

IELTS General Task 1 – Letter Writing

Succeeding at any exam requires positivity, preparation, and practice!

The IELTS General Writing Task 1 measures your ability to communicate about common practical issues. You have 20 minutes to respond to a question prompt, by writing a letter to a person, company, or institution. Your response is worth about 30% of your writing score and is graded separately from the Task 2 essay.

The information below includes test-taking tips, strategies, expressions, sample questions, model letters, and references. It can help you get the highest possible score on the letter-writing section of the IELTS. Use it regularly to keep track of your progress. All the best!

TIPS FOR IELTS GENERAL TASK 1

1. Identify the type of letter you are being asked to write.

- Formal
- Semi-formal
- Informal

Step 2 will help you recognize each type of letter.

2. Identify the purpose of the letter.

TYPETY	PURPOSEPU
Formal	Requesting information from a company Applying for a job Complaining to a bank, store, airline reproduce/service Making a recommendation/suggestion
Semi- formal	Complaining to a landlord Explaining to a neighbour Asking a professor for permission
Informal	Inviting someone you know well Thanking a friend Apologizing Asking for advice

STYLE	ARACTERISTICS	OPENING	ENDINGGG
Formal	To someone you have not met, whose name you don't know	Dear Sir/Madam,	Yours faithfully,
Semi- formal	To someone you may or may not have met, whose last name you know	Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Mr Brown, Dear Ms Stone	Yours faithfully, Yours sincerely,
Informal	To someone you know well, whose first name you know and use	Dear John, Dear Anita,	Best regards, Warm wishes,

Read lots of sample questions. Decide whether the question requires a formal, semi-formal, or informal response. Steps 1 & 2 will help you choose the right language, style, and tone for your letter.

3. Open and close the letter correctly. Do this based on the type and purpose of the letter.

4. Start the letter appropriately.

a. Open a formal and semi-formal letter with a formal sentence and paragraph. Get down to business and say why you are writing. Don't try to be friendly, as you do not know the person you are writing to.

Formal:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to inquire about...

I am writing in connection with...

Semi-formal

Dear Mr Johnson,

I am writing to inform you that...

I am writing to...

b. Open an informal letter with a general, friendly paragraph. Acknowledge your friendship first, before explaining the reason for your letter. In fact, the first paragraph could include just friendly small talk, unrelated to the reason for your writing.

Dear Susan

I hope you and your family are all well! It was so wonderful to spend time with all of you last month. It felt great to catch up with you and Bob, get to know your children, and have fun together after so long. You have always been dear friends of mine, and always will be.

Anyway, the reason I'm writing is that I have some good news: I am getting married in September...

5. Learn and use standard written phrases.

In English letter writing, we use a number of standard expressions and phrases. These not only save time and effort, but also make it easier for the reader to understand our meaning. You can add on the specific information you wish to communicate to these standard phrases. See the list of Useful Expressions below.

6. Spell commonly used words correctly. Learn and practice the correct spelling of words you are likely to use on the exam. Examples are: "sincerely", "faithfully", "in connection with", "apologize", and so on. This is an easy way to boost your score.

7. Divide your letter into paragraphs.

Usually you need four paragraphs:

- Introduction
- Problem / Situation
- Solution / Action
- Conclusion

Make sure to signal the start of a new paragraph in one of two ways:

Indenting: Do NOT leave a line space between paragraphs. Start writing a little to the right of the left margin.

Skipping a line: Leave a line space between paragraphs. Start writing directly from the left margin.

8. Use clear handwriting. Make sure your writing is neat and legible, so your words can be read easily and do not appear to have spelling mistakes. Get feedback from a teacher on your handwriting. Pay special attention to how you form and connect letters such as a, e, i, u, n, r, and w.

9. Write at least 150 words. Practice writing letters till you know what 150 words feels like and looks like. You will lose marks if you write less. You will not lose marks if you write more.

10. Include all three bulleted points. If you exclude even one of the points given to you in the question prompt, you will get a lower grade. Answer all the points.

In your letter:

- explain the problem
- describe why it disturbs you
- suggest a solution

11. Finish in time.

The IELTS General Task I letter is worth about 30% of your writing score, so make sure you complete the whole letter. Though you have to make up a story to explain the situation, keep it simple so you don't run out of time. Make sure to keep 40 minutes to complete the essay in Task 2, which is worth much more in terms of points.

