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WRITING GUIDE FOR
THE C1 (CAE/ISE III)



HOW TO ACE THE WRITING TASKS

WWW.INTERCAMBIODIOMASONLINE.COM | Marc Andrew Huckle



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The guide to the writing tasks for the Advanced

The writing part of the CAE consists of two texts; the first is an obligatory essay and the second is a choice of 3 texts. This document will explain all the types of text and how to pass them with AN A GRADE.

Explanation of all of the writing tasks

- Typical questions
- Evaluation scale

Examples of the types of texts that you need to practice with structural help

- essays
- A formal letter/email
- An informal letter/email
- An article
- A proposal
- A report

Key phrases for better writing

Key phrases to explain your opinion

Key phrases to justify your opinion

Connectors and linking phrases

Example questions for you to practice at home

- Two of these will be corrected by a Cambridge Examiner



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What tasks does the writing part of the exam consist of?

There are 4 questions.

The 1st task is obligatory. You must do question 1 and it is always an essay. The topics are varied but they are usually social issues, about the environment or the advantages/disadvantages of something.

The 2nd task is a choice; you can answer one question of 2, 3, 4. **DO NOT ANSWER ALL OF THE QUESTIONS.** The choices include: a letter (formal or informal), an email, a review, a proposal or a report. My suggestion is to focus on writing a formal or informal letter, a review and an article. The letter and the email are almost identical, so you cover both of them. **The report or proposal are a little difficult** because of the organisation and format.



Typical questions

1. Should you do a plan?

Yes! You must make a plan to organise your writing. On the day of the exam, you will be stressed and feel pressure. A plan is your way of organising your text and your thoughts.

2. What happens if I write more than 260 words?

Nothing... Well, almost nothing. In the past for every 5 words extra, they took away a point, however, now they do not. It is not good to go over 260 words because of time, but you can. I wouldn't write more than 270 words because they will probably lower the mark they give you for content. They will determine some of it to be unnecessary.

3. What counts as complex language in the exam?

You MUST use complex language at C1 level. You must use attention grabbing vocabulary and a variety of grammar structures. The passive voice, relative clauses, modal verbs, conditionals, reported speech and inversions all count as COMPLEX grammar forms and you must use them. Using complex language is not about making the text difficult to understand, it is about using language well and in a concise way.



Evaluation Scale explained

The writing part of the exam lasts for 1 hour 30 minutes (90 minutes). In this time the candidates need to write two texts of 220-260 words. To say what grade you need to pass the writing part of the exam is not as easy as with the use of English and reading as the way it is assessed is fairly subjective and can be within a point of what another examiner would put. The assessment scale for the writing section of Cambridge is broken up into 4 sections:

- Content
- Communicative achievement
- Organisation
- Language

All Cambridge exams are marked in the same way but the evaluation scales leave some room for interpretation and are, therefore, a little subjective. *Examiners mark tasks using assessment scales that were developed with explicit reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The scales, which are used across the spectrum of the Cambridge English General and Business English Writing tests, consist of four subscales: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, and Language:*

Content focuses on how well the candidate has fulfilled the task, in other words if they have done what they were asked to do. DO NOT INCLUDE IRRELEVANT INFORMATION. YOU SHOULD ANSWER THE POINTS IN THE TASK TO THE BEST OF YOUR ABILITY. FOCUS ON WHAT THEY ASK YOU TO DO.



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Communicative Achievement *focuses on how appropriate the writing is for the task and whether the candidate has used the appropriate register. YOU MUST USE APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE WHETHER IT BE FORMAL OR INFORMAL. EACH TYPE OF TEXT HAS ITS OWN REQUIREMENTS.*

Organisation *focuses on the way the candidate puts together the piece of writing, in other words if it is logical and ordered. THE TEXT MUST BE EASY TO FOLLOW BUT ALSO INCLUDE COMPLEX GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURES AND VOCABULARY. DO NOT OVER COMPLICATE THE TEXT! THE USE OF ADEQUATE COHESIVE DEVICES IS ESSENTIAL.*

Language *focuses on vocabulary and grammar. This includes the range of language as well as how accurate it is. CANDIDATES MUST BE ADVENTUROUS WITH THEIR LANGUAGE USE AND USE SEVERAL COMPLEX GRAMMAR STRUCTURE (passives, inversions, cleft sentences, conditionals, modal verbs, relative clauses etc.) TO GET A GOOD GRADE WITH REGARDS TO VOCABULARY YOU SHOULD TRY TO INCORPORATE IDIOMS.*



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Responses are marked on each subscale from 0 to 5.

