

Pearson English Guide: Writing Lesson Plans

Functional Skills : English Level 1

This Planning document is to aid in teaching and learning and should be used as a guide only.

Approaches to teaching writing

Introduction

The Writing section of the Edexcel Functional Skills English Level 1 qualification provides opportunities for students to practise their writing skills using a variety of functional, real-life contexts. The activities are designed to help students develop skills that are transferable to different situations where writing is required and equip them with the tools they need to be functional writers at Level 1.

Discuss what is required of students in order that they might successfully meet the standards.

The lessons

Lesson plans have been derived from each part of the Writing section for you to deliver to your students. The lessons:

- address each aspect of the coverage and range
- go through the different forms of writing
- provide practise opportunities in manageable sections leading to complete writing tasks
- contextualise technical aspects of writing such as spelling and punctuation.

Encourage students to establish links with other writing and reading lessons, using texts as models for their own writing. The text types are ones which students are expected to adopt in their own writing according to purpose and audience.

Modelling writing skills

Use an OHT/digital projector or simply a whiteboard to model different aspects of writing skills. The National Literacy Strategy offers some useful resources, including helpful scaffolding techniques such as writing and thinking frames, so that students have support as they write. As you model some writing, you could encourage students to discuss their own thought processes when they write.

Planning their writing

It is vital that students plan their writing: emphasise how important this is. Experience shows that some students are reluctant to plan, perhaps regarding it as a low priority. The lessons provide opportunities for students to plan their responses in varying degrees of detail and for a range of contexts. There are also opportunities for students to share their planning/ideas with a partner or group and in class discussions. Peer review is often recommended, as reviewing gives the planning more of a status.

Discuss with students the importance of planning and elicit from them such points as:

- it gives writing a structure
- it helps them sustain the appropriate form
- it helps them to think of style/purpose/audience.

You may want to share with students 'expert feedback' such as examiner reports, where concerns about lack of planning are often expressed.

Technical aspects of writing

Aim to give students opportunities to practise spelling, punctuation and grammar in contextualised activities. Contextualising a particular technical aspect of language allows you to teach the application of skills so that students relate what they have learnt to their own writing. Teaching technical aspects in this way enables students to understand the relevance of this to their own writing. To show the importance of technical accuracy, you could draw their attention to the 40% minimum weighting that this has when their writing is assessed.

Use of a dictionary

Encourage students to use a dictionary in the following situations:

- Looking up the meanings of key words in the Functional Skills Criteria
- Looking up meanings of words in reading texts and writing stimulus
- Looking up meanings of words in questions
- When preparing for writing tasks, particularly in the sections focussing on technical skills

There are many ways to use dictionaries in your lessons. You could enhance suggested starter activities by providing words for students to look up in their dictionaries, or you could give them the word verbally and ask students to look for the spelling. Another supporting activity could take the form of posters, with students writing instructions of how to use a dictionary, complete with annotated exemplification.

The prospect of accessing and using a dictionary may be daunting for some Level 1 learners so you may wish to restrict early activities to locating a few words at a time, perhaps working sequentially so that they become familiar with the alphabet and can apply this knowledge to the use of a dictionary.

Resources/further teaching ideas

It is recommended that students are given copies of texts and/or tasks to enable collaborative work and active learning. Annotated/highlighted texts reinforce learning, provide resources for display and serve as a revision resource.

Encourage students to measure their writing alongside a 'checklist' – the self-assessment grids may be useful here. Students should ask themselves the following types of questions:

- Have I written clearly?
- Have I used enough detail?
- Have I set out my ideas/information in a logical sequence?
- Have I written for the right audience?
- Have I a clear sense of purpose?
- Have I used the right form?
- Have I used sentences?
- Have I checked my spelling?

You might elicit such a list from students themselves and lead this into their production of posters that could be used to reinforce learning and act as prompts in writing tasks.

Ask students to identify different writing forms that they might expect to find, and direct them to find their own examples to display with annotations showing:

- form
- audience
- style
- purpose.

Also include features that make this piece of writing a particular text type.