TASK ACHIEVEMENT	DO EVERYTHING YOU ARE ASKED TO DO GIVE A FULL DEVELOPED RESPONSE INCLUDE/COVER ALL THE NECESSARY POINTS WRITE 150 WORDS
COHERENCE & COHESION	COHERENCE: PRESENT IDEAS LOGICALLY USE STRUCTURED PARAGRAPHS COHESION: WRITE SO POINTS STICK TOGETHER, MAKE SENSE, AND CONVEY YOUR MESSAGE USE STANDARD EXPRESSIONS & TRANSITION WORDS
LEXICAL RESOURCE	USE A WIDE RANGE OF VOCABULARY NATURALLY, CORRECTLY, AND FLUENTLY USE CORRECT SPELLING CHOOSE THE RIGHT WORDS (WORD CHOICE) USE THE CORRECT FORM OF WORDS, SUCH AS VERBS, NOUNS, ETC. (WORD FORM)
GRAMMAR RANGE & ACCURACY	USE A WIDE RANGE OF GRAMMAR STRUCTURES INCLUDE DIFFERENT KINDS OF SENTENCES – SIMPLE, COMPOUND, COMPLEX USE EFFECTIVE PUNCTUATION USE CORRECT CAPITALIZATION

1. Read model letters but don't memorize them. Instead, read the letters to get an idea of the overall flow and to pick up new vocabulary and expressions. Make sure to consult only reliable sources, such as Good Luck IELTS, formodel answers.

2. Understand the scoring criteria. Learn how to get a high score by knowing what examiners look for and how they award or deduct points.

IELTS GENERAL TASK 1: USEFUL EXPRESSIONS FOR LETTER-WRITING

To complete your IELTS letter-writing task within 20 minutes, learn to use and spell common phrases and expressions correctly. Choose the correct level of formality based on your question prompt. By using these phrases,

you will save time and effort and earn a higher IELTS score. Most of the expressions below are arranged from formal to semi-formal to informal.

For a full list of phrases and expressions

Apologizing

Please accept my sincere apologies for...

I am very sorry about...

Sorry for...

Asking for help

I'd be grateful if you could...

I would appreciate it if you could...

Could you please...

Asking for information

I am writing to enquire about...

I am writing to find out about...

I would like to know about...

Closing

I look forward to hearing from you,

I look forward to seeing you,

I look forward to meeting you,

Complaining

I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with...

I am writing to express my annoyance with...

I'm not happy with...

Expressing satisfaction

I was delighted to learn that...

I was thrilled to hear that...

I was very glad to hear that...

Expressing concern

I am writing to express my concern about...

I was very sorry to learn that...

I was really sorry to hear that...

Giving bad news

I regret to advise you that...

I regret to inform you that...

I am sorry to tell you that...

Giving good news

I am pleased to advise you that...

I am delighted to inform you that...

I am happy to tell you that...

Giving reasons

This is due to...

This is a result of

... This is because...

Making suggestions

Perhaps it would be useful to...

Perhaps it would be possible to...

It might be helpful to...

Thanking

I am extremely grateful for...

I really appreciate...

Thank you for...

IELTS Writing General Task 1 Sample Letters

1) You have eaten at a restaurant and it was such a terrible experience that you have decided to inform the manager by letter of what happened, and that you want your money back. Things to include:

- **Facts. You need to be concise but explain what happened.**
- **Polite. No one responds to insults.**
- **Outline what you wish from this. What do you want to happen?**
- **Firmness. You want to be taken seriously.**

To the manager,

I would like to express my regret at having dined at your establishment last night; please allow me to explain.

The table was booked two months in advance since it was to cater a major professional event, and yet we were informed by the maitre d' upon arrival that there were no tables sufficiently large and we would have to dine separately. I did press this point with your staff as it was imperative that my party remain in each other's company, but we were told that it was simply impossible to seat us all together.

In addition to this, several menu items were unavailable on the night, including every vegetarian option, meaning that three members of my party were left to eat only bread throughout the meal. As a result of these incidents, I had intended not to pay, but your staff informed us that they would call the police if we refused, and so to avoid further embarrassment, I complied.

