

WRITING GUIDE FOR  
SLP EXAMS  
ETESDA  
ZARAGOZA AIR BASE

# 1. Prepare your writing:

## 1.1. 4-step process

Writing well has four fundamental steps:



### Step 1. Identify key words

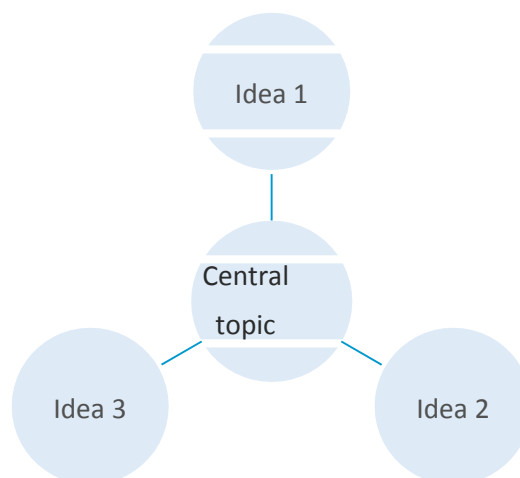
Identify...	Helps with...	Essential for high grade in...
... <b>whom</b> are you writing	Correct register	Communicative achievement
... <b>what</b> you are writing	Correct style	Communicative achievement
... <b>what ideas</b> you must include	Relevant Content	Content

### Step 2. Organise

Organisation is 25% of the grade in the writing paper. **A plan** is essential to organise the content into paragraphs that transmit your ideas clearly.

Here are three methods that are useful in planning proposals, reports, reviews, etc.

- **Brainstorming related ideas:**



- **Organising ideas e.g. contrasting positive versus negative aspects of different ideas:**

	Positive aspects	Negative aspects
Idea 1:		
Idea 2:		

### 3. Listing paragraphs:

- ▶ Introduction: Background of topic & introduce ideas 1 & 2.
- ▶ Develop idea 1.
- ▶ Develop idea 2.
- ▶ Conclusion: Evaluation of idea 1 & 2.

### Step 3. Write

**Write the recommended number of words:** You will NOT be directly penalised for writing more, or less, than the recommended word limit. However, it may negatively affect your grade in other areas:

#### ▶ Writing that is too long:

- **Content.** You have included content that is irrelevant.
- **Language.** You have run out of time and are unable to check your work and correct mistakes.

#### ▶ Writing that is too short:

- **Content.** You will lose points if you have not included all the points and developed your ideas sufficiently.

#### TIP

Before the exam, practice the recommended word limit in the time allowed.

### Step 4. Check



Stop writing and check your work: It is essential to check, check and check again to **maximize your grade in language.**

## 1. 2. Time management

As it can be seen below, writing takes up only 60/70 % of the time.

Writing Paper exam	
Writing task to complete:	45/50 minutes per task
1. Reading question and identify content:	4/5 minutes
2. Organising ideas:	5 minutes
3. Writing:	25/30 minutes
4. Checking:	5/10 minutes

### TIP

When practicing, limit your time to that of the exam.

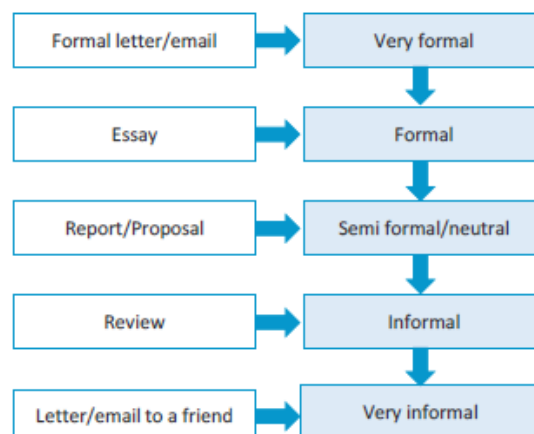
## 1.3. Register

### Formal or informal?

Using the correct style (register) is critical to scoring high in **Communicative Achievement**.

