

IELTS

# *Preparation and Practice*

*Reading and Writing*  
**GENERAL TRAINING MODULE**

READING WRITING

Vladimir Pejovic   Michael Nicklin  
Peggy Read



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Vladimir Pejovic  
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INDONESIA AUSTRALIA LANGUAGE FOUNDATION

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# Contents

Preface How to use this book

iv

## ***Part 1 General Training Reading***

---

About the Reading test	
Section 1	1
Summary 1	15
Section 2	17
Summary 2	38
Skills focus—Guessing the meaning of words	39
Section 3	43
Summary 3	60
Skills focus—Linking words	60
Students' questions answered	62
Practice Reading test 1	65
Practice Reading test 2	79
Practice Reading test 3	91

## ***Part 2 General Training Writing***

---

About the Writing test	103
Task 1	104
Task 2	120
Summary of the Writing test	131
Assessing your own writing	131
Students' questions answered	132
Practice Writing tests 1–5	134

## ***Answer Key***

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**139**

Acknowledgments	154
Reading answer sheet	155
Recommended self-study materials	156



# General Training Writing

## About the Writing Test

The IELTS General Training Writing test takes 60 minutes. You have to complete two writing tasks.

### Task 1

- you have about 20 minutes
- you must write a letter of at least 150 words
- you are given a problem and you must write a letter explaining a situation and/or requesting information or action. You may also have to talk about your needs, wants, likes, dislikes and/or to give opinions.

### Task 2

- you have about 40 minutes
- you must write an essay of at least 250 words
- your answer should be like an essay you would write for a teacher or course tutor
- you are given a problem or an argument/point of view. In your answer, you may have to:
  - describe the situation in your own country
  - give your opinion and explain why you have that opinion
  - agree or disagree with a statement.

### Tasks 1 and 2

For both Tasks the following points apply.

- The topics of the questions will be of general interest, and no specialist knowledge is required. For example, topics can include *travel, accommodation, current affairs, shops and services, health and welfare, health and safety, recreation, social and physical environment*.
- You must write in complete sentences. Notes are not acceptable.

- Do not copy whole sentences or long phrases from the question. The examiner will recognise them, and they will not count towards the minimum number of words you must write.
- You may write on the question sheet if, for example, you want to underline key words or to write notes. (The person who marks your writing will not see the question sheet.)

## **How Answers are Assessed**

- Task 1 and Task 2 are marked separately, i.e. when the marker is assessing your answer to one task, he/she will not look at or consider your response to the other task.
- Task 2 is longer and therefore it is more important in calculating your final mark. For example, if you get Band 6 in Task 1 and a Band 5 in Task 2, your overall mark will be Band 5. However, **both questions must be answered satisfactorily** in order to get a good overall mark. If you write a very good answer to one task and do not attempt the other task, your overall score will be much lower.
- When assessing your writing, the examiner looks at three things:  
 content (the information and ideas)  
 organisation (how the information and ideas are organised)  
 language (sentence structure, vocabulary, etc.)

You should not neglect any of these aspects. For example, if the grammar and vocabulary of your answer are good but the content and organisation are poor, your score will be lower.

## **Writing Strategies**

To answer Task 1 and Task 2 questions, you should work through the following steps.

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| Step 1 | Analyse the question                      |
| Step 2 | Make notes of ideas which could be useful |
| Step 3 | Make a plan                               |
| Step 4 | Write the letter or essay                 |
| Step 5 | Check for mistakes                        |

In this section the five-step strategy will be used to guide you through various sample writing tasks for both Task 1 and Task 2.

## **Task 1**

When the IELTS marker looks at a Task 1 answer, he or she has three basic questions in mind:

- Does the letter do what the question asks? Or, is the content (the ideas and information) appropriate to the task?

- Is the letter written in a well-organised, logical way?
- Is the language accurate and correct?

Many candidates get lower band scores in the test because the content and organisation of their writing are not good enough. It is important that you follow these steps when answering a Task 1 question.

## Demonstration—Question

---

### Sample Question 1

*The course director of your previous college has invited you to attend a party for new students, and he has also asked you to give a talk about studying overseas. You have an important examination on the same day so you cannot attend the party.*

*Write to the director to apologise and to explain why you cannot attend. Suggest another date when you could give your talk.*

## How to Answer

---

### STEP 1—ANALYSE THE QUESTION

#### What is the topic?

Find out by underlining the key words in the question.

*The course director of your previous college has invited you to attend a party for new students, and he has also asked you to give a talk about studying overseas. You have an important examination on the following day so you cannot attend the party.*

You have been invited to go to a party and give a talk, but you cannot go to the party.

#### To whom am I writing?

The letter is to the course director of your old college. Although you know him it is unlikely that you know him very well. The style of the letter should in this instance be formal or semi-formal.

#### What is your purpose in writing the letter?

*Write to the director to apologise and to explain why you cannot attend. Suggest another date when you could give your talk or some other solution.*

You can see that you are given three things to do:

- apologise (for not being able to attend)
- explain (why you cannot attend)
- suggest (another date).

### STEP 2—MAKE NOTES OF IDEAS

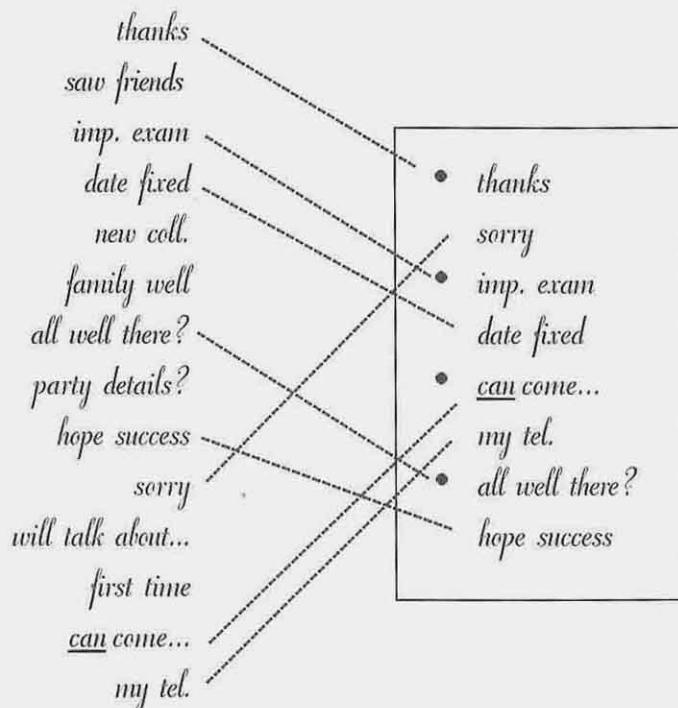
Make a brief note of any ideas which you might use in your answer.

