



BRAYS

FCE Writing

How to pass the Cambridge First Certificate Writing Section

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Introduction

Who is this book for?

This book is for **students** who want good marks in the writing section of the Cambridge First Certificate Exam (FCE). It is also useful for *any* Upper Intermediate student who would like to improve his or her writing.

It is also for **teachers**. Use it exactly as you like. Forward it to students. Print it out. Use it in class. It's completely up to you.

I hope you find it useful.

Enjoy your English and every success with exams.

Alan Bray

Santander, July 2016.

P.S. You can find other free materials to help you prepare for the B2 First Certificate Exam at the following website, brays.es

To buy a Complete FCE or FCE for Schools Online Course with 100 – 150 hours of Listening, Reading, and Use of English practise (including over 50 Exam Practice Papers) [click here](#). Simply practise and take the mock exams until you are sure of exam success.

Spanish speakers can [access this page](#).

What's in the FCE writing exam?

In the two parts of the Cambridge English: First Writing paper, you have to show that you can write different types of text in English.

Summary

Time allowed: 1 hour 20 minutes

Number of parts: 2

Number of questions: Part 1: one compulsory question, Part 2: one question from a choice of three

Types of task: Articles, email, essay, letter, report, review.

Part 1

You are given an essay title and two ideas clearly linked to the title. You write an essay giving your opinions about the title, using the ideas given. You must also add a third, different idea of your own linked to the title. The title will be a subject of general interest – you won't need any specialised knowledge.

What do I have to practise? Using language functions, such as evaluating, expressing opinions, hypothesising, justifying, persuading.

How many questions are there? One compulsory question.

How much do I have to write? 140–190 words.

Part 2

What's in Part 2? You write a text from a choice of text types – article, email/letter, report or review. To guide your writing, you'll be given information about context, topic, purpose and target reader.

What do I have to practise? Writing different types of text that could be included in the exam.

How many questions are there? One task to be selected from a choice of three.

How much do I have to write? 140–190 words

How is the exam assessed?

Answers are assessed using both a general mark scheme, which is used for all the questions, and a separate task-specific mark scheme for each question. The criteria used to assess the candidates' answers in the general mark scheme include:

- range of structure, vocabulary and expression
- effectiveness of organisation, including paragraphing and linking devices
- accuracy of grammar and spelling
- awareness of the situation and target reader.

5 essentials for good answers

1. Answer the question
2. Plan
3. Use paragraphs
4. Revise your work
5. Make sure you answer the question exactly and no more.

It is essential to plan your writing. This should take at least 10 minutes to plan for each question.

In a relatively short piece of writing you will need 4 or 5 paragraphs. The first paragraph will be your introduction. Paragraphs 2, 3 and perhaps 4, will contain the body of your answer, and the last paragraph your concluding comments.

Allow at least 5 minutes for each question to check your answer. Look out for silly mistakes with tenses, word order, spellings etc.

Part 1: Writing essays

Introduction and tips (Writing essays)

1. ANSWER THE QUESTION.
 2. PLAN your essay.
 3. REVISE your essay to correct mistakes.
 4. 4 or 5 PARAGRAPHS, with introduction and conclusion.
- The *first paragraph* should be a general introduction.
 - In the *middle paragraphs* develop your arguments. Give reasons to support your argument. Use a variety of discussive words and phrases. Give examples where possible. Use formal language. Don't use contractions (we're, I've etc.)
 - The *final paragraph* is the best place to express your opinion clearly.

Useful phrases (Writing essays)

Presenting two advantages or disadvantages together:

- *not only ... but ... also*
- *not only ... but also*

Presenting two opposing views:

- *on the one hand, on the other hand*

Expressing Contrast:

- *nevertheless*
- *even so*
- *even though*
- *however*
- *in spite of*
- *despite*
- *but*
- *although*

Expressing results:

- *because of this*

- *therefore*
- *thus*
- *as a result*
- *for this reason*
- *consequently*

Giving examples:

- *such as*
- *like*
- *for example*
- *for instance*

Expressing the opinion of someone else:

- *some people say*
- *some people say that*
- *many people say*
- *many people say that*
- *people often say*
- *it is said*
- *it is said that*
- *according to*

Sample questions (Writing essays)

1. You have done a project on transport in your English class. Your teacher has asked you to write an essay giving your opinions on the following statement.