To determine the style, you first need to decide:

- ▶ To whom you are writing.
- ▶ What your purpose is.



## Formal or informal linking words and discourse markers?

Formal and informal discourse markers should NOT be mixed in the same piece of writing.

Semi-formal/neutral markers can sometimes be adapted to a more, or less, formal style, if appropriate to context.

Do not over-use, as this can seem artificial.

FORMAL REGISTER, e.g.:				
Listing	Adding more information	Contrasting information	Summarising	Referencing
First and foremost,	Moreover,	In contrast,	Therefore,	Regarding...,
Initially	Furthermore,	However,	Accordingly,	With reference to...,
Further	Additionally,	Nonetheless,	Consequently,	With regard to...,
Subsequently	In addition,	Nevertheless,	Thus,	In relation to...,

INFORMAL REGISTER e.g.:				
Listing	Adding more information	Contrasting information	Summarising	Referencing
After...,	Also,	But...,	Anyway/Anyhow	Since...,
Then,	As well as...,	Or	Because,	So,
Next,	Just as...,	Though,	At any rate,	Well...,

SEMI FORMAL/NEUTRAL REGISTER e.g.:				
Listing	Adding more information	Contrasting information	Summarising	Referencing
Initially	Likewise,	Although,	Therefore,	Generally,
Subsequently,	In addition,	Even though,	Accordingly,	In general,
Further	Additionally,	Whereas,	Overall,	In most/many cases,
Lastly,	Similarly,	Besides...,	As a result,	In relation to...,

## 2. Types of Writing:

### 2.1. Essay

#### Part 1: Compulsory question

There will only be one question with a short text.  
You must write an essay.

#### Reasons for writing

- ▶ Write an essay based on points included in the text.
- ▶ Give reasons for your opinion.
- ▶ **NOTE:** It is essential to show your ability to select, defend and evaluate ideas.

#### Style

- ▶ Write in third person throughout, using an objective style.
- ▶ **Exception:** thesis statement (e.g. *Here, I will argue that...*) and conclusion (e.g. *I would argue that...*) may briefly use the first person.
- ▶ Use the passive voice where appropriate: *it is argued that....* **Not:** *\*I believe...*

#### Structure

- ▶ An essay is made up of defined parts that provide cohesion to the writing.
- ▶ Each part plays a role in providing structure to the argument. See table below.

<b>Paragraph 1</b> <b>Introduction</b>	<b>Background:</b> Introduce topic.
	<b>Thesis statement:</b> <i>This essay will discuss...</i> [Idea 1 and idea 2].
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	<b>Paragraph leader:</b> Express idea 1 in one sentence.
	<b>Paragraph body:</b> Develop idea 1.
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	<b>Paragraph leader:</b> Express idea 2 in one sentence.
	<b>Paragraph body:</b> Develop idea 2.
<b>Paragraph 4</b> <b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Summary:</b> Evaluate ideas 1 and 2.
	<b>Future suggestion, comment.</b> Closing comment or question (optional)

**Remember:**



**Useful language**

**Expressing opinions (usually for the last paragraph/conclusion)**

- In my opinion*      *Personally, I believe that...*      *I agree/disagree with...*
- I am in favour of...*    *I am against the idea of...*    *From my point of view/In my view...*
- If you ask me...*      *I believe that...*      *I sympathize with..*
- It seems to me that...*    *I (firmly/strongly) think that...*

**Step 1. Identify key words**

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in **220 – 260** words in an appropriate style. You have 45 minutes.

**1** Your school has received a grant from the local authorities. You have attended a school meeting to discuss how the money should best be spent. You have made the notes below:

**How should the grant be spent?**

- ⇒ playground
- ⇒ computers
- ⇒ library

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

"The children need shade in the playground."

"Children already spend too much time with screens!"

