

Functional Skills English

Level 2



Learning Resource 6
Writing for Different Purposes

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Information**Planning Techniques**

There are several ways of organising information at the planning stage of text writing and by trying them out you will find which suits you best. To some extent, how you structure your work is determined by the style of text you are planning, whether it is a letter, an article for a news-sheet, a piece of persuasive text, a short story or an assignment for a course of study. Below are some possible ways of planning your work. Try them out and discuss with your fellow learners ways that you find helpful. They may have other ideas that you can try out too.

Introduction/Main part/Conclusion

For short pieces of text, you may wish to divide your planning into only three parts, an introduction, the main part of the text and a conclusion.

An introduction should consist of no more than about 10% of the complete piece of work and often defines the terms of the title.

The main part of the text should develop each of your main ideas in turn, with each idea being put into a separate paragraph and supported with examples and references where applicable.

The conclusion should consist of no more than 15% of the complete piece of work and summarise the main ideas.

Exercise 1

Read the following short newspaper article about a new scheme to make health records available on the internet.

Medical Records Available on Net to Doctors

B.T. has won a £620 million contract to set up and run a database that will eventually make everybody's health records accessible to all health professionals anywhere in the country. The system is designed to allow records previously kept in one place to be available to different health providers such as G.P.s, hospitals and specialist clinics. Where such records are already computerised, they will be transferred to the national system, but there is no immediate plan to convert paper records into an electronic form. Consequently, for babies born after the system comes into operation, hopefully within the next two years, every small ailment will be recorded. For the rest of the population, electronic records will begin at the age we have reached when the system is introduced.

Patients who are concerned with confidentiality will be able to opt out of the system completely or have certain information removed to a “sealed envelope” so that only those health professionals given the patient’s permission will have access. This will protect patients, who are HIV positive, have mental health problems or who have had an abortion. The system will also have strict security rules so that only authorised staff will be able to view the records.

The cost of setting up the system will be met by central funds, reassuring the many cash-strapped Primary Care Trusts which are already finding it hard to make ends meet.

Plan and draft a letter to the editor of the newspaper that published this article either in support of or against the scheme of putting medical records on to the Internet. In order to have your letter printed, it needs to be *short and to the point* but have *strong opinions backed up by reasons* for your beliefs. Use the planning idea from the previous page of Introduction/Main part/Conclusion to compose this letter, remembering to keep it brief.

Paragraph headings

You may wish to organise your work by first choosing **subheadings** for each paragraph that you want to write. Write one subheading per sheet of paper or on separate pages of a document on a word processor, and then compile all relevant information, notes only at this stage, beneath each subheading. When finally writing the text, don’t forget that each paragraph needs to be linked to both preceding and following paragraphs with suitable connecting words.

When writing a short story, letter or poem it is often necessary to be more particular about the way that it is planned and drafted because of a restriction on the number of words you want to use. The **language** needs to be succinct yet easy to understand, the **text** concise, yet it needs to contain all the information necessary for the reader to fully appreciate it.

Exercise 2

Compose a page from your diary about a memorable day.

- Choose a day in your life, from childhood or more recently, that was very interesting or unforgettable. It can be imaginary if you cannot remember a real one.
- Imagine that you are writing a short chapter of your autobiography about that day. You can only use one side of A4 paper printed from a word processor to relate the tale.
- Jot down three or four events that took place on that day. Each event can then become the main point of a short paragraph.
- Write an introduction to the chapter of four or five lines long filling in the background to the events – who were the characters involved in your special day, where did it take place, when did it take place, why it took place (if there was a special reason).
- Compose three or four paragraphs around your chosen events, remembering to allow the whole text to flow properly in a logical order by joining each paragraph to its preceding and following one with connecting words. Some examples of these that might help you are: however, furthermore, consequently, in addition, as a result, finally.
- Your conclusion should be about five or six lines long and should tell your readers why this day was such an interesting or unforgettable one to you and why it lives in your memory.

Spider Diagram

This is a way of structuring your ideas **around** the main title of your work. It can be particularly useful for the early planning stages of longer pieces of text such as assignments for study purposes, or for jotting odd words as reminders when the work involves a lot of research. In the example on the following page, the main title of the article, in the centre of the page, is **World Famine**. There are **five subheadings**, each placed in a circle with connecting lines to the main title. The remaining words on the diagram are reminding the writer of what needs to be included in the paragraphs within each subheading.