In the following box, the student has written some notes. On the right side is an explanation of what these notes mean.

<i>thanks</i>	thank the director for the invitation
<i>saw friends</i>	say that you saw some college friends last week
<i>imp. exam</i>	explain why the exam is important
<i>date fixed</i>	explain why the date of the exam cannot be changed
<i>new coll.</i>	talk about your new college
<i>family well</i>	talk about your family
<i>all well there?</i>	ask how everyone is at the old college
<i>party details?</i>	ask for details of the party
<i>hope success</i>	say that you hope the party is a success
<i>sorry</i>	say you can't come to the party and apologise
<i>will talk about...</i>	explain what you will say in your talk about studying overseas
<i>first time</i>	explain it is the first time you have ever been asked to give a talk like this
<i>can come...</i>	say when you can come
<i>my tel.</i>	tell the director how to contact you

### STEP 3—MAKE A PLAN

Decide which of these ideas you will definitely use in the letter. Organise them. The notes from step 2 are on the left side below. In the box on the right there is a sample plan which is based on the notes. Each black dot represents a separate paragraph. Notice that not all of the ideas have been used.



### **STEP 4—WRITE THE LETTER**

Follow the plan.

### **STEP 5—CHECK FOR MISTAKES**

## **Demonstration—Letter**

---

Dear Mr Arnold,

Thank you for ~~your~~ kind invitation ~~to~~ attend the party for new student on the 29th of January. Thank you also for thinking of me to give a talk. However, unfortunately I am unable to attend the party.

I ~~am~~ afraid that on the following day I have my first semester ~~economics~~ exam. This is ~~a~~ complicated subject and a good ~~note~~ mark is essential for me, so I ~~must~~ have to spend the day before ~~to~~ studying. I ~~ask~~ my lecturer if it ~~would~~ be possible to take the examination on another date, but this is not ~~permitted~~ ~~permitting~~

However, I would be very happy to give the talk on another date. I am available on the 5th and 6th of ~~February~~. If one of those dates ~~is~~ convenient for you, please ~~to~~ let me know. I can be contacted ~~at~~ the address above or ~~far~~ ~~by fax~~ or telephone.

I hope that everyone at the college is well, and I hope that your party ~~is a great~~ ~~will be~~ success. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Aung San Nilar

## **Analysis and Practice**

---

### **STEP 1—ANALYSE THE QUESTION**

When analysing the question, you want to know:

- What is the situation or topic?
- Who is the addressee? In other words, to whom is the letter addressed? (This determines how formal the letter should be.)

- What is the purpose of writing the letter? (e.g. to request, to complain, to suggest?)

Task 1 questions are usually in two parts. The first part describes the situation or topic. The second part tells you to whom your letter should be addressed and gives you a task (or purpose).

The best way to identify these pieces of information is to underline the key words as you read carefully through the question. (Remember you are allowed to write on the question sheet.) Look again at the sample underlining in Step 1 in the Demonstration answer.



### ACTIVITY 24

Read Sample questions 2 and 3 carefully and underline the key words. Then complete the tables under each question.

#### *Sample Question 2*

*You have just spent a weekend staying at the Lilo Hotel in Adelaide. When you get home you find that you have left a bag at the hotel.*

*Write to the manager of the hotel and enquire whether the bag has been found. Give any relevant information about the bag and its contents. Ask the manager to contact you immediately if the bag is found and tell him/her how the bag can be sent to you.*

<b>Topic/Situation</b>	
<b>Addressee</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	

#### *Sample Question 3*

*You and some friends had dinner in a restaurant a few nights ago. The service at the restaurant was terrible and the food was bad. You and two friends had severe stomach-aches the following day. The food was also overpriced.*

*Write to the manager of the restaurant and explain these problems. Give any details that you think are relevant. Ask the manager to do something about the situation.*

<b>Topic/Situation</b>	
<b>Addressee</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	

Check your answers in the Answer Key.

### **STEP 2—MAKE A NOTE OF IDEAS**

Here you should make a brief note of *any* ideas which come to mind and which *may* be relevant. At this stage you do not have to decide exactly which ideas will be used in your writing. (Selecting which ideas to use is done in Step 3.)

The purpose of Step 2 is to help you think of information which is useful for the writing task. The process of quickly noting any ideas which come to mind will help you to access relevant information in your memory.

Remember also that these notes are for you only—the assessor will not see them—so the notes should be as brief as possible.



#### **ACTIVITY 25**

Quickly make notes of your ideas for both Sample questions in the previous activity.

Time target: 2 minutes for each question

### **STEP 3—MAKE A PLAN**

At this stage you must think about two questions.

- Which ideas will definitely be used in the letter?
- How will these ideas be organised?

The letter should be divided into paragraphs. When you are planning the letter you should try to put your ideas into logical groups. Each of these groups will then become one paragraph.

There are several common patterns of letter organisation. You should learn these patterns so that your writing will then be organised in an English style. Firstly, all letters should have an **introductory paragraph** and a **closing paragraph**.

## The introductory paragraph

In the introductory paragraph, there are several things you can do.

### SAMPLE SENTENCES

#### Formal

greet the addressee  
(if he/she is your friend)

#### Less formal

- Dear Jack,  
Hi. How are you?
- Dear Annie,  
Hello. I hope everything  
is fine.

tell the addressee who you  
are (if he/she does not  
know you)

- Dear Sir,  
I was a guest at your hotel  
from 23 to 25 May.
- Dear Mr. Parker,  
I am a student at your college,  
enrolled in the cookery course.

thank the addressee (if  
he/she has sent you a letter  
or done something else  
for you)

- Dear Mr. Lopez,  
Thank you for your  
invitation to the reunion  
party on 15 January.
- Dear Mr. Hendrix,  
Thank you for your letter  
asking me about studying in  
Australia.
- Dear Peter,  
Thanks for the invitation.
- Dear Alan,  
Thanks for your letter. It  
was nice to hear from you.

explain your reason  
for writing

- I am writing to advise you of  
the loss of my credit card.
- I'd like to inquire about  
course details.
- I am writing to complain  
about the poor service at  
your restaurant.
- I must tell you about a new  
movie I saw last week.
- Can you help me?
- I am very sorry I forgot to  
send you a birthday card.

