

Writing a letter

What is being tested?

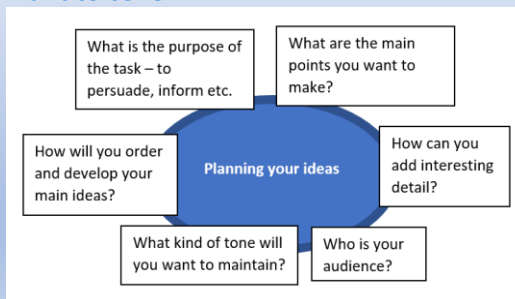
- How you appeal to a reader, the quality of your ideas and how well you present them.
- Your ability to use sentencing, grammar and vocabulary.

Structuring a letter:

1. Learn how to set out a formal letter – make sure you know where the **sender** and **recipient addresses** should go and how to **start** and **end** the letter.
2. Start with a focused **opening paragraph** in which you make clear the purpose of your letter.
3. Include at least two or three **main paragraphs** in which you include more details and ideas.
4. **Conclude** your letter. Either sum up your ideas or discuss the next steps that should be taken.

Planning your content:

Before you begin, read the task carefully. It is really helpful if you **plan** what you want to cover.



Definition:

A **formal letter** is usually written to an audience who you are not personally familiar with. It is usually written for an official purpose – for example, to complain, to apply for work or to offer your opinions on a particular subject.

Techniques to use:

A good letter will be coherent and convincing.

Think about:

- vocabulary – use words that are specific and help you make your points
- organisation – you must write in paragraphs but make sure that these are organised in a logical way
- personal experience – can your own experiences add relevant detail to your letter
- techniques such as rhetorical questions or the use of pertinent evidence – these can help make the reader pay attention to the points being made
- clarity – make sure your points are clearly made and you don't contradict yourself

Writing a letter – exam tasks:

The text below was part of an article in a teenage magazine:

'I'm fed up of reading about celebrities and sports stars behaving badly. They do no good and a lot of harm. The worst thing is that teenagers are easily influenced to think they can copy them and behave the same.'

Write a letter to the magazine giving your views on the subject. [20]

This is part of a letter that appeared in a newspaper:

'I can't understand why we have pets. They can be expensive to look after, they take up lots of time, children want them then get tired of them, yet if you dare to say you would never have a pet, people think you are strange. I would never have one.'

Write a letter to the newspaper giving your views on this subject.[20]

Your headteacher has decided that there should not be an end of year celebration such as a school prom or party. The headteacher believes it would just be an excuse for students to show off in an expensive way.

Write a letter to your headteacher giving your opinions on this. [20]

It has been suggested that reduced-price bus fares for young people should be scrapped to save money, but that free travel for over 65s should continue.

Write a letter to your local newspaper giving your views on this proposal. [20]

TOP TIPS:

- ★ Link ideas across paragraphs to create fluent writing – you might repeat ideas to reinforce a point.
- ★ Use topic sentences at the start of paragraphs to help organise your work and introduce ideas.
- ★ Keep checking the task you have been given to make sure you remain focused.
- ★ Try to develop your ideas thoughtfully – think about what will appeal to an audience.

Next steps...

Work through the PowerPoint that accompanies this resource.

Read the letters pages of a newspaper. Write down what works well. Are there any techniques that you can copy?

Work through some sample tasks and write a plan of what you might include.

Read your teacher's feedback when you next write a formal letter. What do they think you need to do to improve?