



IELTS Writing General Training

Task 1 Model Letters

General Training Task 1 Models, Tips and Language

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1. Formal Letter to your boss (ask for time off)

You are working for a company. You need to take some time off work and want to ask your manager about this.

Write a letter to your manager. In your letter

- explain why you want to take time off work
- give details of the amount of time you need
- suggest how your work could be covered while you are away.

Dear Miss Jones

I am writing to request some time off in September. As you know, my husband has been given an internship for one month overseas and I would like to accompany him there.

Unfortunately, I do not currently have enough annual paid leave to cover the whole 4 weeks, so I would like to know if it is possible for me to take extended unpaid leave. I understand that this is an unusual request. However, I feel that this is an opportunity not to be missed, especially as he will be based in New York, a city which I have always wanted to visit.

You are probably aware of the fact that I have recently been training up an apprentice - Jo Davies, who you may have met. I am confident that she will be more than capable of covering my work when the time comes. Besides, I will be easily contactable and able to work online so I do not think this will cause any major problems in terms of our client contracts.

I think that the experience I could obtain of living and working abroad will be of great benefit to the company as a whole.

With many thanks for considering my request, I look forward to your reply. Please let me know if you need any further details.

Best regards, Fiona

2. Formal letter (job application - plane journey)

During a recent plane journey, you sat next to a business person who owns a chain of restaurants. You talked to him/her and he/she suggested that you should contact him/her about a possible job in one of his/her restaurants.

Write a letter to this person. In your letter

- Remind him/her when and where you met
- Tell him/her what kind of job you are interested in
- Say why you think you would be suitable for the job



Dear Ms Jones

I **am not** sure whether you will remember me, but we met last Saturday on a flight from Dubai to the UK and you **kindly** gave me your business card.

During the flight we **discussed** the imminent opening of a branch of Burger Queen in my hometown and **you mentioned** that you were looking to **recruit** a restaurant manager.

I **would like to apply for this position** as I believe I am **ideally suited** to the role. Over the past 10 years I **have managed** a number of fast-food outlets, working my way up from the shop floor to a managerial position. This variety of experience **has equipped me with** all the skills necessary for the job. I am hard-working, ambitious and self-motivated, with excellent interpersonal and organisational skills.

It was a pleasure chatting with you on the flight and I **hope you will consider my application favourably**. I **enclose** my CV and am available for interview any time **at your convenience**.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Wattam

3. Formal Letter (complaint - faulty equipment)

You recently bought a piece of equipment for your kitchen but it did not work. You phoned the shop but no action was taken.

Write a letter to the shop manager. In your letter

- describe the problem with the equipment
- explain what happened when you phoned the shop
- say what you would like the manager to do

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to **complain** about a faulty microwave which I **purchased** online last week.

Unfortunately when I plugged in the microwave and tried to use it, there was a **serious malfunction**. Smoke started to appear from the **rear of the appliance** and there was a strong burning smell. Obviously it was **not fit for purpose** so I called the shop in order to **request** a refund.

After **several attempts** to get through, I finally spoke to a member of staff who explained that I would have to bring the machine back to the shop **in order to have it repaired**. This would involve **further expense** on my part and **would not be a satisfactory outcome**. Although the help-desk assistant assured me that they would return my call with an update on my enquiry, so far I have heard nothing.

I would be very grateful if you could arrange a full refund and for the microwave **to be collected** from my house.

I look forward to receiving a positive response,

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Wattam



4. Formal Letter (complaint - bus service)

You travel by bus every weekday morning. Recently you have been unhappy with the service.

Write to the bus company saying:

- what the problem is
- how it affects you
- what you want them to do

Dear Sir or Madam

I am a regular passenger on the Number 75 bus which takes me to the University during the week. The service has always been punctual and reliable and I have never had any **cause for complaint**. However, over the last two weeks there have been **a number of issues**.

On several occasions the bus arrived at least 20 minutes late, and last week it did not turn up at all, **which meant that** I was **unable to attend** my first lecture. This has affected my overall **attendance record**, which was **previously** 100%.

To make matters worse, the bus is often over-crowded and **despite having paid** a lot of money for a season ticket, I have to stand up for the whole journey, which leaves me exhausted by the time I get to class.

I hope you will agree that these problems are unacceptable and I would be grateful if you would do everything possible to return the service to its **former level of punctuality and reliability**.

I look forward to your reply,

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Wattam

5. Formal Letter (Suggestion/complaint - museum visit)

You recently visited a museum with your old friend and had some difficulties during the visit.

Write a letter to the museum management

- Say why you visited the museum
- Say what the problem was
- Suggest what can be done to solve the problem



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Dear Sir or Madam,

I recently visited your museum with an elderly friend who **has difficulties** getting up stairs. **Although** she does not need to use a wheelchair, **we were assured beforehand** that all areas of the museum were **fully accessible** to people with disabilities and that there would be lifts **available** to get to the viewing platform on the top floor.

Unfortunately, we soon discovered that there was only one lift and, on the day that we visited, it was **out of order, which meant that** we had to take the stairs. My friend found this **increasingly difficult** and as we got to the higher levels she felt very **unwell** and was **unable to continue**. We had travelled a long way to see the view from the top, and feel that our time and entry fee were wasted.

To avoid this situation happening again, **could I suggest** that you install wheelchair-friendly ramps that people could walk up **in the event of a lift malfunction**. **Failing this, it might be a good idea to** have more full-length windows on the lower floors so that people could at least see out from other levels of the museum.

I hope that you will give my suggestions serious consideration.