As with *Speaking, listening and communication*, reinforce at all times how the writing skills that students are acquiring and developing throughout this course have a direct relevance to the world beyond the classroom and have real-life applications. You might want to discuss employability with your students and how the ability to write clearly, appropriately and accurately is highly valued.

Writing for your audience

Aim

- Use language, format and structure suitable for the audience.

Lesson learning objectives

- Suit your writing to your audience.

Lesson starter: whole class

Discuss with students how to write for an audience and link this with the Reading section where an understanding of audience was established. Remind them always to read the writing task carefully and ask themselves 'Who am I writing for?' 'What does this audience need to know?' and 'How can I make sure my format, content and language suit this audience?'

Share the learning objective and suggest that students underline any words in a question that tell them about the audience. Read this task to the class and ask them to identify the audience for the task: Write a letter to your local council, suggesting ways of improving your area for young adults.

Write the following questions on a whiteboard/ flipchart and ask small groups to consider them:

- To whom is the letter being addressed?
- What is the subject?
- What sort of language needs to be used?

Take class feedback.

Plenary

Discuss students' thoughts on each other's different versions of a paragraph for the third task and on their own writing. Recap what has been learnt in this lesson.

Homework

Direct students to write the opening paragraph of a letter to their local MP, arguing for or against the idea that the school leaving age should be lowered. Discuss the sort of language they need to use and what the MP needs to know so that they are clear what is required for the task.

Main teaching and learning

Brainstorm ideas with the class for how to complete the task above. Direct them to make notes for the task individually. Ask pairs to share their ideas and discuss similarities/differences in their approach, then share their ideas with the rest of the class. Get them to think about effective notes and how they are forming the basis of a plan for a draft of this task.

Ask pairs to decide on the audience and to consider the purpose for three more tasks. Ensure that the three tasks are varied in terms of audience, and whether the response should be formal or informal. Share ideas with another pair before taking class feedback.

Individually, students should draw a spider diagram showing ideas for what the audience of the first task needs to know, then share with a partner. If students use plain A4/A3 paper, their work could be displayed for revision purposes.

Discuss with students which of the three tasks should be written in formal standard English. It is useful to discuss the need for clear English in all tasks, even if some are more formal than others.

In pairs, direct students to read the second task and decide what the audience of the task needs to know, and what language would suit this audience. Pairs should then compare ideas and make notes for the Plenary. Individually, students should write their own paragraph in response to the third task, then share their paragraphs with a partner and discuss strengths/areas for development.

Writing to suit a purpose

Aim

- Use language, format and structure suitable for the purpose.

Lesson learning objectives

- Suit your writing to your purpose.

Lesson starter: pair work

Share the learning objective with the class and remind them that purpose and audience go together. Ask some students to share the opening paragraphs of their letters to the MP as per the previous lesson's homework.

Draw students' attention to these three key questions to ask themselves:

- 1 What do I need to do for this audience? (e.g. do they need facts about something?)
- 2 What do I want the audience to do? (e.g. agree with my point of view.)
- 3 What do I have to include in my writing to achieve my purpose? (e.g. evidence to support my view.)

Give pairs three more tasks and ask them to decide what the purpose of each one is, making a note of their ideas. Feed back and discuss as a class.

Plenary

Feed back on the students' discussions on one of the tasks as a class. Recap on what has been learnt during this lesson.

Homework

Ask students to write the first draft of their article using the plans that they have prepared in the lesson.

Main teaching and learning

Ask students to consider what they would need to do for the audience of each of the tasks, what they would want the audience to do, and what they would have to include to achieve their purpose. Get a range of responses from the class for each of the areas discussed.

Instruct students that, where possible, they should give supporting evidence for their facts, for example, 'according to a recent BBC survey...' Remind them of the difference between facts and opinions: a fact is a piece of information that can be proved to be true, whereas an opinion is simply someone's point of view. They need to know the purpose of a text in order to decide whether to include facts or opinions.

Give pairs a selection of statements to look at and decide whether they are facts or opinions. Take class feedback.

Tell the students that they will be writing a first draft of an article for a school magazine on a subject of their choice. Individually, direct students to make a plan for the task, answering the following questions: What is the purpose for my writing? What do I need to do for this audience? What do I want the audience to do? Students swap plans in pairs and then share their ideas with the class.