Because cars are so convenient public transport has no future.

Write your **essay in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

2. You have had a discussion on fashion in your English class. Your teacher has asked you to write an essay, giving your opinions on the following statement.

Young people never want to dress the same as their parents

Write your **essay in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

3. You have had a discussion on the media's treatment of famous people in your English class. Your teacher has asked you to write an essay, giving your opinions on the following statement.

Famous people such as footballers, film stars and politicians, deserve to have a private life without journalists constantly following them.

Write your **essay in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

[This page](#) from First Certificate Writing gives 5 further titles with sample plans and answers. An excellent page.

Part 2.1: Writing formal letters or emails

Introduction (Writing formal letters or emails)

Writing formal letters is a necessary skill that you need for most ESL or EFL exams at Intermediate Level and above.

Examples:

- You are given an article to read from a newspaper. You write to the newspaper disagreeing with the article.
- You write to complain about something.
- You write making suggestions about something.
- You write requesting information.
- You write giving information.
- You write requesting permission.

Useful phrases (Writing formal letters or emails)

a) Writing formal letters generally:

Greetings:

- *Dear Sir*
- *Dear Madam*
- *Dear Sir/Madam*
- *Dear Mr Brown*
- *Dear Ms Jones etc.*

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing in response to your article/advertisement/letter*
- *I am writing with regard to your article/advertisement/letter*
- *I am writing regarding your article/advertisement/letter*
- *I am writing on behalf of*

Ending the letter:

- *I look forward to receiving your reply*
- *I look forward to your reply*
- *I look forward to hearing from you*

- *I am, yours faithfully (if you don't know the name of the person you are writing to)*
- *I am, yours sincerely (if you know the name of the person you are writing to)*
- *Yours faithfully*
- *Yours sincerely*

b) Writing formal letters to complain:

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing in order to complain about*
- *I am writing to complain about*

Introducing the complaint:

- *Firstly*
- *In the first place*
- *First of all*
- *My first complaint is*
- *The first problem is*
- *The first thing I would like to draw your attention to is*
- *My first concern is*

Introducing further complaints:

- *Secondly*
- *In the second place*
- *Not onlybut also*
- *In addition*
- *In addition to this*
- *Added to this*
- *.....was also unacceptable*

Demanding action:

- *I suggest that you replace the item*
- *I therefore suggest that I be given a full refund*
- *I would be grateful if my money was refunded*
- *I would be grateful if you could give me a full refund*

Ending the letter:

- *I look forward to hearing from you*
- *I look forward to receiving a full refund*
- *I look forward to receiving a replacement*
- *I look forward to receiving your explanation*

c) Writing formal letters to make suggestions:

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing to suggest*
- *I am writing to arrange*
- *I am writing to offer suggestions*
- *I am writing make arrangements*

Making first suggestion:

- *My first suggestion is*
- *First of all I suggest*
- *I would like to suggest*

Making further suggestions:

- *Another possibility is*
- *A further possibility is*
- *I further suggest*
- *I would further suggest*
- *Secondly*

Offering a choice:

- *Would you therefore mind choosing between?*
- *Either.....or*
- *You might choose either or*

d) Writing formal letters to request information

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing to receive further information about*
- *I am writing to enquire about*
- *I am writing to receive more detailed information about*
- *I am writing to receive further details about*

Requesting first piece of information:

- *The first thing I would like to know is*
- *First of all I would like to know*
- *I wonder if you would mind telling me first of all?*

Requesting further information:

- *Could you also tell me....?*
- *Could you also inform me?*
- *Would you also mind informing me?*
- *Would you also mind telling me?*
- *Do you know?*
- *I would also like to know if*

- *I would also like to know whether*
- *I hope you might also let me know about ...*

Thanking for information:

- *I would like to thank you in advance for this information*
- *Thanking you in advance for this information*
- *Thanking you in advance*

e) Writing formal letters to give information:

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing to inform you about*
- *I am writing to provide you with information about*
- *I am writing to let you know that*

Providing first point:

- *The first thing I would like to inform you of is*
- *The first thing I would like to tell you is*
- *The first thing I wish to inform you of is*
- *I would like to begin by informing you*

Providing further points:

- *I would also like to let you know that*
- *I would also like to inform you that*
- *You might also find the following information useful*
- *It might also be useful for you to know that*
- *Another piece of information that might be useful*

Ending the letter:

- *If you require further information, please do not hesitate to ask*
- *If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to ask*
- *I will willingly provide further information on request*
- *I am at your disposal should you require further information*
- *I am at your disposal should you need further assistance*
- *Please do not hesitate to ask should you require further information*

f) Writing formal letters to request permission

Reason for writing:

- *I am writing to ask permission to*
- *I am writing to ask permission for*
- *I am writing to request permission to*
- *I am writing to request permission for*

- *I am writing to ask if I might*

Making first request:

- *Firstly I wonder if you would*
- *First of all I wonder whether you would mind*
- *The first request I would like you to consider is*

Making further requests:

- *I would be grateful if you would also consider*
- *I wonder if it might be possible for me to*
- *I would also like to request permission for*
- *I would also like to request permission to*

Thanking for permission

- *Many thanks for kindly considering my requests*
- *Thank you for considering my requests*

Sample questions (Writing formal letters and emails)

1. You are helping to organise a visit to an English Language Academy in Manchester. You have received a letter from John Webster, the director of the Academy. Read the letter and the notes you have made. Then write a letter to Mr Webster using all your notes.

I am very glad to see that you are coming to our academy in July. I am sure you will all have a very enjoyable time and that you will learn a lot of English.

You can either stay all together in a youth hostel, or individually with local families. Please tell me which you would prefer.

Tell me something about your group so that I can organise interesting spare time activities. What sort of things do they like doing?

Please ask if you need any further information.

Yours sincerely,

John Webster

Your notes:

- Paragraph 1 – learning a lot of English is very important because
- Paragraph 2 – say which you prefer, and why.

- Ask what the weather's like in Manchester and what clothes you will need.

Write your **letter in 140-190 words**. You must use grammatically correct sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation in a style appropriate for the situation.

2. Write **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

You have just returned from a trip to Canada. You flew there and back with Maple Air. You decide to write to the airline to complain about your flight and ask for some money back.

Read the advertisement and the notes you made and then, using the information, write a letter to the airline. You may add other relevant points of your own.

FLY MAPLE AIR TO CANADA

We offer:

- 3 flights a day
- wide, comfortable seats
- friendly, well-trained staff
- a good choice of food – special diets no problem
- the latest in-flight entertainment

Phone 0179 765893 now or see your travel agent for more details.

Your notes:

- Late boarding
- Staff quite rude
- No vegetarian food for me
- Old film

Write your **letter of complaint**. Do not include any postal addresses.

3. Your parents have seen the following advertisement.

IVY GRANGE HEALTH FARM

A marvellous experience and wonderful opportunity to get you fit.

Individualised health and fitness programmes in charming rural setting.

They want you to send an email to ask for further details including answers to the following questions:

Where?
Places available in August?
How much for a week?
Drinking allowed?
Any trips?
What type of exercise?

Write an email in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

[Click here](#) for 5 samples of formal emails from First Certificate Writing, answers included, and [click here](#) for 5 formal letters, again with suggested answers.

Part 2.2: Writing informal letters or emails

Introduction (Writing informal letters or emails)

Writing informal letters and emails involves writing letters or emails to friends or relatives.

When writing an informal letter or email our language is more relaxed and we are able to use abbreviations which is rare in other forms of English writing, except perhaps when using direct speech.

Look also at “**Writing Formal Letters and Emails**” and compare.