Yours faithfully

Fiona Wattam

6. Semi-formal letter (someone you don't know - TV programme)

Write a letter to the manager of a TV company who is planning to make a program about a well-known place.

- Make a suggestion for his TV program.
- Say how you know that place
- Say why you think it would make a good subject for a TV Programme.



Dear Mr Johnson

I am writing in response to your request for ideas relating to your upcoming TV programme about famous places. I would like to suggest Castle Park in Colchester, Essex, as I think this would appeal to all kinds of viewers for a number of different reasons.

First of all, there is the castle itself. It has a long and fascinating history, starting from Roman times when the foundations were built. If you go down into the vaults you can still see the remains of the temple, and there are also dungeons where they used to keep prisoners during the 19th century. I think people would jump at the chance to get a closer look at places which are normally closed off to the public.

Then there are the stunning surroundings and beautifully-kept gardens, both of which are steeped in history. I am sure that your research team would be able to uncover a wealth of little-known facts about historical events which took place here, such as Boudicca's burning of the town and the famous siege during the Civil War.

I've been a regular visitor at the castle for the last 10 years and have learnt so much from it that I think you would have plenty of ideas to choose from when considering the interests of your viewers.

I hope that you will consider my suggestion, and please let me know if I can be of any assistance at all,

Yours sincerely,

Fiona Wattam

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7. Semi-Formal Letter (complaint - neighbour's dog)

Your neighbour has a dog which causes you and your family a lot of problems. Write a letter to your neighbour. In your letter

- complain about the situation
- describe the problems you are having
- say what you will do if the problems continue

Dear **Kirsty**

I hope everything is going well for you and **the boys**. **It's lovely** to see them having fun in the garden. **I hope you don't mind** me writing to you but unfortunately your dog has started to bark **a lot** and **I was wondering** if there was anything we could do together to resolve the situation.

As you know, I work from home most of the time, and the constant barking is very distracting, especially when I'm trying to make audio and video recordings, which are an essential element of my job. **On several occasions** now, I've had to stop the recording and start again, because the barking was so noisy that **I couldn't** concentrate on what I was doing, and **no-one wants to listen** to a tutorial video with a dog **yapping** all the way through it! This has cost me a lot of valuable time.

On top of that, it has become impossible to sit out in the garden on a sunny day, as the slightest noise triggers a reaction from your dog and this is **worsened** by the shouting of your boys as they play with him.

I hope that we can come to **some kind of** agreement about when your dog is allowed outdoors. If not, **I'm afraid I'll have** to contact the council, as the noise is becoming a nuisance to myself and to the other neighbours.

Could we **have a chat** about this some time? Would you be free **for coffee** tomorrow?

Best wishes

Fiona

8. Semi-formal letter to your boss (work party)

The company you work for has been in business for a year. Your manager has asked employees to suggest how this could be celebrated.

Write a letter to your manager. In your letter

- suggest what the company should do to celebrate
- explain what benefits the celebration would bring
- say what you could do to help



Dear Max

Many thanks for inviting us all to help celebrate the first anniversary of the school reopening. I've asked around the staffroom, and gathered a few opinions about what people would like to do.

From the point of view of the staff, the most popular suggestions seem to involve eating and drinking! We thought it would be a nice idea if all of us went out for a meal together at a local restaurant. This would be a great way of thanking everyone for working so hard to make the business such a success.

As for celebrating with the students, perhaps a barbecue would be fun? We could provide the food and drinks and they could bring some traditional dishes which are typical of their country. If we get a good photographer, we could put the photos on Facebook - this would be a brilliant way of promoting the school and spreading the word about how marvellous we are!

My son's a dab hand with a camera, so if you want, I could get him to take the photos and I'll take charge of promoting the event on social media.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts, and please let me know if there's anything else you'd like me to do,

All the best
Fiona

9. Informal Letter (request for job help to a distant friend)

You are going to another country to study. You would like to do a part-time job while you are studying so you want to ask a friend who lives there for some help.

Write a letter to this friend. In your letter

- give details of your study plans
- explain why you want to get a part-time job
- suggest how your friend could help you find a job



Hi Colomba!

How's it going? Long time no see! I hope everything's going well for you and **I'm** sorry **it's** been such a long time since **I've** been in touch.

The big news is that **I'm** going to spend some time in Paris next year in order to **brush up on** my French. **I've** forgotten so much since **Uni** and **you know how it is** - 'use it or lose it' as the saying goes! **I've** already found somewhere to stay and **I've** booked myself onto a course, but **I've** realised **I'll** have to earn **a bit of cash** in my spare time, as I'm sure the cost of living in Paris is horrendous, **isn't it?**

I was wondering if you might be able to help. Do you know anyone who may want English lessons? Or maybe there's somewhere I could put an advert up? I wouldn't mind any kind of bar work either - that would be a **fantastic** way of getting some speaking practice at the same time!

I hope you **don't** mind me asking you. **I've** still got plenty of time before I start, so any ideas would be much appreciated!

Hope to hear from you soon,

All the best

Fiona

(196 words)

10. Informal Letter to a friend (request to look after pet)

A friend has agreed to look after your house and pet while you are on holiday.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- give contact details for when you are away
- give instructions about how to care for your pet
- describe other household duties

Hi Dave

Thanks ever so much for looking after my cat and the house while I'm away. Hopefully it **won't** be too much of a **hassle!** **It's** really **great** that **you're** staying there overnight because you know Tiddles - he **doesn't** like to be left on his own for too long, and **who knows** what he'll get up to...!

