

Giving your time: writing in a neutral style

By the end of the lesson I will be able to:

- write an opinion essay.
- write in a neutral tone.
- use phrasal verbs.



INTRODUCTION

1. Look at the pictures and answer the questions below.

1. Who is giving their time and who is benefitting?
2. Do you give any of your time to other people?
3. Would you like to give your time to help other people in the future?



A. Community work



B. Conservation



C. Mentoring



TASK FOCUS

2. Look at the IELTS task and answer the question below.

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Some people think the government should make young people do a year of unpaid work in their community, before they begin a career.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Which one of the following things must you do?

1. Present both sides of the argument.
2. Give your opinion.
3. Suggest what unpaid work young people could do.
4. Write about unpaid work you have done.

3. Which four statements support the idea of compulsory community work?

1. There aren't enough professionals to care for old people.
2. People need lots of training before doing important community work.
3. Community work can help young people gain important skills.
4. Working in the community can inspire people to be good citizens.
5. People rarely respond positively to things they have to do.
6. Helping others can reduce stress and improve people's mental health.
7. Young people may lose job opportunities as a result of this policy.
8. Adults should have the right to choose how to spend their time.

4. Give each of the statements in activity 3 a score from 1–5. Give 1 for a weak argument and 5 for a strong argument.

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ |



IELTS SKILLS

5. Essays in the General Training IELTS test can be written in a less formal (but not informal) style than essays in the Academic IELTS test, so you may decide to use a neutral tone. Underline the sentence in each pair that is written in a neutral tone.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1a. It's nice to meet you. | 1b. I am delighted to make your acquaintance. |
| 2a. Awesome T-shirt! | 2b. That's a lovely T-shirt. |
| 3a. I'm going mad. | 3b. I'm under pressure. |
| 4a. Best wishes, | 4b. Yours faithfully, |
| 5a. I agree with the idea. | 5b. The idea seems valid to me. |
| 6a. I am deeply saddened by your news. | 6b. I'm very sorry to hear your news. |
| 7a. Don't you dare forget ... | 7b. Please don't forget ... |
| 8a. People rarely buy newspapers. | 8b. No one gets newspapers no more. |

6. Complete the table with your own ideas. Use a neutral tone. The first one has been done for you.

How's it going, John?	1. How are you John?	I trust you are well, John?
Cheers for everything!	2. Thank _____	I'm deeply grateful.
Someone nicked my phone.	3. Someone _____	My mobile phone was stolen.
We're out of time.	4. We don't _____	We lack time.
We must get together again soon!	5. Why don't _____	I propose we reconvene in the near future.
Get back to me ASAP.*	6. Please _____	I await your prompt response.

* ASAP is an abbreviation for *as soon as possible*.



USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR IELTS

7. Match the phrasal verbs with the definitions.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Delay | A. get along |
| 2. Enjoy the company of someone | B. cheer up |
| 3. Start (a project or task) | C. give up |
| 4. Sacrifice or give away | D. take on |
| 5. Consider | E. look after |
| 6. Eventually do/decide | F. end up |
| 7. Make happier | G. put back |
| 8. Take care of | H. figure out |

8. Read this extract from a response to the Task 2 question in activity 2. Rewrite the underlined sections using the correct form of the phrasal verbs from activity 7.

A lot of people spend time **1. taking care of** others in society, although they usually volunteer their time. I, however, think young people should be made to **2. commit themselves to** community work, for a range of reasons.

Firstly, **3. delaying** the start of their careers gives young people valuable time to **4. reflect on** what jobs they would like to do, and after a year working in the community they might **5. eventually start** working for our public services, rather than simply trying to make money.

They may benefit in other ways too. By **6. sacrificing** their time they can actually learn a range of skills, for example, the ability to **7. cooperate and communicate** well with people who are older or have a different background to their own. And as they spend time **8. making others happier** they may gain a sense of well-being too.