Useful phrases (Writing informal letters or emails)

Informal Letters - Greetings:

- *Dear Jim*
- *Hello Jim*
- *Hi Jim*

Informal Letters - Introductory paragraph:

- *Sorry I haven't written for ages*
- *Sorry it's taken me so long to write*
- *How's it going?*
- *How are you?*
- *How are things with you?*
- *How are things?*

An informal letter referring to good news:

- *Glad to hear about*

- *I'm really glad to hear about*
- *I'm very happy to hear about*
- *I was very happy to read about*
- *Great news about your*

An informal letter referring to bad news:

- *I'm extremely sorry to hear about*
- *I'm very sorry to hear about*
- *Sorry to read about*
- *Its very sad to hear about your*
- *I can't tell you how sad I am that*

Informal Letters - Introducing points

- *By the way*
- *Did you hear about*
- *Did you see*
- *Have you seen*
- *Tell me about*
- *Oh, another thing*

Ending an informal letter or email:

- *Well, time to go*
- *Well, it's time to go*
- *Well, got to go*
- *Well, time to close*
- *I've got to leave off now*
- *Write soon*
- *Make sure you write soon*
- *Love*
- *Lots of love*
- *All my love*
- *Will write again soon*
- *Look after yourself*
- *Take care of yourself*
- *All the best*
- *Everything good*

Sample Questions (Writing Informal Letters and emails)

1. Write **140-190** words in an appropriate style

Your Scottish friend, Maggie, has sent you an email asking you to help her organise a special surprise birthday party for her brother Rupert. Read Maggie's email and the notes you have made. Then write an email to Maggie using **all** your notes..

We must make sure that Rupert doesn't know we are planning this surprise. I'm not sure how many people to invite but our house is definitely too small. Do you think we should book the Royal hotel for the evening and have the party there? You know that Rupert is very keen on music so we could hire a live band.

I've also been wondering what we could all buy as a present. What do you think?

Could you come the day before the party to help with preparations. There's a lot to plan so I'd really like your help. Can you suggest something else that will really make the party special?

All for now.

best wishes,

Anne

Your notes:

- Paragraph 1 - Royal Hotel sounds OK but very expensive
- Paragraph 2 - Rupert really enjoys fishing
- Paragraph 3 - Sorry, busy that day.
- Paragraph 3 - Something else - Yes, how about

Write your **email**. You must use grammatically correct sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation in a style appropriate for the situation.

2. Write **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

You are studying in Britain and you've recently received a letter from a friend, Susan, who is interested in arranging a day trip for a group of students. Read Susan's letter, the advertisement and the notes you have made. Then write a letter to Susan, using **all** your notes.

..... and the students in my class are really interested in going on a day trip. I know you went on a boat trip with your class recently. Could you tell me what it was like and whether you'd recommend it?

Susan

Castle and Lake Boat Trips

- Departures 9 a.m. or 11 a.m. daily
- Lunch at restaurant
- Afternoon at lake with choice of water sports
- Reasonable prices with reductions for groups

Your notes:

- Earlier boat less crowded
- Take a packed lunch because
- You must try(watersport)
- Group minimum is 15

Write your **letter**. You must use grammatically correct sentences with accurate spelling and punctuation in a style appropriate for the situation.

3. Your friend, Jim, has written you an email, part of which says:

My parents have given me some money for passing my exams. I don't know whether to spend it on going to watch United in Madrid, or whether I should save up a bit more and buy some clothes. What do you think?

Write an email in reply in **140-190 words**.

5 more sample informal email questions with answers, from First Certificate Writing, can be [found on this page](#). An informal letter can be [found here](#).

Part 2.3: Writing articles

Introduction and tips (Writing articles)

- ANSWER THE QUESTION
- PLAN your article.
- Give your article a title.
- Make sure you have at least 4 paragraphs.
- Ask rhetorical questions to get your readers' attention. Eg. What would the world be like without oil? What will life be like in 20 years time?
- Speak directly to your readers. Eg. Let's just imagine some of the possibilities.
- Give examples where appropriate.
- Use humour where appropriate
- Give a conclusion and summary in the last paragraph.
- Finally, give your opinion where appropriate.
- REVISE your article to correct mistakes.

Useful phrases (Writing articles)

Rhetorical phrases:

- *Have you ever*?
- *What do you think about*?
- *Are you one of those people who thinks that*?