"The library hasn't got enough reading books"

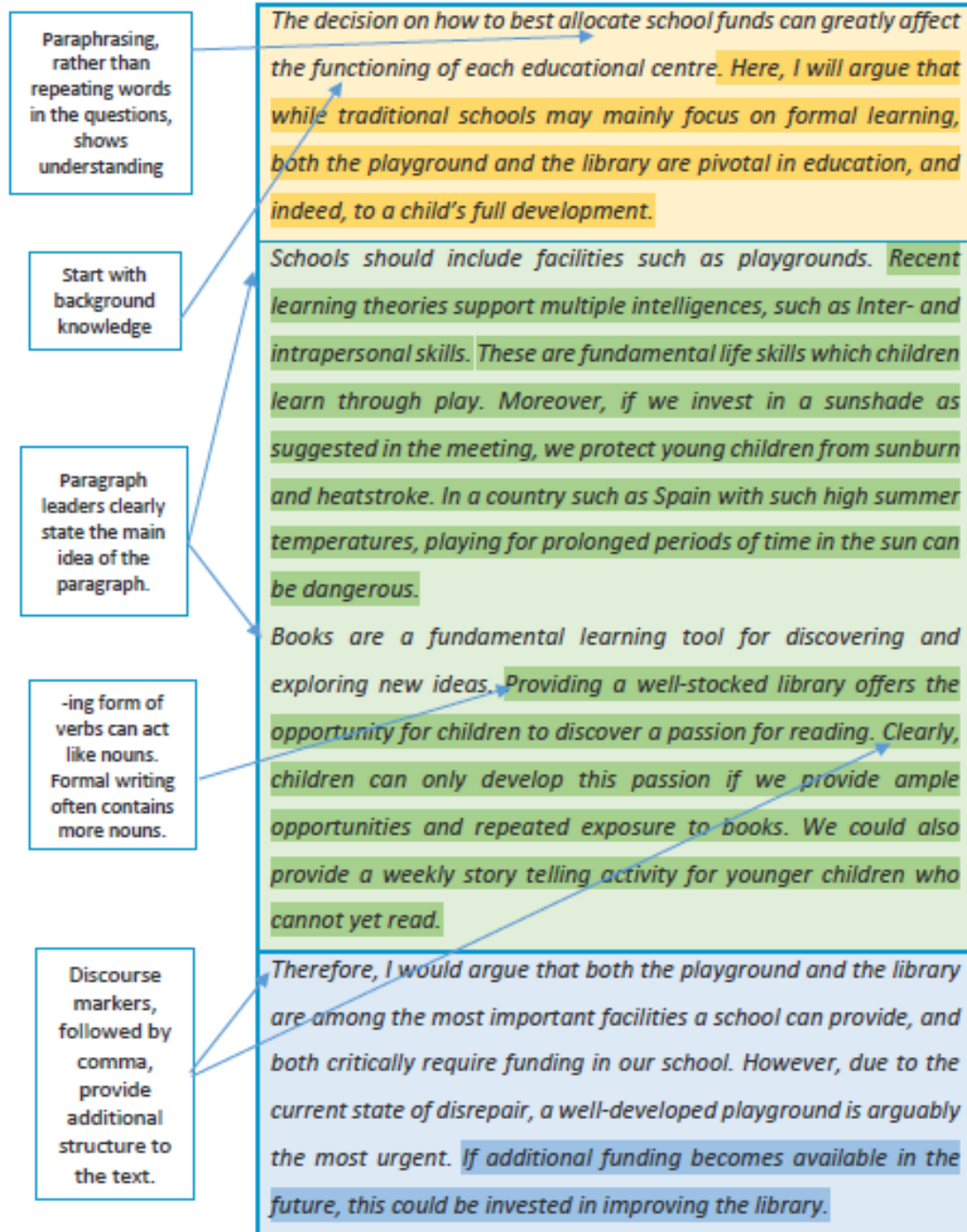
Write an essay discussing **two** of the possible ways to spend the grant from your notes. You should **explain which improvement is more important** for your pupils, **giving reasons** in support of your answer.