IELTS PRACTICE

9. Practise doing Task 2 of the IELTS General Training Writing test.

You should spend about 40 minutes on this task.

Some people think that people who have committed crimes should do unpaid community work such as helping a charity or cleaning the streets, rather than spending time in prison.
Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.



SELF-STUDY

A further practice opportunity for IELTS General Training Writing Task 2, with a sample answer, is available at <https://tinyurl.com/y8f8pdjv>.

Attempt the task, then find language in the sample answer to help you improve your work.

Accommodation: producing purposeful writing

By the end of the lesson I will be able to:

- produce writing that has a clear purpose.
- understand different types of letter-writing task.
- write in a formal tone.
- use language for making offers and requests.



INTRODUCTION

1. Look at the pictures and answer the questions below.



A. Shared house



B. Hall of residence



C. Private flat

1. What are the advantages and disadvantages of living in each type of accommodation?
2. Which type of accommodation would you prefer to rent?



GET TO KNOW IELTS

2. Read the information about IELTS General Training Writing Task 1. Then decide whether the statements below are true (T) or false (F).

In IELTS General Training Writing Task 1, test takers are presented with a situation and are required to write a personal response in the form of an informal, semi-formal or formal letter of at least 150 words. The situations are common, everyday ones such as writing to a college accommodation officer about problems with housing. Test takers are told what kind of information they must include (in the form of three bullet points). They will be penalised for irrelevance if the response is off-topic, or is not written as full, connected text (e.g. if bullet points or notes are used in any part of the response). Addresses do not need to be included in the response. The style of writing that test takers need to use depends on who they are asked to write to (the audience) and how well they are supposed to know them. They need to write using a tone that is appropriate for their audience.

Test takers ...

1. always write a letter. _____
2. are told what information they should include. _____
3. can write using bullet points. _____
4. should add an address at the top of the letter. _____
5. usually write for the same audience. _____
6. should always write using a formal tone. _____



TASK FOCUS

3. Look at the IELTS task and answer the question below.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You have received a letter from your landlord, Mr Matthews, asking you to renew your contract and pay more rent. You are happy in the property but the landlord has not been maintaining it well.

Write a reply to Mr Matthews. In your letter:

- *indicate your intention to stay*
- *give information about the maintenance issues*
- *explain what you would like the landlord to do now.*

Write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Mr Matthews,

Which one of the following things should you NOT do?

1. Tell the landlord you're leaving.
2. Negotiate the terms of a new contract.
3. Describe the problems with the property.

4. Decide whether the response to the task in activity 3 should be written in a ...

1. formal tone
2. semi-formal tone
3. informal tone.



IELTS SKILLS

5. Which two of the following might be the purpose of a formal letter?

1. To entertain
2. To register a problem
3. To exchange news
4. To request information
5. To maintain a friendship

6. Which one of the following sentences most clearly expresses a purpose?

1. I am writing because I have a problem.
2. I am writing to request that you replace the boiler.
3. I am writing in response to your letter of 5 February.
4. I am writing as a tenant of Norham Gardens.

7. Write a sentence that clearly expresses a purpose based on each prompt. Begin each sentence with *I am writing to ...* The first one has been done for you.

1. You would like the estate agency to return your deposit.

I am writing to request the return of my deposit.

2. You would like the landlord to know you are dissatisfied with the size of your bed.

3. You would like to be on a waiting list for university accommodation.

4. You would like the accommodation officer to solve an issue with the front door lock.



USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR IELTS

8. Study the phrases. Decide if they are used for making offers (O) or requests (R). The first one has been done for you.