### The closing paragraph

The content of the closing paragraph depends on what you have written in the rest of your letter, but some possibilities are listed in the following table.

SAMPLE SENTENCES		
	Formal	Less formal
If your letter is <i>making a request</i> :		
mention what the addressee will do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thank you for your attention to this matter.</li><li>• I look forward to your prompt response.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thanks for your help.</li><li>• Please write soon.</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>giving an apology</i> :		
make a final apology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Once again, I am sorry for any inconvenience caused.</li><li>• Please accept my apologies once more.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I hope I didn't cause you too much trouble.</li><li>• Sorry again!</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>making a complaint</i> :		
mention what the addressee will do	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I expect to hear from you very soon.</li><li>• Please give this matter your immediate attention.</li></ul>	
If your letter is <i>giving information</i> :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• say you hope you have been helpful</li><li>• offer more information</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I hope this information will help you.</li><li>• Please feel free to contact me for more information.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I hope all this helps.</li><li>• If I can tell you anything else, please call me.</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>making suggestions</i> :		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• say you hope you have been helpful</li><li>• offer more help</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I trust these suggestions have been useful.</li><li>• Please let me know if I can help any further.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I hope these suggestions help.</li><li>• If there is anything else I can do, please call.</li></ul>

### The 'body' of the letter

The body is the middle part of the letter which contains most of the important information. There are several standard patterns for organising the body of your letter in an English style. Look at the following examples.

Type of letter	Plan
If your letter is <i>making a request</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introductory paragraph</li><li>• explain the situation</li><li>• details of your request</li><li>• closing paragraph</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>giving an apology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introductory paragraph</li><li>• explain why you must apologise</li><li>• alternative plan (if appropriate)</li><li>• closing paragraph</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>making a complaint</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introductory paragraph</li><li>• explanation problems</li><li>• say what you think the addressee should do</li><li>• closing paragraph</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>giving information</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introductory paragraph</li><li>• information</li><li>• offer more information (if appropriate)</li><li>• closing paragraph</li></ul>
If your letter is <i>making suggestions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• introductory paragraph</li><li>• make first suggestion</li><li>• provide an alternative to this suggestion or make a second suggestion</li><li>• closing paragraph</li></ul>

Note that the above plans are examples only. Sometimes, the test question(s) will give you more than one purpose for writing the letter. If this happens you will have to choose from two or more of the above plans. For example, the Demonstration letter on page 107 combines apologising and suggesting.



### ACTIVITY 26

The following is an example of notes of ideas for Sample question 2 on page 108. The notes are in the box on the left and their meaning is explained on the right. The notes are followed by three plans.

Which is the best plan based on the notes? What is wrong with the other two?

<i>not valuable</i>	explain that the bag and contents are not valuable in dollars, but are important to you
<i>bag lost</i>	say that the bag is missing
<i>found?</i>	ask whether the bag has been found
<i>send</i>	ask the manager to send the bag
<i>when at hotel</i>	say when you stayed at the hotel
<i>room no.</i>	say which room you stayed in
<i>enjoy hol.</i>	say that you enjoyed your holiday
<i>bag size</i>	give the bag's size and colour
<i>contents</i>	describe the bag's contents
<i>stolen?</i>	explain that you think the bag may have been stolen
<i>police?</i>	ask if you should tell the police
<i>reward</i>	tell the manager you will offer a reward
<i>contact me</i>	ask the manager to contact you
<i>thanks</i>	thank the manager for helping you

#### Plan 1

- *bag lost*
- stolen?*
- call police?*
- reward*
- *contact me*
- send*
- not valuable*
- *enjoy hol.*
- room no.*
- when at hotel*
- *thanks*

#### Plan 2

- when at hotel*
- room no.*
- contact me*
- thanks*
- bag lost*
- contents*
- send*
- bag size*
- found?*
- not valuable*

#### Plan 3

- *when at hotel*
- room no.*
- bag lost*
- found?*
- *bag size*
- contents*
- not valuable*
- *contact me*
- send*
- *thanks*

Check your answer with the Answer Key.



## ACTIVITY 27

Based on your notes from Activity 25, write a plan for a letter to answer Sample question 3. Remember to keep the plan as brief as possible.

Time target: 1 to 2 minutes



**Note:** Do not check the Answer Key yet. Wait until you have finished Activity 28.

## ACTIVITY 28

It is important that you include in your letter all the things that the task tells you to do. Look for key words like *write*, *explain*, *ask*, *give*, *tell*. Following are two sample plans for Sample question 3. Both of them omit some important information that is specifically required by the task. Read each plan and say what is missing in each case.

### Plan 1

- *when had dinner*
- want to complain*
- *service bad*
- no menu*
- long wait for food*
- long wait for bill*
- *food bad*
- too salty*
- not fresh*
- stomach-ache*
- *expensive*
- *won't come again*

### Plan 2

- *when had dinner*
- want to complain*
- *food bad*
- over-cooked*
- too spicy*
- small quantity*
- expensive*
- *my demands*
- free meal*
- free drinks*

Now re-check the plan you did in the previous activity. Does it omit anything? Compare your plan with the sample plan for Activity 27 in the Answer Key.

## STEP 4—WRITE THE LETTER

When you write a letter using your plan, you should think about how to expand the points you have noted. For example, in the Demonstration letter the writer is supposed to *explain why he/she cannot attend the party*. Instead of just saying that he/she has a test, the letter says *what kind of test, why it is important*, and *how the writer tried—unsuccessfully—to reschedule it*. The task also instructs the writer to *suggest another date or some other solution*. In the letter, the writer *gave a choice of dates and gave several ways to be contacted*.

You should give information that is relevant and realistic. Remember also that you cannot give too much information about any one point because you have to finish all the main points of the question.