This experience was entirely unacceptable, and I would like to request a full refund of the amount paid. I would also suggest that your staff not promise customers degrees of service that they are unable to provide in order to avoid disappointing experiences such as these.

Regards,
Paul Hollywood

2) Write a letter to your neighbour requesting that something be done about the dog. Include in your letter:

- **Your reason for writing**
- **What you would like to happen**
- **A nice, respectful style**

Dear Sir and Madame,

I am a nearby resident currently attending university. I am pursuing a degree in mathematics, and my course material is very difficult to understand. I have to spend many hours studying for exams and working through practice problems. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing barking from the dog in your house, it is very difficult for me to concentrate.

I am writing to ask if there is anything you can do to help reduce the barking, especially during the later hours. It is difficult for me to sleep because of the barking. I hope that this letter does not offend you, as I am only trying to get myself some comfort at home to aid me in my studies. If you would like to further discuss this, please contact me at your convenience. I hope we can resolve this smoothly. Thank you and take care.

Sincerely,
Jimmy Lisbon

A reporter complained about a new TV program that you like. Write a letter to the newspaper editor.

- **Describe your point of view.**
- **Say what you like about the show and why.**
- **Ask the newspaper to take some action.**

You should write at least 150 words.

Dear Mr Bradshaw,

I am contacting you regarding the article where you unfairly criticized Top Gear, namely Jeremy Clarkson. Understandably Mr Clarkson is not everyone's cup of tea, however publicly complaining then lambasting him and the show is unfair. Their difference of opinion is under no circumstances an excuse to write a letter of complaint.

Personally I feel that the shows ingenuity largely stems from the fact that their presenters are occasionally controversial and honest. This is unlike the modern TV shows which are bland, politically correct and just lacking any entertainment value for my liking.

I would be very grateful if you could in future editions of your newspaper 'The Echo' only publish positive articles about the programme. Failing this small request could you please refrain from any undue negative press.

Kind Regards,

B. Worthington

A museum near your home is looking for people to do part-time voluntary/ unpaid work. You would like to do some voluntary/unpaid work at the museum.

Write a letter to the museum director to apply for the voluntary/unpaid work. In your letter:

- * explain why you want to do voluntary/unpaid work at the museum
- * describe some skills and qualities you have that would be useful
- * give details of when you would be available for work

Dear Director,

I am writing in response to your request for volunteers.

I am really keen to do this because I am a history buff and looking for interesting ways to keep myself busy during my retirement years. I believe this would also give me an opportunity to have more involvement in the community.

I believe I have a number of skills that will be of value to the museum. First of all, I am an excellent public speaker and I believe this would be useful for seminars or tour groups. As well as this, I'm also computer savvy and able to complete technical tasks.

I am available any time during the week. As I am an early bird, any type of hours in the morning or afternoon will suit me. However, I have to look after my grandchildren during weekends, so I am not available.

I would appreciate discussing this with you further when time permits.

Yours faithfully,
Mike Wattie

2) You have seen an advertisement from a couple, who live in Australia, for someone to teach their two children your language for a year.

Write a letter to the couple. In your letter:

- * explain why you think you would be suitable for the job
- * say what else you could do for the family
- * give your reasons for wanting the job

Dear Mr and Mrs Thompson,

I am writing with regard to your advertisement for a Chinese tutor.

I believe that I am highly suited for this job due to my qualifications and experience teaching Chinese. I have a master degree in Chinese language teaching from Shanghai university. In addition, I have been working as a Chinese tutor now for five years.

In addition, to teaching Chinese I can also educate your children about Chinese culture. I believe your children would be interested to know about Chinese calligraphy and I could supply equipment if they are keen to learn this.

The main reason why I am interested in this job is because it will support my current studies. I'm currently studying for my PhD and my area of interest is teaching Chinese to non-native children. Therefore, I believe that while teaching your children I will also benefit by understanding how non-native children learn.

I would appreciate discussing this with you further when time permits.

Yours faithfully,
Mike Wattie

General training informal letters Sample

1) A friend of yours is thinking about applying for the same course that you did at university. He/she has asked for your advice about studying this subject.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter:

- * give details of the course you took at the University
- * explain why you recommend the University
- * give some advice about how to apply

Dear Joe,

I hope you are doing well. I'm writing with regard to your choice of university course.