Apart from that, **he's pretty low-maintenance**. Just **feed him** in the morning (about half of one of those pouches I keep under the sink) and then again at about 6 (the other half!) and **remember** to leave a saucer of fresh water out, if you don't mind. You can put the bowls in the dishwasher - I know **it's** not very hygienic but so much easier. And **no worries** about letting him out - he can come and go as he pleases through the cat flap, but can you just make sure he's back inside safe and sound before you go to bed?

The only thing you need to know about the house is that the rubbish van comes **mega** early on Friday. **Don't** leave it out the night before or the foxes will tear the bags apart and the neighbours will be a bit cheesed off. **Oh** and that reminds me - no wild parties and loud music **yeah??**

If you have any problems just **text me** or **google** the Grand Hotel, Cardiff.

Hope you have a nice week!

Cheers again,

Fi x

The same question:

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for agreeing to house-sit for me. If you need to contact me during my holiday, I'll be staying at the Imperial Hotel in Bundaberg. If it's urgent, however, please ring my mobile phone, which I'll keep with me at all times. I've written the numbers on a sticky note which I've left on the fridge.

My cat needs to be fed twice daily so each morning and evening - put a handful of cat biscuits in his dish. You will find these in the kitchen pantry. Also, please check throughout the day to make sure he has fresh water. You can give him a small bowl of milk in the evening.

I would like you to water my plants, too. The indoor ones in the lounge only need water once every few days but the plants on the balcony need to be watered daily unless there has been heavy rain. Finally, for security, please clear my mailbox every day and keep the outside lights on at night.

I look forward to seeing you on my return.

Yours, Katie

*****This is a suggested answer from the British Council website.**

It is a 'safe' answer because it is **accurate** and **extremely polite**.

However, there are many aspects that are too formal, and this affects the tone:

- Formal linking words - *however, unless, which (x 4), Finally*
- Passives - *my cat needs to be fed, plants need to be watered*
- Inconsistent contractions - *you will find, there has been heavy rain*
- Unfriendly commands - *put a handful, please clear my mailbox every day, keep the light on*
- Formal requests - *I would like you to*
- Formal ending - *I look forward to seeing you on my return, Yours*
- Formal expressions - *for security*
- Formal structure - better to keep boring details like contact numbers till the end

This is always the problem with materials I find online - even the British Council sometimes. They often give models of a 'good' answer, but this would lose points for being too formal. Very often the people who write these examples are not examiners!

11. Informal letter to a friend (request - you want your bag back)

You lent a bag to your friend and now you need it back.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- ask for the bag back
- say why you need it
- suggest how you can get it

Hi Sarah!

How's it going? Hope you're well and still having a **great** time at **Uni**. I haven't heard from you **for ages!**
What have you **been up to?**

Guess what - you know I've always wanted to visit Paris? **Well**, I have to go there for **a couple of** days next week with work. **So excited!** **You've** been to Paris **haven't you?** **Got** any recommendations? I'm going to be travelling light, so I was wondering if I could get my suitcase **back off you, you know** the one with the wheels that I lent you last year? It's a perfect size because I'll be able to take all my **stuff** on the flight with me and it'll be **handy** for getting on the metro. Sorry **it's all a bit last minute**, but I haven't got enough **cash** to **splash out on** a new one at the **mo!**

Would it be ok if I popped round to **pick it up** sometime? Or maybe you could **drop it off** at my house if you're passing? Sorry again to be **a pain** but it's **kind of** urgent. **Do you reckon** I could have it before the weekend? My flight's on Monday, so **that'll** give me a bit of time to pack.

Let me know asap what's best for you. **Can't wait** to see you for a coffee and a catch-up.

Bye for now,

Fi x

FORMAL (WRONG!!) version that I improved on:**Task: try to improve the underlined phrases.**Dear Sarah

I trust that this letter finds you in good health and that your studies are proving to be as fruitful as you had hoped. It has been such a long time since we last spoke.

I am writing to you regarding my suitcase which you borrowed. My firm requires me to attend a conference and make a series of business trips abroad in order to assess a local branch of our company. The trip will not exceed 2 weeks in duration. As I was planning the trip I recalled that I had lent you my travel bag some time ago for you to visit your relatives. If you no longer require the suitcase, I would be grateful if you could return it as soon as possible. I understand that you have been busy and thereby forgot to do so. I apologise for such a sudden request but I cannot afford to purchase a new bag.

Might I suggest that I collect it from you at your earliest convenience? Otherwise, you could post it to my home address and I will reimburse you the postage fees. I appreciate your time in making the necessary arrangements.

I hope I shall receive a reply from you soon. Do let me know if you are available in the evening or your preferred method of ensuring that I receive the bag.

Sincerely yours,

Fiona

12. Informal Letter to a friend (invitation to your new home)

You have recently moved to a different house.

Write a letter to an English-speaking friend. In your letter

- explain why you have moved
- describe the new house
- invite your friend to come and visit



Hi Dave

How's it going? Just a **quick note** to let you know that we've finally moved to a bigger house! **Hurrah!** We'd been thinking of moving **for ages** - we were getting **a bit fed up** with our tiny bungalow **to be honest**, especially now that **the little ones** are growing up. So after a lot of **hassle** and expense **here we are** in our new house.

I **reckon** you'll love it. **It's got** 3 bedrooms, and a brand new bathroom and kitchen. The **kids** are running around **like lunatics** because there is much more space - the living room and garden are **massive!** And Mike is really **chuffed** because he doesn't need to do much decorating!

Why don't you pop round this weekend and see what you think of our **new place?** We'd all love to see you and if the weather is good we can **have a barbie** in the garden.

I'll **text you** the address, so **give us a call** and let us know when to expect you.