For the beginning and the ending of your letter, there are a limited number of options:

	Beginning	Ending
If you don't know the name of the addressee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dear Sir,</li><li>• Dear Madam,</li><li>• Dear Sir/Madam,</li></ul>	Yours faithfully,
If you know the surname of the person but he/she is not a close friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dear Mr Jenkins,</li><li>• Dear Ms Lang,</li><li>• Dear Dr Spock,</li></ul>	Yours sincerely,
If the person is a friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dear Sue,</li><li>• Dear Michael,</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Best regards,</li><li>• Best wishes,</li><li>• Love,</li></ul>

### Appropriate Language

In English, there are certain standard words and phrases that can be used when you want to make a request, suggestion, complaint, and so on. These are called *functions*. You should learn some of the common functions. Some examples are featured in the table below.

	Formal	Less formal
Apology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'm terribly sorry, but...</li><li>• I am afraid I...</li><li>• I must apologise about _____ (not) _____ ing...</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'm very sorry but...</li><li>• I am sorry about (not) _____ ing...</li></ul>
Complaint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I must complain about... (no informal forms)</li><li>• I am not satisfied with...</li><li>• I feel something should be done about...</li></ul>	
Request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Could you please...</li><li>• Could you possibly...</li><li>• Would it be possible to...</li><li>• I would be grateful if you would...</li><li>• Would you mind _____ ing...</li><li>• I wonder if you could...</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Could you...</li><li>• Can you...</li><li>• I'd like you to...</li><li>• Would you mind _____ ing...</li></ul>
Making suggestions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'd like to suggest that...</li><li>• May I suggest that...</li><li>• Perhaps we could...</li><li>• Could you please...</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How about...</li><li>• What about...</li><li>• Why don't we...</li><li>• Let's...</li></ul>



Many English textbooks will teach you functions suitable for different situations. You should look at the books you have available (a list of recommended books is on page 156) and learn a wide range of functions for use in Task 1.

Be sure to note whether a function is used in formal or in less formal situations. For most Task 1 questions you will use formal language, but you may be asked to write informally, for example to a close friend.

### Making changes and alterations while you write

Most students write in pencil when completing the test and make changes by using an eraser. However, this wastes time. The quickest way to make changes is to cross out (draw a line through) the unwanted words and write the new words after or above. The marker will ignore any words that are crossed out.

## ACTIVITY 29

For Sample question 2, write a complete letter using the best plan from Activity 26.

Time target: 15 minutes

### STEP 5—CHECK FOR MISTAKES



Under the pressure of writing in exam conditions, most students make errors they would not usually make. These errors are often very basic, and they do not give the marker a good impression of your knowledge of English. Consequently, it is very important that you save a few minutes at the end of the test time period to check your writing and correct any mistakes you find.

The check-list in the next activity includes the most common grammatical errors made by candidates. You should use this reference to check your own work. These corrections could make a difference to your final score.

## ACTIVITY 30

Correct the grammatical errors in the samples below by crossing out the mistake and writing in the correct form.

### a) Subject/Verb agreement

*If one of those dates are convenient, please let me know.*

*They doesn't gets enough exercise.*

### b) Plurals

*A party for all new student will be held on Monday.*

*Both childrens and adults are affected.*

*There are many new problem for individuals.*

### c) Subject/Verb/Object

*I afraid that I have lost your invitation.*

*There are various negative effects on families or society.*

#### d) Tenses

*Many of the TV programs in my country are coming from overseas.*

*Yesterday, I ask my lecturer about the test results.*

*Individuals can be negatively affect by television.*

#### e) Modals

*Therefore, I must have to spend the day studying.*

*Watching too much TV can to make people lazy.*

*Governments should exercising more control.*

#### f) Word form

*I hope that your party will be success.*

*The cat died, causing great unhappy.*

#### g) Possessives

*Thank you for you kind invitation.*

*My supervisor party was great.*

#### h) Spelling, capitalisation and punctuation

*The ceremony is on the 5th and 6th of february.*

*I am dreading my first semester ekonomi exam.*

*I like listening to peoples problems.*

#### i) Articles

*This is the complicated subject.*

*He comes from another part of country.*

Check your answers with the Answer Key.

If you found it difficult to make these corrections, you probably need to study some more English grammar. In addition to the categories of mistakes mentioned in the check-list, you should also make sure that you can use the following grammar points correctly:

- pronouns
- connecting words (conjunctions)
- conditional sentences
- relative clauses
- prepositions



## ACTIVITY 31

Below is a sample letter for Sample question 2. The letter has some mistakes in functions and grammar. Find the mistakes, cross them out and write the corrections.

Dear Mr Simpson,

I stay in your hotel on the 23rd and the 24th of october. I was stay in room 603. When I have arrived home I discovered I had left one of my bag at hotel. Could you please checking your Lost and Found department and see if my bag is there ?

The bag is the small black leather document case with the narrow strap. Inside the bag you can find several business card, Mont Blanc fountain pen, small address book and three copies of business proposal. Also a silver pocket calculator. These things is not very value in money terms, but they have a lot of personal value to me.

I would appreciate it if you could contact me as soon as possible, since I particularly need the proposals for a presentation this week. If you could send the bag to me by courier service I am most grateful. I have arranged payment for the service on delivery here.

Thank you for you help.

Yours sincerely,

Fatima Ferrangites

Check your answers with the letter in the Answer Key.



## ACTIVITY 32

Read through and check the letter you wrote for Activity 29. Make corrections by crossing out the old words and writing the new ones above or after.

Time target: 2 minutes



## ACTIVITY 33

Using your own plan for Sample question 3 (from Activity 27), write a complete letter. Then check what you have written and make changes as necessary.

Time target: 20 minutes

Compare your letter with the sample letter in the Answer Key.

### Assessing your written work

The best way to assess your written work is to ask someone with a higher level of English than yours to read it. Remember that grammar is not the only criterion. The content and organisation of your letter are also very important, so make sure that whoever comments on your writing also considers these two aspects.

You can learn more about these things from books about writing in English. You should also use the guide *Assessing Your Own Writing* at the end of Writing Task 2.

## Task 2

For Task 2 you must write a short essay, similar to the kind of task you might have to do for a teacher as part of a class assignment. The minimum number of words is 250.

As with Task 1, when the IELTS marker reads your essay, he or she will have three main questions in mind.

- Does the essay do what the question asks? (Is the content relevant?)
- Is the essay written in a well-organised, logical way?
- Is the language accurate and correct?

Many students concentrate on the third point, language, and neglect content and organisation. To make sure that the content and organisation of your essay are satisfactory, you must spend a few minutes thinking about and planning your essay **before you start to write**. You will also be able to write your essay more quickly because you already know what you want to write about.