I studied marketing when I went to Victoria University. I found this course really fascinating because it kind of combines business theory with psychology theory. My degree has helped me greatly to not only find jobs but also to get promoted as well.

Victoria University is an excellent choice because it has the leading business school in the country. By studying there you do not only get a great education you'll also have a qualification from the most prestigious university in the country. This is extremely important when you're trying to get that first job.

The easiest way to apply is online. You've just got to make sure that you've scanned all your relevant documents to upload to the system. Make sure you've got your high school results and you'll also need your birth certificate.

Please let me know if you've got any more questions.

Best regards,
Mike

2) A friend of yours is thinking of going on a camping holiday for the first time this summer. He/she has asked for your advice.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter:

- * explain why you think your friend would enjoy a camping holiday
- * describe some possible disadvantages
- * say whether you would like to go camping with your friend this summer

Dear Joe,

I hope you are doing well. I'm writing with regard to your upcoming camping vacation. I believe you will have a great time camping. I know you're a big fan of the outdoors and camping is the truly best way to experience nature. That area you planning to go to is renowned for its wide range of flora and fauna.

This type of holiday is not without its drawbacks. The main one is that you need to do a lot of preparation and make sure that you don't forget any essential items. On top of this, the isolated location means that you're going to have to cook all your own food because there are no restaurants nearby.

I really wish that I could join you, but as you know summer is my busy season. I must keep my nose to the grindstone and wait until winter before I can take a holiday.

Please let me know if you've got any more questions.

Best regards,
Mike

Important and useful collocations (topic- wise) vocabulary

Important	vital/crucial/decisive/pivotal/ indispensable/critical significant/ key (For person): influential/formidable/prominent/ eminent/ distinguished
Reason	cause/justification/rationale/motive/purpose/objective/ intention/factor/element/ component/consideration/aspect
Famous	well known/celebrated/ prominent/famed/renowned/ noted/distinguished/esteemed/ legendary/illustrious/popular/ favored/approved/well received/sought after/widespread/ prevalent/prevaling/rife
Depend	hinge on/pivot on/rest on/be subject to/be contingent on/be dependent on
Contribute:	give/donate/come up with/bestow/ grant/bring about/play a part in/be instrumental in
Affect (verb)	influence/exert influence on/have an impact on
Positive (adj)	favourable/constructive/approving/supportive/reassuring/affirmative/beneficial/advantageous/instrumental/worthwhile/profitable/rewarding/ productive/gainful/fruitful
Positive (noun)	advantage/convenience/boon/ virtue/reward/merit/blessing
Negative	drawback/disadvantage/downside/ pitfall/hidden danger/unsuspected

