

How to Write a Successful Informal Email

Exercise 5

Total: 15 marks

Exercise 5: writing an informal email

- You should write 120-160 words of continuous prose (ordinary language).
- The question includes information on the purpose and audience.
- You MUST address the prompts provided in the task.
- You will be awarded six marks for the content (task fulfillment and development of ideas) and up to 9 marks for language (range, accuracy and organization).
- Type of response: an informal email
- Total marks: 15

Exercise 5



You recently went to the opening day of a new visitor attraction in your town.

Write an email to a friend about the day.

In your email, you should:

- describe the visitor attraction
- explain what happened on the day
- say if you think the attraction will be a success or not.

The pictures above may give you some ideas, and you should try to use some ideas of your own.

Your email should be between 150 and 200 words long.

You will receive up to 10 marks for the content of your email, and up to 9 marks for the style and accuracy of your language.

- These are usually to your friends or family, usually asking you to detail a recent event you took part in and they didn't.

You will be awarded marks based on your usage of:

1. Common and less common vocabulary
2. Variety of complex structures
3. Tense agreements
4. Punctuation
5. No fragments
6. Organization
7. Linking devices

It should be chatty since it is written to a friend.

You have to figure out the purpose of the question:

Address all three bullet points.

Are you going to describe?

Are you inviting a friend?

Features of an informal email/letter

- Appropriate greeting and a friendly opening (dear John, I know it's been a while)
- Adopt a chatty style (you wouldn't believe it!)
- Use idioms and phrasal verbs (better late than never, I had to put up with)
- Informal expressions (it seriously blew my mind)
- Interrogatives (what would you have done?)
- Contractions (can't/wouldn't/ hadn't)
- Simple connectives (and, next, because, so)
- Range of vocabulary--- Instead of good----captivating)
- Variety of sentence structures
- Appropriate closing (speak to you soon/ catch you later/ let's meet soon)

- **☒ Greetings:** we greet the other person (i.e. say “hi” or “hello”). ☒
- **Opening paragraph:** we react to the other person’s news and ask them how they are feeling and whatever else you feel is appropriate.
- ☒ **Main paragraph 1:** in this paragraph we deal with the first and second bullet point, which we can identify in the instructions.
- ☒ **Main paragraph 2:** in this paragraph, you discuss the third bullet point.
- **Closing paragraph:** in this paragraph we “start” to say goodbye by wishing the other person well and asking them to reply to your letter. ☒ **Goodbye:** we use a short expression to say goodbye.
- ☒ **Signature:** we sign the letter with our name (IT MUST BE A FAKE NAME)

Format

- Salutation (Dear...,)
- Introduction
- Body (could be two or three paragraphs)
- Conclusion, signature (with love/ best wishes etc.)

Model Answer

Dear Gary,

Hope you are doing well.

I'm doing fine, though my life is quite hectic at the moment because, as you know, I am moving abroad and there is so much to do!

There are a few things that I can't take with me because they are too big so I am seeing if any of my friends would be interested in buying them. One of the things I do not want to take with me is my television, and I thought you might like to buy it off me for a cheap price.

It's a 32" flat screen TV, and it's a Phillips model. It has a USB port so you can just plug in a thumb drive to watch movies or listen to music. It has great stereo surround sound.

As you know, I'm leaving the country at the end of the month, which is only two weeks away. So if you want to see it, it would be best to come on 20th or 21st. That will give me time to sell it elsewhere if you are not interested.

Ok, I look forward to seeing you. Let me know if you can't make it.

All the best,

John.