Lots of love,

Talk soon,

Fi x

13. Formal letter (complaint to landlord)

You are a student at an English language school in London and you have been experiencing some problems in the flat. Write a letter to the landlord. In your letter

- State your reason for writing
- Describe the problems and explain how you feel
- Propose a solution and ask the landlord to take action

Dear Mr Smith

I am one of the tenants at your property in Brick Lane, and am writing to complain about the fact that we do not have any hot water or heating in our house.

As you know, we have been living in this house since June, and have always paid our rent on time.

However, we have now been without heating or hot water for two weeks. This is making our lives very uncomfortable, especially as it is the middle of winter.

Ten days ago you promised to send a workman to our house within 2 days but no one came. After calling many times, the workman eventually arrived at the house five days later. Unfortunately he said he could not fix the problem because the water heater was too old. We are now extremely unhappy about this situation.

We are unable to go on living in the house in these conditions and we would ask you to fix the problem urgently. Unless the heater is fixed or replaced within the next 24 hours, we will be forced to look for alternative accommodation. We also request a 50% refund on our rent for the period we have been without any hot water or heating.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

Fiona Wattam

14. Formal letter of request (to a bank for a loan)

As an international student in Australia, you have an account with a local bank. The monthly bank transfer you receive from your parents has been delayed this month due to an error at your parents' bank.

Write a letter to your bank. In your letter

- Introduce yourself and ask for a loan
- Say why you need the money
- Tell them how you intend to pay back the money

Dear Sir/Madam

I am an international student from the UK studying at Sydney University and **I am writing to you as I would like to request** a temporary loan so that I can meet my expenses this month.

I have had my account for about two years since I arrived in Australia and **I have always kept** it in credit. My parents send me a regular bank transfer of \$2200 every month and until now, **I have always received** this monthly payment without any difficulty.

Unfortunately, however, **there has been** an error with their online banking system at HSBC so the funds will be delayed this month. This will be a problem for me because my monthly rent of \$1000 **is due** next week and I need money to cover general living expenses.

I would therefore like to request a temporary loan of \$1800 for a maximum period of one month until the next payment is completed. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

I look forward very much to hearing from you soon.

Best regards

Fiona Wattam

15. Formal Letter of request (training course accommodation)

You are going on a short training course. You need somewhere to live while you are there.

Write a letter to the accommodation officer at the college. In your letter:

- Explain your situation
- Describe the accommodation you require
- Say when you will need it.

Dear **Mr Jones**

I am a 27-year-old Economics student from Brazil and I have been accepted to do a one-month training course at Essex University starting next September.

I would be grateful if you could help me find some accommodation for the duration of my course. **Ideally, I would like to** stay with a host family **so that** I can practise my English at the same time. **If possible, I would prefer to** be near the college rather than in the town centre, **as** my course will be quite intensive. **If** you had anywhere within walking distance of the University **that would be even better**. Since I will only be there for a short time I will not have much time to work out the public transport system.

My only requirements are a quiet room with a desk and internet access. The course starts on September 1st, so I will be arriving a couple of days in advance and it finishes on Friday 30th, but I fly back on the Sunday, so **I would need to stay** there on Saturday night.

Could you please give me some indication of cost and whether meals are included?

I look forward to hearing from you,

With many thanks in advance

Fiona Wattam

16. Formal Letter to an insurance company (lost item)

On a recent holiday you lost a valuable item. Fortunately you had insurance which will cover the cost.

Write a letter to the insurance company. In your letter:

- Describe the item you lost
- Explain how you lost it
- Tell the insurance company what you would like them to do.



Dear Sir or Madam

I have recently returned from a city-break in Paris where I lost my grandmother's engagement ring. I am writing to claim on my holiday insurance policy which I bought from your company before I left on Friday 10th August.

Unfortunately I have no idea how much the ring is worth, as it holds more sentimental value for me than anything else. It is gold, and has 3 sapphires surrounded by what I believed to be diamonds, though I cannot confirm this. It was beautifully engraved with the word 'cariad' inside, which is the Welsh word for 'love'.

I must have lost it in the hotel where we were staying. I always take my ring off before I go to bed and put it on the bedside table next to my watch and phone. However, the morning I lost it, I was rushing to get my flight and I guess I must have quickly grabbed my watch and phone, knocking the ring to the floor. I can only imagine that it has now been vacuumed up and will never be seen again. I have been in touch with the hotel but nothing has been handed in to their lost property office as yet.

Since I do not expect to find the ring in these circumstances, I would like to make a claim for £300, which is the cost of similar rings dated from a similar period according to some research that I have done on the Internet.

Please could you let me know what I need to next and I would be grateful if you could email me any of the forms that I need to fill in.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours faithfully

Fiona Wattam

17. Formal Letter (complaint to the manager of a leisure centre)

There is a problem with the changing rooms at your local leisure centre. You have complained to the manager about this several times, but nothing has been done. Write to the manager.

- Give details about the problem
- Say what happened when you complained about this before
- Say what you want the manager to do next.

Dear Sir or Madam

I've been a member of Leisure World for a year and recently I've noticed a deterioration in the general standards of hygiene in the changing rooms. I have complained about this several times, but there has been no discernible improvement.

I first noticed the problem about a month ago. When I arrived early one morning, it was obvious that the changing area had not been cleaned overnight and there seemed to be a lot of slippery mud on the floor where people had been walking around with wet shoes on. Furthermore there were quite a few empty shampoo bottles and discarded soap sachets littered around. It made the place look very untidy and unhygienic.

I mentioned this to the lady at reception who assured me that something would be done immediately. Furthermore, I had a quick chat with the cleaner who told me that you are very short-staffed at the moment.