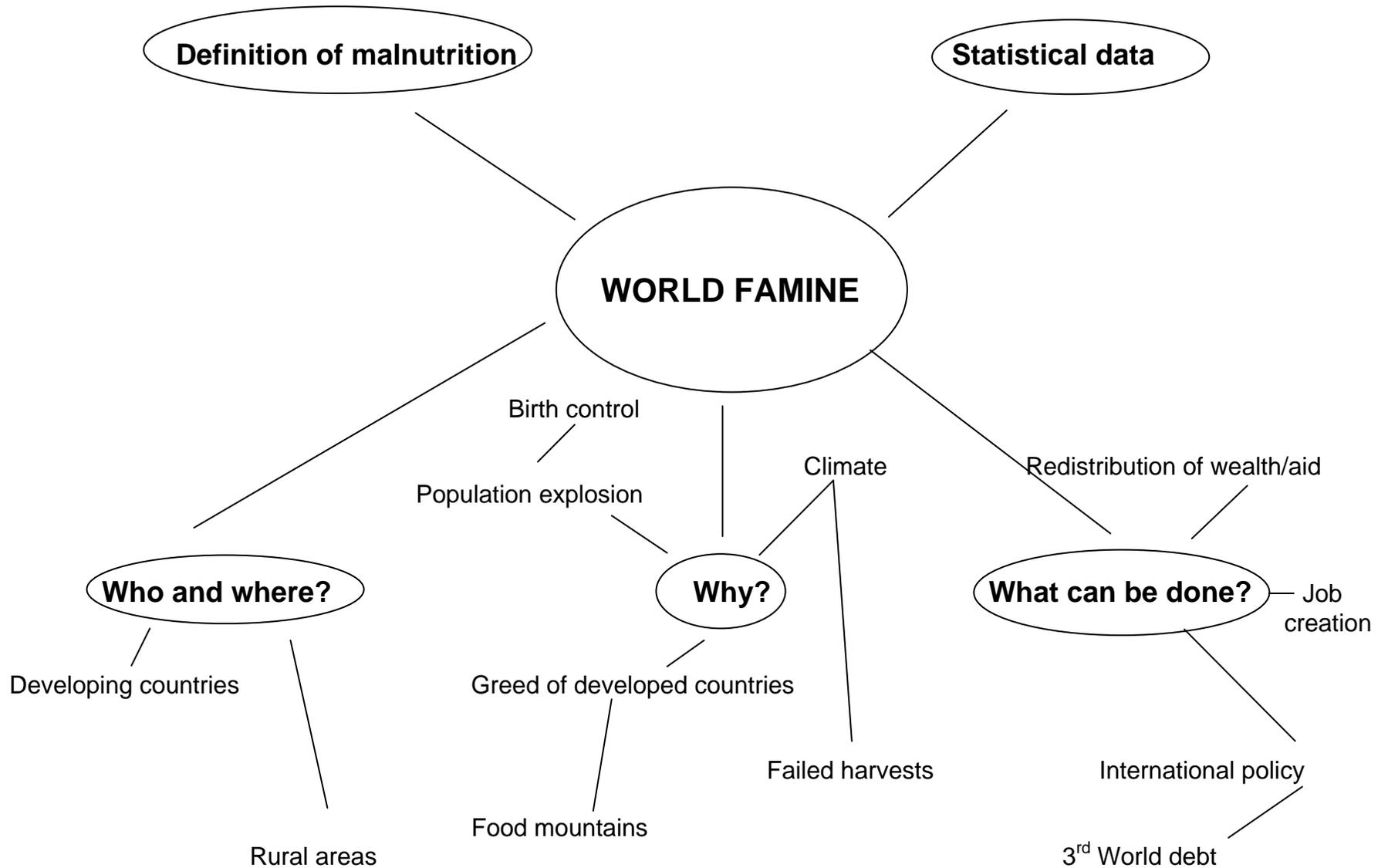
Look at the example overleaf and try to add more “legs” to the spider diagram for this topic.

This form of planning can also be useful in a **brainshowering session**, when a group of people discuss and combine their ideas into one joint plan.

Exercise 3

Try using a spider diagram to help you compose a short article (no more than five paragraphs) for a magazine suitable for young Learners.

- **Choose a topic** that you would like to know more about, or one that you could tell other people about.
- Write the **title of that topic** in the centre of a large piece of paper, using big bold letters, drawing a circle round it or using some other way of making it stand out.
- Think of the **main points** that you want to include in your work and write them round the edge of your paper but connected to the centre word with lines. These are your **subheadings or paragraph headings**. You may want these words to stand out too, but don't make them quite as important as your centre word.
- Any **other points** you want to include in your article should now be connected to the subheadings by lines.
- When you have noted as many ideas as you can, **ask someone else** to look at your spider diagram, so that they might suggest other “legs” you may want to include.
- Try to **write, or word process**, your article straight from this planning. The words you have jotted down on your spider diagram will, hopefully, be sufficient to enable you to remember in enough detail all that you wanted to include in your text. You can always use the original source of information to help with the details if you have chosen to write about an unfamiliar topic.
- Try the whole process again but this time in a group brainshowering session. There is no need to compose the finished product, just practise this type of planning. You may need a huge piece of paper if you are to include everyone's ideas!



Information**Persuasive Texts**

When writing **persuasive texts**, it is essential for the writer to work out the most important points of the text so that these can be used advantageously to persuade people to a particular point of view. Look at this example of how an article about using public transport has been constructed around **five main points**. Each main point is in a separate paragraph. The article is trying to persuade motorists to abandon their cars and use public transport instead.

Leave Your Car Behind

During December, the local council is asking motorists to leave their cars in the garage and use public transport for city centre Christmas shopping. Far too many cars enter our city centre during this busy time and drivers have problems in finding a parking place. Traffic wardens have been given strict instructions to move people on when queuing beyond the allowed limit at car parks.

Any motorist found parking illegally will be given a hefty fine and persistent offenders will find their cars wheel-clamped. The penalty fine to have the car released will cost as much as £100 for the first offence and will significantly increase with each offence. Parking illegally in disabled spaces will be punished even more severely.

The usual Park and Ride sites will be fully operational throughout December with additional buses at busy times both morning and early evening. The six sites, dotted around all edges of the city, take an average of more than 1000 vehicles each and, with buses leaving every 5-8 minutes, the journey into the city centre is quick and easy, especially where bus lanes are available.

In addition, the local bus services are frequent, cheap and convenient for all parts of the city centre. Many buses have easy access for pushchairs, buggies, wheelchairs and more elderly people and have plenty of space for all those oversized parcels.

But by far the most important reason why you should use public transport is so that our city centre does not become grid-locked and overcome with traffic fumes. Hopefully we can all then arrive home less stressed in the safe hands of our public transport drivers, in buses that can keep to their schedules and get you where you want to be quickly and safely.

Exercise 4

Using the article about public transport on the previous page:

- Identify each main point, one in each paragraph, by underlining the appropriate phrase or sentence.
- In each paragraph, *highlight* the persuasive language that has been used to try to convince motorists not to use their cars in the city centre.

Exercise 5

Presenting Ideas Using Persuasive Language

Using the same format as the public transport article, with a partner, write an article of about the same length for a council newsletter trying to persuade people to recycle their unwanted glass, plastics, clothes, newspapers, packaging, drinks cans etc. Here are some guidelines you may wish to use to help you construct a piece of persuasive text that will convince the reader to do as you ask.

