

Article – Exam-Style Writing Tasks

English

Level 2 Writing

Two exam-style tasks · planning grid · mark scheme · model answer with examiner notes

Know the format: an article

Layout: a headline (catchy – alliteration, a question or a play on words) → optional strapline and byline → an opening paragraph that hooks the reader and says what the article is about → 3–4 body paragraphs, each with one point and an example → a closing paragraph that returns to the opening idea or gives a call to action.

Tone: lively but controlled. You can use direct address ('you'), rhetorical questions, the rule of three, a short anecdote, statistics you invent. Keep paragraphs short.

Cover every bullet. The task's bullets are the examiner's checklist – give each one a paragraph.

Useful phrases

- At eighteen I could..., but I could not...
- Here is the thing nobody tells you:
- It is not ... that matters; it is ...
- I learned this the hard way.
- None of this needs...; one ... a fortnight would do it.
- Imagine if...
- So here is my suggestion.
- It should not have taken ... to learn it.

Task 1 – exam-style (Pearson layout)

Task 1

21 marks · about 35 minutes

Information

A website for young adults is running a series of articles called '**Skills school never taught me**'. Readers are invited to write about a practical skill – such as managing money, cooking, dealing with landlords, or coping with stress – that they had to learn for themselves after leaving school.

Writing task

Write an article for the website about a skill you think everyone should be taught before they leave school.

In your writing, you should:

- say what the skill is and why it matters
- describe how you learned it and what went wrong along the way
- explain how it could be taught in schools

You should aim to write about **250 to 300** words.

(21 marks)

Plan first (5 minutes)

Headline + strapline

Hook (para 1): why this skill?

Para 2: what it is / why it matters

Para 3: how I learned it – the story

Para 4: how schools could teach it

Closing line / call to action

Write your answer

[illegible]

Task 2 – exam-style (Highfield layout)

Task 2

27 marks · about 30 minutes

Information

Your workplace produces a monthly staff newsletter. The editor has asked for articles on the theme **'One change that would make this a better place to work'**.

You make these notes: flexible start times (7–10 am) · long commutes, school runs · other companies do it · trial for 3 months · would need clear core hours (10–3) · morale, less lateness

Writing task

Write an article for the staff newsletter about the change you would make.

In your writing, you should:

- describe the change you are suggesting
- explain the benefits for staff and for the company
- say how it could be introduced

You should aim to write about **250 to 300** words.

(27 marks)

Write your answer

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Article – Exam-Style Writing Tasks – Mark Scheme and Model Answer

How the examiner marks it, what a full-marks answer must include, and a model answer at a secure Level 2 pass standard.

Want a tutor to mark your work? Functify Learning runs live 10-week Functional Skills Level 2 English and Maths courses (small groups, mock exam included) and a 5-day self-paced revision course. Start with our free mini mock test at funtifylearning.co.uk.

How writing tasks are marked

Marks	Composition (what the examiner looks for) – Grid A	Spelling, punctuation and grammar – Grid B
Top band 9–12 (Task 1) 7–9 (Task 2)	Ideas are consistently clear, with detail used <i>effectively</i> for the purpose and audience, at the right length. Format and structure are right for the text type; paragraphs are used effectively and the writing is held together with organisational markers. A range of sentence types, including complex sentences, used accurately. Language and register suit the audience, with a wide, well-chosen vocabulary.	Top: spelling of everyday and specialist words is accurate; a range of punctuation is used correctly and for effect; grammar is consistently accurate, including tense and subject–verb agreement.
Middle band 5–8 / 4–6	Ideas are reasonably clear with an appropriate level of detail. Format and structure are appropriate; paragraphs generally accurate; cohesion mostly maintained. Range of sentences with general accuracy. Wide vocabulary appropriate to purpose and audience.	Middle: mostly accurate spelling with some errors in harder words; sentence punctuation mostly accurate; grammar generally correct.
Lower band 1–4 / 1–3	Straightforward ideas with some clarity. Some use of appropriate format, paragraphs and cohesion. Some range of sentences with some accuracy. Some appropriate vocabulary.	Lower: errors in spelling and punctuation that sometimes affect clarity; limited or inconsistent grammatical control.

Based on the published Pearson Edexcel Level 2 writing grids (Task 1 = 21 marks: 12 composition + 9 SPaG; Task 2 = 15 marks: 9 + 6). Highfield, City & Guilds and NCFE mark the same strands with different totals (e.g. 27 per task).

Indicative content – what a full answer to Task 1 must cover

- Identify a specific skill and explain why it matters (e.g. budgeting – rent, bills, debt; cooking – health and cost; renting – deposits and contracts)
- Describe a personal learning experience with a specific setback (an overdraft, a burnt dinner, a lost deposit) and what it taught them
- Suggest a realistic way schools could teach it (a weekly lesson in Year 10/11, a workshop with real bank statements, a mock tenancy contract, visiting speakers)

- Use article conventions: headline, engaging opening, paragraphs, a conclusion; language suited to a young-adult website

The examiner's list is "not prescriptive" – any relevant, developed ideas score – but every bullet point in the task must be addressed.

Model answer – Task 1 (296 words)

Nobody told me rent was only the beginning

The skill school never taught me: how to run a bank account before it runs you. [headline + strapline]

At eighteen I could explain the causes of the First World War, but I could not tell you what a direct debit was. Three months after moving into my first flat, I found out the hard way. [hook: contrast + short punchy sentence]

The skill is simple to name and surprisingly hard to learn: budgeting. Not saving for a holiday, but knowing exactly what leaves your account, when, and what happens if it isn't there. Rent is the obvious bill. It is the other twelve – council tax, energy, water, phone, broadband, insurance – that quietly empty an account while you are looking the other way. [bullet 1: what the skill is + why it matters; listing for effect]

I learned by getting it wrong. My council tax came out two days before payday, my account went £140 overdrawn, and the bank charged me £6 a day until I noticed. That was a week. By the time I understood what had happened I had paid £42 for the privilege of not knowing how my own money worked. A friend finally sat me down with a spreadsheet and a highlighter, and we moved every bill to the day after payday. I have not been overdrawn since. [bullet 2: personal story, specific figures, the turning point]

None of this needs a new qualification. One lesson a fortnight in Year 11, using real bank statements with the names blacked out, would do it. Students could set up a budget for an imaginary flat, get hit with a surprise bill, and work out what to move. A local bank would probably send someone in for free. [bullet 3: practical, realistic suggestions]

Schools teach us to pass exams. The overdraft taught me to read a bank statement. I know which lesson I use more often – and it should not have cost me £42 to learn it. [ending returns to the opening idea; memorable final line]

Why this scores in the top band

- The headline and strapline are doing the job of an article's format; the first paragraph hooks with a contrast and a very short sentence.
- Every bullet has its own paragraph, and the personal story carries specific, believable figures (£140, £6 a day, £42).
- The tone suits a young-adult website: direct, wry, first person – but the sentences are controlled and the punctuation is accurate.
- Language features are used deliberately: listing of bills, contrast between school and real life, a rule-of-three close.
- The ending links back to the opening, which is what 'cohesion' looks like in an article.

Where Level 2 students lose marks on this text type

- No headline – or a headline that is just the topic ('Budgeting'). Give it some life.
- Writing a report or an essay with a headline stuck on top: no hook, no voice, no direct address.
- Skipping the 'what went wrong' bullet because it feels personal. The examiner wants the story – invent one if you need to.

- One enormous paragraph. Articles use short paragraphs; the format mark depends on it.