## Step 2. Organise

Paragraph	Function	What to say
Paragraph 1 Introduction	<b>Background</b>	<i>Funding important for schools.</i>
	<b>Thesis statement:</b> Mention idea 1 & 2, and which is more important, e.g.: <i>This essay will discuss /Here I will argue....</i>	<i>Playground (developing friendships). Library (learn to enjoy reading). Both important in education, though sometimes forgotten.</i>
Paragraph 2 leader	<b>Idea 1</b>	<i>Children learn through play.</i>
Paragraph 2 body	<b>Justify idea 1</b>	<i>Shade to avoid sunburn in summer. Freedom to express themselves. Make friends. Relax in between classes.</i>
Paragraph 3 leader	<b>Idea 2</b>	<i>Books-fundamental for learning.</i>
Paragraph 3 body	<b>Justify idea 2</b>	<i>Explore new ideas. Discover passion for reading.</i>
Paragraph 4 Conclusion	<b>Summary:</b> State which idea of the two is more important.  Justify selection.	<i>Both time spent in the playground and library are necessary for child's full development. Developing the playground. Learn life skills through play</i>
	<b>Future suggestions</b>	<i>Maybe library in future?</i>



### Step 3. Write



## Step 4. Check



**Practice!** Read the following questions and write an essay in 45 minutes.

You **must** answer this question. Write your answer in 220-260 words in an appropriate style. You have 45 minutes.

1. Your local sports club has received a donation. You have attended a meeting to discuss how the money should best be spent. You have made the notes below:

**How should the donation be spent?**

- ▶ exercise machines
- ▶ more classes
- ▶ additional staff

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

“The machines are always busy.”

“I can never join a class as I’m working at that time!”

“There aren’t enough monitors to help members.”

Write an essay discussing **two** of the possible ways to spend the donation from your notes. You should **explain which improvement is more important** for the club members, **giving reasons** in support of your answer.

## 2.2. Formal letter/email

### Reason for writing

To reassure someone, justify a course of action, or correct a misunderstanding. For example:

- ▶ Letter or email of application (for a job).
- ▶ Letter or email of complaint.

### Style

A letter of application (for a job etc.) is one of the most formal of all writing styles, with very strict conventions in its opening and closing sentences.

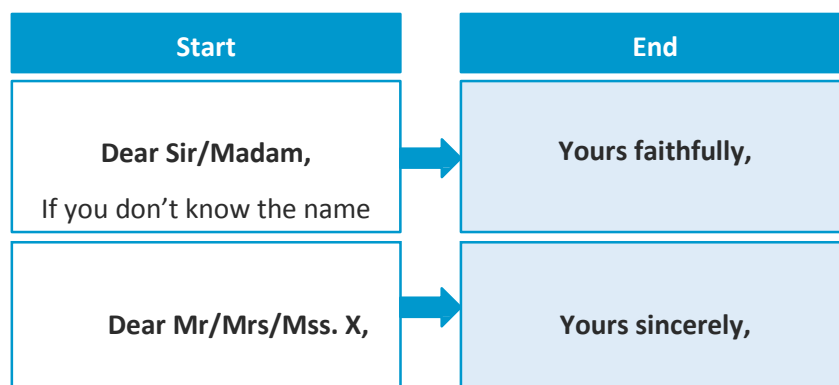
An email of application will still follow a formal style but may use less strict conventions. Write in the first person where appropriate.

### Structure

Use paragraphs to structure your writing and give coherence to your ideas:

<b>Opening</b>	<i>Dear...</i>
<b>Paragraph 1</b>	Introduce the topic/ state reason for writing.
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Develop the topic. Give description and details.
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Further discussion if necessary.
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Discuss the desired result of the letter. Suggestions, recommendations, closing comments.
<b>Sign off</b>	<i>Yours sincerely, faithfully</i> (depending on title used).