The strategy for Task 2 is the same as for Task 1.

- Step 1 Analyse the question
- Step 2 Make notes of ideas  
that might be included in the essay
- Step 3 Make a plan  
by selecting the best ideas and organising them
- Step 4 Write the essay
- Step 5 Check for mistakes  
and correct them

### Demonstration—Question

#### *Sample Question 4*

*Television is now widespread in all communities. Almost everyone has access to this medium on a daily basis. However, the effects of television are not always positive.*

*What are some of the negative effects of television? What can be done to minimise these bad effects?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

### STEP 1—ANALYSE THE QUESTION

What is my audience?

Task 2 questions are usually said to be ‘as part of a class assignment’. You should write the essay as though it was for a teacher.

What is the topic?

The key words in the first part of the question have been underlined below:

Television is now widespread in all communities. Almost everyone has access to this medium on a daily basis. However, the effects of television are not always positive.

The subject of the first two sentences is the general topic of *television*. This topic is limited or narrowed in the third sentence which specifies the ‘effects’ of television, in particular the *negative effects* (‘are not always positive’ means *are sometimes negative*).

What is your purpose/task in writing?

The key words of the rest of the question are underlined below:

What are some of the negative effects of television? What can be done to minimise these bad effects?

Give reasons for your answer.

Note that there are actually two questions or tasks in the one activity:

- to give some of the possible negative effects of television
- to explain how to prevent or limit these negative effects

### STEP 2—MAKE NOTES OF IDEAS

The following is an example of the kind of notes you might write at this stage. The sample notes are written in the box. To the right is a brief explanation of what these notes mean.

*The possible negative effects of television*

<i>expens.</i>
<i>destr. cust.</i>
<i>waste time</i>
<i>ads bad</i>
<i>lazy</i>
<i>fam. life</i>
<i>pol.</i>
<i>eyes</i>
<i>Am. cult.</i>

expensive for the community  
destroys local customs  
people (especially children) waste time  
bad influence of advertising  
people become lazy  
destroys family life  
can be used for bad political purposes  
bad for the eyes  
spreads Western (especially American) culture  
including undesirable images: greed, violence, sex

### How to minimise these effects

contr. TV

control TV content

contr. ads

control advertising

explain

explain effects to people

alt. entert.

encourage alternative entertainment

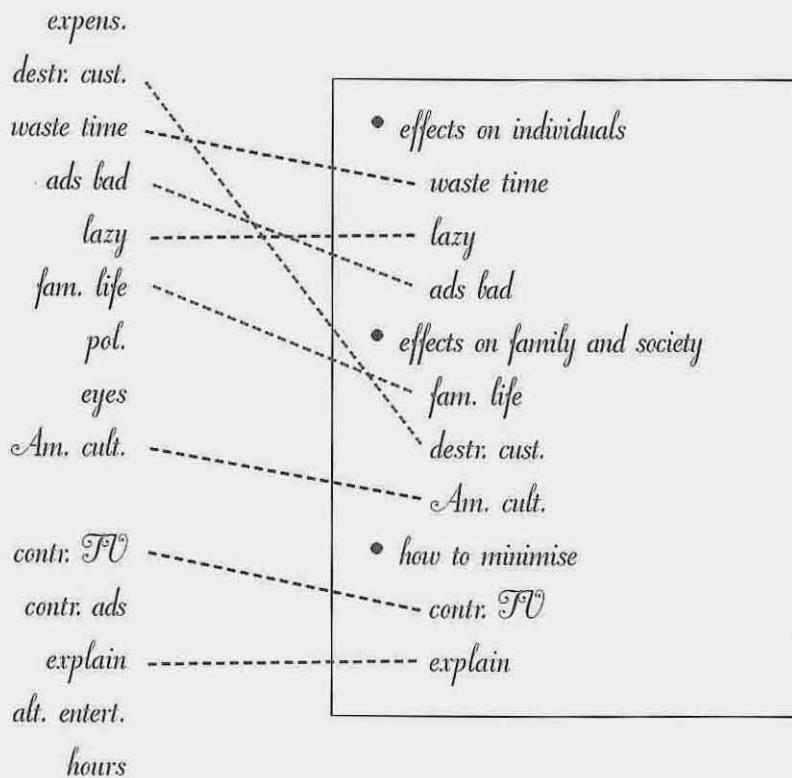
hours

limit broadcasting hours

### STEP 3—MAKE A PLAN

Decide which of the ideas will definitely be used in your essay. Organise these ideas logically.

In the box below right is a sample plan written on the basis of these notes. Not all of the ideas have been used in the plan. Related points are grouped together into paragraphs (marked with black dots).



### STEP 4—WRITE THE ESSAY

Follow the plan.

### STEP 5—CHECK FOR MISTAKES

## Demonstration—Essay

With the modern telecommunication<sup>s</sup>, even people who live in very remote areas have access to television. However, even though television is clearly very popular, the effects on people watching television are often negatively.

Individuals can be negatively affected in three main ways. Many people, both children and adults, waste a lot of time sitting in front of a TV watching poor quality programs. Secondly, watching too much TV can make people lazy and unhealthy because they don't get enough exercise. Thirdly, the advertisements on television can make people feel unhappy with the things they have and can influence them to spend money on new things.

TV has various

Various negative effects on families and society. Because of TVs, families communicate less with each other and do less family activities together. Small societies may begin to lose their local customs if most television programs will come from another part of the country. Many of the TV programs in my country come from overseas, especially the United States of America. This will affect national culture by encouraging the spread of western customs and values.

There are two key ways to minimize the negative effects described above. Firstly, governments should exercise more control over the content of TV programs. Programs which they are not educational or which may influence people in a negative way should be limited or restricted. Secondly, governments should educate people about the possible negative effects of TV. People can then regulate themselves and their children.

In conclusion, I think that someone should do something to be done to protect the community from the negative effects of television. If the situation is left will leave to continue as it is, many new problems for individual and society will arise in the future.

### **STEP 1—ANALYSE THE QUESTION**

The questions for Task 2 usually have two parts, a topic paragraph and a question paragraph.

Look again at Sample question 1:

*Television is now widespread in all communities. Almost everyone has access to this medium on a daily basis. However, the effects of television are not always positive.*

introductory paragraph—gives you information or comment, helps to define the topic.