I would be very grateful if you could let me know what is being done about the problem. I feel that there is an urgent need to hire additional staff to ensure that the changing area is clean and safe for us to use, otherwise I will be forced to cancel my membership and go elsewhere.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Regards

Fiona Wattam

18. Informal letter giving information about your region

An English-speaking friend wants to spend a two-week holiday in your region and has written asking for information and advice. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter:

- offer to help them find somewhere to stay
- give advice about what to do
- give information about what clothes to bring.

Hi Colomba

I'm so excited that you're coming to see us next month! Of course you're more than welcome to stay with me and my family but if you prefer, I could find you a nice B&B so you can be a bit more independent and come and go as you please.

There are loads of things to do in the city. If I were you, I'd spend a few days on the beach relaxing and then go sightseeing in the city. I'm sure you'll love all the museums and art galleries, not to mention the shops! One place you really must visit is the enormous aquarium where you'll probably want to spend the whole day. And don't miss the famous castle - it's about an hour away by bus.

As for clothes, don't bother bringing too many because the weather is normally warm and sunny at this time of year. It's a bit chilly in the evening though, so it might be a good idea to bring a jumper.

Let me know what time you're coming so that I can meet you at the airport. It'll be great to see you again so I can catch up with all your news!

Safe journey and see you soon!

Love Fiona x

19. Letter to your colleagues - 2 versions (social event decision)

You have been asked to organise a social event for your company. Write an email to your colleagues.

In the email say:

- What suggestions have been made
- What you think about the suggestions
- What you have decided to do

Semi-formal version

Dear colleagues

We haven't been able to have an end-of-year social event for the past two years due to limited funds. This year, however, the company has offered to pay for an end-of-year party. We've discussed various options as you will see below.

Firstly we considered an office party held on the premises. The main advantage of this would be that it avoids any need for people to make special travel arrangements. On the other hand, the building doesn't really have a space that is suitable. We therefore looked at a meal out as there are a number of suitable restaurants close to the office. One argument against this was that sitting at table is not a good way for us to mix and get to know people from other departments. Finally we discussed a day trip, for example to a local tourist spot. The main drawback of this is the cost. In addition, it's difficult to find somewhere that caters for all of our needs and interests.

Taking all of the points into consideration, we propose an office party for all staff, to be held in the main reception area. Date and time to be confirmed.

Please let us know your opinion, preferably before the end of next week,

Thank you,

Fiona

213 words

Less formal version

Hi everyone

As you know we haven't had a Christmas party for the past two years because of a lack of funds. But this year, the company has said that they'll pay for some kind of get-together. I've asked around the office, and this is basically what we've come up with.

First of all we thought about having an after-work party in the office. This would be the easiest option because everyone would already be there, though it's not ideal because there's not much space.

So then we looked into a meal out. There are loads of nice restaurants not too far away from the office but some people thought it probably wasn't the best way to mingle because everyone would be sitting at a table all evening.

Finally we considered something like a day trip to somewhere nice and local. The only problem with this would be the cost and also it's quite difficult to find somewhere that suits all of our needs and interests.

So after a lot of thought, we've decided that an office party in the main reception would be the best bet. Date and time to be confirmed.

Please let us know what you think before the end of next week if possible.

Many thanks

Fiona

211 words

20. Letter of thanks to someone in your community

You are a member of a local group which provides a free service for your community. You have a special request for extra help. Write a letter to the group leader.

- thank him/her for their work
- explain what you need help with
- suggest what you could do in return

Say how this might benefit the community.

Dear Mr Jones,

Thank you very much for providing us with your free 'Maths for Mums and Dads' lessons in the community centre every day. I'm sure that these must take a long time to prepare. I have learnt such a lot from them and now feel more confident about helping my son with his homework.

I was wondering if you could possibly give me any extra materials that I could use in my free time? I realise I could google this myself and find something on the internet but I thought you might be able to point me in the right direction if you have time.

Perhaps I could make some photocopies and share them around so that other people can make use of them too? I know you're very busy at the moment because it's the start of term, so there's no hurry.

With many thanks in advance,

Best wishes

Fiona



EXTRA

General tips about a letter of thanks

NB I wrote this advice for someone who wrote me a really badly-worded request on Instagram! (*'This too easy. Give more difficult'*)

Here's the [full post](#).

- always use a **polite greeting** (Dear, Hi) and a friendly goodbye (Many thanks in advance, Bye for now, See you soon)
- always **show awareness** of the reader's situation (I'm sorry to bother you as I know you're busy) or show some appreciation of the person you want to get help from (Thank you for letting me know about...)
- always ask **polite questions** (Would it be possible for you to...? Could you possibly...? Would you mind...?)
- or use a **polite phrase** (I would be very grateful if you could...)
- ALWAYS say '**please**' and '**thank you**'
- **NEVER use commands** (Send me more information. Give me more difficult questions). They are rude and very unlikely to get a positive response.
- **try not to criticise** the person you are asking to give you something for free (!!!)