- 1) **Choose four or five main points** around which you will construct your article. Each of these main points will become the focus for each paragraph. **Some examples** you might like to think about are: better use of local council tax; less landfill waste; environmental and health issues; money saved to be used for play facilities for children, better provision for teenagers' recreational pursuits or community facilities for the elderly etc.
- 2) **Compose a few sentences** about each of your main points, remembering to use **persuasive language** to encourage your readers to recycle their waste materials.
- 3) **Put your paragraphs into the most appropriate order** so that they follow on from each other, making the best effect for your persuasive argument.
- 4) **Read it through to your partner** to check that the article makes sense and that you have used words that will convince your audience to participate in the recycling scheme.
- 5) **Edit** any parts of the article that you are not completely happy with and then read it through again checking your alterations.
- 6) **By word-processing your article** from the beginning, you can much more easily alter your work as you progress. When you have finished it, print it out so that you can read it to a group of learners. You may like to use it to lead a group discussion on this topical issue of recycling.

Information**Letter Writing**

Letter writing is a dying art because we now have much quicker forms of communication, telephone and e-mails being the most popular. However, we still need to be able to construct and reply to letters, both formal, or business, and informal. They each need a different format to communicate the intention of the writer.

- A **business** letter needs to have precise, formal language. It needs to be short and come straight to the point. If replying to a business letter, using the terminology that has been used in the original letter will help to address the issues clearly.
- An **informal** letter can be much more friendly and chatty in style, as though talking with a friend or work colleague. The language used is likely to be much more colloquial or slang.

Exercise 6

Try to show a difference in style in the following examples of letters you may need to write. Draft out a sample for each one and compare notes with a partner when you have completed them. Together choose the best two examples from each of your letters, one a formal business letter, the other an informal letter to someone you know well, correct any details of language, order or subject matter that you think is not appropriate in the context of the letter you have written and then write them out in full.

- 1) A letter to your bank sending them your new change of address.
- 2) A letter to your great aunt telling her of your new change of address.
- 3) A letter to your child's head teacher asking for time out of school to go on a week's holiday in June.
- 4) A letter to your grandmother, who lives in an old people's home, thanking her for the scarf she sent you for your birthday.
- 5) A letter to the Inland Revenue in reply to their request for proof of purchase of various items you have claimed for on your tax return, saying that you no longer have the receipts.
- 6) A letter to a mobile phone company's headquarters complaining that your new phone has not worked properly since you bought it a month ago, despite the best endeavours of the assistants in the shop where you purchased it to have it repaired for you. Demand a new one!

Remember to think carefully about the length of each letter and the amount of detail that you need to include in each case.

Information

Letter Writing

This next exercise is going to combine the skills of using persuasive text with letter writing.

As a member of a committee organising a Summer Fair, you have been asked to write a letter to ask people to give up their Saturday afternoon to run a stall, help with the games and sideshows or serve refreshments. This could be an event where you live, where you work, at your child's school, at the local sports venue, or anywhere that has to raise money through such events. The choice is yours!

In order for this letter to have the most impact you may like to think about these ideas as to how you can best persuade people to help:

- how successful the event has been in the past;
- how much money has been raised, how it has been used and who has benefited from it;
- don't forget to include necessary details:
 - where the event takes place;
 - when – date and time;
- list the opportunities for help on the day with stalls etc;
- remember to appeal to their sense of community – perhaps a good way of getting to know people;
- think about the best length for the letter – put yourself in the place of the receiver!
- look at your choice of language – you're trying to **persuade** people to help;
- consider using a reply slip so there is no excuse for the recipients to back out;
- and don't forget to say how much enjoyment and satisfaction the helpers will have.

Exercise 7

Combining Writing Techniques

Using these ideas, write a draft letter using a word processor.

When you have written the draft letter, ask someone else to read it to see if they would be persuaded to help. Ask if there is any other information they would like to know before committing themselves to helping, or if you have included anything which they consider makes your letter unnecessarily long. Redraft your letter if you wish to take their views into account, and then ask a third person to read your letter for their views. By redrafting a second time, if necessary, you should have a concise, persuasive piece of writing that would convince anybody to come and help raise some money with you!

Information**Paragraph Sequencing**

In all forms of written text it is important to put the **paragraphs in the correct sequence** so that they follow on from each other, but particularly so when writing a set of instructions on how to use an appliance, or how to build a piece of flat pack furniture.

For example: when wanting to build a flat pack wardrobe there are several bits of information needed to do it successfully. There is no point in giving instructions to attach the sides, back and top together if you cannot then put the rail in for the clothes to hang on. So manufacturers have to be very careful about the **order** of the instructions that they give, as well as their clarity.

Exercise 8**Presenting an Explanation**

Describe how to use an appliance that you are particularly familiar with, imagining that your audience has never used one before.

It may be some household appliance like a microwave oven or a washing machine or it may be some tool that you use for your work. Remember that you will have to *explain in some detail*, and in the *right order*, if your appliance is to be used correctly and safely by someone who is unfamiliar with it. You want to be able to use it again when they have finished with it!

Use the space below to *note* the instructions you need to give them and to sort the instructions out into the *correct order*. When you have completed your notes, using a *word processor* at this stage to *write, order and number* your instructions will help you to rearrange the finished product more easily by “cutting and pasting” where necessary.

If possible, when you have finished writing, *read* the instructions out to a partner to see if they can follow them and make the appliance work properly. You may find you have to make some adjustments to your order if they try to follow them precisely!

Information**Presentation Writing**

The focus of this next exercise is to deliver a two-minute presentation to your group on a topic of your choice. This will hopefully prompt your audience to ask questions and perhaps want to debate any thought-provoking issues in your presentation. In order to achieve this end, we need to consider several steps:

- research;
- planning;
- writing a draft;
- editing;
- proofreading;
- final product;
- rehearsal.

1) Research

Choose a topic that is of particular interest to you from a national or local newspaper or from a news website e.g. the BBC national or local news or a website belonging to one of the national newspapers. The topic must be of interest to you so that your audience will be riveted to every word of your presentation!

