this offer upset me.”

This paragraph should be the longest in the whole letter. You can even divide it into several parts.

3. Write what you would like them to do, and what will you do if they don't give you what you want.

"I insist that you replace the damaged tape recorder and send me a new one. Otherwise I will be forced to stop my payments to your store".

4. Write formal ending for the letter, your name and sign.

"I look forward to hearing from you."

If you **know** the name of person you are writing to, sign

"Yours **sincerely**,
Mr. Smith"

If you **don't know** the name of person you are writing to, sign

"Yours **faithfully**,
Mr. Smith"

Example of Complaint

This example demonstrates what a good letter of complaint should look like. There are notes on the margins, which indicate paragraphs numbers as explained on pages 26-27. You don't need to write them in your own letter. It is enough to just leave blank line between the paragraphs

Dear Sir/Madam,

The reason I am writing to you is poor quality of a food processor, which I bought in your store two weeks ago. After only two times it was in use, problems started to appear.

The first malfunction that I noticed was safety lock that demanded applying of great force. My wife had to ask me for help, because she wasn't strong enough to push the safety lock through. We discovered another problem when tried to use the blender. I put some ice-cream and milk in the blender and pushed the "Start" button. It started working but suddenly got stuck and we were unable to use it since. I was very surprised to discover that much problems in a quite expensive model.

Naturally, I returned the blender to you to be replaced with a new one. Your assistant said that I would have to wait only a week. After two weeks the food processor had still not arrived. Finally, four weeks later, I was contacted by your representative. Imagine my feelings when I learned from him that I can not receive the same model of food processor as I bought. As a solution he offered that I upgrade my model to a better one and this too will take two weeks.

I am very disappointed with both the equipment and the service have I received. Therefore I expect a full refund of 180\$ as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,
Mr. Smith.

1

2a

2b

2c

2d

3

4

Useful phrases

The following phrases will make your letter look good. In case it is hard for you to remember all of them, choose just one for each paragraph, memorize it and use for all the letters of this type.

For Paragraph 1

- “I am writing to complain about...”
- “I am writing in regard to...”
- “The reason I am writing to you is (a problem with...)”
- “I am writing to express my concern about/dissatisfaction with...”
- “I would like to bring the matter of ... to your attention.”
- “I would like to draw your attention to ...”

For paragraph 2

- “I was supposed to receive ... Unfortunately, that never happened.”
- “You can imagine how unhappy I was to discover ...”
- “I regret to inform you that your service was below my expectations.”
- “When I tried to contact you by phone, no one could offer me any sensible answer.”
- “I contacted your representative in Unfortunately, he denied me the service that I requested.”

For paragraph 3

- “The ideal solution would be ... “
- “I hope you can settle this matter by ...(doing something)”
- “I insist on getting a refund of ...”
- “Please look into this matter as soon as possible.”
- “I believe this matter deserves your urgent attention.”

You have bought a new camera but when you got it home you found it had some problems. You returned the camera and spoke to the company representative a week ago but the camera has still not been repaired.

Write a letter to the company.

In your letter:

- Introduce yourself
 - Explain the situation
 - Say what action you would like the company to take
-

Write at least 150 words

You do **NOT** need to write any addresses

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear.....,

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is Mark Roberts and **I am writing to you regarding** a Nokia camera that I bought at your department store on Sunhill Road, Dewsbury, on the 5th September.

The camera seemed to work fine in the shop. However, upon returning home, it became clear that the shutter mechanism was not functioning properly. **In addition to this**, there was a small scratch on the lens.

I therefore returned to the shop the following day, on the 6th September, and spoke to a company representative about the issue. I left the camera with the assistant and they assured me that they would look into the problem with a view to repairing the camera and get back to me a few days later.

However, it has now been one week and when I contacted the shop again they said that the camera has still not been fixed and they do not know how long it will be.

As I am sure you will understand, **it is not acceptable** to be waiting for such a long time for it to be repaired. **I would therefore like to request** that I be given a full refund should I not receive the repaired camera by the end of this week.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully
Mark Roberts