Understanding form

Aim

- Write clearly and coherently using appropriate form.

Lesson learning objectives

- Choose the right form for your writing and use the right features.

Lesson starter: pair work

Remind students that the features of different forms of writing help the reader to find the information they are looking for, and that using these features correctly will make their writing more effective and give them more marks. Link references to form, features and purpose with the Reading lessons. Give students two tasks that have contrasting purposes and require different responses, for example writing a letter of complaint and a short magazine article. In pairs, ask students to decide on their form and purpose and make notes to feed back to the class.

Draw out the form and purpose of the tasks in class discussion. Ask students what details in the task gave them information about form and purpose.

Plenary

Draw out from the students the key things that they have learnt, such as different forms, the importance of following rules, appropriate use of paragraphs and using an appropriate tone.

Homework

Ask students to complete either the formal complaint letter or the short magazine article, making sure that they use correct form in their writing.

Main teaching and learning

Make it clear to students that writing letters is a common task and that they are expected to write using correct form in order to gain marks. Display a short, two-paragraph letter of complaint, read it through with students and annotate it showing where to put the date, the addresses of the sender and recipient, and how to begin and sign off a formal letter. Link the 'Dear Mr/Mrs ...' with the 'Yours sincerely' to reinforce correct form.

Pairs complete the following sentences:

- 1 The opening paragraph states what the letter...
- 2 The closing paragraph says what the writer...

Use this as an opportunity to stress the importance of using paragraphs.

Provide students with an example of a short magazine article, and ask them to look for features that make this an article. Individually, students work through questions on the text, such as:

- What does the heading of the article tell you?
- How does the first sentence draw the reader in?
- Each paragraph gives a new main point. What is the point of paragraph x?
- What is the main point of paragraph x? How does the writer back up this point?

Where they are asked to identify the main point of a paragraph, make the link with being able to identify the main point of a text in reading.

Provide students with other examples of different forms of writing, such as an email and an information leaflet, and point out their features.

Make sure during feedback that students are clear about the different forms of writing and their different purposes.

Understanding style

Aim

- Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear.

Lesson learning objectives

- Suit your writing style to your purpose and audience.

Lesson starter: whole class

Remind students to match their tone to their task, i.e. if they are writing for a serious purpose, or if they do not know the audience they are writing for very well, they need to use a formal tone. Instruct them to avoid using text speak, slang, or dialect words, and always to use correct grammar and punctuation.

Emphasise the importance of writing being 'fit for purpose'. Read the guidance about when to use formal and informal style and link it with formal/informal discussion, e.g. how this affects structure and tone.

Plenary

Draw out from students what they have learnt about the two uses of the apostrophe. Emphasise that they now have a greater understanding of how to use style according to form, purpose and audience.

Main teaching and learning

Draw students' attention to the following guidance regarding formal and less formal standard English.

Formal standard English:

- use correct grammar
- do not use any dialect or slang
- use sophisticated or technical words
- keep your writing impersonal.

Less formal standard English:

- use correct grammar
- do not use dialect or slang
- include some informal words such as *don't* or *can't*
- use common, everyday words
- your writing can be more personal and direct.

Point out that even where a response can be less formal, standard English should always be used. In small groups, give students a short example of writing using each of the two styles and ask them to discuss them and make a note of the differences. Ask students to share their ideas in a class discussion.

Give students four tasks to read, each with a different form, audience and purpose. Ask them to identify which responses should be written in formal standard English and make notes on the reasons for their answers. Feed back to the class.

Provide students with an example first draft for one of the tasks requiring a formal response, but written in less formal English. Ask pairs to suggest ways to improve the draft, then direct them to write a second draft of the text in a more appropriate style. Ask them to share their version with another pair and share some examples with the class.

Explain apostrophe use to students: when they are writing less formal English, they may like to use words like *don't*, *can't*, *wouldn't*. These are contractions of two more formal words, with an apostrophe to show where letters have been left out, e.g.:

- do not → don't
- can not → can't
- would not → wouldn't

Then take students through guidance on how to use apostrophes to show ownership.

