**Formal letters**

Opening: Dear Sir/Madam

Closing: Yours faithfully + your full name

**Semi-formal letters**

Opening: Dear Mr./Miss/Mrs.+ the last name of the recipient

Closing: Yours sincerely + your full name

**Personal letters**

Opening: Dear + the first name of the recipient

Closing: Best regards + your first name

**Structure Your Letter**

**Paragraph 1:** Directly state the purpose of your letter in formal and semi-formal letters. Here are some useful sentences you can use in your writing.

**Formal and semi-formal letters:**

I am writing this letter with regard to…

I am writing to express my…

I am writing to inform you…

**Personal letters usually include a greeting first and then state the purpose:**

How are you doing?

I hope you are doing well.

How have you been?

**Main body:** In the main body, you can use three paragraphs to cover the bullet points one by one. Also, think of some relevant details to enrich the content of your letter.

**Conclusion paragraph:** Usually, you can use the last paragraph to call to action, express thanks or ask for a response. Here are some examples.

**Formal/Semi-formal letters:**

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I look forward to hearing from you.

**Personal letters:**

I can’t wait to hear from you.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Style | Characteristics | Opening | Ending |
| 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 & use | Dear Mr Brown, Dear Ms Stone | Yours sincerely |
| Informal | To someone you know well, whose first name you know and use | Dear John Dear Anita | Best regards Warm wishes |

Dear Sir / Madam,I am writing to inquire about / I am writing in connection with...

Dear Mr Jones,I am writing to inform you ... / I am writing in connection with...

*Dear Jane*

*I hope you and your family are all well. It was such a pleasure to see you again last summer. We sure had a great time catching up with each other after so many years. You have always been a cherished friend, no matter how much of a gap there has been since we met.*

*Anyway, the reason I'm writing is that I have some good news - I am getting married this summer...*

**Apologizing**  
I'm sorry about...  
I am sorry that...  
I'm very sorry about...  
I'm very sorry for...  
Please forgive me for...  
I'd like to apologize for...  
Please accept my apologies.  
Please accept my sincere apologies. (very formal)

**Asking for Help**  
I'd be grateful if you could...  
I would be grateful if you could...  
I would appreciate it if you could...  
Could you please...  
I was wondering of you could help me.(informal)  
I would like to know...

**Asking for Information**  
I am writing to enquire about...  
I am writing to find out about...  
What I am looking for is...  
I would like to know about/if...

**Closing**  
I look forward to seeing you.  
I look forward to hearing from you.  
I look forward to meeting you.

**Complaining / expressing dissatisfaction**  
I'm writing to express my dissatisfaction with...  
I'm writing to express my annoyance with...  
I am not happy about...  
...was very disappointing.

**Conveying regards**  
Please give my best regards to your family.  
Please pass on my best wishes to your wife and children.  
Please give my regards to your parents.

**Expressing satisfaction**  
I was delighted to hear that...  
I was very happy to learn that...  
I was thrilled to find out that...  
I was glad to hear that...  
...was very enjoyable.

**Expressing concern / sympathy**  
I was sorry to hear about... (your accident/ illness)  
I am writing to express my concern about...

**Giving bad news**  
I regret to inform you that...(semi-formal)  
I am sorry to tell you that...(informal)  
I regret to advise you that...(formal)  
I am afraid I have some bad news.(informal)

**Giving good news**

I am pleased to inform you that...(semi-formal)  
I am delighted to tell you that...(informal)  
I am happy to advise you that...(formal)  
I thought you might like to know that...

**Giving reasons**  
This is because...  
This is because of...  
This is due to... (formal)  
This is as a result of...(formal)  
This is owing to...(formal)

**Making suggestions**  
Would it be a good idea to...  
Perhaps it would be a good idea to...

**Thanking**  
Thanks.  
Thank you.  
Thank you very much.  
Thank you kindly.  
I can't thank you enough.  
No words can express my gratitude.  
I am extremely grateful for...  
I very much appreciate your \_\_\_\_\_\_ing

**QUIZ**

Match the following:

1. Thank you kindly.  
2. I am pleased to inform you that...  
3. Please give my best wishes to...  
4. This is due to...  
5. I look forward to hearing from you.  
6. I would like to know...  
7. I'd like to apologize for...  
8. I regret to inform you...

a. Apologizing  
b. Conveying regards  
c. Giving bad news  
d. Giving reasons  
e. Closing  
f. Thanking  
g. Giving good news  
h. Asking for information

