

Formal Email – Exam-Style Writing Tasks

English

Level 2 Writing

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

Know the format: a formal email

Layout: the exam gives you **To:** and **From:** lines – complete them – then write a specific **Subject:** line, a greeting (**Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Mr/Ms + surname**), paragraphs, and a sign-off (**Yours faithfully / sincerely**; **Kind regards** is acceptable in an email if the tone is otherwise formal) with your full name.

Structure is the same as a letter: purpose → what happened (dates, times, order numbers) → the effect on you → what you want done and by when → polite close.

Register: formal. An email is not a text message: no 'Hi', no 'u', no emojis, full sentences, paragraphs. A complaint should be firm and factual, never rude.

Useful phrases

- I am writing to complain about / to apply for / to request...
- Your website states that... however...
- On [date] I... but...
- As a result, I have...
- I would like you to... within ... days.
- I would be grateful if you could confirm...
- If I do not hear from you by..., I will...
- Could you let me know what happens next?

Task 1 – exam-style (Pearson layout)

Task 1

15 marks · about 25 minutes

Information

You ordered an exercise bike online from a home-fitness company three weeks ago. The company's website promises delivery within five working days, free assembly by a trained fitter, and a 30-day money-back guarantee.

Your bike arrived nine days late, the fitter did not turn up on the day arranged, and one pedal was missing from the box.

Writing task

Write an email of complaint to the company's Customer Care Manager.

In your writing, you should:

- describe what went wrong with your order
- explain what action you would like the company to take

You should aim to write about **200 to 250** words.

(15 marks)

Plan first (5 minutes)

Subject line (specific)

Para 1: purpose – order number, date

Para 2: what went wrong (3 things, in order)

Para 3: effect on me

Para 4: what I want + deadline

Sign-off + full name

Write your answer

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, and the page is completely blank except for the lines themselves.

Task 2 – exam-style (Highfield layout)

Task 2

27 marks · about 30 minutes

Information

You saw this notice at work:

Staff training fund – applications open

Up to £500 per employee towards a course that will benefit your work. Apply by email to the HR Manager, explaining what you want to study and how it will help the company.

You make these notes: want to do a Level 3 first-aid course · £380, evenings, 6 weeks · no trained first-aider on my shift · would cover Saturdays · could train other staff afterwards

Writing task

Write an email to the HR Manager applying for the training fund.

In your writing, you should:

- say which course you want to do and give the details
- explain how it would benefit you and the company
- ask what happens next

You should aim to write about **200 to 250** words.

(27 marks)

Write your answer

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

Formal Email – 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

- Describe the three problems specifically: late delivery (nine days, against a five-day promise), fitter not arriving (date/time), missing pedal
- Refer to the company's own promises (5 working days, free assembly, 30-day guarantee) to strengthen the complaint
- Explain the effect: unable to use the bike, time taken off work waiting for the fitter
- State clear, reasonable actions: send the pedal, book a fitter within a set time, partial refund, apology; give a deadline

- Use email conventions: subject line, greeting, paragraphs, formal sign-off

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 (241 words)

To:	[customer care address given on the paper]
From:	[your email address]
Subject:	Complaint about order 48211 – late delivery, missed fitting and missing part

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to complain about the exercise bike I ordered from your website on 28 August (order number 48211). **[purpose, with the reference an examiner expects]**

Your website promises delivery within five working days. My bike did not arrive until 15 September – nine working days late – and nobody contacted me to explain the delay. On 16 September I took a morning off work for the fitter you had booked, but no one came and no one called. When I finally opened the box myself, I found that one of the pedals was missing. **[three problems, in order, each with a date; refers back to the company's promise]**

As a result, three weeks after paying £349, I have a bike I cannot use, and I have lost half a day's pay waiting for a fitter who never appeared. This is not the service your advertising describes. **[effect on the customer; firm but polite]**

I would like you to send the missing pedal by tracked delivery within seven days, and to arrange a new fitting appointment on a date I choose, with a confirmation call the day before. Given the delay and the missed appointment, I also think a partial refund of £50 would be reasonable. If I do not hear from you within seven days, I will use the 30-day guarantee to return the bike for a full refund. **[specific actions + deadline + consequence – bullet 2 fully covered]**

I look forward to your reply.

Yours faithfully,
D. Kowalski

Why this scores in the top band

- The subject line tells the reader what the email is about before they open it – a format mark.
- Each problem has a date and a fact; the company's own promises are quoted back to it, which is what makes a complaint persuasive rather than just angry.
- The requests are specific, reasonable and time-limited, and there is a consequence – exactly what bullet 2 asks for.
- Formal register throughout: no contractions, no insults, 'I would like you to' rather than 'you must'.
- Within the 200–250 word range; four clear paragraphs with one job each.

Where Level 2 students lose marks on this text type

- Leaving the Subject line blank or vague ('Complaint'). Make it specific.
- Ranting: 'disgusting', 'a joke', 'useless'. Emotive insults lose register marks; facts and dates win.
- Describing what went wrong at length and then forgetting to say what you want done – bullet 2 is half the task.
- Signing off 'Thanks' or 'Cheers'. Keep the email as formal as a letter.