- | | |
|---|-------------------|
| 1. <i>I would be grateful if you could ...</i> | <u> R </u> |
| 2. <i>I trust you will accept my proposal ...</i> | <u> </u> |
| 3. <i>Would you mind ...</i> | <u> </u> |
| 4. <i>I am willing ...</i> | <u> </u> |
| 5. <i>Kindly ...</i> | <u> </u> |

9. Decide if the phrases in activity 8 should be followed by the ...

A. bare infinitive (e.g. *provide*).

B. infinitive (e.g. *to provide*).

C. gerund (e.g. *providing*).

1. *I would be grateful if you could ...* _____

2. *I trust you will accept my proposal ...* _____

3. *Would you mind ...* _____

4. *I am willing ...* _____

5. *Kindly ...* _____



IELTS PRACTICE

10. Write a response to the task in activity 3.



SELF-STUDY

Compare the response you wrote in activity 10 to the sample answer (to be provided by your teacher). Improve your response by making at least three changes to it, borrowing ideas from the sample answer.

Socialising: writing in an informal style

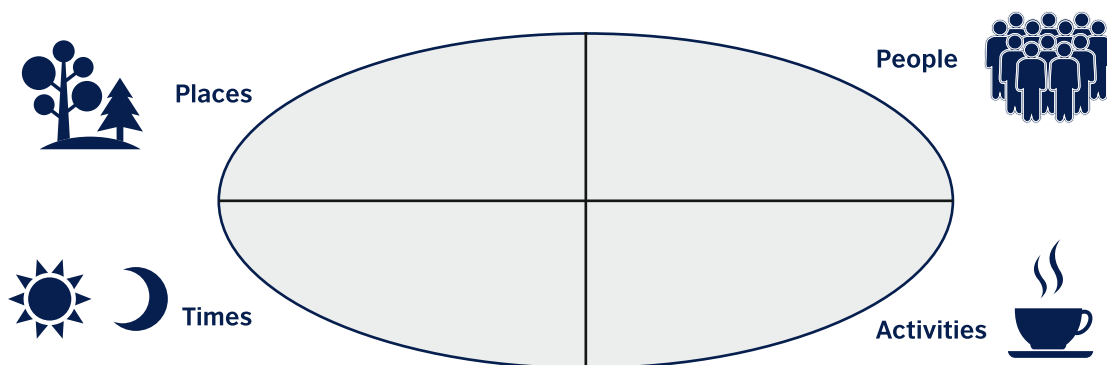
By the end of the lesson I will be able to:

- write an informal letter.
- write with an informal tone.
- understand the assessment criteria for General Training Writing Task 1.



INTRODUCTION

1. How do you socialise? Write notes in the diagram below and compare your ideas in groups. Does anyone else socialise like you?



GET TO KNOW IELTS

2. The examiner will look for the following characteristics in the letter you write in Task 1 of the IELTS General Training Writing test. Match the terms (1–3) with the descriptions below (A–C).
1. Consistent tone _____
 2. Appropriate tone _____
 3. Clear purpose _____
- A. The reader will understand exactly what the writer wants them to do or feel.
 - B. The way the letter is written doesn't change. The writing is (for example) chatty, business-like, or polite throughout the letter.
 - C. The choice of words matches the reader's expectations. If the reader and writer are friends, the letter will contain informal words.

3. Match the problems (1–3) with the letter extracts below (A–C).

1. Inconsistent tone _____
2. Inappropriate tone _____
3. Unclear purpose _____

- A. Hi there, mate. How's it going? I'm writing to express my deepest gratitude.
- B. Dear Alex, I thought I'd write you a letter as I've got a new job. Also, I hear you have a new pet.
- C. Hi, boss. You couldn't give us a pay rise, could you?



TASK FOCUS

4. Look at the IELTS task and answer the questions below.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

Ian, an old friend from your schooldays, recently prepared an evening meal for you at his home, where you also met his wife and two children.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter:

- *thank him for the evening*
- *explain what you enjoyed about it*
- *suggest a meal at your house.*

Write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Ian,

1. How many people ate together at Ian's home?
2. Where did you and Ian meet?
3. What's the main purpose of the letter?
4. Should the tone of the letter be formal or informal?