Answers:  
1-f, 2-g, 3-b. 4-d, 5-e, 6-h, 7-a, 8-c

**Stating Your Opinion**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In my opinion, | According to me, |
| In my view, | To me, |
| From my point of view, | I think |
| It seems to me that | I believe |
| From my perspective | To my way of thinking |
| It appears that | I suppose |
| I realize | I understand |
| I imagine | I feel |

**Giving Examples**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| For example, | For instance, |
| such as | In other words, |
| as | like |
| that is | namely |
| To illustrate | To paraphrase |

**Comparing**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Similar to | As...as |
| in common | also |
| Either...or | In the same way, |
| Neither...nor | At the same time |
| Just as | resemble |

**Contrasting**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| However, | But |
| On the contrary, | On the other hand, |
| Differ from | Nevertheless |
| Although | Though |
| Otherwise | Instead |
| Alternatively, | Even though |

**Generalizing**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Generally, | Generally speaking, |
| Overall, | On the whole, |
| In general, | By and large, |
| It seems to me that | I believe |
| All in all, | Basically, |
| Essentially, | As a rule, |
| All things considered | For the most part |

**Expressing Certainty**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Certainly, | Undoubtedly, |
| Doubtless, | No doubt, |
| Definitely, | Of course, |

**Expressing Partial Agreement**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| More or less, | To some extent, |
| Up to a point, | Almost, |
| In a way, | So to speak, |

**Showing cause**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Due to | Because |
| Because of | Owing to |

**Showing effect**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Therefore, | As a result, |
| Consequently, | For this reason, |
| Thus, | So, |
| thereby | Eventually, |
| Hence, | The reason why |

**Marking time**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| First, | Last |
| Second, | Lastly, |
| Third, | Then, |
| Firstly, | First of all, |
| Secondly, | Before |
| Thirdly, | After |
| During | While |
| To begin with | At the same time |
| Simultaneously | After this / that |
| Since | Meanwhile |
| Afterwards | Following this |
| When | As soon as |

**Adding Information**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Furthermore | In addition |
| Also | And |
| Moreover | Similarly |
| Likewise | As well as |
| Besides | Too |
| Even | What’s more |

**Expressing condition**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| If | Whether |
| In case | Unless |
| Provided that | So that |

**Concluding**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To summarize | In conclusion |
| Lastly, | Finally, |
| To conclude with, | In short, |

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 001 - Complaining to a Hotel**

Below is a sample letter response to **Task 1 of the General IELTS Writing Section**. It is a **formal** letter, which can be identified in several ways:

* the tone, which is official, business-like and serious
* the use of Dear Sir / Madam
* the absence of contractions
* the use of formal expressions (I am writing in connection with...)
* the closing salutation ( "Yours faithfully" instead of the more informal "Yours sincerely" or "Best regards")

##### GENERAL WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You recently stayed in a hotel in a large city. The weather was very unusual for the time of year and the heating / cooling system in the hotel was quite inadequate.

Write a letter to the manager of the hotel. In your letter:

* give details of what went wrong
* explain what you had to do to overcome the problem at the time
* say what action you would like the manager to take

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing in connection with my recent stay at the Four Seasons in London, England. Unfortunately, due to a malfunctioning heater in my room, I spent three miserable nights at your hotel from April 26 � 29, 2010.

When I arrived in London, there was an unexpected snowstorm. I understand it does not usually snow inApril; however, when I got to my room, there was no heat. After complaining, a technician was sent up, who informed me they had to install a new heating unit. When I asked to be moved to another room, I was told the hotel was completely booked. Unfortunately, each night after work I returned to discover the problem had not been rectified. Eventually, I spent three horribly uncomfortable nights, wearing my coat to bed, wearing socks around the room and ending up with a bad cold from the unheated room. I had no time to complain as I had to catch a flight home right after my conference.

I am shocked by this terrible service. This is not what anyone expects for $400 a night! To compensate me for this tremendous inconvenience, I ask that you refund my money right away and offer me a free, more comfortable stay in one of your finer suites in the future. If not, I am prepared to take my complaint to a higher authority.

I look forward to hearing from you at the earliest,

Yours faithfully,

Mr John McFee

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 002 - Explaining to a Bank**

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You have received a letter from your bank, asking you to acknowledge receipt of a new bank card. However, the card was missing from the envelope.

Write a letter to the bank's head office. In your letter:

* explain why you are writing
* express concern about the missing card
* ask them what they intend to do

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing in connection with a missing or stolen debit card from your bank. This is an urgent matter as the bank card could prove dangerous in the hands of the wrong person.

