

## Level 1 Writing exam

### Guidance with Task 3 – writing formally

In Task three of the writing exam at Level 1, candidates are expected to write a letter or email. The expected register is formal and the purpose is to explain and request. The reader is an official contact connected with education, training, work and social roles. Candidates should write around 150 words.

Example scenarios include: having purchased a faulty item, having a journey delayed or cancelled, poor customer service, an issue in rented accommodation, a request for something at work (time off, extra support, new equipment), a request for something at college (extra time for assignments, a change to arrangements).

These are just examples and do not cover the full range of possible tasks. See the past and sample papers at [trinitycollege.com/skillsforlife](http://trinitycollege.com/skillsforlife) for further examples.

### Formal writing – letters

There are many examples online of what a formal letter should look like. There is no specific formulation that Trinity markers prefer, however there are some general guidelines to keep in mind:

**Opening greeting:** A letter will normally be opened in a formulaic manner. Usually this is '*Dear [Name]*'. In this task, the name of the addressee is not given and so the formula '*Dear Sir/Madam*', '*Dear Sir or Madam*', '*Dear Sirs*' can be used. '*To whom it may concern*' is also acceptable. Candidates may also invent the name of an addressee.

'Hi' or 'Hello' as a greeting is too informal in this context.

**Date:** Candidates do not need to include a date and doing so, or not doing so, is not assessed.

**Address:** Formal letters will usually have the writer's address at the top. Some sources prefer the right of the paper for this, some prefer the left. However, some people will use their own letterhead, on which the address appears in the middle. Candidates are not assessed on whether they provide an address or not and markers do not expect them to do so.

**Closing greeting:** The standard closing for a formal letter where the addressee is not known is '*Yours faithfully*'. Any similarly formal closing is acceptable (eg '*Yours sincerely*'). If the candidate has invented a named addressee, '*Yours sincerely*' is the more appropriate closing.

### Formal writing – emails

**Opening greeting:** The opening greeting is the same as for a letter.

**Date:** In the case of an email, a date is not necessary as emails are automatically dated. In addition, candidates need not add a subject line or reference as this is provided

**Closing greeting:** The standard closing for a formal email is '*regards*'. Any similarly formal closing is acceptable (eg '*kind regards*', '*yours faithfully*', '*sincerely*', '*respectfully*')

### What about the content?

In this task, whether letter or email, the candidate is required to do two things: to inform the reader of what has happened, and to ask for something to be done. In the first part of the task, the candidate needs to be able to give an account of the situation in a formal way. Below are some examples of phrases you can use to do this:

- ▶ *I am writing to inform you...*
- ▶ *I am contacting you regarding...*
- ▶ *Upon opening the box I discovered...*
- ▶ *Unfortunately, I was unable to make my appointment...*
- ▶ *It has not been possible to complete this work on time...*
- ▶ *I telephoned on several occasions...*
- ▶ *The item has not yet arrived...*

Secondly, the candidate needs to ask for something to be done, some rectification to be made or a request to be granted. Below are some examples of phrases:

- ▶ *I would appreciate it if you could...*
- ▶ *It would be an enormous help if...*
- ▶ *I am sure you can appreciate that...*
- ▶ *I am requesting that you make amends...*
- ▶ *Please could you ensure that...*
- ▶ *... at your earliest convenience.*

### General rules:

- ▶ Avoid contractions
  - 'I am' instead of 'I'm'
  - 'you are' instead of 'you're'
  - 'it is' instead of 'it's'
  - 'do not' instead of 'don't'
- ▶ Use polite language and softening expressions; don't make angry demands
  - 'I would appreciate it if you provided a replacement item.'* Instead of: *'You must send me a new one.'*
  - 'Please let me know at your earliest convenience.'* Instead of: *'Write back to me'*
  - 'I was very disappointed to find that my reservation had been cancelled.'* Instead of *'Your staff were useless.'*
- ▶ Avoid expressive punctuation eg exclamation marks, ellipses, interrobangs,
  - *The microwave doesn't even work!*
  - *I plugged it in and... nothing!*
  - *How would you like it if this happened?!*

Remember, the register and awareness of the reader and purpose is important. Candidates are also assessed on their ability to structure the text, for example using appropriate opening and closing statements and sequencing of information. Candidates are not marked on their ability to perfectly reproduce a formal letter and these tips should enable them to have some techniques to present their work in a way that feels authentic.

### Example

Dear Sir/Madam

*I am writing regarding a computer I purchased from the Beckenham branch of your shop. I enclose a copy of the receipt as proof of purchase.*

*I set up the computer according to the instructions but unfortunately, it does not appear to be working. The power light is on when plugged in, but I cannot hear the fans working. The screen does not come on either. I believe there is an electrical fault with the computer and so I expect you to replace the whole computer or repair the damaged part.*

*I should add that I have telephoned this store on several occasions but no one has answered the phone. I suggest that you speak to the store manager about this as this issue could have been resolved by now.*

*I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.*

Yours faithfully

Agnieszka Padalecki-Lister