When marking the tasks, examiners take into account length of responses and varieties of English:

Guidelines on length are provided for each task; responses which are too short may not have an adequate range of language and may not provide all the information that is required, while responses which are too long may contain irrelevant content and have a negative effect on the reader. These may affect candidates' marks on the relevant subscales.

Candidates are expected to use a particular variety of English with some degree of consistency in areas such as spelling, and not for example switch from using a British spelling of a word to an American spelling of the same word.



How to write an essay for the CAE

An essay is the first part of the writing and it is obligatory. You need to answer the question with between 220-260 words. In the text you need to analyse a question using different points of view. It is a semi-formal text and should be impartial until the conclusion. What the examiner wants to see is a balanced argument that is both interesting and easy to read.

A good essay contains the following parts:

Introduction

Introduce the topic and say what you are going to talk about and capture the interest of the reader with a question, a fact or an extreme opinion.

1st paragraph

The first point from the notes (you can mix points if they are related). This should be your main point, you must justify why it is the most important.

2nd paragraph

The 2nd point from the notes, you need to link it to the first. Explain why it is of secondary importance.

3rd paragraph

This is optional and can be linked to the second paragraphs. It explains the final point and links to the others.

Conclusion

A summary of what you have said in the main paragraphs and make your main point. It must be interesting and the reader should learn something from it.



What do they look for in a good essay?

As I have said before, an essay at C1 level should be semi-formal. Try to avoid contractions (can't), phrasal verbs (be into) and colloquial phrases (awesome). The text needs to be the exact format that they have asked for (an essay with separate paragraphs), it should be easy to read and INTERESTING. If it is boring, it will get a bad grade.



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Example of an essay:

Where should we invest local authority funding?

To some extent it is impossible to agree on where or to whom local governments should allocate funding. In all cases there will be disagreement as to what is the best cause of action. This essay is aimed at discussing the importance of this funding and the influence it can have on our society.

It is said that a person without their health has nothing. One of the principal aims of local government should be to ensure the wellbeing of the general public. This point does not refer to the investment in healthcare, but the investment in schemes to prevent the deterioration of health. Sports centres could well be the answer to health problems as a more active nation is a healthier one, and the promotion of physical activity and the knowledge of how to live a healthier lifestyle is a must in today's society.

Another point that needs to be made is that of education. The investment in a good educational system is implicit, therefore more investment needs to be made so that people can further their contact with culture and further learning. Museums are a national pastime and should be accessible to all. What is more, they should be of a good standard to capture the interest of the people in order to educate them.

In a nutshell, local governments have an obligation to invest in fruitful projects that are both long-term and beneficial to the people. They must focus on the promotion of the improvement of the standard of living, and what better than in health and education. But referring to the point made earlier, without good health, education is worth for nothing.

ESSAYS ARE FORMAL AND YOU MUST USE FORMAL LANGUAGE, avoid:

Informal language (slang and colloquialisms)

Contractions

Phrasal verbs when possible



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Example letter/email question:

Read part of an email from a friend who is planning on spending their Erasmus year in your country.

It goes without saying that I will need to learn Spanish, or at least have a good base before I come, but this is easier said than done. Are there any ways that I could save time doing this? Could you give me any useful tips to improve quickly?

Reply to the email message offering your friend some advice. Write your **email** in **220-260 words** in an appropriate style.

Example answer:

Hey David,

Long time, no see! What a surprise to receive your email. How long has it been? I think I last saw you when we were backpacking in Peru.