- *Are you one of those people who?*
- *What would life be like if?*
- *Will the future bring us ?*

Introducing your first point:

- *Firstly*
- *In the first place*
- *First of all*
- *The first thing to consider is*
- *One thing to consider is*
- *To begin with*

Introducing more points:

- *Secondly*
- *Another consideration*
- *Yet another consideration*
- *Another thing to consider is*
- *Added to that*
- *Apart from that*
- *In addition to this*

Introducing your final points:

- *In conclusion*
- *To conclude*
- *To sum up*
- *So*

Introducing your opinion:

- *I think*
- *In my opinion*
- *Personally I believe that*
- *In my view*
- *If you ask me*
- *To my mind*
- *My personal opinion is*

Sample questions (Writing articles)

1. You see this announcement in your school's English language magazine .

New Clubs after School

Your school wants to start some new after school clubs. Chess, table-tennis, judo, guitar playing and cookery have been suggested as possible clubs. What do you think?

- *Tell us which one of these five ideas you like best **and why.***

- Make **one** other suggestion for a new club **and** explain why it would be a good idea.

Write your **article** in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

2. You see this announcement in the *Leisure and Entertainment* magazine.

Could you live without internet for a month?

Write and tell us what difference this would make to your life. We will publish the best article.

Write your **article** in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

3. You see this announcement in a magazine.

We invite you to write an article on 'The City of the Future'.

In what ways will Cities be different in the future? In what ways will they be the same? The writer of the best article will receive a prize.

Write your **article** in **140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

3 more sample article questions from First Certificate Writing, with answers, [can be found here.](#)

Part 2.4: Writing reports

Introduction and tips (Writing reports)

- ANSWER THE QUESTION
- PLAN your report.
- Make sure you have at least 4 paragraphs.
- Every paragraph should have a heading which explains what the paragraph is about.
- Your first paragraph heading will be INTRODUCTION and your last, CONCLUSION
- Always start with To: E.g. *To: Ms Jones*
- Put From: on the line below and then add your name.
- Put Subject: on the next line. Choose a heading that describes clearly what the report is about.
- You do not need to put the date but you can if you want to.
- Use formal language.
- Do not use contractions.
- Try to make recommendations in the final paragraph.
- REVISE your report to correct mistakes.

Useful phrases (Writing reports)

Introductory Information:

- *To:*
- *From:*
- *Subject:*
- *Date:*

Headings - to include:

- *Introduction:*
- *Subject of each paragraph:*
- *Conclusion or recommendation(s):*

Introductory Paragraph

- *As requested I have*
- *This involved visiting*
- *This involved looking at*
- *This involved investigating*
- *My findings are outlined below.*
- *My findings are presented below.*
- *I outline my findings below.*

Recommending:

- *I would like to suggest*
- *I would like to recommend*
- *I therefore suggest*
- *I therefore recommend*
- *I therefore suggest that we do not*
- *I therefore recommend that we do not*
- *I therefore do not suggest*
- *I therefore do not recommend*
- *I therefore recommend*
- *I believe we should recommend*
- *I believe we should not recommend*
- *You may wish to consider*

Sample questions (Writing reports)

1. You help out at a music festival which is held in your town every year. This takes place outdoors over one weekend. The organisers want to improve the festival and so have asked you to write a short report.. You should comment on the site, the programme, the food and other facilities, the cost and anything else you consider relevant.

Write your **report of 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

2. Some American students are on an exchange programme with your college for a month. The college has asked you to write a report on entertainment in

your area for the teacher who is in charge of the group. You should give advice on such things as types of entertainment, venues and prices.

Write your **report of 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

3. Your head teacher (or University Chancellor) has sent you a letter explaining that the government is awarding 50, 000 euro grants to organizations which are making big efforts to become greener.

He asks you to tour the school (or university) to see what can be done to make the building more environmentally friendly.

Then he wants you to write a report describing the current situation and making recommendations on how improvements can be made.

Write your **report in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

4. You belong to a youth club which is subsidised by the village council. The youth club leader has asked you to write a report on the activities of the club to help the council decide whether or not they will increase the small grant they give every year.