### Starting and ending the letter



## Useful language

### Opening sentences (letter of application)

*I am writing **to apply for** the post / position of ... as advertised in (newspaper/ date)...*

*I am writing **in reference to** your advertisement, from the (newspaper/ date)...*

### Opening sentences (letter of complaint)

*I am writing **with regard to** the article entitled (when/where) to express **my concern about /disapproval of** (reason for writing)...*

*I am writing **in reference to** the article entitled (when/where) to express my **disappointment with/dissatisfaction with** (reason for writing)...*

### Body (letter of application)

*I am sure that I would be successful in this post as I...*

*I am particularly interested in completing (the course) as...*

### Body (letter of complaint)

*Firstly, / To begin with, / I would like to state that/ I would like to point out that... In fact, / furthermore, / moreover, / in addition, / finally,*

*According to (your article),*

*Your (article) states that ... However,*

### Closing sentences of a letter of application

*I very much hope you will (desired result)*

*I would appreciate it/be grateful if you would (desired result)*

*I look forward to receiving/seeing (desired result)*

### Desired result a letter of complaint

*I trust you will (desired result)*

*It seems only fair that you should (desired action)*

*Considering the above, (I feel I am entitled to a full refund and a formal apology)*

## Remember:



### Step 1. Identify key words

You recently read an article in a daily newspaper. You feel that it portrayed young people inaccurately and negatively because it focused on problems such as being addicted to technology and mobile phones and showing a lack of respect to others. You have decided to write a letter to the newspaper editor to comment on the article, stating your opinions. Write your **letter**.

### Step 2. Organise

<b>Who to?</b>	Newspaper editor.
<b>Register?</b>	Very Formal. No name. <i>Dear Sir/Madam.</i>
<b>Paragraph 1</b>	Disagree with opinion about young people.
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Article was wholly negative. Should have included positive points.
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Describe good points- not just mobile phones also: sport, music. Good with technology.
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Not badly behaved. Example: volunteer work.
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Recommendation-publish another article with more balanced view.
<b>Sign off</b>	<i>Yours faithfully.</i>

### Step 3. Write

Correctly follows formal letter writing conventions when opening the letter

Formal discourse markers and cohesion

Correctly follows formal letter writing conventions to sign off

*Dear Sir/Madam,*

*I am writing in reference to the article entitled "The young problem" which appeared in the latest edition of your magazine to express my dissatisfaction with the image presented of young people today.*

*Firstly, I consider that the article presents a wholly negative view of today's young people. In my experience, there are many positive points that could have been made in the article.*

*We all know that young people have been born in a technological society surrounded by smart phones, however they are also engaged in far more extracurricular activities, such as sport, music, and language activities. Their command of technology will create more opportunities to find a good job.*

*Furthermore, it is not true that all young people are badly-behaved. Many young people show respect for others in different situations and they are involved in voluntary work when they finish their degrees. Additionally, in many schools they can participate with less fortunate people who are sick in hospitals.*

*In my opinion, a good education when they are children will solve these problems and they will be well-behaved and use technology correctly.*

*I am a dedicated reader of your magazine and I would be grateful if you would consider publishing an article taking into account this alternative point of view in the future editions of your magazine.*

*Yours faithfully.*

## Step 4. Check



### TIP

Starting the paragraph in a formal letter can be the trickiest part.  
Learn 1 or 2 opening sentences to help you.



**Practice!** Write a formal email/letter in 45 minutes.

You recently bought tickets for a tour of a historic site while on holiday. You feel that the tour was unsatisfactory as the driver was late picking you up from the hotel. As a result, you had less time to spend at the site before returning. You have decided to write a letter to the tour company, stating your dissatisfaction and suggesting a possible solution.

Write your **letter**.