(202 Words)

| | | |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Greeting | — | <i>Dear John,</i> |
| Opening p. | — | <i>It's nice to hear from you, and I'm happy to answer your questions.</i> |
| Main p. 1 | — | <i>My favourite show is called "Cooking Challenge". I must say it's a great show. In this programme, there are some contestants and they must cook a meal for the judges. Then, the judges taste the dishes and decide which is the best. The winner receives a prize of 500€.</i> |
| Main p. 2 | — | <i>I like it because, as you know, I love cooking, so with this programme I can learn how to prepare food in different ways.</i> |
| Closing p. | — | <i>Well, I have to go now. Let me know about your favourite show, too.</i> |
| Goodbye | — | <i>Best wishes,</i> |
| Signature | — | <i>Luis</i> |

Introduction

Start with a warm, friendly opening. For example, ‘*How are you doing?*’. Go for these:

- *It was good to hear from you*
- *Sorry for not replying sooner. I have been very busy.*
- *I’m so sorry for taking so long to reply. I have been revising for my exams.*
- *Congratulations on your award! It’s been a hectic week over here. So sorry I couldn’t write to you earlier.* (This is a good opening, because it tells the examiner that you know this person well).
- Tell them why you’re writing the letter. This will be specified in the question paper itself. Keep it very short. In the example above, you could say: *I’ve been dying to tell you about this circus that came to town last Friday!!*

Body

- This is the actual content of your letter.
- Provide more details about the topic.
- Use **lots of adjectives and verbs** and really relay your **thoughts and emotions**.
- Use **the prompts and pictures** in the question. You can write it in **two/three paragraphs** to organise your ideas

Body paragraphs

- *Nobody knew about the circus arriving. But the moment they opened the entrance, all the villagers started flocking in. Steve and I begged for mom and dad to take us there! It was magnificent, in every sense of the word! There were talking parrots, tigers jumping through fire hoops (Steve ran away scared when he saw the Tiger!), an elephant that could predict your weight, a fortune teller and all sorts of things you see in the circuses in movies!*

Mom was fascinated by the ‘Guess the Price’ tent and spent a lot of money on it but didn’t guess a single one right. Dad and I went to every single tent. My favourite was this magic show! The magician literally turned a rat into a rabbit! I have no idea how. It was truly magical! We stayed there till dusk and then very reluctantly went back. The circus clearly had won the hearts of all villagers!

Conclusion

The conclusion has to wrap up the letter. For example, *I really wish you were there! You would have loved it! Give my regards to Margret and Aunt Marie! Reply soon!*

Tips

- Take care of **spelling, punctuation and grammar**. It's a writing task after all.
- **Don't use abbreviations and slang** such as 'u' and 'OMG'! This is an international exam, not an actual email to your friend!
- Keep the **tone very light and warm**. An informal letter should be informal.
- Writing a **paragraph for each bullet point** (given in the question) can be a good method of keeping the letter organised.
- **Give personal anecdotes**. Add details that tell the examiner you really know each other. In my sample answer above, I used the names *Steve*, *Margaret* and *Aunt Marie* without giving any explanation for who they exactly are, because my friend knows who they are!
- Try using **time phrases**. Eg: *shortly after that/after that afternoon/after dinner* etc.
- **Keep to the word limit**. It should be at least 150 words and shouldn't exceed 200 words.

Exercise 5



15 You recently helped someone in trouble.

Write an email to a friend explaining what happened.

In your email, you should:

- describe where you were and what happened
- explain what you did to help
- say what you learnt from this experience.

The pictures above may give you some ideas, and you can also use some ideas of your own.

Your email should be between 150 and 200 words long.

You will receive up to 8 marks for the content of your email, and up to 8 marks for the language used.

Model Response

Dear Jake,

How's things? It's definitely been a while! I'm sorry I've been a little on the quiet side – you know how hectic life gets sometimes; I wish I was exaggerating but I presently have a mountain of homework staring at me from the corner of my room. Anyway, I thought I'd reach out to you as something rather shocking happened today in our favourite coffee place; you won't believe it!

Early this morning, I miraculously found myself with 5 minutes to spare so I thought I would nip into Coffee4u. As soon as I stepped foot into the shop, there was some commotion happening. A woman was in floods of tears; I stood frozen for a few seconds. She started waving her purse in the air and she suddenly locked eyes with me. Her money had been stolen. At this point, I was very aware of the time; I was also very aware of being face to face with someone who desperately needed my help. I decided to put school to the back of my mind and I put my hand on the lady's shoulder and told her that I would try my best to help. I called the police immediately and explained the situation to the busy baristas.