To start with, as far as I remember your Spanish was pretty good back then so what you really need to do is brush up on what you have studied in the past. You are a very sociable person and I am sure you will learn in no time once you are here, but I would recommend studying a little online beforehand. Have you heard of the websites www.appf.es or www.intercambioidiomasonline.com? They have some great resources for you to get started.

Providing that you have time to get out and about, I would also recommend finding a language learning partner to keep up your motivation. It would be a great idea to join a conversation group to get some practise. Having said that, on the internet you can also join groups of Facebook to chat to other language learners.

Another thing is to make sure you are consistent. It is a great idea to study a little every day, doing things that you enjoy. So, what I would advise is to do the magic combination of an online course, a language learning partner and also a general course book so that you can get up to speed with grammar structures and common vocabulary.

If you need anything else, give me a buzz at 622950782 and we can have a chat.

Ok, catch you later.



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Example report question:

Your local authority is conducting a survey into language learning habits of the people between 16-45 in the area. They have asked for a report on the types of methods used in state run schools and language centres. They have asked for some suggestions on how to improve their facilities, teaching methods and resources.

Write your **report** in **220-260 words** in an appropriate style.

Example answer:

Introduction

The main purpose of this report is to analyse the effectiveness of language teaching in the local area. It will offer a review of what is available and also make some recommendations on how to improve.

Facilities

Due to a lack of funding during the economic recession, the facilities available have not been renovated since more than a decade ago. What's more, because of this scarcity of investment, much of what there is has been over used and/or damaged to some extent. Many modern private language centres have sprung up around the city in recent years but they are both unaffordable and difficult to monitor. There are a fair few teachers working who are quite frankly not up to the job.

Teaching Methods

The methodology used by most teachers has not changed over the last 15 to 20 years or so and therefore needs to be improved. Teachers need the correct type of training that is not only theory based but also practical and ready to input into the system. Some teachers see language teaching as an easy ride and seem to be running down the clock to retirement, to the distain of their students.



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Resources

There is a case of follow-the-book syndrome apparent in the local area. Teachers need to be given the freedom to use their creativity and also the training to be able to implement it in the classroom. This way resources will be more varied and students will be able to relate to them more easily.

Recommendations

Taking all of the factors of this report into account, the best plan of action would be to increase funding to ensure progress. What is more than just money, it is essential that this funding gets to where it is most needed. I would suggest teacher training and resources to be the priority.



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Example review question:

You have seen this announcement on your favourite music website.

Have you ever been to an amazing concert venue?

Write a review of the best music venue in your local area and tell us about what makes it so special. Say who you would recommend it for a why?

The best entries will be published on our website.

Example answer:

The Apollo: The Theatre of Dreams

Never before have you seen such an amazing spectacle as you will see in the Apollo. It's not only the facilities and personnel that make this venue so great, but also the amazing acoustics of such a large venue.

From the moment you enter the place there is an awe about it. All of the greatest acts of recent times have played here and you can feel the buzz as soon as you enter. The crowd are so close to the stage that they can literally feel the droplets of sweat coming off of the brows of their favourite artists, this creates an amazing connection between the musicians and the audience and I can tell you, the fans go wild!

I'd definitely recommend this venue to anyone, it has a great feel to it and the prices are at the lower end of what you would expect to pay in such a place. They also don't go over the top on drinks prices, and through it sounds weird, it's not all that difficult to get to the bathroom which is a plus. So, without a doubt, the next time your favourite group is playing, come on down to the Apollo, oh, and did I mention it is in London? It couldn't get any better.



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Example proposal question:

You go to a university that has a high amount of international students and you have realised that the website is not up to scratch. Write a proposal for the University Dean about how it could be improved.

Write your **proposal** in **220-260 words** in an appropriate style.

Example proposal answer

Introduction

This proposal is aimed at outlining the way in which the university website could be improved so that it is more user friendly for international students. It will suggest what improvements can be made and also set out how this would benefit the students themselves.

