

Informal Letter or 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: an informal letter or email

Layout: email – To/From/Subject then 'Hi Jo,' or 'Dear Nan,'; letter – your address and date, then the greeting. Paragraphs as usual. Sign off 'Love,', 'Best wishes,', 'See you soon,' + first name.

Register: friendly and personal. Contractions (I'm, don't) are fine. Questions to the reader, exclamation marks in moderation, some humour. **Not** fine: text-speak, emojis, missing capital letters, no paragraphs.

The structure is still there: why you're writing → the main news or request with detail → what you'd like them to do / how you feel → a warm close.

Useful phrases

- It was so good to hear from you.
- Let me tell you what it's actually like.
- Honestly? ...
- The best bit is... / The hard part is...
- My advice: don't...; do...
- You'll ... by half-term.
- Ring me when you've decided.
- Love, / Best wishes, / See you soon,

Task 1 – exam-style (Pearson layout)

Task 1

15 marks · about 25 minutes

Information

A friend who moved to another town last year is thinking about applying for the same college course you have just started. They have emailed to ask what it is really like.

Writing task

Write an email to your friend about the course.

In your writing, you should:

- describe what the course involves and what you think of it so far
- give your friend advice about applying and about the first few weeks

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

(15 marks)

Plan first (5 minutes)

Subject + greeting

Para 1: nice to hear from you + why I'm writing

Para 2: what the course involves

Para 3: what I think of it (honest)

Para 4: advice – applying + first weeks

Warm close + sign-off

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.

Task 2 – exam-style (Highfield layout)

Task 2

27 marks · about 30 minutes

Information

Your grandparent has offered to help you with the cost of a training course you want to do, but has asked you to explain what the course is and why you want to do it before they decide.

You make these notes: Level 3 childcare course, one year, two days a week · want to work in a nursery, then maybe run one · fees £1,100 · would cover the rest from part-time job · thank them properly · visit next month

Writing task

Write a letter to your grandparent about the course.

In your writing, you should:

- explain what the course is and why you want to do it
- say how the money would help and what you would contribute yourself
- thank them and suggest when you could see them

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 run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Informal Letter or 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

- A description of the course: subject, length, days, what a typical session involves, the tutors
- An honest opinion with specifics: what is enjoyable, what is harder than expected
- Practical advice: applying (deadline, what to put on the form, who to contact), and the first weeks (be early, get the reading list, talk to people)
- Informal email conventions: subject line, friendly greeting and sign-off, personal tone, paragraphs, accurate SPaG

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)

To:	[your friend's address]
From:	[your email address]
Subject:	The course – honest answer!

Hi Jo, [informal greeting]

It was so good to hear from you – I still can't believe it's been a year since you moved. And yes, you should absolutely apply. Let me tell you what it's actually like, warts and all. [warm opener; purpose; personal voice with contractions]

The course is two days a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, nine till three, and it runs until June. Tuesdays are mostly practical – last week we spent the whole morning on a real case study and had to present our plan to the group, which was terrifying and brilliant in equal measure. Thursdays are more theory, with a lot of reading set between sessions. The tutors are strict about deadlines but genuinely kind if you're struggling; mine has already stayed late twice to go through things with me. [bullet 1: what it involves – days, times, a specific example, the tutors]

Honestly? I love it more than I expected. The people are the best bit – there are twenty of us, from nineteen to fifty-something, and nobody makes you feel stupid for asking. The hard part is the reading. I thought I could do it on the bus. I can't. I've had to block out Sunday afternoons, and that has taken some getting used to. [honest opinion; short sentences for emphasis; personal detail]

Advice for applying: don't leave it until the deadline, because they interview everyone and the slots go fast. On the form, write about something you've actually done, not what you think they want to hear – my tutor said that's what got me in. For the first few weeks, turn up early, get the reading list on day one, and sit next to someone new every session. You'll have a group of friends by half-term. [bullet 2: specific advice for both parts; imperatives soften in an informal voice]

Ring me when you've decided – I'll help you with the form. And come and visit; the college café does the best flapjack in the county. [close: offer + invitation; humour]

Love,
Priya

Why this scores in the top band

- The voice is unmistakably informal – 'warts and all', 'Honestly?', contractions throughout – yet every sentence is complete, punctuated and paragraphed.
- Both bullets are covered in full: what the course involves (days, times, an example session, tutors) and advice split into applying and the first weeks.
- Detail is specific and personal: twenty students, Sunday afternoons, flapjack – the mark scheme calls this 'detail effectively used'.
- Range of sentences: long descriptive ones, then 'I thought I could do it on the bus. I can't.' for emphasis.
- Correct informal conventions: subject line, 'Hi Jo', warm sign-off with first name.

Where Level 2 students lose marks on this text type

- Treating 'informal' as 'anything goes': text-speak, no capitals, no paragraphs. Register marks and SPaG marks both fall.

- Writing formally to a friend – 'Dear Sir', 'Yours faithfully' – which is the wrong register for the audience.
- Chatting for 200 words and forgetting the second bullet (the advice).
- Overusing exclamation marks. One or two is friendly; ten is noise.