Model 2

Hi Clive,

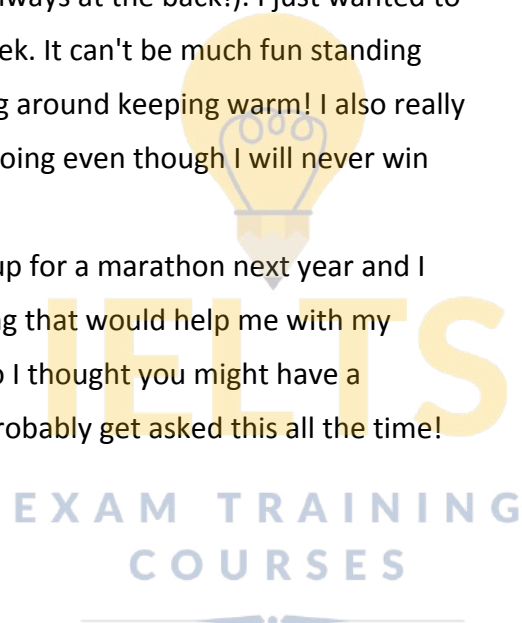
This is Fiona from your running group (the slow one who's always at the back!). I just wanted to say thank you for all the hard work that you put in every week. It can't be much fun standing out in the freezing cold and pouring rain while we're running around keeping warm! I also really appreciate the fact that you always encourage me to keep going even though I will never win any races ;-)

Speaking of which, I'm not sure if you know but I've signed up for a marathon next year and I was wondering if you could recommend a book or something that would help me with my training plan. There seem to be hundreds of these online, so I thought you might have a personal favourite that I could get. No worries if not - you probably get asked this all the time!

See you next week and thanks again

All the best

Fiona



Hi Clive - friendly personal greeting

This is Fiona from your running group (the slow one who's always at the back!) - clear introduction, use of humour

I just wanted to say thank you - polite thanks

It can't be much fun - showing empathy and understanding

I also really appreciate the fact that - showing appreciation

I'm not sure if you know but - assume nothing!

I was wondering if you could - a polite request

so I thought you might - clear explanation for why you're asking

No worries if not - no pressure on the reader

See you next week and thanks again - a friendly goodbye:

All the best/Warm wishes/Cheers

21. A letter apologising to a colleague

A colleague you've known for a long time is leaving for a new job but you can't attend their leaving party. Write a letter:

- apologise and explain why you can't attend
- say how you felt about working with them
- suggest how to keep in touch.



Dear John

So sorry to hear that you're leaving us! **Great news** about the new job though - you totally deserved to get it after all the hard work you've put in since the day you started.

I just wanted to say how much I've enjoyed working with you. I don't know how I'd have survived my first few weeks if it hadn't been for your patience. **I really appreciate** your support - you've always been there for me whenever I needed help.

It's a real shame that I can't make it to your leaving-do next week. I booked the week off a while ago, so I'm taking the kids to Paris to see the sights.

I really hope we can stay in touch though. You know where to find me if you fancy a drink some time when you've settled in - **maybe we could** meet up for my birthday next month?

Wishing you all the best in your exciting new career,

You'll be very much missed in the office (especially your tea-making skills!)

All the best

Fiona

(182 words)

IELTS
EXAM TRAINING
COURSES

22. Letter of complaint to a restaurant

You took your family to a nearby restaurant. You were disappointed with the meal and wish to complain to the manager. Write a letter to the manager of the restaurant. In your letter

- explain why you were at the restaurant
- describe the problems
- write about the action you want the manager to take

Dear Sir/Madam

I am one of your regular customers and every year my family and I celebrate our parents' wedding anniversary at your restaurant. Both the food and the service have always been excellent, but **unfortunately** this year we were very disappointed and **I would like to complain about** several things that we were unhappy with.

That evening we ordered your signature pasta dish as we always do. **However**, it took a very long time to be served. **What's more**, when the dish finally arrived it was lukewarm, **not to mention the fact that** it tasted completely different from what we were used to. **In fact** it was extremely bland and dry.

As this restaurant is part of our community and as it has become a family tradition to go there annually, **we would be extremely grateful if you could** give us some guarantee that this will not happen again. I can only assume that the recipe has been changed. **Could I possibly suggest that** you test the dish yourself in order to find out what the chef might have done differently, or **could you maybe** persuade the chef to use the original recipe that was always so delicious?

Thank you in advance for your attention and I look forward to your response,

Yours faithfully,

Ana Quintalo **216 words**

Model 2 (too long, but a true story!)

Notice the use of adjectives to describe specific problems.

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to complain about an evening spent at your restaurant on April 10th. My family and I were in Paris for 2 nights, and because your establishment comes highly recommended in several well-known food guides **we were looking forward to** a very pleasant experience.

Unfortunately things did not go well right from the start. **First of all**, we had to queue for some time before being seated, **even though** we had made a reservation beforehand. We were **then** given a **cramped** table right next to the toilets and we waited for about 20 minutes before we could even order a drink. There was no apology or explanation from the waiter, who looked extremely **busy** and **overworked**. We asked for his help with some of the items from the menu, but he became quite **impatient** and told us that he did not have any time to explain every dish in detail.

When the food **finally** arrived at least 60 minutes later, my son's chicken was **raw** in the middle and my vegetarian lasagne was almost **inedible**. It was so **overcooked** that I could hardly eat it. **To add insult to injury**, all three of us were up all night vomiting, which meant that we could not enjoy the rest of our stay.

I would like to request a full refund as compensation for the miserable time that we endured both at your restaurant and for the food poisoning and loss of a day's holiday.

I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours faithfully

Fiona Wattam

252 words

23 Letter to manager about a customer complaint

There have been several complaints about the reception area where visitors to your company arrive. Your manager has asked you to suggest how the reception area could be improved. Write a letter to your manager. In your letter

- describe the complaints that have been made
- say why the reception area is important
- suggest how the reception area could be improved

Dear Mr Smith

As per your request, I am writing to outline some of the complaints that we have had about the reception area.

First of all, a number of visitors expressed their dissatisfaction with the size of the reception area, due to the fact that it is often overcrowded and that there are not enough desks for filling in all the various forms. They also mentioned the lack of receptionists available to deal with questions at busy times of the day.