Find as many **references** to the topic as possible and look at **differing viewpoints** if that is applicable.

2) Planning

While **reading** all the information you have found, work out how many **paragraphs** you will need to write, list any **subheadings** that will help you to **structure** your work later. **Note down** any information you have, underneath the subheadings, which can be included in that paragraph. At this stage the notes need only be words or phrases, not whole sentences. Try also at this stage to sort out the **sequence** of your paragraphs so that they follow on from each other in a logical order.

3) Writing a draft

Now **draft** out your presentation. This is best done on a **word processor** so that you can return to it later and edit it as you wish without having to start all over again. Don't forget to use language that will attract the attention of your listeners.

4) Editing

Read your draft presentation out loud, **timing** it as you read to determine whether it is of the correct length. If the presentation is going to be too long, now comes the tricky part – selecting what **must** be included in your presentation, what **might** be included, and what you can definitely do without. Using a **word processor** for this part makes editing so much easier as you can chop and change the content and the order at will, remembering to **save** your changes each time. Check for **spelling and grammatical errors** at the same time.

5) Proofreading

Ask someone else to **proofread** your presentation to test out its **structure** and **content** and, if possible, **read it aloud** to another person to test whether it flows properly and that the sequence of paragraphs is correct.

6) Final product

You may now have to return to the saved version of your presentation on your word processor and **re-edit** your work, according to the new changes you have had to make. After all that work, you should now have a **finished presentation** that you can **print** off the computer and **deliver** to your audience.

7) Rehearsal

Before you **deliver** your presentation, practise delivering it aloud two or three times to anyone who will listen, to yourself in a mirror or even to the cat. It is so much easier to give a presentation to an audience if you are familiar with how it sounds, where you need to pause and the phrases you wish to emphasise for greatest effect.

Exercise 9

Use the above plan to write a presentation of your own choice.

Deliver your presentation to your group.

Ask them to provide you with constructive criticism on the planning and content.

Information**Writing Business Letters**

A bold letter calls for many qualities. Not only should it be well written, or typed, but the paper should be of suitable quality, the envelope properly addressed and spaced and the stamp stuck on its allotted area. The letter you write conveys an impression of you or your organisation. Therefore, ensure that your letters are well displayed and faultlessly presented.

Parts of a business letter

The parts of a business letter are described below in the order in which they appear. Only a few letters contain all of these parts. Each part of the letter is **separated by one clear line space**.

Address of sender

This can sometimes be in the middle of a page at the top of the letter if the company is using headed notepaper, and is often accompanied by a logo. Traditionally, handwritten letters have the address of the sender at the top right hand side of the page. Now, because business letters of all types are usually word processed, it is acceptable to put the address of the sender blocked at the left hand margin at the top of the letter on hand written as well as typed letters. (See the examples on the following pages).

Reference

The reference identifies the letter. It may be by the initials of the person signing the letter followed by the typist's e.g. TSE/UK.

Date

To be written in full in the following order – day, month, year. **Every letter must be dated.**

Attention line

It is the policy of some companies not to permit letters to be addressed to an individual. If this is the case, and the sender wishes the letter to be dealt with by a particular person, an attention line is used.

Name and address of addressee

The name and address of the person to receive the letter. Always write the postal town in capitals.

Salutation

The greeting e.g. Dear Sir, Dear Madam, Dear Sir or Madam, Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.

Subject heading

This summarises the contents of the message. A subject heading is not always used.

Body of letter

The content of the letter must be set out in suitable paragraphs.

Complimentary close

This is the closing line of a letter. The most usual ways are:

Yours faithfully - where the salutation is Dear Sir or Dear Madam;

Yours sincerely - where the salutation is less formal e.g. Dear Mr Jones or Dear Mrs Brown.

Signatory

The name of the person signing the letter. (A space would be left above this for the actual signature).

Designation

The position of the person signing the letter. (Sometimes the name of the department he or she works in).

Enclosure

The abbreviation Enc. is only used when an enclosure is to accompany the letter.

Note

a) House Style

Many firms have their own method of display known as the “**house style**” and this should always be used.

b) Open Punctuation – (Letters and Memoranda)

1) No punctuation until after the **Subject heading**.

2) No punctuation in abbreviations e.g. BBC, am, PLC etc.

3) No punctuation after the full stop at the end of the last paragraph.

4) Use of commas, full stops, apostrophes etc. is as normal in the main body of the letter.

Example of a business letter. Open punctuation – fully blocked.

Baxter & Kyle Ltd
6 High Street
BATH
BA2 6JP

Our ref JH/PP

Your ref SM/JH

12 August 200...

For the attention of Mr S Marshall

P & J Rawlins
42 Canterbury Close
BRISTOL
BS99 1BH

Dear Sir

Account Number 4562

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the above account. I have pleasure in providing the following details:

AMOUNT OUTSTANDING AS AT 31 JULY 200... £3,060.45

I am enclosing a copy of your Statement of Account for July and I hope that you agree with the details. However, if you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

J Hammond
Accounts Manager

Enc

Memoranda

Memoranda are a method of communication between members or branches of a firm (see example.) The following points should be noted:-

- a. There is no salutation.
- b. There is no complimentary close.
- c. As they are a form of internal correspondence, they do not normally require an envelope unless marked CONFIDENTIAL, PERSONAL or PRIVATE.

Example memorandum. Open punctuation – fully blocked.

MEMORANDUM

From James Lockhart

To Michelle Winterton

Date 12 August 200...

Ref JL/JM

NEW MEMBER OF STAFF ANDREW COUPLAND

Please find attached a copy of the letter sent to Andrew Coupland by Maria Faraday last week. I spoke to Andrew recently and he has definitely accepted the post.

On Monday morning I have a meeting starting at 9 am and it is scheduled to finish at 11 am. Therefore, would you please keep the morning free to introduce Andrew to other colleagues and to accompany him on a brief tour of the college. I will arrange for coffee to be served in my office at 11.15 am so that we can inform him of his immediate duties.