The police swiftly arrived and the lady thanked me; I felt a huge wave of happiness come over me. I had finally done something right in my life! What would you have done? I didn't manage to get to school in time but being late really didn't bother me that much. Sometimes we have to put others first even if it means getting another detention for being late (oops!)

Anyway – let's meet up soon! It's been far too long.

Exercise 5



- 14 Last week, you met someone who has recently moved to the area where you live. You get on well, and you think your friend would like this person too.

Write an email to your friend about the person you met.

In your email, you should:

- say how you met this person
- explain why you think your friend would like this person
- suggest something you could all do together.

The pictures above may give you some ideas, and you can also use some ideas of your own.

Your email should be between 150 and 200 words long.

You will receive up to 8 marks for the content of your email, and up to 8 marks for the language used.

Model Response

Hi Rob,

Hope all is well with you. Things have been pretty quiet here as usual. But the good news is that a family finally moved into the house next door; I honestly thought that garish FOR SALE sign would never come down! They are absolutely lovely and the best thing – they have a son the same age as us; he's really funny.

His name is Gaz. I met him whilst doing some morning exercise outside. He just so happened to be doing the same thing. In fact, I almost bumped into him! It at least got us talking; he is like you Rob - he can talk for England! He's really into his fitness as well. Although he's only just moved here, he's training for his 5th half marathon – you two would get on like a house on fire – seriously!

Anyway, Gaz is very eager to meet some new people. I'm sure you can remember when you were new to the neighbourhood and felt completely alone; It's not a nice feeling. I thought that maybe we could all grab a coffee together – how does that sound? Gaz also mentioned setting up a little running club – maybe I could point him in your direction? I'm sure you could help him.

Let me know what you think.

Jim

Exercise 5



- 14 You recently watched an interesting documentary which helped you to do a homework project.

Write an email to a friend about the documentary.

In your email, you should:

- describe the documentary that you watched
- tell your friend about the homework project
- explain how the documentary helped you with your homework project.

The pictures above may give you some ideas, and you can also use some ideas of your own.

Your email should be between 150 and 200 words long.

You will receive up to 8 marks for the content of your email, and up to 8 marks for the language used.

Model Response

Hey Sarah,

How's tricks? You know our seemingly impossible homework project that is due in less than... a week?! Well, I am about to answer your prayers. Ahh, the joys of Netflix. Please tell me you haven't seen My Octopus Teacher, yet? My head has seriously been spinning from the amount of research I have been carrying out on invertebrates. This documentary has everything we need for our project. Prayers answered!

The documentary was seriously amazing. Who would have thought that octopuses were so remarkably smart? You know me – I have the attention span of goldfish, but this documentary really taught me so much; I was hooked from beginning to end. I also had to grab my tissues towards the end – I won't spoil it for you but it really moved me. Anyway, back to our science project – it is on different invertebrates and their behaviours. I think Miss is expecting us to put together a booklet of sorts with different chapters based on the animals we choose.

The documentary got me thinking. Maybe I could include a couple of chapters about octopuses and make reference to the documentary itself. I am sure it would impress Miss – the fact that I had not relied so heavily on Wikipedia for once! I could include chapters about their habitat, behaviour and diet. What do you think?

Anyway – I thought I'd tell you about this documentary in case you want to give it a watch. Trust me; it will help with your final project.

Speak to you soon.

Useful Phrases

| Greetings | Opening paragraph | Opening paragraph | Closing paragraphs | Saying goodbye |
|-------------|---|----------------------------|--|----------------|
| Hi John, | ☑ It's nice / great / good to hear from you. | Hope you are doing well. ☑ | Well, it's time to say goodbye. ☑ | ☑ Best wishes, |
| Hello John, | ☑ It's nice / great / good to read your letter. | How's it going? | Anyway, I have to go now. | Best, |
| Dear John, | ☑ I'm glad to hear your news. | How are you? | Well, it's time to go | Take care, |
| | ☑ I'm excited about... (your news.) | How are things (going)? | Anyway, gotta go | All my love, |
| | It's great to hear that... ☑ | | ☑ I really hope to hear from you soon. | Love, |
| | I'm sorry to hear that... | | I'm looking forward to hearing from you. | Lots of love, |
| | ☑ Thank you very much for your letter. | | ☑ I hope you write back soon. ☑ | See you soon, |
| | ☑ I'm really sorry to read your news. | | Make sure you write back soon. | Regards, |

FORMAL

INFORMAL

▪I regret to inform you that ...

