

# The writing Module

As a student at college or university, you will have to produce a lot of writing material. As someone who may soon be living or working in a country where English is widely used, an ability to communicate effectively in writing will also be essential. Some writing may be in the form of letters, emails, short essays or reports. Other pieces of writing will be longer and will require considerable planning and attention to detail.

It will therefore be important for you to be able to express yourself clearly, write in a variety of styles and organise your ideas carefully. You will also need to be fairly accurate in your writing, so that your message is not obscured by grammatical errors. The writing examiners mark your work in four areas: content, organisation, vocabulary and grammar.

## Exercise 1

Look at the table and the box below. The table shows the four assessment criteria for writing tasks and the box shows a list of skills and strategies. Match each of the skills and strategies, A-R, to one of the assessment criteria. The first two have been done for you.

Assessment Criteria	Skills and strategies
Content	
Organization	
vocabulary	
Grammar	

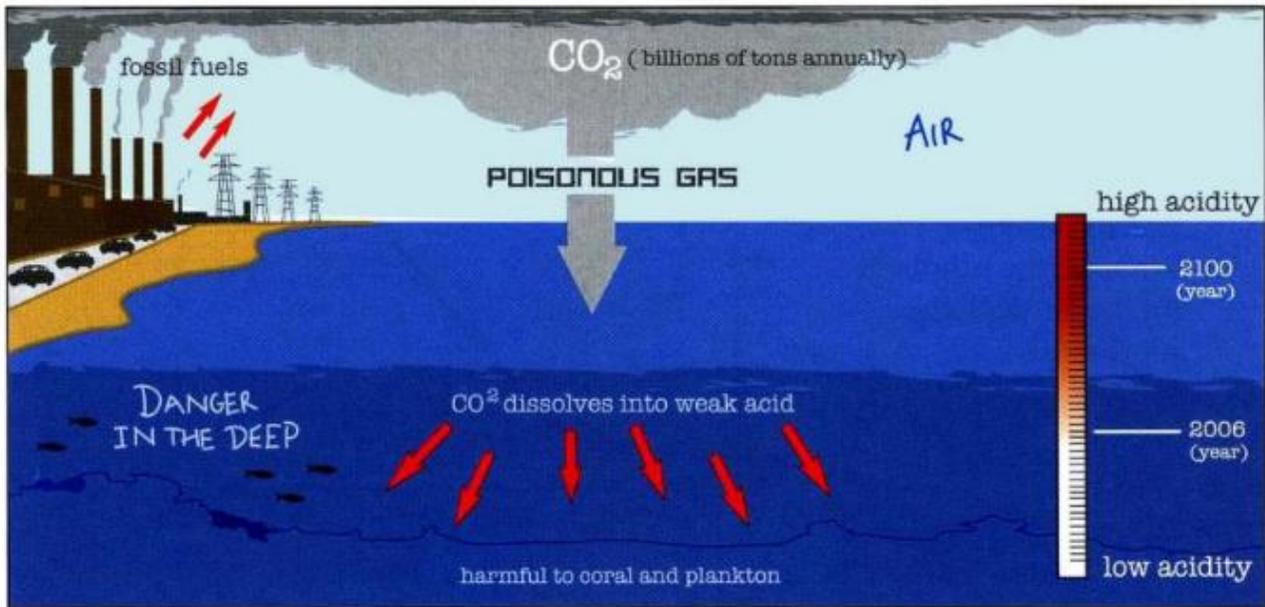
Skills and Strategies	Skills and Strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Use linkers appropriately</li> <li>B. Choose the right words</li> <li>C. Use the correct punctuation</li> <li>D. Choose words that go well together</li> <li>E. Include data to support points</li> <li>F. Use the right tense and voice</li> <li>G. Use paragraphs appropriately</li> <li>H. Provide an overview of the information</li> <li>I. Use words in the correct form</li> <li>J. Use complex sentences</li> <li>K. Use reference words to avoid repetition</li> <li>L. Use the right prepositions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>M. Spell words correctly</li> <li>N. Select the most important information</li> <li>O. Use comparative structures correctly</li> <li>P. Use practise words and expressions</li> <li>Q. Write at least 150 words</li> <li>R. Present information in a logical order</li> </ul>

Exercise 2. Work with a partner. Together, discuss these questions.

