

## How to write an informal letter or email for International Exams.



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Sources: Ashton, S., Thomas, B. (2006). *PET Practice Tests Plus 2*. Pearson Education Limited : Spain. ; Hughes, J., Naunton, J. (2015). *Spotlight on First (FCE), 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. National Geographic Learning : Hampshire, UK.  
FCE book; <https://keepsmlingenglish.com/2017/09/how-to-write-informal-email-fce-writing/>

IELTS task 1	Informal language	A standard structure	150 words minimum
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In your IELTS (general English) task 1, and also FCE and other international exams, replying to an informal email or letter is a common task. In fact, for IELTS General English this is always the writing task 1.

***This guide contains useful language and a structure that you can apply to your answer.***

### Language style: informal language.

- the tone, which is very warm, personal and friendly
- Use of first name
- Use contractions (I'm writing because...)
- Common phrasal verbs (I'm broke up with her because...)
- Colloquial expressions (you messed up)
- Writing as we think (Oh / by the way / anyway)
- Informal expressions (thanks / write soon)
- No addresses or dates needed

### Part 1) Let's first look at a typical question:

*You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.*

An English-speaking friend wants to spend a two-week holiday in your city next summer. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter,

- Give advice about what to do
- give information about what clothes to bring
- Offer for him to stay at your house

Write at least 150 Words. You do not need to write any address.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_



*Part 2: A typical response will need the following parts:*

- *Opening formula*
- *Introductory paragraph*
- *Subtask 1*
- *Subtask 2*
- *Subtask 3*
- *Closing paragraph*
- *Closing formulae*
- *Signature*

Consider this model answer, and note how the structure has been used to answer to task:

**OPENING FORMULA** *Dear Jack,*

**INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH** *It's great to hear from you after so long! How are you doing? I'm so excited about your visit next summer. Let me give you some tips so you can get ready.*

**SUBTASK 1:**  
*what to visit* *First of all, there are some places which you can't miss! For example, here in Granada you should totally visit the Alhambra, an ancient Muslim palace. It was nominated to become one of the new seven wonders of the world. Also, don't forget to check out St Nicholas viewpoint – you'll have the best views of the Alhambra and the whole city.*

**SUBTASK 2:**  
*what to wear* *As for clothes, remember that it can get super hot in Granada, especially for foreigners! So forget about long sleeves or trousers and just pack some shorts, T- shirts and sandals. Oh, and remember to bring a cap, too!*

**SUBTASK 2:**  
*invite him* *By the way, do you have a place to stay? If you want, I could put you up in my place. I have a spare room and it would be great to have you here.*

**CLOSING PARAGRAPH** *Anyway, I must dash now. Drop me a line soon and let me know what you think.*

**CLOSING FORMULA** *Best wishes,*

**SIGNATURE** *Carlos*

**Part 3:** *Now practice and use a variety of the following expressions and vocabulary to make your answer both relevant and demonstrate a variety in your informal language and writing skills. Try a variety of different example questions that can be found on the internet, for your particular exam.*

**Beginning a letter**

- Dear John (to a friend/ family)
- Dear Mr Smith

*Opening formulae*

### Replying to a letter

- Thank you very much for your last letter.
- I've just read your interesting letter.
- It was very nice to hear from you/get your letter.
- I hope that you and your family are well.

### Saying why you are writing

- You asked me about my favourite TV programmes.
- You asked me for advice about travelling round my country
- You asked me what I do at weekends...
- You want to know my opinion about...

*Introductory paragraph*

### good news / bad news

I'm so happy because..  
The good/bad news is that..  
Unfortunately...

### Say when and where/ Give details

There is /are..  
It's at/starts at  
You can get there by...

### Thank

Thanks for  
I'm really grateful for...

### Offer /Request

- Would you like to ...?
- Can I...?/Could you ...?
- Would you mind if ...?

### Apologise

- I really sorry but
- I'm afraid that

### Recommend and suggest

- You should/ought to
- Why don't you ...?
- How about ...?

*All to support your subtasks (depending on the task)*

### Ending a letter

- That's all for now.
  - Write back soon and tell me all your news
  - I hope to hear from you soon.
  - Love, / Lots of love, /Best wishes, / Cheers / Paul
- Also you can add "P.S." after your have ended the letter with any additional information that you forgot.*

- *Closing paragraph*
- *Closing formulae*
- *Signature*

For more information See ASK guides on:

- *Email and letter writing guidelines (includes formal language as well) :*  
<http://repository.urosario.edu.co/bitstream/handle/10336/13377/WRITING%20EMAILS%20AND%20LETTERS.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