Problems with using the site

A recent study into how easy it is to get around the site has revealed that 70% of students whose second language is English find it difficult to find specific information about their courses. Because of the language barrier, they find it hard to make their search terms clear and this has become a cause for concern. Translating the site is not an option and this can be a big problem, especially at the beginning of the academic year.

Ways the site could address these issues

It has been well documented that the university website has neither a site map nor an introduction video to help novice students to find their way around it. It would make a huge difference if there were some simple instructions to indicate where to find information. It is a delicate balance as we, of course, want international students to learn English, but also want them to navigate the site with ease.



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Recommendations

I would like to make the following recommendations:

Invite students who are starting out at the university to a quick and informative seminar to demonstrate how to use the site.

Provide language help and some useful resources (like www.intercambioidiomasonline.com) for language learning and assistance.

Provide a survival pack for students to take with them and know how to combat technological issues.

If these recommendations are in place, young people are bound to feel more prepared for their experience and take full advantage of this unique experience.



Key phrases for better writing:

STARTING:	CONCLUSION:	CONTRAST:	TIME:
To get started	as can be seen	although this may be true	Firstly, secondly, thirdly
On starting this essay	in the final analysis	in contrast	in due time
Firstly	all things considered	different from	as long as
To begin with	as shown above	of course ..., but	as soon as
In the first place	in the long run	on the other hand	at the moment
until now	given these points	on the contrary	in good time
the first point I'd like to make is	as has been noted	at the same time	in the meantime
it is time to	in a word	in spite of	in a moment
I would like to start by	for the most part	even so / though	in ages
To start with	after all	be that as it may	whenever
To introduce the topic	in fact	then again	now that
To kick off this essay	in summary	above all	instantly
The first thing to mention is	in conclusion	in reality	without delay
As a starting point	in short	after all	all of a sudden
In the first part	in brief	although	at the present time
On the one hand	in essence	instead	from time to time
	to summarize	whereas	sooner or later
	on balance	despite	at the same time
	altogether	conversely	up to the present time
	overall	otherwise	at this instant
	by and large	however	first, second
	to sum up	rather	in time
	on the whole	nevertheless	prior to
	in any event	nonetheless	straightaway
	taking all of this into account	regardless	by the time
	all in all	as if/though	in this day and age



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Key phrases for expressing your opinion:

In my opinion,...

In my eyes,...

To my mind,...

As far as I am concerned,...

Speaking personally,...

From my point of view,...

As for me / As to me,...

My view / opinion / belief / impression / conviction is that...

I hold the view that...

I would say that...

It seems to me that...

I am of the opinion that...

My impression is that...

I am under the impression that...

It is my impression that...

I have the feeling that...

My own feeling on the subject is that...

I have no doubt that...

I am sure / I am certain that...

I think / consider / find / feel / believe / suppose / presume / assume/reckon

I hold the opinion that... (I form / adopt an opinion.)

I dare say that...

I guess that...

I bet that....

I gather that...

It goes without saying that...



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Key phrases for justifying your opinion:

Estas frases son flexibles y se puede modificar para ajustarlas al contexto

To begin, you can use these *basic (B1) phrases* to justify an opinion in English:

because...
the reason is...
the reason I believe that is...
the facts suggest...
the evidence shows...
taking into account what I have seen...

You can justify your opinion more effectively by being more specific. Try some *intermediate (B2) phrases* like these:

The first reason I believe this is...
The main reason I feel this way is...
There are several reasons I believe this. The first is...

When you are not completely certain, you can try one of these more *advanced (C1) English phrases*:

I don't have any special reason for believing this. It just seems right to me that...
I could be wrong as I have no special reason for believing this. I just feel this is right as...
I'm not sure why I feel this way but I have reason to believe...

When you ARE certain, try one of these phrases:

There is a lot of evidence to support my point of view. For example...
There are many facts in favour of my opinion. One such fact is...
From my own personal experience, I am lead to believe...



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Connectors:

Cada conector tiene una función distinta. Ha de tener en cuenta la diferencias gramaticales de cada.