- a. What do you think are the most important skills for a good writer to have?
  
- b. Which of the four criteria do you find most difficult when writing in English?

Exercise 3. Work with a partner. Together, discuss the following questions.

- a. What does the process diagram below show?
  
- b. What do the arrows represent?
  
- c. What does the scale at the side of the diagram describe?



Exercise 4 Complete this short description of the diagram by first choosing the most suitable verb from the box for each gap and then putting it in the correct form.

reduce	pass	happen	rise	develop	burn
destroy					
pollute	become	release	give	allow	attack

This diagram shows how carbon dioxide 1..... the world's oceans. Billions of tons of carbon dioxide and other toxic substances 2..... into the air every year from the fossil fuels that 3..... In our factories, homes and cars. These gases eventually 4..... Into the oceans and form a weak acid, which 5..... Plankton and the shells of marine creatures, causing serious damage. Experts predict that the acid levels of the oceans 6..... considerably between now and 2100. If this happens and the Earth's seas 7..... too acidic, much of the coral and plankton that live there could 8..... within a few decades.

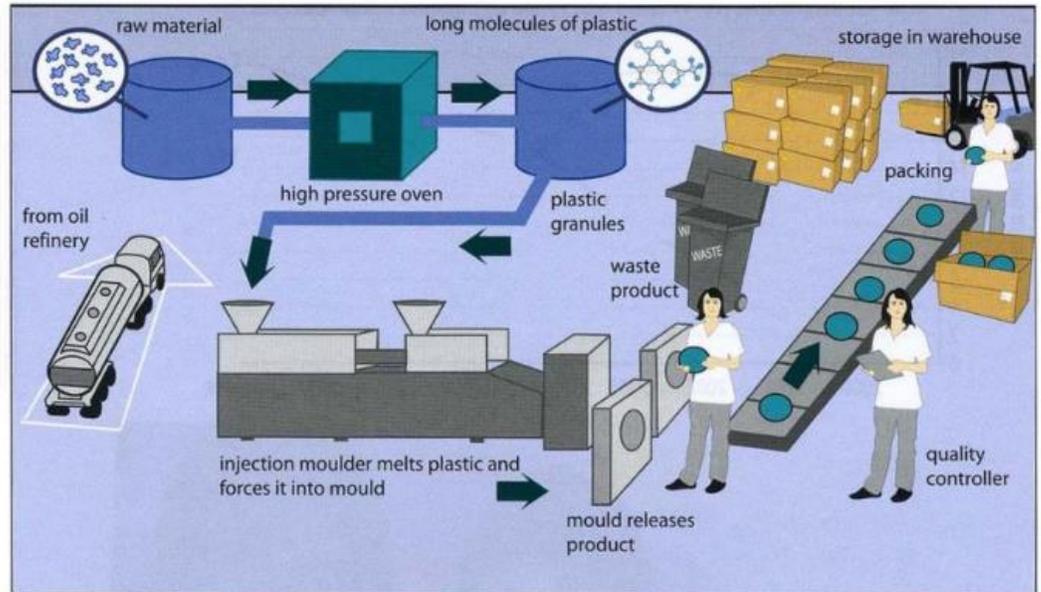
Exercise 5. Work with a partner. Together, look at the task on the next page and then discuss these questions.

- a. Can you rephrase the task introduction in your own words?  
“The diagram below shows how raw materials are used to make plastic products.”
  
- b. Which key words in the labels do you not need to rephrase?
  
- c. Which words could you try to rephrase?
  