Discuss the common error of using apostrophes for plurals.

Planning and organising your writing

Aim

- Present information in a logical sequence.

Lesson learning objectives

- Read writing tasks carefully to work out what you must do. Plan your texts appropriately.

Lesson starter: whole class

Stress to students that good writing needs to be carefully planned and organised, and remind them that to write effectively they must read the task carefully to make sure they are clear about their audience, form, purpose and style.

Provide students with a couple of example opinions in the form of messages on an internet discussion board. Read the messages with them. In pairs, students consider whether language should be formal or informal in an internet discussion. Ask students to make a list of the main points, ideas and details in each of the messages. Discuss the outcomes as a class, and then the individual writing task, in which students write their own messages for the internet discussion forum, giving their own detailed views on the subject.

Plenary

Discuss with students key things they have learnt in this lesson about audience, purpose, form and style, and how important it is when planning their writing to take all of these factors into consideration.

Homework

Individually, students write up the plans they worked on during the lesson in final form.

Main teaching and learning

In pairs, students should consider the terms of the individual writing task as detailed above, and use the key words in the task to work out their audience, purpose, form and style. Talk about audience, purpose, form and style as a useful checklist that they could use for all writing, whether in lessons, assessments or real-life situations (job applications etc.). In pairs, students gather and organise their ideas for the writing task, by writing their individual point of view in the middle of a page, then writing question words around it (Who? What? Where? How? Why? When?). These question words will help them to back up their point of view with detailed information. Next, students should write an answer for each question, and a detail to back up each answer.

Individually, students complete their plans, decide which are their three strongest points, and number these 1–3 in order of priority. Direct students to swap their plan with a partner and discuss similarities, differences and areas for improvement. Feed back through class discussion.

Remind students to plan their writing to make sure their main points are clear and that they link together in a logical sequence, without repetition. Draw students' attention to the different ways of organising ideas: paragraphs, sub-headings, bullet points, and numbered lists are all useful methods. Emphasise to students that all writing needs to be organised and there are different ways to do this, depending on the form of writing.

Writing in paragraphs

Aim

- Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail.
- Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense.

Lesson learning objectives

- Plan and write well-structured paragraphs. Link your paragraphs together.

Lesson starter: whole class

Remind students that paragraphing helps to organise their writing, and that by grouping their ideas in separate paragraphs they can develop each of their main points clearly.

Make copies of an example text where all paragraphing has been removed. In pairs, students mark where each new paragraph should begin, looking carefully for where each new point starts in order to decide, and make annotations. Feed back in class discussion, agreeing where each new paragraph could begin and why.

Plenary

Discuss how students can use what they have learnt about paragraphs and connectives in this lesson in their own writing.

Homework

Students to write a couple of paragraphs on where they have been on holiday, making sure they use appropriate connectives.

Main teaching

Show students the following mnemonic for remembering how to construct paragraphs:

Point – the first sentence in the paragraph tells readers its main point.

Evidence – next give readers facts and/or anecdotes to prove that the point is sensible.

Explain – after giving evidence, explore its significance. Explore the main point in more depth or add similar smaller points related to it.

Link – end the paragraph by showing how it links to the main topic or the point in the next paragraph.

To help remember this, use the initial letters of the four points – PEEL.

Give pairs a paragraph to read and ask them which part of the paragraph gives evidence to back up the main point, which part adds more explanation of the evidence, and which sentence links this point to the main point of the text. In feedback, make sure students understand which part of the paragraph performs each of these roles.

Instruct students to link each paragraph to the next with connectives:

- To show the **order** that things happen in, use connectives such as first, next, then, later, finally.
- To add something to **support** a point you have already made, use connectives such as in addition, also, too.
- To add something to **go against** a point you have already made, use connectives such as however, but, on the other hand.
- To **explain** your point or give reasons for it, use connectives such as because, for example, so.
- To list your points by their **importance**, use connectives such as first, second, finally.

Provide copies of another paragraph with all the connectives removed and left as blanks. In pairs, students fill in the blanks with appropriate connectives and share their version with another pair. Feedback in class discussion.

Using main points and details

Aim

- Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear.