Enc

Curriculum Vitae (CV)

Information

How to Prepare a Good CV

Advertisements for jobs often ask you to send your CV with a covering letter and it is a good idea (and will save you a lot of time) if you have one prepared and saved which you always keep up to date. A well written CV is an easy way to give a prospective employer the basic details about yourself. However, for a CV to serve as a good self advertisement, it has to be well produced and kept up to date.

Your CV is useful for you to record all your achievements and work experience so when you make a job application you will have all the information you need available and not have to search for it.

As a job advertisement can easily attract hundreds of applicants, having a well presented and easy to read CV could make the difference between you being short-listed and passed over. A badly presented CV will not even be read beyond the first page and you will not be offered an interview. There are some factors which you should always bear in mind when preparing your CV.

- 1) **Word process your CV.** This will not only show any potential employer that you have valuable computer skills, you will be able to update it quickly and easily and produce as many copies as you need.
- 2) **Accuracy is vital.** If your CV is badly written with grammar and spelling mistakes, it will certainly make an impression on a potential employer, but not the one you want.
- 3) **Consider the layout and presentation of your CV** very carefully. It must be easy to read and the important facts must be easy to find so use sub-sections and headings. The CVs which show that time and effort has been taken in preparing them are the ones to catch a potential employer's eye. Use a simple, uncomplicated font (eg Arial) and leave spaces between sections.
- 4) The important details to put into your CV are those which show your **achievements and experience.** Use your CV to show how you would be of value to any potential employer by listing job roles and responsibilities you have fulfilled successfully. The ones which are most applicable to the job for which you are applying can be expanded upon in more detail in your letter and at the interview if you are lucky enough to be offered one. Tables can be an effective way of listing your qualifications with their grades and dates.
- 5) Try to **adapt your CV** so it is tailored towards **each job** for which you apply. This means stressing your qualifications and experience which best meet the requirements of the job. This is relatively easy to do if it is word processed and saved.

- 6) Arrange your **employment record in date order**. Many employers prefer to see the list beginning with your most recent job. If you had a period of unemployment for any reason, do not ignore it or try to pretend it never happened. You may well be questioned about it.
- 7) You should **list any specific skills** you have eg holding a full driving licence; speaking foreign languages; computing skills.
- 8) Always send a **covering letter** unless you have been asked to simply complete the organisation's application form. This letter can refer to the details given in your CV such as your list of computing qualifications. You should not repeat lists of facts, the letter is your opportunity to show how your qualifications, experience and personal qualities make you an ideal person for the job.
- 9) Make sure that any **details and facts you give are accurate**. Never pretend to have qualifications and experience you do not have. You can be (and often are) asked to bring in your certificates for checking and previous employers can be contacted.

Even if you have a beautiful CV, if the job advertisement asks you only to send a letter or to telephone for an application form, **DO AS YOU ARE ASKED**.

On the next page is a model CV which you can adapt for yourself as you may not need all the elements which are included here.

CURRICULUM VITAE

1. Personal Details

Surname _____ First Name _____

Address _____

Telephone Number Home _____ Work _____

Fax Number _____ Home _____ Work _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth _____ Nationality _____

2. Education

School/College	Dates Attended

3. Qualifications Gained

Subject	Qualification and Grade	Date

4. Work Experience

a) Present Employer

Name of Employer	Position Held	Date Job Began

b) Previous Employment

Name of Employer	Position Held	Date Job Began

5. Other Skills/Certificates Held

e.g. Driving Licence, typing, computer literacy, first aid certificate

6. Hobbies - other interests

Exercise 10

Choose one of the following to plan, draft and write:

- letter of application for a job;
- letter to an organisation asking for information;
- letter thanking an organisation for work experience;
- letter to a teacher or tutor asking for a reference;
- letter requesting details of a holiday;
- letter of complaint about faulty goods;
- example letters for an assignment;
- personal CV.

It would be worth your while to prepare letters for the above occasions. Keep these to refer to when you have to write a business letter in the future.

- Take assignments which require the writing of letters to your communication session. Draft the letters and ask your tutor for comments.
- Rewrite them as necessary, then use these in your assignment.

Information

Reports

Reports are essentially practical documents, a record of observations made, work done, or recommendations for future action and are often intended as a basis for decision-making. They should, therefore, be objective and present all the facts in a logical sequence so that valid conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the facts presented.

This writing frame can be used to plan any report.

Example:

TITLE	Title of report e.g. "A report identifying"
Terms of Reference	A short sharp statement about what the report aims to do e.g. "The following report aims to evaluate current use and efficiency."
Methods	You describe the methods of research you used to enable you to produce the report e.g. surveys, observations and discussions with personnel (include job titles).
Findings	This section should contain a description of the findings from your research. It can be split into as many sub-sections as appropriate. Using numbering and/or bullet points is acceptable.
Conclusion	This should take the form of a summary which evaluates all the data you have collected. This analysis should enable the reader to identify the most important issues raised and it must satisfy the title and terms of reference.
Recommendations (If appropriate)	Recommendations should only be made if the title and terms of reference ask for these.
Signature	
Date	

This is an example of a simple report that a workman might produce following a complaint about work done for a householder.

Report on the Outbreak of Mould on New Plasterwork

Terms of Reference

The purpose of this report is to investigate a complaint received from a householder concerning black mould on new plasterwork in a newly finished house in two rooms at 25 Morton Road. The work was completed on the 30th of last month.

Method

- 1) Review of the original work specification.
- 2) A visual inspection of the problem by the supervising site agent.

Findings

- 1) A problem of black mould was verified in the hallway and in the main lounge.
- 2) The mould is spreading quickly in these two areas.
- 3) Because of the health risks, the house is not currently fit for human habitation.
- 4) None of the upstairs rooms appear to be affected.

Conclusions

- After inspection of the walls in question – all of which were internal – the conclusion was reached that the problem had been caused by the use of stale, dirty water when the plaster had been applied.
- Further inspection of the progress charts suggest that the work was done during the heat wave of last August when the water could have gone off during the three day break.