## 2.3. Informal email/letter

### Reason for writing

- ▶ Email/letter to family member or friend.
  - ▶ Ask for a favour/ a request for help.
  - ▶ Arrange plans/parties/meetings.
  - ▶ Update his/her/your status, ask how everything is going.

### Style

- ▶ A relaxed style with a very light tone.
- ▶ Mimic your style of speaking.
- ▶ Use exclamation marks and informal punctuation.
- ▶ Keep it fun/light-hearted if appropriate.
- ▶ Write in the first person.

### Structure

Use paragraphs to structure your writing and give coherence to your ideas:

<b>Paragraph 1</b>	Greeting. Setting up response for paragraph 2.
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Idea 1 of required content + justification.
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Idea 2 of required content + justification.
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Closing sentences. Signing off.



## Useful language

Start	End
Dear... Hello/ Hi!/ Hi there!	<b>Regards</b> (email-neutral) <b>From</b> (letter-neutral) <b>Love</b> (family & best friends)

Opening paragraph	Closing paragraph
Great to hear from you! Hey! How are you?	Write back as soon as you can. Can't wait to hear what happens! Write soon!

### Remember:



## Step 1. Identify key words

You have received an email from an English friend:

I'm loving my new job. I've met loads of new friends and guess what? I'm going to be attending a meeting in your town next month!  
 I'm arriving mid-week and I get to spend the weekend there, and I really want to get to know the town. So, please fill me in! Tell me where I should go, when and why?  
 Can't wait!  
 Love. Claire

Write your **email** in reply. You do not need to include the email address.

## Step 2. Organise

<b>Topic</b>	Weekend trip to my town.	
<b>Who to?</b>	Friend.	
<b>Register?</b>	Very informal.	
<b>Where to go?</b>	Castle.	Pub.
<b>When to go?</b>	Early or late.	Book a table if evening.
<b>Why?</b>	Spectacular views. Avoid crowds.	Good food. Cheap. Very busy.

### Step 3. Write

The diagram illustrates an informal text with several callout boxes pointing to specific features:

- Omission of 'I'm upon starting sentence is very colloquial.** Points to the start of the text: "Great about your job! I'm so pleased for you! I know you were really worried about starting at the office."
- Rhetorical questions maintain informal style** Points to the question: "Places to go? Well, there's no missing the castle up on the hill. It's a nightmare to walk all the way up there, but it will worth it! The views are spectacular! And the castle is really well-maintained. Looks like one of those Disney castles! Best avoid the crowds as it gets really packed, so I'd go either first thing or last thing in the evening."
- Where** Points to the question: "Where else? Well, you know that pub I went for my birthday? I sent you a selfie of me outside. It was built in the 1600s so it's a really attractive place. They've got fabulous food, and it's pretty good value —not pricey at all. I'd definitely phone up and book though, if you go in the evening. It's impossible to get a table otherwise. Not quite so busy at lunchtime, so maybe better then."
- Use contractions in informal texts** Points to the phrase: "I'd definitely phone up and book though, if you go in the evening."
- Why** Points to the phrase: "I'd definitely phone up and book though, if you go in the evening."
- Consistently chatty informal style throughout** Points to the phrase: "I think they might be turning on the Christmas lights that week, so if you are lucky you'll get to see the display over the harbour —that can be amazing at night. But you know how cold it gets over here in December —make sure you wrap up! You'll freeze, if not!"
- When** Points to the phrase: "Can't wait to see you!"

The text itself is as follows:

Hi there!

Great about your job! I'm so pleased for you! I know you were really worried about starting at the office. Really excited that you are coming here! I can't wait — haven't seen you in ages. Are you coming with your colleagues or alone? If you are coming alone, you can stay at my place. Let me know if you need picking up from the station.

Places to go? Well, there's no missing the castle up on the hill. It's a nightmare to walk all the way up there, but it will worth it! The views are spectacular! And the castle is really well-maintained. Looks like one of those Disney castles! Best avoid the crowds as it gets really packed, so I'd go either first thing or last thing in the evening.