(noun)	
Negative (adj.)	harmful/adverse/damaging/ detrimental/unfavorable/disadvantageous(For person): Pessimistic/gloomy/defeatist/ gloom-ridden/cynical/dismissive
Be Believed(v)	regarded as true/accepted as true/think/be of the opinion that/have an idea that/assume/presume/be of the view/be under the impression/opine/be of the conviction
Good	gorgeous/ravishing/dazzling/ exquisite/stunning/excellent/superb/outstanding/ magnificent/first rate/ exceptional/wonderful/marvelous/worthy/admirable/ pleasant/enjoyable/pleasurable/ amusing/entertaining/ delightful (For food): Mouthwatering/delicious/ appetizing delectable/ palatable/succulent/savory/ toothsome/luscious (For person): Amiable/affable/good natured/companionable/ gracious/courteous/cheerful/ sympathetic/considerate
Argue (v)	cite evidence in support of/ pronounce/contend/assent/proclaim/plead
Support (v)	favors/endorse/be on the side of/stand up for/approve of/ defend
Oppose (v)	disagree with/resist of/disapprove of/object to Very (adj.)extremely/exceedingly/ immensely
Bad (adj.)	inferior/substandard/spoiled/ infamous/dismal/not at par/ not up to mark/awful/dreadful/shoddy/abominable/careless/ amateurish/not appropriate/ inauspicious/adverse/ inopportune/unpleasant/ nasty/terrible/wicked/ sinful/immoral/corrupt/ black hearted/depraved/ unprincipled/nefarious/ unscrupulous/regretful/ ashamed about/guilty/conscience/stricken/guilt /ridden/repentant/ penitent/ shame faced/apologetic(For food): Rotten/moldy/go bad/ sour/rancid/stale/stinking/foul /smelling/revolting
Relevant (adj.)	pertinent/ applicable/opposite to the point/appropriate/ congruous/apropos
Irrelevant (adj.)	subject/inapt/not germane/not beside the point/off the pertinent
Idea	concept/notion/conception/viewpoint/outlook/perception
Big	huge/enormous/gigantic/humongous/mammoth/ substantial
Dangerous	hazardous/risky/precarious
Dull	boring/uninteresting/ monotonous/humdrum/dreary
Happy	delighted/elated/joyful/jaunty/jubilant/ecstatic
Interesting	gripping/enthralling/ captivating/fascinating/ engaging/spirited/intriguingdelighted/elated/joyful/jaunty/jubilant/ecstatic
New	unique/modern/current/ recent/novel
Increase (v)	grow/shoot up/enlarge/expand/swell/rise/soar/surge/multiply/ mushroom/proliferate/showball/build up/mount up/pile up/ accrue/accumulate
Increase (noun)	growth/rise/enlargement/ expansion/extension
Decrease (v)	lessen/reduce/drop/diminish/decline/dwindle/contract/ shrink/abate/subside/sink/ taper off/slump/plummet/plunge/peter out
Decrease (n)	decline/downturn
Money	wealth/riches/fortune/assets/ resources/property/financial gain/monetary benefit/hard cash

Government	regime/authority/executive/administration
People	human beings/humankind/ species/human citizens/ subjects/electors/voters/ taxpayers/inhabitants/masses/culture/traditions/heritage/ values/customs/general public/ civilization/society/way of life/ lifestyle
Technology	the application of scientific knowledge for practical purpose/machinery and device developed from scientific knowledge
Society	the community/general public/ the people/the population/ civilization/world at large
Old	elderly/aged/senior/ mature/grey haired/senile/ superannuated/retired people/ septuagenarian/octogenarian/ nonagenarian/centenarian Tendency/inclination/ propensity for/proclivity for/
Intention	penchant for/predisposition to/ goal/aim/objective/purpose/ intent/target/plan
Desire (n)	aspiration/yearning/longing/ craving/hankering/hunger/ thirst/itch/burning/lust/sexual
Study	Gifted child, win a scholarship, secure a place, academic year, core subjects, set texts, formal education, meet the entry requirements, marked improvement, wondering attention, room for improvement, thirst for knowledge, quick learner, wavering concentration, demonstrate an ability, proven ability, to play truant
Work	join the staff, make a living, aspect of the job, members of staff, maternity leave, go part time, do a job-share, lay off staff, go freelance, network of contacts, volume of work, earn a good living, carve a niche for oneself, open to offer, tempting offer, moving up the ladder, under pressure, daunting task, mastering new skills, professional misconduct, heavy workload, unsocial hours, menial task
Travel Adventure Transport	Thirst for adventure, contain the excitement, get itchy Feet, arduous journey, have a stopover, low cost airline, Put on standby, went trekking, intrepid explorer, unexplored wilderness, to face severe weather conditions, have a Special charm, first leg of the journey, local transport, Commuter route, getting stuck in traffic, tall road, rush Hour, commuter train, peak time, traffic gridlock, cycle/ Pedestrian lane, off-peak, packed trains, fare/price hike, Ease traffic congestion, park-and-ride-scheme, road Closures, bring traffic to standstill
Sports	Deserve to win, narrowly defeated/beaten, enter a competition, put up a fight, set a new world record,
Book Films	Book reviewers/film critics, based on a true story, book/film captures an atmosphere, book/film deals with, opening/closing scene/chapter, happy/tragic ending, male/female lead, cameo role, box-office hit, cast/shoot a film, engrossed/ absorbed in a book, compulsive reading, bedtime reading, an easy read, flick/ skim through a book, startling originality, an amazing chain of events, consummate professional, star studded cast, highly/thoroughly recommended, last in impression, awakened my interest, fired the imagination
Environment	Disposal of household waste, dump the waste, toxic waste, Environmental catastrophe, climate change, weather pattern, Dire consequences. Widespread flooding & searing heat, Irreversible climate change, reduce the carbon footprint, offsetting carbon