*What are some of the negative effects of television? What can be done to minimise these bad effects?*

question paragraph—contains one, two or three questions. Tells you what information you must give about the topic.

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You must read the question(s) carefully and do exactly what the task asks you to do. In order to answer the above Task successfully, this means:

1. Describe the possible negative effects of television.
2. Explain how these negative effects can be avoided or minimised.

In this task it is **not relevant** to, for example:

- discuss at length the *benefits* of television
- focus on other public media, for example radio or newspapers
- talk *only* about the effects of television *on children*
- discuss in great detail the fact that nearly everyone has access to television.



### **ACTIVITY 34**

Sample questions 5 and 6 each have an **introductory paragraph** and a **question paragraph**. Read each Sample carefully and underline the key words. What do you have to talk about in your essays to answer the questions in a relevant way?

#### *Sample Question 5*

*Many newspapers and magazines feature stories about the private lives of famous people. We know what they eat, where they buy their clothes and who they love. We also often see pictures of them in private situations.*

*Is it appropriate for a magazine or newspaper to give this kind of private information about people?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

### *Sample Question 6*

*Many young people choose to continue their education at colleges or universities in English-speaking countries such as Britain, Australia or America.*

*What are the benefits of studying abroad? What are some of the problems that students might experience when studying in a foreign country?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

Check your answers with the Answer Key.

### **STEP 2—MAKE NOTES OF IDEAS**

As for Task 1, at this stage you should make brief notes of any ideas which come to mind and may be relevant. Later, in Step 3, choose the best ideas for your essay.

Candidates often have trouble thinking of ideas to include in their essay and waste a lot of time while they are writing trying to come up with more. If, before you start writing, you take two minutes to note anything which comes to mind, you will remember useful information and will also save time while you are writing.

Remember that these notes are only for your benefit. The assessor will not see them. The notes should be as brief as possible.

#### **Giving your opinions**

It will often be relevant to give your opinions in your essay. If the question can be answered with ‘yes’ or ‘no’, do not be afraid to give a direct answer (usually in the introduction or the conclusion of your essay).

#### **Giving evidence or examples**

You should use relevant evidence and/or examples to support any points that you make in your essay. This is very important. Your essay will be graded on the ideas you present and the way you support them. To understand how to do this, you should study the way that the sample Task 2 essays in this book support any points made.



### **ACTIVITY 35**

You have already analysed Sample question 5 and Sample question 6 by underlining the key words. Now, quickly note any ideas which may be useful in your answer to these questions. Note that the question paragraph may have more than two questions in it.

Time target: 2 minutes for each question

### **STEP 3—MAKE A PLAN**

Decide which of the ideas you have noted above will definitely be used in the essay. Organise these ideas into logical groups.

Your essay should be divided into **paragraphs**. In an essay of 250 words there should be between 4 to 7 paragraphs.

In the normal style of writing in English, each paragraph is usually limited to one aspect of the topic you are writing about. When you are planning your essay you should try to put the information that you want to use into logical groups. Each of these groups will then become one paragraph. (Look again at the Demonstration essay on page 123 for an example.)

If there are two or more questions in the **question paragraph** of a task, you should have at least one paragraph addressing each question in your essay. The following are examples of the format to be used when answering such an essay question.

	Plan 1	Plan 2
short paragraph	introduction	introduction
paragraph	answer to question 1	answer to question 1
paragraph	answer to question 2	answer to question 1 (continued)
paragraph	answer to question 3	answer to question 2
short paragraph	conclusion	conclusion

The pattern of organisation above in the right-hand column is used in the Demonstration essay.

Where you have two paragraphs answering one question, try to divide your ideas into two logical groups, one for each paragraph. In the Demonstration essay although there are two paragraphs talking about the first question ('What are some of the negative effects of television?'), the first of these paragraphs was about *effects on individuals* and the second was about *effects on families and societies*.

If there is only one question in the task (for example whether you *agree* or *disagree* with a statement given in the introductory paragraph), you could use the following patterns of organisation.

To agree	To disagree
short introduction	short introduction
reasons why the statement is incorrect	reasons why the statement is correct
reasons why the statement is correct	reasons why the statement is incorrect
more reasons why the statement is correct	more reasons why the statement is incorrect
short conclusion	short conclusion

In these examples, both sides of a situation or argument are discussed. It is a good idea to talk about both sides because this will give you more things to write about. However, if you do this, in the conclusion of your essay you should say which side, in your opinion, is stronger.

Alternatively you could analyse only one side of an issue. If you decide to discuss only one side, it is a good idea to state clearly in your introduction that it is the best point of view in your opinion.

To agree	To disagree
short introduction	short introduction
reason 1 supporting the statement	reason 1 opposing the statement
reason 2 supporting the statement	reason 2 opposing the statement
reason 3 supporting the statement	reason 3 opposing the statement
short conclusion	short conclusion



### ACTIVITY 36

Using the ideas you noted in the previous activity, make a brief plan for each of Sample questions 5 and 6. Remember that the plan is only for you—the marker will not look at it—so be as brief as possible.

**Note:** Most essays written by native speakers of English have an introduction and a conclusion. However, for your essay the introduction and the conclusion should be very short and you do not actually need to mention them in your plan. They are mentioned in the patterns of organisation above just to remind you of the overall structure of the essay. (We will discuss what to write in introductions and conclusions in Step 4.)

Time target: 2 minutes for each plan

Compare your plans with the sample plans in the Answer Key.

### STEP 4—WRITE THE ESSAY

#### The introduction

You should try to write a short (one or two sentences) introduction for your essay. The main purpose of an introduction is to tell the reader what you are going to write about. Your introduction must state the main issue (or the main focus) of the essay. Look at the first paragraph of the Demonstration essay again:

*With modern telecommunications, even people who live in very remote areas have access to television. However, even though television is clearly very popular, the effects on people of watching television are often negative.*

Notice that the second sentence of this introduction talks about the main issue—the negative effects of television. The **main issue** sentence is usually at the end of the introduction. When you mention the issue here you should avoid copying too many words from the **question paragraph**. If you copy long phrases or sentences, these will be ignored by the marker and they will not count towards the 250 words you need to write.

Apart from giving the main issue, if you want to write a slightly longer introduction you could add a first sentence which says something very general about the topic. In the example from the Demonstration essay, the first sentence does this.