Just yesterday, I received a letter from your bank's head office. It stated that my new bank card was enclosed and asked me to acknowledge receipt. However, when the envelope arrived in my mailbox, it was in a tattered state. More importantly, the debit card which was supposed to be included, was missing. I checked and rechecked around the mailbox but found nothing. I am concerned that someone has gone through my mail and possibly stolen the card.

For this reason, I request that you cancel the existing debit card immediately. The debit card in question is related to my account number 64729401 at your Bay and Bloor branch. After it has been cancelled, please arrange to send me a new one, as I need to travel overseas next week and will need to carry the new bank card with me.

Thank you kindly in advance,

Yours faithfully,

Ms Brenda Holster

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 003 - Making Recommendations to a Magazine**

You eat at your college cafeteria at lunch time every day. However, you think it needs some improvements. Write a letter to the college magazine. In your letter:

* explain what you like about the cafeteria
* say what is wrong with it
* suggest how it could be improved

Dear Sir / Madam

I am writing in connection with our college cafeteria. Since almost every student spends some time here every day, I believe it is in everyone's best interest to find ways to improve the quality of this central eatery.

The cafeteria itself is modern, spacious and attractive. The newly painted murals of the seaside give the seating area an open, airy, outdoor feeling which makes it very pleasant to eat meals there. This is further enhanced by the large green plants and flowing water fountains.

The main problem with the cafeteria is in the food served! First of all, there is a very limited selection available. Each day offers up only standard North American fare of hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken nuggets and French fries. Not only is this selection unhealthy, but also uninteresting day in and day out. We have so many international students on campus, it would be wonderful to have some curries, burritos and falafel added to the menu. Secondly, since this is a student cafeteria, prices need to stay low. We have unfortunately seen two price hikes in the last two years.

I am sure if we offer a wider range of foods, at better prices, the cafeteria will continue to run profitably as more students choose to eat there.

Yours faithfully,

Daniel Bernard

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 004 - Requesting a Letter of Reference**

You are applying for a job and need a letter of reference from someone who knew you when you were at school.

Write a letter to one of your old teachers asking for a reference. In your letter:

* say what job you have applied for
* explain why you want this job
* suggest what information the teacher should include

Dear Mrs Sweeney

How are you? I hope everything is fine at the school and that you have been well. I still remember the dynamic way in which you taught grammar to me and all of the teacher trainees in your English class. Thanks again for those important lessons.

I am writing in connection with a letter of reference that I need for a job that I have applied for recently. As I am due to graduate next month, I have applied for a position as an ESL teacher at a private language school in Tokyo, Japan. You might remember my telling you how very much I looked forward to teaching and traveling around the world. Now I have the chance. I am confident that I can make a difference in the lives of students who need to learn English.

In the letter of reference, I would appreciate it if you could include information related to my trustworthiness, my enthusiasm and my cross-cultural awareness while in teacher training college. As the job is in Japan, they do not have the chance to interview me and will base their decision largely on my letters of reference. I would need to have the letter in two weeks, by July 1st.

Thank you kindly in advance,

Yours sincerely,

Grace Smith

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 005 - Requesting Accommodation**

Write a letter to the accommodation officer at the college. In your letter:

Write a letter to the accommodation officer at the college. In your letter:

* explain your situation
* describe the accommodation you require
* say when you will need it

Dear Mrs Walker

I am writing in connection with my upcoming training course at your college in Sydney, Australia. I will be there to attend the Brain- Based Learning program at Victoria College for a period of three weeks from July 2st to July 22st, 2010. I am hoping that you will be able to assist me with my accommodation arrangements.

As I am slightly older than most of the other participants, I would appreciate it if you could find a private studio apartment for me, close to the college. It would be ideal if I could walk to school each day, but if not, I would need access to public transportation. I understand some of the events on campus finish quite late so I would prefer not to walk in an unfamiliar neighbourhood after dark. In terms of the apartment, all I require is a bed, a desk, a TV, an Internet connection, a kitchen and a bathroom. My budget is around US $1000 for 3 weeks.

As I will be arriving on July 1st, I would need the apartment to be available from that night until the day of my departure, which is July 23rd. My last night in the apartment would be July 22nd.

Please let me know if you are able to find such an apartment and if not, please suggest other suitable arrangements. I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Jane Goodwin

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 006 - Complaining to a Landlord**

You have been living in a rental apartment for the past year. Recently a new neighbour moved in and has been making a lot of noise, which disturbs you.

Write a letter to the landlord. In your letter:

* explain the situation
* describe why it bothers you
* suggest a solution

Dear Mr Shah

I hope you and your family are all well. I am writing in connection with a problem I have with the new tenant, Jack, who has moved in downstairs. Unfortunately, his habits and needs appear to be quite different from my own.