- d. What other vocabulary do you know that would be useful to describe the equipment or process?
  
- e. What linking words might you use?

The diagram below shows how raw materials are used to make plastic products.

Summarise the information by selecting and reporting the main features, and make comparisons where relevant.

**Test tip**  
You will need to use the key words in the labels on the diagram to support the main points. However, you should use your own words and sentences whenever you can.



Exercise 6 Complete this plan and then write a summary of the process shown in the diagram.

**Test tip**  
Design your paragraph breaks around the main stages.

		Notes
Para 1	Introduction and overview of diagram	Complex process/number of steps/equipment/people
Para 2	How process begins up to production of long molecules	
Para 3	From molecules to mold	
Para 4	What happens to finish product	

**Activity 7** Swap your plan and your summary of the process with a partner. Read your partner's answers and then compare them with the model answer in the key. Does the model answer include any of your vocabulary or linking words from your answers to exercise 5.

**The diagram illustrates the various stages in the production of plastic items. Clearly this is the complex process that requires a range of equipment and, machinery and at some stages, skilled workers.**

**Initially, the raw materials have to be transported from the oil refinery to the plant. On arrival, they are poured into a large drum and from there they pass into a special oven, which heats the material at high pressure so that long molecules of plastic form.**

**The granules are then funnelled into a rectangular moulder with a narrow end. The moulder melts the plastic in order to push it out into a mould. When the plastic has hardened in the mould, the items can be removed and any waste material discarded.**

**Before they can be packaged, the finished products have to be checked for any problems, so next they are placed on a belt and observed by an expert. If they pass the inspection, they can be packed into boxes and taken to a warehouse for storage.**  
**170 words.**

## **Communicating your message**

What is tone?

The tone and level of formality that you use in your letter will affect how successful you are at communicating your message. The tone of your letter depends on who you are writing to. If you are writing a formal letter, your language should be clear and polite, while a letter to a friend may contain less formal expressions and be more direct.

How can I make sure that my meaning is clear?

You need to use the right expressions to convey your message, and your vocabulary should be appropriate and varied.

## Using the right tone

You need to use appropriate language in your letter to give it the right tone -formal, neutral or informal.

Task 1. Read the list of sentences below in the Request and suggestions box. What do you notice about them?

Task 2. Work with a partner. Together, discuss how a reader would react if they received these statements in a letter.

<b>Requests and suggestions</b>	<b>Polite expressions</b>
<p><i>Send me a brochure.</i></p> <p><i>I want a ticket for tonight's show.</i></p> <p><i>I think you should employ more staff.</i></p> <p><i>You should give up smoking.</i></p> <p><i>I want to get a place at your school.</i></p> <p><i>You always park too close to me!</i></p> <p><i>I need to use you as a referee.</i></p>	<p>I would like to .....</p> <p>I am interested in .....ing</p> <p>Could I suggest that .....</p> <p>I would be grateful if .....</p> <p>Perhaps it would be better if you.....</p> <p>I would recommend that you .....</p> <p>I would appreciate it if .....</p> <p>You could consider .....ing</p> <p>I was wondering if .....</p>

Task 3 Improve the tone of each request and suggestion by rewriting it using a structure from the *Polite expressions* box.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Choosing the right language and expressions

Informal letters are often quite personal, while formal letters need to be more distant, but there are many feelings that you may wish to convey in both types of letters and often it is best to be neutral (neither too formal or informal).

Task 4. Read the expressions **1-15** and match them to the uses described in **A-G**.  
When it is appropriate to use each expression. Write f for formal, i for informal and n for n

Expressions		These are used to .....
1. I was (so) sorry to hear about .....		A. Apologise for something B. Ask for information C. Express satisfaction D. Complain about something E. Thank somebody for something F. Express sympathy G. Make suggestions
2. I would (very much) like to know .....		
3. I'm sorry that I.....		
4. I would be grateful if you could .....		
5. I was delighted/glad to hear.....		
6. I am writing to express my concern about.....		
7. I'm (extremely) grateful to you for.....		
8. I very much appreciate your .....ing		
9. Unfortunately/Regrettably I .....		
10. Even though I phoned you about ...		
11. Please accept my apologies (for....)		
12. ....was very enjoyable.		
13. ....is very disappointing.		
14. I regret that .....		
15. Would it be a good idea to .....		