### The conclusion

Like the introduction, the conclusion of your essay should be short, just one or two sentences. The content of the conclusion is more flexible. You can:

- mention the main point of your essay again (in different words)
- give your opinion strongly
- talk about future effects or consequences
- make any other comment that you think is relevant.

Because your essay is relatively short, it is not necessary to summarise the ideas or arguments you have used in your essay. Look at the conclusion from the Demonstration essay:

*In conclusion, I think that something should be done as soon as possible to protect the community from the negative effects of television. If the situation is left to continue as it is, many new problems for individuals and societies will arise in the future.*

The first sentence gives the writer's opinion about one of the main points in the essay. The last sentence talks about future effects or consequences.

Later, when you are working through the sample essays at the end of this section, pay attention to the kinds of things that are mentioned in the conclusions. Eventually, what is relevant to put into the conclusions of essays in an English style will become clearer to you.

### The body of the essay

This is the most important part of your essay because it contains your arguments and evidence or examples.

The first sentence of each paragraph in the body of your essay should give the main point of the paragraph, or otherwise indicate clearly to the reader what topic will be discussed in the paragraph. This kind of sentence is called a **topic sentence**. You have seen in the Reading section of this book that the English style for most paragraphs is to have a topic sentence as the first sentence.

In the Demonstration essay, you will see three good examples of paragraphs that start with clear topic sentences.

Paragraph 2: *Individuals can be negatively affected in three ways.*

Paragraph 3: *There are also various negative effects on families and societies.*

Paragraph 4: *There are two key ways to minimise the negative effects described.*

Almost all the body paragraphs written in the sample answers follow this pattern. Having topic sentences at the beginning of paragraphs is the clearest form of organisation in English. It will help the reader follow your line of thinking.



While you are writing your essay, you should show clearly where new paragraphs begin by starting the first line of each paragraph two or three centimetres from the left-hand side of the page. This is called *indenting*. If you do not indent in handwritten work, it may not be clear to the marker where the paragraph divisions are. As a result, the organisation of your essay will not be clear either.

### Linking words

Use appropriate linking words to make your writing more cohesive. Linking words such as *firstly*, *secondly*, *also*, *in addition*, *however*, *on the other hand*, will help the reader understand your writing. Make sure you know how to use the most common linking words. There is an exercise on linking words at the end of Reading Section 3.

## ACTIVITY 37

Using the plan you have already written for Sample question 5, write the essay. Remember to include:

- an introduction
- paragraphs in the body of the essay that start with topic sentences
- a conclusion.

Don't forget the linking words and don't forget to indent.

Time target: 35 minutes per essay

## STEP 5—CHECK FOR MISTAKES



You should allow two minutes at the end of the test time to read through your essay and make corrections. This could make a difference to your final score. Use the checklists in Activity 30 (page 116) to help you.

## ACTIVITY 38

The following is a sample essay for Sample question 2. The essay has a broad range of grammatical errors in it. Find the errors and make corrections by crossing out and rewriting.

*People generally read newspapers to find out world current affairs, and they read magazines to get entertainment. One would expect therefore to find the type of articles that feature the private lives of famous peoples in magazines, not newspapers. However nowadays, more and more newspapers including stories like these that they are neither informative nor useful.*

*According to my opinion I think this type of gossip about peoples private lives should not be in newspapers for several reasons. Firstly, the fact for*

example, Princess Diana is going out with sportsman is not important news. Secondly, if newspaper want to publish articles about the famous people, they should focussing on their public events and achievements. Such as, if there is an article about Princess Diana, it will be about her charity works, which will increase public awareness of important problems. In addition, journalists should made sure they only write about true facts, not just rumour. One should be able to be reliable on newspapers in factual truth.

Magazines on the one hand, focus on social news and therefore I felt it is acceptable for them to contain some features about famous personalities. In addition to being popular reading, these stories often benefit the stars by being free publicity for them, thereby so helping their career. However I'm also believe that magazine stories should not have mention things that are too embarrassed or untrue, just to attracted people to buy the magazine. Sensational stories like these and causing great unhappy to the person concerned.

In conclusion I think newspapers should concentrate on really news, but magazines can feature some articles on peoples private lives.

Check your corrections with the Answer Key.



### ACTIVITY 39

Read the essay you wrote for Sample question 5 (Activity 37) and correct any mistakes you find. Remember: the quickest way to make corrections is to draw a line through the old word(s) and write the new one(s) above.

Time target: 2 minutes per essay



### ACTIVITY 40

Using your own plan for Sample question 6 (from Activity 36), write the complete essay. Then check what you have written and make changes as necessary.

Time target: 40 minutes

When you have finished, compare your essay with the sample in the Answer Key.

# Summary of the Writing Test

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## STEP 1—ANALYSE THE QUESTION

### TASK 1

- Underline key words
- What is the topic or situation?
- What style should be used?
- What is the purpose of the letter?

### TASK 2

- Underline key words
- What is the form of the question?
- How do I answer in a relevant way?

## STEP 2—MAKE NOTES OF IDEAS

### TASKS 1 and 2

- Take 2 minutes to write down *any* ideas which *may* be relevant
- Be as brief as possible

## STEP 3—MAKE A PLAN

### TASKS 1 and 2

- Choose relevant ideas
- Support your ideas with relevant examples where possible

## STEP 4—WRITE THE ESSAY OR LETTER

### TASK 1

- Write an appropriate beginning and ending to your letter
- Write in the correct style
- Use the correct pattern of organisation
- Use the correct functional language
- Use linking words
- Indent paragraphs

### TASK 2

- Write an introduction, but do not copy too many words from the question
- Start each paragraph in the body of your essay with a topic sentence
- Use linking words
- Indent paragraphs
- Write a conclusion

## STEP 5—CHECK FOR MISTAKES

### TASKS 1 and 2

- Allow at least two minutes to correct careless mistakes

## Assessing Your Own Writing

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Assessing your own writing can be difficult. The following guidelines may help you to measure your progress and isolate your areas of weakness. If you can honestly answer yes to most of the following questions, your score should be quite high; if most of the responses are no, you have some work to do to avoid a low score.