The issue is that Jack is a professional musician who plays his electric guitar late into the night. I understand he is in a band and needs to practice; however, I think he cannot do so in a residential building such as ours. As I mentioned to you when I signed the lease to the apartment, I am a full-time writer who works from home. For me, it is essential to have silence so I can concentrate on my work. With Jack playing at all hours, I have been unable to get any of my writing done, except when he is out. In some cases, I have even been forced to leave the apartment and work at a nearby coffee shop or library as the guitar playing was causing such a disturbance.

I would appreciate it if you could speak to Jack and ask him to turn down the volume on his guitar or else to use headphones. I have spoken to him about it, but to no avail. I will let you know as soon as the situation improves.

Thank you kindly in advance and please give my best regards to your family,

Yours sincerely,

Meg Snyder

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 007 - Thanking & Inviting a Friend**

Last month you had a holiday overseas where you stayed with some friends. They have just sent you some photos of your holiday.

Write a letter to your friends. In your letter:

* thank them for the photos and for the holiday
* explain why you didn't write earlier
* invite them to come and stay with you

Dear Ajay and Sunita,

Thanks so much for your kind letter and the lovely photos of my holiday in Mumbai. Sorry for the delay in acknowledging your mail, but your package arrived just as I was about to leave town on a business trip. I've just returned to Toronto today.

Looking at the photos brings back so many happy memories of the times we spent together and the wonderful hospitality you extended to me. I felt completely pampered by both of you! You surrounded me with warm friends, good food, amazing sights, great shopping, unforgettable cultural events and laughter-filled evenings. I would have been lost without you. I can't thank you enough.

These good memories gave me an idea. I know you've always wanted to visit Canada. Why don't you plan a holiday and stay with me this summer? The weather is great at that time of year, all tourist sites are open and I could take two weeks off from work. Aside from seeing Toronto, we could drive to Niagara Falls, Thousand Islands, Montreal, Ottawa and Quebec City. I would be thrilled if you could make it.

Thank you both again for the beautiful holiday and the photos which are already up on my wall. Now, I'm looking forward to hearing from you.

Warm wishes,

Carol

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 008 - Describing a New Job**

You have recently started work in a new company.

Write a letter to an English-speaking friend. In your letter,

* explain why you changed jobs
* describe your new job
* tell him / her your other news

Dear Eva,

How are you? I hope you've been well. Sorry for having been out of touch for a short while. There have been some changes in my life and I wanted to let you know the latest from my side.

The big news is that I have finally changed my job! Do you remember when you were here on holiday, I always talked about how I hated my boring bank job? Well, it was clear I needed a change. So, finally, I took a part-time TESL course and trained to be an ESL teacher. Now I'm working full-time in a private language school. I teach General English, Business English and IELTS. Each day, I look forward to going to work. My students come from all over the world and I love teaching them as well as learning from them.

Aside from that, I also moved to a new apartment near the school where I work. It's small, but downtown, so I am right in the heart of the city, instead of way out in the suburbs. Suddenly, there's so many fun things to do, in the evenings too. I am a much happier person today because of these recent changes.

So, how about you? I hope you'll have a chance to visit Canada again soon. In the meantime, please write and let me know what's new with you.

Warm wishes

Kim

#### **Free Sample IELTS Letter - 009 - Advising a Friend**

An English-speaking friend wants to spend a two-week holiday in your region and has written asking for information and advice. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter,

* offer to find somewhere to stay
* give advice about what to do
* give information about what clothes to bring

Dear Julie

Thanks so much for your latest letter. I'm really excited to hear that you're planning to visit Toronto. It will give me a chance to take you around, as you did so kindly for me when I was in Amsterdam last year.

Regarding your visit, I would be happy to help in any way possible. First, unless you really like freezing weather, I suggest you come in the summer months of July or August. Though most hotels are expensive at that time, we have some wonderful guest suites available in our high-rise building, for only about $50 per night. They are fully furnished studio apartments, with a kitchen, so you can have the option of eating in. Just let me know your dates and I can make a reservation for you.

Summer is also the time when all the tourist sites are open. We can visit Centre Island, Canada's Wonderland, Niagara Falls, the CN Tower, the Royal Ontario Museum, the Science Centre and Thousand Islands. The weather should be warm and comfortable, around 25 � 30 degrees Celsius, so bring your informal summer clothes, a swimsuit and an umbrella too. We do get summer showers quite often.

I can't wait for you to come! Write soon with more details,

Warm wishes

Irene