Lesson learning objectives

- Work out the difference between a main point and a detail. Use both main points and details in your paragraphs. Practise planning and writing paragraphs.

Lesson starter: whole class/pair work

Direct students to a very short text with a main point and details supporting that point, and discuss how the text is made up of these two elements. In pairs, give students another short text with main points, details, and images, and direct students to identify which are the main points and images, and which are the detailed points and images. Ask them to note down their ideas for class feedback.

Plenary

Discuss what has been learnt during the lesson and check that students understand the correct use of inverted commas.

Homework

Students should go back to the draft paragraph that they wrote about their favourite actor/actress and add extra detail to it by including a quotation.

Main teaching and learning

Provide students with a short text with several paragraphs, each with different main points and details. In small groups they should identify the main point of the first paragraph, and the details that support the main point. Next, they should find the details and evidence that support the main points of two further paragraphs.

Individually, students use the information they have read in the short text above to write two main points on the subject of the text, then work with a partner to add two details about each main point to support them.

Give students a task of writing a short paragraph about their favourite actor/actress.

Draw up a planning table for students to use, with columns headed 'Paragraph', 'Main point', 'Evidence' and 'Details', and ask students to use this to plan their paragraphs. Individually, students think of at least two things that they admire about that person, then invite some to share their ideas with the class. Individually, students plan a paragraph for each of their main points using the planning table, including connectives to link the points. Feed back in class discussion. If students have chosen the same actor/actress, compare the different details and main points that each student has included.

Give students guidance on inverted commas. Explain that the details they use to back up a main point could include quotations. When using quotations, students should:

- begin and end with inverted commas
- make the quotation part of their sentence
- introduce it with a comma
- make sure it is clear who is speaking.

Writing effective sentences

Aim

- Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense.

Lesson learning objectives

- Write in complete and clear sentences. Write in different types of sentences and punctuate sentences correctly.

Lesson starter: whole class

Discuss the importance of writing clear sentences, using different types of sentences and correct punctuation. Remind students of earlier work on use of connectives. Take them through the following checklist on simple sentences and discuss the use of a verb:

- A simple sentence makes one point and has one verb. A verb is a word that shows an event or action taking place.
- Before you write a sentence, say it in your head. Does it make sense? Has it got a verb? Is it clear who or what is doing the verb?
- Then write your sentence down and check that it:
 - starts with a capital letter
 - ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

Plenary

Share some of the responses to the short text, discussing the correctly punctuated form. If some students have different versions, this is a useful opportunity to discuss reasons for choices. Ensure that there is agreement and understanding at the end of the discussion.

Homework

Ask students to write their own paragraph about a hobby or interest, using what has been learnt in this lesson as well as previous writing lessons.

Main teaching and learning

Provide an example of a poorly written advert with no full sentences or punctuation. Individually, students read the text and rewrite it in complete simple sentences, then swap with a partner and compare. Ensure that students know how to use connectives to make their writing flow well.

Give students a list of simple sentences. In pairs, students should use connectives to join some of these together to make several longer sentences.

Reiterate that in order to vary their sentences, students could use statements, exclamations and questions.

Remind students that they can make their writing more interesting by linking simple sentences that are related with a connective. They can vary their writing by using different kinds of connectives. Remind them that the full stop, question mark and exclamation mark all act as full stops to end sentences.

Individually, students should write an email to a friend, suggesting that they meet up at the weekend, making sure to include a statement, a question and an exclamation. Swap emails in pairs and check each other's sentences: is every sentence complete? Does the writing contain the three necessary elements? Students then individually write a paragraph for a blog about what they enjoy doing in their spare time, making sure to vary their writing by using simple sentences, sentences linked with connectives and statements, exclamations and questions. If possible, provide examples of a blog to ensure that students understand the form.

Check that the students are confident in using capital letters, full stops and commas correctly.

Provide copies of a short text that uses no punctuation. In pairs, students should read this text and rewrite it, making it easier to follow by breaking it into correctly punctuated sentences.

Practising writing clearly and logically (1)

Aim

- Write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail.
- Present information in a logical sequence.

Lesson learning objectives

- Practise writing a complete text. Organise points logically and improve spelling.