Write your **report in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

Part 2.5: Writing reviews

Introduction and tips (Writing reviews)

- ANSWER THE QUESTION
- PLAN your review.
- Make sure you have at least 4 paragraphs.
- Choose an appropriate title.
- The introduction will talk about what's being reviewed.
- Use a relaxed, friendly, chatty style.
- You can use contractions such as I'm, I've etc..
- Use a new paragraph for each point you want to make.
- Give your opinion.
- In the concluding paragraph give your opinion.

Useful phrases (Writing reviews)

What I liked

- *What I liked most was*
- *The thing I liked most was*
- *I was pleasantly surprised by*
- *..... would appeal to*
- *If you get a chance to*

What I disliked

- *What I disliked most was*
- *I was disappointed by*
- *I was disappointed with*
- *I was very disappointed by*
- *I was very disappointed with*

Reviews of books:

- *main character*
- *is set in*
- *comedy*
- *science fiction*
- *thriller*
- *romance*
- *comedy:*
- *author*
- *written by*
- *chapter*
- *factual*
- *fiction*
- *unbelievable*
- *bestseller*
- *chapter*
- *ending*

Reviews of films, tv programmes, plays:

- *lead role*
- *star role*
- *star*
- *star actor*
- *star actress*
- *starring*
- *secondary role*
- *He plays a*
- *She plays a*
- *written by*
- *is set in*
- *based on a true story*

- *believable*
- *true to life*
- *not very believable*
- *far-fetched*
- *comedy*
- *romance*
- *science fiction*
- *ending*

Reviews of hotels, restaurants, etc:

- *location*
- *service*
- *setting*
- *attractive setting*
- *disappointing setting*
- *owned by*
- *run by*
- *head chef (restaurant)*
- *waiters (restaurant)*
- *staff*
- *staff at reception(hotel)*
- *hotel facilities*
- *reasonable prices*
- *good value for money*
- *excellent value for money*
- *expensive*
- *a bit expensive*
- *overpriced*
- *not worth the money*
- *poor value for money*
- *always fully booked*
- *book in advance*

Sample questions (Writing reviews)

1. Your teacher has asked you to write a review for a book you have read recently. The best reviews will go in the school magazine. Review the book giving your opinion and saying whether or not you would recommend it.

Write your **review in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

2. Your teacher has asked you to write a review for a film you have seen recently on DVD or at the cinema. The best reviews will go in the school magazine. Review the book giving your opinion and saying whether or not you would recommend it.

Write your **review in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

3. At school you are building a tourist website in English. Your teacher has asked you to write a review of a restaurant you have eaten at in your town. Review the restaurant giving your opinion and saying whether or not you would recommend it.

Write your **review in 140-190 words** in an appropriate style.

Further examples from Flo-Joe, for all writing types, can be found [on this page](#). A great site with authentic answers + marking with codes included.

[Exam English Help](#) is another very good site with FCE Writing Samples and advice.

Finally

We at Brays hope that the information you have read helps you master the English language.

The fact that you have read this far should prove useful. But, obviously, the more you write, the better you become, especially if you have a good teacher to guide you.

To get the best from what you have read you need now to go to the next important stage:

- Select a question!
- Answer it
- Ask a tutor to guide you through the correction
- Repeat the process
- Repeat again and again

The more practice and guidance you have, the better you will become.

If you don't have someone with a sufficiently high level to guide you then [contact us here](#). If you live in Santander or Getafe we have small classes specialising in correction of writings and spoken English (with free online courses for FCE or FCE for Schools)

Online tutoring



If you are unable to attend one of our academies **Sarah Bray** provides very thorough online tutorials, with a free online course, via Skype. Sarah is a Management graduate from Warwick University with a Masters from Cranfield. She also has an 'A' grade Cambridge CELTA certificate and is a very highly rated expert in the English teaching field. [This link](#) will take you to her Linked In profile. She can be contacted by phone (00 34) 916 823977.

Online Course

If you intend taking the FCE exam you can find an excellent online course, with 100-150 hours of practice covering all sections of the exam, and including over 50 exam papers, [on this page](#). This course is completely free for students of Brays.

The Spanish version of the page [can be accessed here](#).

Every success with your exams, and in life.

Enjoy your English,

Alan Bray

July, 2016