Where else? Well, you know that pub I went for my birthday? I sent you a selfie of me outside. It was built in the 1600s so it's a really attractive place. They've got fabulous food, and it's pretty good value —not pricey at all. I'd definitely phone up and book though, if you go in the evening. It's impossible to get a table otherwise. Not quite so busy at lunchtime, so maybe better then.

I think they might be turning on the Christmas lights that week, so if you are lucky you'll get to see the display over the harbour —that can be amazing at night. But you know how cold it gets over here in December —make sure you wrap up! You'll freeze, if not!

Can't wait to see you!

Lots of love,

## Step 4. Check



### TIP

Do NOT use formal language and discourse markers to show off your knowledge. Keep a chatty informal style throughout.



**Practice!** Read the following question and write an informal email/letter in 45 minutes.

You have asked a friend to take care of your sister while you're gone and she sends you the next email:

Hi Darla!

Don't worry! Of course I'll look after your sister while you're away. Especially as you say she is really looking forward to staying with me!

As she is going to be here over the weekend, let me know what she enjoys doing. And tell me about what she likes to eat! I'll go shopping before she gets here, and I'll buy her favourite treats!

Enjoy your trip!

Write your **email** in reply. You do not need to include the email address.

## 2.4. Report

### Reason for writing

- ▶ Evaluate your experience.
- ▶ Summarise information.
- ▶ If required, make a recommendation based on your evaluation.
- ▶ Written for your manager, your boss, a professional group, or a school administrator.

### Style

- ▶ Semi- formal or neutral language.
- ▶ Concise and well organised.
- ▶ Use headings/bullet points to aid organisation for easy reference.

### Structure

Use paragraphs to structure your writing and give coherence to your ideas:

<b>Paragraph 1</b>	Introduction. General background
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	Positive aspects of point 1.
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	Negative aspects of point 1.
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	Positive aspects of point 2.
<b>Paragraph 5</b>	Negative aspects of point 2.
<b>Paragraph 6</b>	Conclusion.

## Useful language

### Presenting and contrasting arguments

*The main argument in favour / against*

*is... First of all, I should like to consider...*

*The first point I would like to consider/to be considered is...*

*To make the problem clear, I would like to present some examples of... Apart from that...*

*Even though / In spite of...*

*What is more...*

*What matters most in this case*

*is... There is no doubt that...*

### Reasoning

*Because of / As a result*

*of On account of...*

*Owing to / Due to / Therefore*

### Concluding (some of them ONLY if a suggestion/recommendation is asked to you)

*To sum up, it could be said that...*

*On this basis, I can conclude that...*

*Having proved this, I would like to...*

*In conclusion, I would like to stress that...*

*Given this, it can be concluded that...*

### Remember:



## Step 1. Identify key words

You have been asked to write a report for your company manager about the quality of the staff catering facilities provided at your office. In your report you should discuss how frequently the facilities are used, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages for the company and staff, and suggest improvements.

Write your report.

## Step 2. Organise

<b>Who to?</b>	<i>Company manager.</i>
<b>Register?</b>	<i>Semi-formal.</i>
<b>Paragraph 1</b>	<i>Introduce topic. Evaluate catering facilities. Company staff. Problems: no food. Insufficient quality.</i>
<b>Paragraph 2</b>	<i>Problem 1: Failure to provide food due to error-caterers thought bank holiday.</i>
<b>Paragraph 3</b>	<i>Solution 1. Talk to company. Only close national holidays.</i>
<b>Paragraph 4</b>	<i>Problem 2: insufficient quantity due to extra personnel on training.</i>
<b>Paragraph 5</b>	<i>Solution 2: company dept. must provide caterers with dates for training.</i>
<b>Paragraph 6</b>	<i>Conclusion. Not necessary to change catering firm.</i>

### Step 3. Write

Format allows easy reference.