5. Which three of the following sentences would you expect to read in a letter responding to the task in activity 4?

1. I'm afraid the potatoes were a little overcooked.
2. I'm writing to thank you for the lovely meal.
3. We must meet for a coffee one day soon.
4. What about dinner at mine on 11 April, if you're free?

5. Your children were absolutely delightful.
6. Do you remember our geography lessons with Mr Moody?



IELTS SKILLS

6. Cross out three features of writing that would be inappropriate in an informal letter.

Feature	Example
1. Contractions	<i>I've, she'll</i>
2. Dashes and exclamation marks	<i>It's nearly the weekend – I can't wait!</i>
3. Long words (with Latin origins)	<i>agriculture, fortunate</i>
4. Short words	<i>farming, lucky</i>
5. Figurative language	<i>You're a star!</i>
6. Exaggeration (hyperbole)	<i>I have a million things to do.</i>
7. Non-standard English	<i>I done loads of stuff today.</i>
8. Idioms	<i>It's driving me round the bend.</i>
9. A high density of nouns	<i>Despite the lack of fine weather, my intention is to travel.</i>
10. Personal pronouns	<i>I saw him yesterday.</i>

7. Find examples of the appropriate features from activity 6 in the sample answer below.

Dear Ian,

Thank you so much for the lovely dinner last weekend. You're a very talented cook. In fact, the whole evening was a real pleasure from start to finish. I particularly enjoyed meeting your fantastic family. I think Ricky and Magdalen were only babies last time I saw them so it was great to see how they've turned out. Magdalen kept us entertained with endless jokes and Ricky is such a grown-up young man – I can't think where he gets it from! But seriously, you must be bursting with pride.

Anyway, I was wondering whether we should do it again some time but this time at my place. I make a mean chicken pie and you've never actually met my wife, Amelia – I think you'd really get on. At the moment we're at sixes and sevens because we recently moved house but come the summer we'll definitely be ready to do some entertaining. Are you up for it? Let me know.

All the best for now,

Lesley



USEFUL LANGUAGE FOR IELTS

8. In informal writing, it is common to add to or limit the meaning of adjectives with words or phrases called **modifiers**. Read the information in the box and then choose the best options to complete the sentences below.

Modifiers

Intensifiers (such as *absolutely* and *totally*) can be used to strengthen meaning and add emphasis to non-gradable adjectives like *amazing* and *terrible*.

Intensifiers (such *extremely*, *so*, and *very*) can also be used to strengthen meaning and add emphasis to gradable adjectives like *cool*, *exciting* and *funny*.

Downtoners (such as *a bit*, *a little*, and *slightly*) can be used to reduce strength and emphasis. They are often used with negative adjectives like *boring*, *dull*, and *silly*.

1. She's **extremely/totally** funny.
 2. It's **absolutely/a little** hot in here.
 3. This room is **totally/a bit** smelly.
 4. Those athletes are **absolutely/very** incredible.
 5. This ice-cream is **totally/so** good.
 6. I'm feeling **slightly/absolutely** nervous.
9. Complete the sentences below with suitable modifiers from activity 8 (more than one answer is always possible).
1. Your cooking is _____ tasty.
 2. Travelling by car is _____ dull.
 3. I'm feeling _____ tired.
 4. The film was _____ awesome.
 5. Your new jacket's _____ cool.
 6. Our chat was _____ enjoyable.
 7. They are _____ amazing gymnasts.



IELTS PRACTICE

10. Practise doing Task 1 of the IELTS General Training Writing test.

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You have some time off work and are hoping to visit a close friend, Stephanie, for a few days.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- *suggest spending time together*
- *explain why you have time to do this*
- *propose some activities*

Write at least 150 words.

You do NOT need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear Stephanie,



SELF-STUDY

Read a response to the task in activity 10 written by one of your classmates. Then suggest how the tone of the letter could be made more consistent or appropriate. Use the list of writing features from activity 6 to help you.