Recommendations

- 1) That the infected plaster is taken away and after a coat of Uni-Bond is supplied, a fresh coat of float and skim is applied.
- 2) The walls are repainted or wall-papered to the owners' requirements.
- 3) A letter of apology is sent to the owners along with a cheque to reimburse them for the inconvenience they have endured.
- 4) A note is sent out to all site foremen to ensure all water used for plastering, concrete and mortar is clean at all times in order to ensure there is no future reoccurrence of the problem.

Appendices

Possible useful appendices for this report could be:

- a map of the area to show the location of the house;
- a plan/diagram showing the downstairs part of the house;
- a breakdown of the costs involved in rectifying the problem.

Exercise 11

Use the following writing frame to plan a report useful for your own vocational studies.

Title	
Terms of Reference	
Methods	
Findings	
Conclusions	
Recommendations (If appropriate)	
Signature	
Date	

Information**Formal/Informal Writing**

Language in both spoken and written forms is used in varying degrees of formality, from a friendly chat, e-mail or mobile 'phone text with a close friend to a formal, official document produced by governments, lawyers or civil servants.

In order to make our writing more effective, we need to judge the correct level of formality for each situation. Generally speaking, the better you know somebody the more informal the language can be. Sometimes, family members or long-standing friends may have a "secret" or "private" language that only they know, words that have been used from childhood perhaps. In contrast, the more remote the recipient of your communications, the more formal will be the language you use.

The **style** of our writing also needs to change in differing circumstances along with the degree of formality in the language we use.

The **style** depends on:

- why we are writing (**purpose**);
- to whom we are writing (**audience**);
- the format of our writing whether it is informal or formal (**context**).

The **style** can be changed by using different:

- vocabulary;
- sentence length;
- sentence structure.

More care will be needed in the way in which we construct our sentences in a formal document, as opposed to an e-mail or note to a friend or work colleague.

In this set of exercises, we will be assessing how formal or informal written communication needs to be depending upon the purpose of the text, and, writing at an appropriate level for each example.

You may find it helpful to use a word processor for these exercises as you can use some of the same information twice over by copying the appropriate part of your work.

You may also like to add some clip-art to the more informal examples such as the invitation to families in the first example.

Exercise 12

You are organising a “presentation of annual awards” evening for your daughter’s pony club and need to send out invitations. There will be two different kinds of invitations.

- 1) Firstly you need to write an invitation to all the parents/carers of the children involved. Your invitation needs to include the following information plus your choice of date and time:
 - the presentation will take place in the local community centre and refreshments will be served;
 - there will be no charge for the event, but there will be a raffle and other money raising events to help cover the cost of the refreshments;
 - there will be a disco for the children;
 - other family members are also invited;
 - there will be no bar but people can bring their own drinks.
- 2) You also need to invite a guest to present the prizes, perhaps your local M.P., a local dignitary or someone who has been a part of the pony club’s history and has later had a successful career in riding. Some of the above information will therefore not be relevant for their invitation.

You will see from this example that even though you are providing some of the same information in both letters, you will need to use different language and styles for the two invitations.

- In the first one to the children’s families you may wish to adopt a friendly, chatty style to encourage them to support their children.
- The second one to the guest speaker will need to be more formal while at the same time persuading them how appreciative the children would be if they could honour them by presenting the prizes at the award ceremony.

Exercise 13

In this second exercise, you are being asked to write letters of complaint about the state of the pavements around where you live. Again there are two parts to the exercise, one a formal letter of complaint to your local M.P. and the other to a friend who used to live near you.

- 1) In the letter to your local M.P., you need to stress that you have already complained to your local council with no success and that you are writing on behalf of all the elderly and infirm people of your neighbourhood as well as parents of small children because of the dangerous condition that the pavements are in.
 - Comment on the amount of local taxes that are paid in order for the council to provide you with a service, which they clearly are not doing.
 - Suggest that people will be claiming compensation for injuries sustained due to accidents caused by broken paving stones and missing grates.
 - Suggest that your M.P. takes a walk around your local neighbourhood at night to see for him/herself how dangerous it is.
 - Inform your M.P. that your street is the main thoroughfare to all the local amenities such as shops, doctors' surgeries and clinics, banks, the local school and playgroup and the community centre where the pensioners' groups meet.
- 2) In the second letter to a former neighbour.
 - Explain that you're sorry to have missed sending her a birthday card but that you haven't been able to go out for several days because you sprained your ankle as a result of falling over on the pavement near your home.
 - Remind her of the condition of the pavement when she lived nearby, of how you used to complain then and how much the pavement has deteriorated since, partly because of problems with new neighbours parking their vehicles on it.
 - Tell her about your campaign to alert the council and your local M.P. to the condition of the pavement and how dangerous it is for your elderly next door neighbour who is now trying to do your shopping for you, as well as his own, while your ankle is bad.

Again, you are being asked to write in two contrasting styles.

The first letter to your local M.P. needs to be very factual, using formal language and set out in an easy-to-read style with bullet points or subheadings so that the information you wish your reader to have is immediately accessible.

In the second letter you are writing to a friend and therefore the language will be much less formal and the style chatty. You may wish to pass on some local gossip concerning her old neighbours!

Exercise 14

In this exercise, you are asked to write a report of a meeting you had to attend concerning employees' use of fire doors as access to the back of the multi-storey building in which you work. The fire door is being left open to allow people access to the building from the outside and this causes a security problem, which the Health and Safety committee for the whole building has been forced to address.

As your department's representative you have been asked to:

- produce a notice for display in the department reporting on the decisions taken at the meeting, pointing out the possible consequences of this irresponsible action in terms of security;
- report back to the Health and Safety committee on the action your department has taken to solve the problem.

In the first piece of writing, you may wish to compile your notice to your own department in the form of a poster or flyer with pictures to attract people's attention. You need them to take notice of this piece of information as everyone's security is at risk, which is a serious matter, but you do not want your colleagues to be resentful of your position of authority on this issue. You need to strike the balance between "formal" information and "informal" presentation.