Content	Organisation	Language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I done what the question asked me to do?</li> <li>• Is it the right length?</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I included all the necessary information?</li> <li>• Is it written in the correct style?</li> </ul> <p><b>Task 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does my essay contain some good ideas and opinions which are relevant to the question?</li> <li>• Have I supported my ideas and opinions with examples?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is it easy to read ?</li> <li>• Have I presented my ideas and/or information in a logical order?</li> <li>• Is it divided into appropriate paragraphs?</li> <li>• Have I used linking words correctly?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have I used a variety of sentence structures?</li> <li>• Are the sentences grammatically accurate?</li> <li>• Is the spelling and punctuation correct?</li> <li>• Is there a range of vocabulary?</li> </ul>

## Students' Questions Answered

### *The Writing Test*

Can I use a pencil or do I have to use a pen?	It's up to you. You can use whatever you like as long as it is legible.
Do I have to count my words?	No, but it is a good idea to know roughly how many words you usually write to a line. Then you can count the number of lines you write.
What will happen if I don't write enough words?	If you have not answered the questions as completely as you should, you will get a lower score.
What will happen if I write too many words?	If you write far too many words, you might include irrelevant information and/or ideas for which you may be penalised. Also, if you write far too many words for one of the tasks, you may neglect the other.
Is spelling important?	Spelling is important, although the occasional minor mistake won't matter.

Can I start with Task 2 first?	You can do the test in any order. Just make sure you keep to the times advised.
What should I do if I don't understand the question?	You cannot ask the invigilator or use a dictionary. You will have to guess and answer as well as you can.
What's the best way to correct any mistakes that I make?	The quickest way to correct mistakes is to cross them out and write the correction clearly next to or above the mistake.
Will I lose marks if my essay is very messy with lots of crossings out?	No, you won't. But you must make sure that it is legible. Obviously the easier your essay is to read, the happier the examiner will be.
What do I do if I realise I have forgotten to include something important in one of my essays?	You can add it in afterwards, by writing it at the bottom of your essay and showing where it should go with an asterisk or an arrow.
What do I do if I don't know anything about the topic in Task 2?	You will have to do the best you can. Take a few minutes to note down some ideas. Once you start, more details will almost certainly come. (See Step 2 in the Writing section.)
If I don't have enough time to finish, should I finish in note form, like a plan?	No. Anything written in note form will not be read. Just continue in sentences.
Should I memorise answers to a variety of general topics?	No. Anything that the examiner suspects is copied will not count towards the number of words, and you may also be penalised for copying.
Should I write on every other line?	If you have very large writing it might be a good idea. However, for average sized writing it is not necessary because there is still room to make corrections.
I can't write very quickly. What should I do?	You don't actually have to write a lot in the time allowed (400 words in one hour is less than 10 words a minute). However, you should practise writing to time as often as possible, to improve your speed.

# GENERAL TRAINING WRITING

## PRACTICE TEST 1

TIME ALLOWED: 1 hour

### WRITING TASK 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

*An Australian colleague is going to your country for a conference. He/She will spend several days in your home town, and has written a letter to you asking for advice about things to see and do there.*

*Write a letter to the colleague suggesting what he/she should see and do while he/she is in your home town.*

You should write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write your own address.

### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

As part of a class assignment you have been asked to write about the following topic.

*In Western countries, people spend a lot of money on their pets. They buy special food for their cats or dogs, buy them toys and often pay high fees for medical treatment. Some people think this is a waste of money, and argue that pets are dirty and dangerous.*

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a pet? Do people spend too much money on pets?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You should write at least 250 words.

# GENERAL TRAINING WRITING

## PRACTICE TEST 2

**TIME ALLOWED: 1 hour**

### WRITING TASK 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

*Last year you attended an intensive English course at the Darwin College of English. Your new employer has asked you to provide copies of your reports and assignments as quickly as possible.*

*Write to the director of the language school and request these documents.*

You should write at least 150 words.

### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

As part of a class assignment you have been asked to write about the following topic.

*There have been many technological developments in the 20th century, for example in transport, telecommunications and health.*

*What technological development do you think has been the most important? How has it changed people's lives? Have all the changes been positive?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You should write at least 250 words.

# GENERAL TRAINING WRITING

## PRACTICE TEST 3

TIME ALLOWED: 1 hour

### WRITING TASK 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

*You booked a two-week holiday to Sydney with Fly-by-Night Travel. You are not happy with the holiday—the flight was delayed, the hotel was noisy, and so on.*

*Write to Fly-by-Night Travel to complain about the holiday giving details about the problems. Request some compensation or refund.*

You should write at least 150 words.

### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

As part of a class assignment you have been asked to write about the following topic.

*In many countries the problem of drug-taking is increasing. Governments and the general public are particularly concerned about young people using illegal drugs such as marijuana, ecstasy and heroin.*

*What methods could be used to prevent young people from taking drugs? Is it appropriate to send young drug-users to prison?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You should write at least 250 words.

## GENERAL TRAINING WRITING

### PRACTICE TEST 4

TIME ALLOWED: 1 hour

#### WRITING TASK 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

*You have lost your credit card.*

*Write to the manager of your bank. Explain where and how you lost the card and any other relevant details. Ask the manager to cancel the old card and to send you a replacement.*

You should write at least 150 words.

#### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

As part of a class assignment you have been asked to write about the following topic.

*Last year many famous pop and sports stars earned millions of dollars each. Many other entertainment and sports personalities also have very high incomes. On the other hand, most people in 'ordinary' professions like nurses, doctors and teachers earn only a small fraction of the incomes of these 'stars'.*

*What do you think about stars receiving very high salaries? Is it fair that people with jobs that directly help people are paid much less?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You should write at least 250 words.

# GENERAL TRAINING WRITING

## PRACTICE TEST 5

TIME ALLOWED: 1 hour

### WRITING TASK 1

You should spend no more than 20 minutes on this task.

*A friend is already attending a TAFE college in Australia. You will be going to Australia next year.*

*Write and ask him/her about what you should do before you go. Ask him/her about any problems he/she has had.*

You should write at least 150 words.

### WRITING TASK 2

You should spend no more than 40 minutes on this task.

As part of a class assignment you have been asked to write about the following topic.

*The average British child between the ages of 4 and 15 watches more than 20 hours of television a week. Studies show she/he only spends about 7 hours per week on physical exercise.*

*How does this compare with the situation in your country? How can parents make sure children get enough exercise?*

*Give reasons for your answer.*

You should write at least 250 words.