	emission, vehicle
	emissions, hybrid car, alternative energy sources, renewable energy, green taxes
Social life	Flying visit, girls' night out, go out for a meal, stick to diet, Surprise party, called for a celebration, whirlwind visit, play host to, to pay a visit, join the festivities, attend a formal function, family gathering, wine and dine, convivial atmosphere, the perfect venue,
Festivals/ Celebrations	Festival falls on, festival celebrates, to uphold the tradition, hold an unusual festivals, tradition dates back to, festive mood/ season, movable feasts, rich tradition, cultural heritage, proud tradition, break with tradition, best man (in a wedding), long-standing tradition, tie the knot, pre-wedding nerves
fashion	Beauty products, long-lasting color, sun-damaged hair, Clinically pr oven to banish wrinkles, luxury item, flawless complexion, unrivalled service, glossy magazines, in fashion, designer label, high street fashion, launch new collections, new season's look, setting the trend, stunning range, hit the ,high street, hugely popular, fashion victim, excruciating uncomfortable, back in
Country side & Town	Surrounding countryside, familiar landscape, gentle/ rugged landscape, open fields, rocky mountains, fast flowing river, dense forest, unspoilt countryside, destroy the countryside, protecting the environment, bustling centre, high quality urban living, long opening hours, reliable public transport, rustic charm, quiet backwater, crowded street, hectic pace of life, tree- planting scheme, derelict buildings, leafy suburbs, congested road, city centre, suburban area, exurban area
Science/Techn ology	Harnessing technologies, cutting-edge design, run smoothly,
Health Illness	Catch cold/flu/ pneumonia, contract a disease/malaria, diagnosed with a disease, succumb to/sustain an injury, follow a fitness programmed, vigorous/ gentle exercise, terminally ill, excruciating/ unbearable pain, trivial/ minor ailments, life threatening, acutely/ intensely painful, relieve/ alleviate the pain, heavy/ slight cold, splitting headache, dull ache, reducing the stress level, go on a diet, medical serious condition, respond well to the treatment, make a full recovery, adverse reactions, be in poor health, critically/ seriously ill, feel into/ come out of a coma, massive heart attack, untimely/premature demise/death
People; Personality Character Behavior	Good company, selfish/ stubborn streak, ongoing, good sense of humor, Fiercely loyal, set high standards, razor sharp mind, supremely Confident, painfully shy, bear a grudge, brutally honest, sense of Responsibility, swallow the pride, throw a tantrum, lose the Patience/nerve/ temper, reveal his/N her true character, gruff exterior but sharp wit, downright rude, pent- up anger, boundless/ bursting with energy, bubbly/lively personality,, does not look one's age, blank expression, cool/ warm reception, abrasive manner, round/square/ oval face, droopy/ handlebar moustache, straight/ upturned/ flat nose, slender waist, lovely complexion, sleek/ shoulder-length/coarse/ thick/jet-black/fair hair, broad hips, well built with broad shoulders, youthful appearance, chubby cheeks, bushy/thick/ thin eyebrows, go gray/ bald, to have a striking appearance, disheveled hair

Family Relationship	Nuclear/extended family, close/distant/ blood relatives, second/ Distant cousin, close/ immediate family, close/ close-knit family, Loving/ respectable/dysfunctional family, estranged husband/Wife, bitter/acrimonious divorce, broken/deprived/stable home, Start a family & set up home, expecting a baby or baby is due, apply for the, run/provide for a family, Custody of a child, give/grant the custody, single parent, have a baby, cement the Relationship, close friend or casual acquaintance, keep in/ lose Contact/touch, form a lasting friendship, strike up a friendship
Houses Rooms Flats	Short-let accommodation, studio flat, move into a flat/ house, Suitable accommodation, fully furnished/ equipped flat/house, Fully fitted kitchen, off-road parking, spacious living room, airy Bedrooms, window that overlooks the garden, basement flat, Granny flat, adding/building an extension, completely refurbished, chilly Corridor & draughty hall, dilapidated building, cramped rooms, House warming party, affordable housing, feel homesick, second home, cozy room