*To: Company Manager  
From: Marcos García  
Subject: Evaluation and recommendation regarding the staff catering facilities in Avila office*

*The aim of this report is to evaluate the staff catering facilities provided at the local office in Avila. The services are currently provided by an external company and are used by almost 100% of the personnel on a daily basis. Recently, two problems have been detected: failure to provide any food on one day, and insufficient quantity on another two days.*

Each problem has a heading for easy reference.

#### *Failure to provide food*

*When contacted, the firm provided the following explanation: due to an error, the catering company had assumed that our premises would be closed on local public holidays, and had therefore not provided any catering. We have since explained that, as a nationwide company, we do not close on local public holidays, only national bank holidays. We have been assured that this error will not reoccur.*

#### *Insufficient quantity*

*Following two training periods where extra personnel from other offices had eaten at the Avila office, 12 people were not provided with food in the staff canteen. As a result, the company had to contact a take-away food service. Upon investigation, the catering company had not been informed beforehand of the training sessions, and had therefore not been able to provide sufficient portions. The company department responsible for this had been advised that they must inform the catering company of any training sessions to avoid this happening again.*

Short conclusion provides summary and final evaluation.

*Accordingly, I believe these episodes were isolated incidents and have been resolved satisfactorily. I do not believe it necessary to change the catering firm.*

## Step 4. Check



### TIP

Providing a subject at the beginning of the report helps you to clarify argument.



**Practice!** Read the following question and write an informal email/letter in 45 minutes.

You have been asked to write a report for your company manager about the quality of the sports facilities provided at your work place. In your report you should discuss how frequently the facilities are used, evaluate the advantages and disadvantages for the company and workers, and suggest improvements.

Write your **report**.



## 3.1. Other Writing Topics

### SLP 2.2.2.2 (220/250 words aprox)

- 1. While you were staying at your friend's house in London, you left one of your bags there. Write an email to him/her and:**
  - describe the bag and its contents
  - ask him/her to send it to Spain
  - suggest paying for postage
  - apologize for all trouble.
- 2. You were coming back from work. You witnessed a road accident in which a soldier from your unit was involved. Write a report to the local MP department and include the following:**
  - time and date
  - weather conditions
  - how it happened
  - whose fault you think it was and why
  - rescue operation by emergency services
- 3. You have seen an advertisement for a military job abroad. You are interested in it but you need more information. Write a letter introducing yourself and asking about the job details: contract length, salary, working hours, accommodation, possibility to bring your family, etc.**
- 4. The Air Forces have been improving over the years as their soldiers get better equipment and vehicles and aircraft are updated. However, some facilities are still quite old and have not changed since they were first built. Do you think Government should invest more in installations rather than other things? What buildings would you suggest improving?**

SLP 3.3.3.3 & 4.4.4.4 (350/500 words aprox)

**1. Write a report for the NATO health commission about the state of the military health service in Spain. Include the points below:**

- the current situation
- possible causes of the present problems and their consequences
- steps that should be taken to remedy the situation.

**2. The Internet: the most useful tool for centuries sure but... is it safe? Discuss on the safety on the Internet. You have been asked to write an opinion essay on it. Include the points below:**

- cybercrime
- risks connected with private and corporate use of the Internet
- possible solutions to avoid those risks

**3. A foreign TV team wants to come for two days to make a short programme about the Spanish peacekeeping exercise for the maneuvers in San Gregorio in collaboration with other countries. You have been tasked with organizing their visit. Write an email:**

- informing them about your commander's approval of their arrival
- establishing the details of their visit such as the schedule or planned activities they are allowed to film or any other ideas you may have.
- asking about their further questions and suggestions.

**4. Write a report describing the present involvement of the Spanish arms industry in European projects.**

- Identify the main areas of interest for the Spanish arms industry
- Describe possible challenges it may face
- Suggest what can be done to make Spanish industry more competitive and cost effective.

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