Your report back to the committee, however, needs to be formal, factual and positive. You must, as your department's representative, convince them that you are dealing with the matter promptly and seriously and that appropriate action will be taken against offenders.

Information

Proofreading

We can proofread our work for different purposes:

- scanning each line for spellings that don't look right;
- 'reading aloud' to spot grammatical errors;
- looking for missing or repeated words;
- looking for where the meaning could be expressed more clearly or concisely.

Exercise 15

Write an article for the college news-sheet or a community paper about some event that you have attended.

Exchange your writing with another learner at the proofreading stage.

Proofread each other's work looking for where the sense needs to be clarified and pointing out grammatical errors, spelling mistakes and word repetition.

Information**Proofreading for Spelling Errors**

An important part of proofreading is to identify, and then correct, spelling errors.

For Example

The following sentences have several errors.

The talest montain in the world is Mont Everest on the border between Nepal and Tibet. It is 8,847 meters high. The first men to sucessfully clime to the sumit were the New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tensing in 1953.

Corrected it looks like this.

The **tallest mountain** in the world is **Mount** Everest on the border **between** Nepal and Tibet. It is 8,847 **metres** high. The first men to **successfully climb** to the **summit** were the New Zealander, Sir Edmund Hillary, and Sherpa Tensing in 1953.

Exercise 16

First identify the spellings which look wrong by highlighting them. Then use a dictionary if necessary to identify the correct spelling.

There are at least 10 million bikes in Britain and another 2 million are sold every year. Most of these are mountain bikes, which out sell every other type of bike ten to one because they are fun, fashionable and fit for use in town and country. The key to mountain bike popularity is their versatility. The small frames and 26 inch wheels with well cushioned tyres originated in California among riders who enjoyed plummeting down mountain sides. By coincidence, the same features suit city riders who need to bump up and down kerbs and ride through potholes. Most are made with light weight strong frames and have suspension in both the forks and seat post. A road bike has the traditional frame with medium width tyres. It has an upright riding position and is best used for short distances on roads but is unsuitable for off road and track riding.

The Hybrid bike, which is a cross between a mountain bike and a road bike, is growing in popularity. It combines the strength of a mountain bike with the ease of pedaling a road bike. Many now come with suspension forks and seat post.

A much less popular type of bike is the racing bike. These are much faster on well surfaced roads. They are now built using manufacturing techniques and materials developed in the aerospace industry. Sales of racers are on the increase in Europe, particularly in Germany, but are an acquired taste.

Discuss with another learner. Have they found the same number of errors?

Information**Expressing Meaning More Clearly**

Sometimes too much information is compressed into too few words which results in the sense being muddled. When writing we should always try and be aware of the readers' perspective.

For Example

"The three bedroomed house with a large downstairs room had a small kitchen fitted with some old units, needing replacing, and attached was a very small utility room with a boiler inside. The large downstairs room is used as a dining room and lounge and looked out over the overgrown garden at the back and the street to the front. Upstairs were three bedrooms and a bathroom which needs decoration, two doubles with brightly coloured flowered wallpaper and a single with bunk beds."

This description is full of information but is difficult to understand. Rewritten using more words makes it much easier to understand.

"The house has three bedrooms and a large downstairs living room. The living room is used as both a lounge and a dining room. It looks out over an overgrown garden to the back and to the front, the street. The small kitchen is fitted with some old units which are in need of replacement, attached is a small utility room housing the boiler. Upstairs, there are three bedrooms and a bathroom. The bathroom needs modernising and decorating. There are two double bedrooms, both with brightly coloured wall paper and a single one which has built-in bunk beds."

Exercise 17

Write a description of about a 150 words, of a place you know, including as much detail as you can.

Is it easy to understand?

Exchange your description with another learner.

Expand and clarify each other's texts.

Read the finished descriptions to each other.

Information

Being Aware of the Reader

One way of being more aware of the reader is to become the reader yourself and read a piece of written work 'aloud'.

This can be under our breath in a whisper but the important thing is to listen to the words as well as look them. By doing this we can identify grammatical errors, spot missing or repeated words and identify where the meaning could be expressed more clearly and concisely.

Exercise 18

Write an account of an event or a visit you have made.

Use the above method of proofreading to improve your work.

Assess whether it is necessary to rewrite the piece.

Information**Using Word Processing When Proofreading**

When word processing, there is usually a spelling and grammar checker. This can help us to correct errors, but it is only an aid. It does not find all the mistakes.

Cut and Paste can also be used to help with the sense of the passage.

Exercise 19

Type the following passage into the computer and activate the spelling and grammar check. Use Cut and Paste to change the order of the sentences so that the sense is improved.

This is an extract from a holiday diary.

Monday 22 june

We was awake early in the morning. The taxi for the airport arrived punctually and we were off on our long awaited holiday on the island of Majorca. Check in past with no problems but much to our disapointment our flight had been delayed and we would have to spend an extra two hours sitting around before bording our flight. On arriving at the airport we inpatiently waited around in the entrance area for our friends, Jake and pete, who as usual were late. A brief stop at the newsagent to by some magazines to help pass the time whilst waiting was followed by a long cold drink at one of the snack bars. Jake was feeling rather apprehensive as this was the first time he had flewed.

We boards the flight only two and a half hours late. After a long wait our flight was called. A trouble free flight bought us to Palma airport, it was fantastic to look down at the azure blue sea and think that we would soon be there swimming in its cool waters.

After disembarking we were quick through customs and pasport control, and managed to retreive our baggage without any hitches. It was then on to our apartment, being driven by a not very safe taxi driver.

The apartment was great with plenty of room for us all. It had a marvellous view of the beach and was close to the wide variety of restaurants, bars and night clubs. All we wanted to do were to get unpacked as quickly as possible and get out and find some evening entertainment in one of the many night clubs and bars in the surrounding area. Or long awaited holiday had begun.