ADDING INFORMATION	CONTRAST
And, also, as well, in addition, besides, above all	However, but, although, on the other hand, despite, in spite of, even though, though, whereas
GIVING EXAMPLES	SIMILARITY
Such as, for example, like, for instance, as follows:	Similarly, equally, likewise, in the same way
REINFORCEMENT	RESULT
Also, furthermore, moreover, above all, not only... but also	So, therefore, as a result, because of this, consequently, thus, hence, in that case
DEDUCTION	SUMMARY
Otherwise, in other words, then, in that case	In conclusion, to sum up, in brief, therefore, to summarise
SEQUENCE	STATING THE OBVIOUS
Firstly, secondly, thirdly, lastly, next, after, to start with, to finish,	Obviously, clearly, naturally, of course, surely, after all

Linking:

“Linking” refers to the way the writer relates their ideas together. It is essential to be able to form an argument and have a balanced piece of writing.

As I have said before...

With respect to the point on...

Regarding...

Like I have said...

In relation to...

Taking into account...



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Making recommendations:

One suggestion could be...

It might be a good idea...

it would be useful to...

It would be a good idea to...

Would not be better to...

Taking all of the factors into account...

What about... ?

I should therefore recommend...

How about... ?

Should we not... ?

Let's...

Why not... ?

Speculating:

Probably – He will probably do the exam next week

Perhaps/maybe – Perhaps he doesn't have time

May/might/could – You might be luckier next time

What if – What if he doesn't arrive on time?



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Useful phrases for an **informal** letter: (use as set phrases in the exam, don't experiment with new vocabulary or grammar)

Beginning:

Thanks for your letter, it's great to hear from you

Long time, no see! What a surprise to receive your email.

It was great to receive your email

Thanks for the email, it seems to me that

I'm glad that.... What I think/reckon is (that)

Ending:

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Ok, catch you later.

Ok, well, see you soon.



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Useful phrases for a **formal** letter:

Beginning:

With regards to the letter/email on...

With reference to your letter/email...

After having received your letter/email...

I received your address from ... and would like ...

Thank you very much for your letter/email on...

I have been given your contact details by... and I would like to...

In reply to your letter/email of...

Ending:

I hope to hear from you soon...

If you require any further information, feel free to contact me

Should you require anything else, do not hesitate in contacting me

Regards

Yours faithfully

Yours sincerely

(signature)



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Two of the answers will be corrected by a Cambridge/Trinity/EOI examiner, who will also offer advice on how to improve. Your answers should be 220-260 words long. You MUST do the essay and then choose one of the other options.

Example essay question (part 1):

Tour class has had a discussion about the economic recession; write an essay about what has been discussed in class:

Should the bankers who caused the economic recession be held accountable for what they did?

- **prison**
- **fines**
- **change the system**

Choose two of the points to discuss.

Here are some of the opinions from the class.

- *Yes, they should all be locked up*
- *It was a genuine mistake, they should just try to fix it*
- *All bankers are corrupt!*



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Advice:

Title – The Candidate needs to include a title in the essay, proposal and review. You can use the question from the task or set your own title so that the reader knows the tone of the answer.

Organisation – You must write in the correct format. There is a need to write paragraphs. The introduction needs to capture interest and also explain how you will answer the question. The main content needs to be both interesting and informative and there is a need for a concise and useful conclusion.

A balanced answer – when writing an essay, it is better to remain impartial throughout the essay. You need to form a balanced argument and cover all of the points of view. Only include a personal opinion in the conclusion and then justify it.



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Example questions (part 2):

Email

You have seen an advertisement in the newspaper:

Students needed for work experience placement.

Birmingham City University is offering the opportunity to get ahead in the job market by allowing some of its students to do work placements in the education faculty. If you are ages 18-35 and are very open-minded, why not give it a go?

- *say why you would be a good candidate*

- *discuss your availability*

Send applications to marc.h@appf.edu.es

Review

The new digital glasses have just been released and offer a great range of possibilities such as internet access and x-ray vision:

Write a review about the glasses and who you would recommend them to.

Proposal

The local authority in your city has just released plans to build a new sports centre. Write a proposal about it and suggest how it could be a success with the locals.