

How can I revise for Writing in my IGCSE exam?

Revising for your English examination is not as straightforward as preparing for other subjects since you do not have a body of content to learn. On the other hand, there are some useful things you can do:

- Practise reading texts in newspapers, magazines or textbooks and making notes of the main points. This can help you prepare for both the note-taking and summary writing tasks
- Use a Thesaurus to build up collections of vocabulary- e.g. assorted ways of expressing common concepts:

| | |
|---|--|
| The trip was good . | enjoyable, interesting, educational, informative, fascinating, eye-opening, inspirational, life-changing |
| I felt scared . | anxious, apprehensive, nervous, fearful, terrified |
| I saw a man running down the street. | sprinting, running at full pelt |
| I saw a woman stepping off the pavement into the road. | spotted, noticed, observed |
| The council should make a skate park. | construct, create, |
| Opponents say that foxhunting is an important part of English culture. | argue, claim, insist, maintain |
| She is a really nice person. | warm, generous, considerate, helpful, easygoing, supportive |

- Re-read good examples of formal letters (e.g. an application for a job as a play-worker); notice the structure:
 - Where I read the advertisement + Basic information about myself (not your name, that is at the end of the letter!)
 - Why I believe I am suitable for the job: 1..... 2..... 3..... 4.....
 - Who to approach for references
 - Yours faithfully/sincerely + name

- Notice and practise writing common phrases found in formal letters:
 - Recently I read your advertisement for a ...
 - I would like to apply for ...
 - the position of ... / the job of ... / the vacancy.
 - I believe that I am suitable for the job in a number of ways.
 - Firstly, ...Secondly, ... Thirdly, Finally,...
 - Also, ...In addition, ...
 - I have worked as a ...
 - I had a holiday job as a ...
 - I have good _____ skills
 - I have experience of _____ing...
 - If you wish to obtain a reference, you may contact ...
 - Please feel free to contact me at any time.
 - I read your recent article on ...
 - I would like to lend my support to ...
 - The School Council recently proposed that ...
 - I believe that this idea should be rejected.
 - There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, ... Secondly,...
- Re-read your notes on how to begin/end informal letters; make notes for a letter to a friend about a recent experience (e.g. taking part in a performance, winning a competition, meeting your hero, meeting an old classmate, visiting a foreign country, learning a new skill); work out what each paragraph is going to be about; make a note of likely connectives (*the following day, by the end of our conversation, as a result, because of this, in the end* etc.); write the letter!

- Re-read old essays and think about your most common errors (especially tenses, missing "a"/"the", plural "-s", uncountable nouns, prepositions of time/place - *in Jakarta, in March, at night, etc.*; vocabulary - *go shopping, to be interested in..., to apply for...*); write new sentences that follow the correct patterns.
- Revise lists of connecting words/phrases:
 - Firstly, ... Secondly, ... Thirdly, ... Finally ...
 - For example, ... For instance, ...
 - In addition, ... Also, ... Furthermore, ... What is more, ...
 - As a result, ... Because of this, ... Consequently, ... Therefore, ...
 - On the one hand, ... On the other hand, ...
 - It is true that ... However, ...
 - ..., however, ... In contrast, ... On the other hand, ...
 - Similarly, ...
 - Another argument against _____ is that ...
 - Another disadvantage of _____ is that ...

Informal Letters

Yes, an informal letter should be fairly informal - but don't overdo it! The examiner will **not** be impressed by text messaging shorthand such as "U" for you. Likewise, please avoid excessive use of slang: your objective is to show off your knowledge of standard English vocabulary and grammar.

The content of informal letters is difficult to predict. However, they often include an account of recent events. If you have to write a letter like this, then take care with your verbs! Also, try to use some time phrases (e.g. *Shortly after that, Later, That afternoon, After dinner, ...*) Try to use a good range of vocabulary too, avoiding dull words such as "nice", "fun" and "scary".

Dear Cameron,

BEGINNINGS

- Thank you for your lovely letter.
- Many thanks for your letter.
- Thanks for writing.
- It was good to hear from you.
- Sorry for not replying sooner. I have been very busy.
- Sorry for taking so long to reply. I have been revising for my exams

SIGNALLING: "THE END IS NEAR"

- Well, that's all my news for now.
- It's getting late, so I'd better stop now.
- I'd better stop now. It's past midnight and I have an exam tomorrow.
- Time to stop: Mum's calling me for dinner.
- I'd better finish - I'm running out of space.

ENDINGS

- I look forward to hearing from you.
- I can hardly wait to meet you.
- Please write again soon.
- Please keep in touch.
- Give my regards to ...

BEST WISHES

- Lots of Love
- Regards
- Thinking of you

Formal Letters

Dear Sir or Madam ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️ Yours faithfully

Dear Ms Waters ☹️☹️☹️☹️☹️ Yours sincerely

Use a formal tone: this affects your choice of vocabulary and grammar.

Dear Sir or Madam

With regard to your recent feature on leisure activities for young people, I would like to make a few suggestions. Firstly, there is a clear shortage of playing fields with the result that many children play football in the road, which is dangerous. Secondly,...

NOTE: You should not use short forms (e.g. don't, won't, isn't) in a formal letter.

Letter applying for a job

Dear Sir or Madam

I have read your advertisement in the Daily News and would like to apply for a position as a Playworker. I am a fifteen-year-old student at Brookvale College and will be available for work throughout the school holidays.

I believe that I am suitable for the job in a number of ways. Firstly, I have worked as a babysitter for the past three years and my employers have been very satisfied with my work. The children I have looked after are between four and ten years old. Secondly, I have good organisation skills as I am a Girl Guide leader and have helped to plan four camping trips. As part of my duties, I supervise team games and sing-song sessions. I also play the guitar. Thirdly, I am a reasonably good cook. I can prepare simple pasta dishes and I have a lot of experience of making sandwiches for Girl Guide outings. Finally, I am bilingual, speaking both Indonesian and English fluently. I am also beginning to learn French.

If you wish to obtain a reference, you may contact my Headteacher, Ms L Jones (Tel: 7643218) or Mrs K Lee (8790021) who has employed me as a babysitter.

Yours faithfully,

Rina Matsumoro

Writing Practice Tasks

Try writing some of the letters in the lists below. Make sure you give yourself practice in a range of text types. Ideally, you should work against the clock (a maximum of 30 mins. per text). However, before writing have a look at your corrected homework: What can you learn from your mistakes there?

- Your school newspaper has invited suggestions for making the school more environmentally friendly. Write a letter with practical suggestions for creating a "greener" campus. The slogan "*Reduce, Re-use, Recycle*" may help you to think of some ideas. (About 150-200 words)
- "Ban the car!" An environmental organisation has proposed that cars should be banned since they cause pollution, traffic jams, road deaths and stress. Write an article for a newspaper giving your opinion. (About 150-200 words)
- A student magazine is running a "Teacher of the Year" competition. Students have been invited to write to the magazine with recommendations. Write a letter nominating one of your teachers and giving reasons why you think they should receive the award. (Please do not use a real name!) (About 150-200 words)
- Your principal has asked for ideas about how to improve the school's facilities. Write him/her a letter giving your suggestions. (About 150-200 words)
- You have read the following advertisement in a student magazine. Write a letter applying for any one of the vacancies. (About 150-200 words)

RADIO CAMPUS – VACANCIES

"Radio Campus" - the radio station run by students for students –
is seeking suitably experienced and motivated staff.

We have the following vacancies:

Station Manager; Marketing Staff; Advertising Staff; D.J.s

Interested students should apply in writing to the Managing Director, giving details of relevant skills and experience.