Lesson starter: pair work

Explain the importance of being able to write a complete text that is organised logically with accurate spelling. Remind them that accuracy of spelling, grammar and punctuation are features of successful writing.

Set the students a task that requires them to write a set of instructions. In pairs, ask them to establish audience, purpose, form and style. Feed back in class discussion.

Plenary

Invite students to advise on correct spellings for the previous exercise. Check that students are clear on spelling strategies, giving/following instructions, using correct names, and using connectives.

Main teaching and learning

Explain to students how to write instructions. Remind them to picture themselves doing the activity one step at a time, make a brief note of what they need to tell their audience at each step, and number the stages in the order they need to be done. Direct pairs to write a set of instructions using this guidance. In feedback, discuss with students how this is relevant to real-life situations.

Pairs make a plan for the task, making a note of what they will need to write about for each part of the process. Remind students what is meant by form, and refer to the later part of this lesson if necessary. There is also an opportunity to revisit use of connectives.

Pairs must decide whether they want to organise their points as a numbered list or in a paragraph with time connectives, then add either of these to their plan. During class feedback, students discuss their decisions with peers. This is a good opportunity to compare instructions using numbered lists and time connectives, and to comment on the effectiveness of each approach.

Check that students are using the correct verbs to describe actions and prepositions to make their instructions clear.

Individually, students write a first draft of their instructions, remembering to write appropriately for their audience and purpose, use the correct form, use time connectives or numbers to organise their points, and to use accurate vocabulary. Swap with a partner to discuss ways to improve.

Take students through the following guidance on how to improve their spelling:

- break down words into sounds, e.g. *re-mem-ber*
- use a rhyme or message, e.g. *necessary* has one collar (one 'c') and two sleeves (two 's's')
- say a word as it sounds, e.g. *Wed-nes-day*
- look words up in a dictionary
- look at a word, cover it, say it, then try to write it.

Give out copies of a short text with several spelling errors. Students read the text, find at least three mistakes in it, and work out and write down the correct spellings.

Practise writing clearly and logically (2)

Aim

- Use language, format and structure suitable for purpose and audience.
- Use correct grammar, including correct and consistent use of tense.
- Ensure written work includes generally accurate punctuation and spelling and that meaning is clear.

Lesson learning objectives

- Practise writing a complete text in the form of briefing notes. Organise points logically and use correct verb tenses.

Lesson starter: pair work

Explain that briefing notes summarise the main points of a meeting, event or task so that the reader is given all the important information. Briefing notes need the information to be in a logical order, in different sections under headings, and points separated using numbered lists or bullet points.

Remind students to spend some time planning their work before they start to write. They should plan a structure for their writing to ensure they include everything they need in a logical order.

Plenary

Discuss as a class key things learnt and any areas that need clarifying, including verbs.

Homework

Individually, write up the draft briefing notes into a final version.

Main teaching and learning

Provide students with a task that requires them to write briefing notes, for example, for an inspector visiting their school/college.

Discuss as a class the key words in the task that tell you about form, audience and purpose, and direct students to make notes on this. Write the headings 'Introduction', 'Background', 'Considerations' and 'During the visit' on the board, and discuss the structure provided by these headings. Explain that this is the structure for their briefing notes and will provide the basis of their writing plan.

In pairs, students work out what information they want to include under each heading, considering the following:

Introduction: what the task tells you about the reason for the visit.

Background: information the inspector might need about your school, the students they will meet, and what lessons they will see.

Considerations: anything the inspector should bear in mind during the visit.

During the visit: practical details of what will happen on the day.

Individually, students note down ideas for a plan for their writing, then draft their briefing notes.

Ensure that students:

- Have a title summing up what the notes are for.
- Use all four headings.
- Organise information under headings, following their plan.
- Use a style that is appropriate for the audience.
- Present your information clearly – think about using bulleted lists or sub-headings.

Remind students of the importance of leaving time to proofread their work carefully. They should always check that they have used the correct tense of verbs, and that their spelling and punctuation are accurate. They can use a dictionary if they are not sure of spellings.

Swap briefing notes with a partner and review each other's work, checking generally and also looking at verb tenses.