Did the spelling check find all the spelling mistakes?

Did the grammar check find all the grammatical errors?

When you have finished, compare your finished text with another learner. Are they the same?

Proofreading Help for Tutors

There are some errors made by learners which come up time and time again. At all levels, these must be identified by tutors and corrected.

Before learners begin to produce writing for assessment purposes, it would be a good idea if they were taught these points very clearly so there can be no excuse for them making these mistakes repeatedly.

- 1) ALL **people** (humans) must be referred to as **WHO**, not as which or that. To do otherwise is not only bad grammar, it is bad manners!!
- 2) The word **amount** is frequently used wrongly. An amount must only be used when you are referring to a **QUANTITY** of something which cannot physically be counted, e.g. an amount of sugar, because no-one can actually count the grains of sugar. The word amount is therefore used when the object can be referred to in terms of a measure e.g. a weight, a size. But people can always be counted, no matter how many of them there are, so an amount of people is always incorrect. Learners must use the term a **NUMBER** of people.
- 3) **Paragraphing** – there are only two acceptable ways to indicate paragraphing whether the work is typed or hand-written:
 - by leaving a line space between the paragraphs;
 - by indenting the first line by approximately five characters.

One simple hard return is not paragraphing (in spite of normal newspaper practice – for them space is money).

- 4) **Vocationally specific vocabulary** must always be spelt accurately at all levels. For the learners, this vocabulary is part of their everyday language and they should be able to use it accurately.
- 5) The appropriate **punctuation in bulleted lists**.

A colon in the introductory line should be followed by lower case for each point and semi-colons throughout until the final full-stop, e.g.

When lifting a load safely, remember the following points:

- keep the back straight;
- keep the arms close to the body;
- tuck the chin in;
- stand facing the direction you need to go with the feet slightly apart;
- bend the knees;
- list by straightening the legs keeping the load close to the body;
- turn by moving the feet, not by twisting the trunk of the body.

Note - The computer default does not help here as it automatically turns the first letter of each point into capitals. Learners must change these back to lower case manually.

- 6) **ALOT** does not exist as a word! (Not to be confused with allot – to allocate).
- 7) Subject/verb agreements are frequently fairly random. These must be accurate. For example, the computers in the classroom does not work! This is wrong. The verb must be appropriate for computers (plural), not classroom (singular). The correct version is - the computers in the classroom **do** not work.
- 8) There are many words in the English language which sound identical but which are spelt differently and have very different meanings. These are **homophones**. They are NOT interchangeable, eg a leaver is a person who is leaving somewhere such as their school, a lever is a mechanical device. Because the word exists, the spellcheck facility on a computer will not recognise that it is the wrong homophone, only good proof-reading and marking can check this.
- 9) There are many words in English which end in the spelling '**ise**'. These words must be spelt this way, not with a 'z' as in 'ize'. The only exception to this is prise/prize which are homophones with totally different meanings.
- 10) Headings must not be separated from their accompanying text. It is better if learners leave a space at the bottom of one page than to separate anything which logically must go together.
- 11) Images – pictures, diagrams, drawings, graphs etc must always be labelled and/or referred to in the text so they are integral and have obvious importance within the document.
- 12) The use of capital letters for certain subject/vocationally specific words eg "alcohol causes Cirrhosis" must be wrong when cirrhosis is written with a capital letter because if you think "it is a medical problem" then it must be treated like all other medical problems and if you write "I have toothache, 'flu, a broken leg" etc, these would never take capitals, so more serious diseases cannot either. Where there is a grey area regarding what is/is not a name eg in science, there can be a choice so long as there is consistency throughout the document eg Carbon, Oxygen OR carbon, oxygen. (These are names of gasses and scientific texts do differ in treatment. However, these are from the Periodic Table of the Elements, and none of the elements should take capital letters eg gold, lead, hydrogen.)
- 13) The use of abbreviations is not always inappropriate – eg advert' for advertisements. However, just because something is commonly said does not mean it should be written; correct standard English must be taught so learners can recognise which is the correct and which is the colloquial version. If abbreviations are used they must fit in with the purpose of the document.

- 14) Anything which is not standard English, whether it is colloquial or dialect, is slang and is not acceptable in written documents unless it is there for a specific illustrative or dramatic purpose, eg in a piece of literature style writing where a character would be expected to speak in accordance with their situation, or to explain to the reader how young children acquire and use language in Early Years. If slang is used for a reason, it must be acknowledged by the writer by the use of inverted commas. This shows that the writer is aware that it is not standard English and that its use is deliberate and for a purpose and not just because they do not know any better.

Presentation of documents

- 1) The important point to remember with all communication work is that it must be **FIT FOR PURPOSE**. If it is for “public consumption” it must be totally accurate – this includes, letters, reports, posters, advertisements. With all these types of documents, when you are assessing, you need to consider if it would be successful in its purpose eg if a poster advertising an event does not show a venue or date, it would fail in its purpose however good it looks otherwise.

It also means that the potential (or theoretical) audience of the written work must be taken into account. A letter, report or Curriculum Vitae must be presented in a neat, professional looking manner as with this type of communication, the ‘audience’ would be one whom the learner was wishing to impress.

This means that the use of **bold, italics, underlining, block capitals**, especially large (or small) **font sizes** or the use of **WordArt** or of **fancy fonts** must be done for a specific purpose that is in keeping with the purpose of the document and all these should be used sparingly for emphasis and to highlight important points. There is no written document for which there would be a need to use bold highlighting for the whole document, with the possible exception of a simple poster.

- 2) The presentation must be **CONSISTENT**. This includes the style of headings, presentation of bulleted or numbered lists, fonts used – if more than one style is used, it must be for a good reason and aids the communication process.
- 3) There are specific formats for certain types of documents – letters, memoranda, reports - which are detailed in the Learning Resources. If these types of documents are being presented, they must follow the accepted formats. The guidance in the Learning Resources has been produced along nationally accepted lines so these are the standards of formatting we must adhere to.