Task 5 Read the Test tip and then look at the extracts A-D. Decide what is wrong with the underlined words.

- A. ....
- B. ....
- C. ....
- D. ....

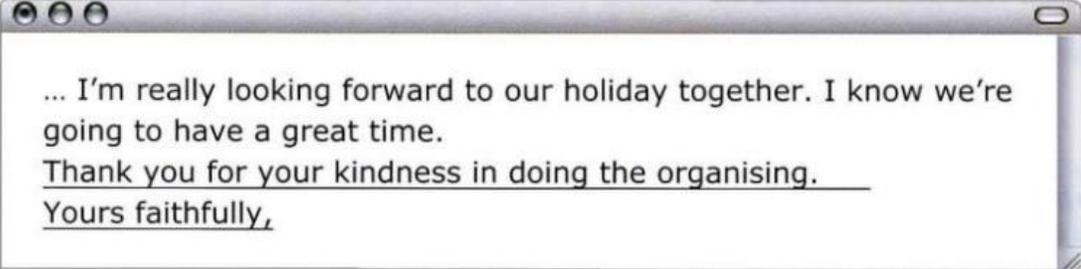
**Test tip**  
You need to use the right tone throughout your letter. You will lose marks if you use an inappropriate tone or if you use the wrong tone in parts of your letter.

**A**  
Dear Jenny,  
It was absolutely fantastic to see you at the school reunion last week. You haven't changed a bit since we last met! I only have your old email address, so kindly send me your contact details so that I can forward you the photographs I mentioned.

**B**  
Dear Mr Parsons,  
How's it going? Still at the old school, I hope, because I need you to do something for me!  
I've been working in hospitality for the last 5 years, as an apprentice chef, but now I've decided that I'd like to take up full-time study again, so I'd like you to be a referee for me.

**C**  
Dear Sirs,  
I've received a reminder notice from your company, saying I have not paid my phone bill and threatening to cut off the phone. You guys have got it wrong because I know I paid this bill.  
I enclose a copy of my credit card statement showing that the payment was made on 26 February.

**D**



... I'm really looking forward to our holiday together. I know we're going to have a great time.  
Thank you for your kindness in doing the organising.  
Yours faithfully,

Task 6 Rewrite the underlined sentences using the right tone.

6. A.....

.....

.....

B.....

.....

.....  
C.....

.....  
D.....

**Task 7** Read the four writing tasks A-D below and decide what type of letter you will need to write (formal or informal) and what feelings you need to express.

**A** *You play sport (e.g. football) for a local team. You recently heard that a player in your team is in hospital.*  
*Write a letter to your team mate. In your letter*

- say how you feel about the news
- ask about the treatment in the hospital
- suggest some ways of cheering him/her up

**B** *You recently stayed in a hotel in another city. When you got home you discovered that you had left something of value in the room.*  
*Write a letter to the hotel. In your letter*

- describe the item that you left behind and say where you left it
- ask the hotel to arrange to send it to you
- suggest a way to pay for the postage

**C** *Two days ago you had a meal at a well-known restaurant. Unfortunately, you were very ill after the meal.*  
*Write a letter to the restaurant. In your letter*

- describe what you ate
- say how you feel about the situation
- ask them what they can do about it

**D** *A friend recently invited you to a special party. You intended to go but at the last minute you were unable to attend.*  
*Write a letter to your friend. In your letter*

- apologise for not going to the party
- explain what prevented you from going
- suggest a way of making up for this

7. A.....

B.....

C.....

D.....