Needless to say, the area where visitors arrive is extremely important as it 'sets the tone' and gives the first impression of the organization, so I strongly recommend that we make a few radical changes.

One solution to the space problem would be to knock through to the adjacent room. This would almost double the size of the area, and then we'd be able to get more tables and comfy seats for people who are waiting. I also think we need to consider hiring a second receptionist for peak periods.

I realise that there will be costs involved, but I think it will be worth it in the long run.

Looking forward to hearing your thoughts,

Best regards

Fiona Wattam

24 Letter of application to do voluntary work at a hospital

Your local hospital has advertised for people to do unpaid work helping at the hospital. You would like to do some work at the hospital in your free time.

Write a letter to the hospital. In your letter

- Explain why you would like to do unpaid work at the hospital
- Say what type of unpaid work you would be able to do
- Give details of when you would be available for this work

Formal Model

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing this letter in support of my application to join the hospital as a volunteer worker. I would be most grateful if you would consider the following information favourably when deciding on my eligibility for this role.

I am currently a final-year college student preparing to enter medical school in the coming year, and I feel that working as a volunteer in this department would provide me with some much-needed hands-on experience of the day-to-day responsibilities I might encounter while working in a medical context. As I have already had some experience of administrative and clerical work, I would be able to work on the reception desk, as well as assist the elderly, the disabled or young patients in transit to and from the various wards. I am also willing to assist medical staff with the preparation of medical equipment, and I am trained in sterilisation and general hygiene practice through an internship at a neighbouring hospital. I hope that you find my application suitable and hope to be considered for the role. I am happy to undertake any other tasks that the management would consider suitable for my level of expertise and experience.

I will be available to accept any position if offered from early March, after I have completed my final exams.

Yours faithfully,

Fiona Wattam



Less formal Version

Dear Sir or Madam

While I was visiting a friend in hospital last week, I saw your advert looking for people to work on a voluntary basis. I am writing to offer my services in the hope that you might be able to make use of my skills and experience in a suitable role.

Having just retired from my position as an Academic Skills Tutor at the local university I find myself with a lot of spare time on my hands and would love to give something back to the community. I have been an English language teacher for most of my life, and I understand that there are several members of staff who have come from overseas and who might be looking to improve their speaking skills in their free time.

I am available most afternoons and evenings, and am happy to arrange a time that works best for you and your staff.

I live locally and could pop in for a chat at your convenience.

*I look forward to hearing from you,
Yours faithfully*

Fiona Wattam.



25: Sending a gift to a friend (informal)

Write a letter to a friend who just moved into a new house that you are sending a gift to. You should say

- What the gift is
- Why you chose it
- How it will be delivered

Model

Hi Sylvie!

Happy New Home! I hope the move went smoothly and that you've had the chance to settle in a bit - how does it feel now that you've finally arrived? Is it everything you dreamed of? Can't wait to visit!

I just wanted to let you know that I'm sending you a little house-warming present in the post. It's just a small thing to make you feel at home. I found an online company that delivers freshly-baked brownies to your door, and thought that the aroma would be nice for you to come home to! The thing is, you need to be there when they deliver, otherwise they'd have to leave them on the doorstep, and who knows what passing creatures might fancy them, now that you're living way out in the sticks - it could attract bears from all around the neighbourhood!

So I asked them to drop them off at around 8 a.m on Monday - is that ok for you? I guess you won't have left for work by then. It's not too late to change it though (up to midnight this evening).

Hope you enjoy the brownies - just let me know when you'd like me to come round and help you eat them.

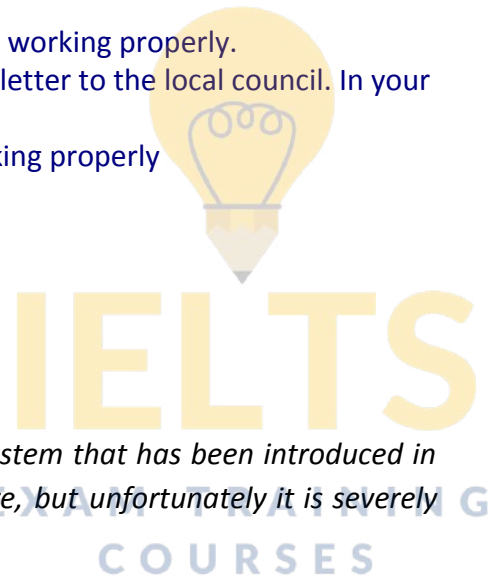
Lots of love

Fi x

26. Letter of complaint about the rubbish system

The system used for rubbish collection in your local area is not working properly. This is causing problems for you and your neighbours. Write a letter to the local council. In your letter

- Describe how the rubbish collection system is not working properly
- Explain how this is affecting you and your neighbours
- Suggest what should be done about the problem



Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to complain about the new rubbish collection system that has been introduced in Colchester. I understand that this was a cost-cutting measure, but unfortunately it is severely impacting my neighbourhood.

Ever since I have lived in Essex, there has been a weekly collection of non-recyclables in black bin bags, and a fortnightly collection of recyclable waste (paper, plastic and cans), all of which goes into see-through plastic bags. However, now that black bin-bag collection is once a fortnight, and alternates with the clear bin-bags, it has resulted in complete chaos and confusion.

The main flaw in the system is that people forget what they should put out each week, resulting in rubbish being left on the pavement for days on end, as people are reluctant to take it back into their homes once they realise they have made a mistake. During the night, foxes and cats tear open the bags, leaving debris strewn across the road and blowing into people's gardens and community green spaces. This makes the whole town look unsightly and no doubt encourages vermin and other pests.