▪**I hate to have to tell you this but ...**

▪I am writing to inform you that ...

▪**Just a quick line to say ...**

▪It is a pleasure to meet you.

▪**Nice to meet you.**

▪Upon your arrival ...

▪**As soon as you get here ...**

▪At your earliest convenience

▪**As soon as you can**

▪I regret that I will be unable to attend ...

▪**Sorry I can't make it.**

▪I would appreciate being kept informed ...

▪**Please keep me posted/updated.**

▪**Keep me in the loop!**

▪I would like to remind you that ...

▪**Don't forget ...**

▪Would you be available on ?

▪**I suggest we get together on**

▪I really appreciate your assistance

▪**Thanks a lot!**

▪Please accept my apologies for ...

▪**Sorry for ...**

▪It will not be necessary for you to ...

▪**You won't have to ...**

▪It would be of great benefit to you to ...

▪**It would do you good to ...**

▪We have a vast amount of information at your disposal.

▪**I have lots of information for you.**

▪We were hoping you could ...

▪**Could you ...?**

▪It is my opinion that ...

▪**I think ...**

▪Please remember me to Alex.

▪**Say hello to Alex for me.**

▪I'd like to express my gratitude for...

▪**Thanks a million. I owe you one!**

| idiom | Meaning | Usage |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| A blessing in disguise | a good thing that seemed bad at first | as part of a sentence |
| A dime a dozen | Something common | as part of a sentence |
| Beat around the bush | Avoid saying what you mean, usually because it is uncomfortable | as part of a sentence |
| Better late than never | Better to arrive late than not to come at all | by itself |
| Bite the bullet | To get something over with because it is inevitable | as part of a sentence |
| Break a leg | Good luck | by itself |
| Call it a day | Stop working on something | as part of a sentence |
| Cut somebody some slack | Don't be so critical | as part of a sentence |
| Cutting corners | Doing something poorly in order to save time or money | as part of a sentence |
| Easy does it | Slow down | by itself |
| Get out of hand | Get out of control | as part of a sentence |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| Get something out of your system | Do the thing you've been wanting to do so you can move on | as part of a sentence |
| Get your act together | Work better or leave | by itself |
| Give someone the benefit of the doubt | Trust what someone says | as part of a sentence |
| Go back to the drawing board | Start over | as part of a sentence |
| Hang in there | Don't give up | by itself |
| Hit the sack | Go to sleep | as part of a sentence |
| It's not rocket science | It's not complicated | by itself |
| Let someone off the hook | To not hold someone responsible for something | as part of a sentence |
| Make a long story short | Tell something briefly | as part of a sentence |
| Miss the boat | It's too late | as part of a sentence |
| No pain, no gain | You have to work for what you want | by itself |
| On the ball | Doing a good job | as part of a sentence |

| | | |
|--|---|-----------------------|
| Pull someone's leg | To joke with someone | as part of a sentence |
| Pull yourself together | Calm down | by itself |
| So far so good | Things are going well so far | by itself |
| Speak of the devil | The person we were just talking about showed up! | by itself |
| That's the last straw | My patience has run out | by itself |
| The best of both worlds | An ideal situation | as part of a sentence |
| Time flies when you're having fun | You don't notice how long something lasts when it's fun | by itself |
| To get bent out of shape | To get upset | as part of a sentence |
| To make matters worse | Make a problem worse | as part of a sentence |
| Under the weather | Sick | as part of a sentence |
| We'll cross that bridge when we come to it | Let's not talk about that problem right now | by itself |
| Wrap your head around something | Understand something complicated | as part of a sentence |
| You can say that again | That's true, I agree | by itself |
| Your guess is as good as mine | I have no idea | by itself |

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECyofbX1Py4>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4AZLYMiYMw>