Might I suggest that you organise both collections on the same day, so that all the rubbish is collected together? I think this would lessen the confusion, and people would be more likely to get the day right.

I look forward to hearing your views on the matter,

Yours faithfully

Fiona Wattam

27 Letter to a friend about a lost file

You stayed at your friends' house when you took part in a business seminar in Australia. You left a file with important documents in your room.

Write a letter to your friend explaining the problem.

- describe the file
- say where you think you lost it
- ask him/her to return it to you by post



Hi Tracey

Thanks ever so much for **putting me up** while I was in Sydney. It was great to **catch up with you** and spend some time reminiscing about the good old days! I had a really fantastic time and felt truly spoilt and pampered the whole time I was there!

You'll never guess what though, when I got back home I couldn't find that file I showed you with all my research in it. **You know the one** - it's kind of flowery and not very professional-looking but it **does the job**. I have a sneaking suspicion that I **chucked it** under the bed when we got home late and a bit **worse for wear** the night before I left.

Is there any chance you could have a look for me? I'm sorry **it's a real pain**, but I'm going to need it to write up all those notes I took. Should have gone digital, shouldn't I?! If you find it (and **fingers crossed** you will, because if it's not there, I must have left it at the airport going through security) **would you mind** posting it to me? I'll pay you back for the postage costs and **buy you a beer** next time we meet up I promise.

Many thanks in advance - **I owe you one**,

Chat soon

Love Fiona xxx

BONUS: Some corrected student examples from the Members Academy

You've noticed that a street near your home has become very dirty recently.

Write to the city council to complain about the street. You should say

- **why you think this is happening,**
- **the problems that it may be causing**
- **and suggest a way to deal with this situation.**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with regards to the illegal dumping of household rubbish in Carlton Street (where I live), and the fact that no proper action has been taken despite several letters of complaint from the residents.

Since the recent change to a twice-weekly refuse collection, people have been leaving items such as microwaves, furniture and even black bin bags on the corner of the street. It has become a serious eyesore and passers-by could easily trip and fall over them in the dark. Furthermore, potentially harmful chemicals are leaking into the nearby drain and the rotting food has started to attract flies and vermin.

As a short-term fix, I would be very grateful if you could arrange for the rubbish truck to collect all the items from the street as a matter of urgency. Could I also suggest that in order to prevent this from happening in the future, Carlton Council should issue a warning letter to people living in the vicinity, making them aware of the heavy fines that they could incur and letting them know where they can safely dispose of their waste?

I hope you will agree that this problem is unacceptable, and do everything possible to make this residential area clean and safe again.

I look forward to your reply,

Yours faithfully,

Dikshya

217 words

This example shows how you can adapt formal writing to informal (in brackets) and by using contractions (in red)

Your friend is expecting to visit you in two weeks time, but unfortunately you are not available at the same time.

Write a letter to your friend. In your letter

- **Apologize and say that you are not available at that time**
- **Explain why**
- **Suggest another time when he could visit**

Hi John,

How are you? Hope my email finds you very well. *[you're doing well]* Good to know that you passed the entrance exam of NanYang Polytechnic Uni and *I'm* very excited to hear about your plans to visit me this summer. *However, unfortunately I am not available [What a nightmare - I won't be there when you're coming!]* at that time. *Very sorry* about that and wonder whether you can come in autumn instead?

I'm in the last semester of my MBA course and will have final exams in July. *They're* quite stressful so I want to spend more time reviewing and practicing. Just *wanna* let you know that *I'll* be promoted to work for the NAS project if I get an A grade in four out of five subjects of the semester.

Why don't you come here in August? We'll have a lot of time for travelling and enjoying the landscape and traditional cuisine. *[the street food!]* The weather in Aug is extremely cool so you'll feel comfortable while travelling everywhere in Vietnam. *Moreover*, the 15th Henry Int' Running event will *occur** in DaNang beach city on the first Sunday of Aug with *participation of* many foreigners, so *there's* no reason for us not to register now and join. *[By the way, there'll be loads of tourists around for the DaNang beach race on the first Sunday of Aug, so we should definitely take part!]*

Write soon!

Can't wait to see you!

All the best

Han

Thushara

Your local newspaper is offering an award for people who have helped the community. Write a letter to the newspaper editor. In your letter

- +suggest someone you think should receive the award**
- +describe what the person does to help the community**
- +suggest an award that would be appropriate for this person**

Dear Mr. John*/ Mr Davies

I am writing because I would like to terminate my voluntary work as an assistant to your hospital's receptionist since there has been a change in my school schedule.

[I am writing to inform you that unfortunately I will be unable to continue working as...]

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that I have been given an international internship in Vietnam. I'm sure that you remember this internship programme, as we discussed it in my interview last month. Owing to the requirements of the programme, I am going to be in Vietnam from Sep 15th to Oct 15th. The programme had originally intended to take place in October but it has been changed last minute in order to match up relating participants.

It is regrettable that I have not finished my mini-survey on patients' satisfaction as promised. However, I would be grateful if you could accept my nomination of Ms. Hoa to continue my work, as she is one of the most active volunteers in my school. If you decide to let her substitute for me it would be good for both of us, as we will support each other and complete all the tasks.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Best regards

Lee Hong

You stayed at your friends' house when you took part in a business seminar in Australia. You left a file with important documents in your room.

Write a letter to your friend explaining the problem.

- describe the file
- say where you think you lost it
- ask him/her to return it to you by post

Hi Tracey

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Many thanks in advance - I owe you one,

Chat soon

Love Fiona xxx