

## Introduction to Functional Writing

The functional writing section is worth 30 marks. This is equal to the marks given for each of the six sections in Paper 2, so it is well worth taking the time to prepare for this task.

You should be prepared to write any of the types of Functional Writing listed below.

- Letters
- Short Talks
- Reports
- Reviews, introductions to books or 'blurbs' on book jackets/DVD covers.
- Newspaper or Magazine Articles
- Instructions
- Advertisements
- Competition entries
- Proposals

### **Points to note**

- Functional writing is different to personal writing in that you have far less freedom in the way you approach the task. There are certain standard and accepted ways of writing letters, reviews, reports etc. and the purpose of this question is to ensure that you know how to tackle such things. You may have an opportunity to be a little bit creative, but you must abide by the rules.
- This is a short piece of writing, not an essay, so keep an eye on the length.
- Read the question very carefully and underline the important words. (I have shown you how to do this in the sample answers.)

- Think about the target audience for this piece. To whom are you writing? If you are writing a letter to your friend the tone can be chatty and informal, if you are writing a letter to a newspaper or if you are applying for a job, the language must be formal.
- Plan your answer very carefully. You may find that the question can help you with this by mentioning things you should include in your letter, review, report etc.
- Organise your thoughts and express yourself clearly. This is an exercise in communication, be sure that you are easily understood. Keep your sentences short and simple, particularly if you have a tendency to let your writing get out of control. Before you begin writing a sentence, know how it is going to end. Don't just see where it takes you.
- Make sure that your writing is relevant and that you only include information which helps to answer the question you were asked.
- It is very important that you write in the correct register. This means using language appropriate to the task.



## How to Revise For this Section

The best way to revise for this section is to read examples of as many types of functional writing as you can. This is easy, as they are everywhere. Take a moment to look around your school, or your classroom. There are probably instructions, telling you what to do in the event of a fire. There may be school rules posted in the hall, or in your homework diary. Look at the book you are studying for your English exam. There is undoubtedly a blurb on the back. Everywhere you look, there are examples of functional writing. Get into the habit of looking at them a little more closely than you would normally do, and your own writing will improve.

Of course, it is essential that you practise writing too. Don't assume that simply reading samples of other people's writing will automatically get you a high grade. You may be wondering how you will know if your work is good enough. Well, you can use the internet to your advantage here. Set yourself a little task, like writing instructions on how to make scrambled egg, say, and when you have finished, look up the instructions on the internet, or in a recipe book. Compare what you have written to the version written on the net or in the book. Have you left out any steps? Is your answer much longer or shorter than the published version?

Get into the habit of reading the newspapers every day. Again, you can use the internet to help you here. This will show you how news reports and sample articles are written, which will also help you in your Personal Writing and Media Studies sections of the exam. News reports are found in the main body of the paper, while feature articles are usually in the 'Review', 'Opinion' or 'Lifestyle' sections of the paper. Look at the letters to the editor. See if you can identify those which impress you and ask yourself why they are effective.

## Table of Past Questions

I have made a table for you of the options that have come up from 2001 to 2014.

Year / Task	'15	'14	'13	'12	'11	'10	'09	'08	'07	'06	'05	'04	'03	'02	'01
Flyer			X												
Review			X		X					X		X			X
Letter					X					X		X	X	X	X
Ad / Prospectus				X							X				
Report	X							X						X	
Instructions / Guidelines	X								X						
Article		X		X							X				
Speech or Talk		X					X						X	X	X
Sports Report						X									
Competition Entry						X		X							

## Formal Letter Writing

You may be asked to write a formal or an informal letter in the functional writing section of Paper 1. Formal letters are far more commonly asked than informal letters but it is worth knowing how to write both.

The most commonly-asked formal letters are for the following purposes:

- Writing to a celebrity, telling them why you admire their work.
- Applying for a job.
- Recommending someone for a particular job.
- Inviting someone to an event.
- Writing to a newspaper, commenting on a topical issue. (This is often a letter of complaint.)
- Asking for information.

Always use a fictitious (false) name and address when writing a letter in an exam. You should have one ready before the Junior Cert; you will have enough to do on the day without trying to think up of a false name and address on the spot. The easiest way to do it is to juggle your name and address around a little. You can do the same with the address of your school by using a mixture of your primary and secondary school names and a neighbouring town, for example.

In a formal letter, you may include the recipient's name and job title above the address. You do not have to do this in every circumstance, however. Use your judgement here. You would not have to include a job title if you were writing to a celebrity, but it would be appropriate to do so when writing to a supermarket manager for example.

When you are learning the layout of a formal letter, it is best to be as correct as possible. Some textbooks say you can write the date 02/01/2014, for example, but others disagree. Therefore, it is wise to stick to a format that everybody will find acceptable. You cannot be too correct. I think it is sensible to write the date as I have shown it on the next page.

No. 25, Main Street,  
Mallow,  
Co. Cork.

Mr. John O'Sullivan,  
Manager,  
Tesco,  
Killarney,  
Co. Kerry.

2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

In the first, short paragraph you should say why you are writing the letter. Think of the tone; if you are asking for money, you will want to be persuasive. Ask yourself who will be reading the letter and keep this person in mind throughout. Skip a line before beginning the next paragraph.

In the second paragraph, you should make your next point. Be clear. Make sure you have made a plan and that there is a logical sequence to the paragraphs.

In the third and subsequent paragraphs, you should continue to develop the theme of the letter, giving any facts that you think relevant. Four or five points should be plenty. Remember to avoid slang, exaggeration, deeply personal anecdotes and any remarks which may be racist, sexist or otherwise prejudiced. It is best to avoid contractions in formal letters. For example, you shouldn't write 'I'm' or 'We're': you should write 'I am' and 'We are' instead.

The final paragraph is usually quite short, thanking the person for taking the time to deal with your complaint or consider your request and so forth. If you would like them to take some action on your behalf, this is the time to ask what they intend to do. You may also tell the recipient to contact you if they have any further queries.

Yours faithfully, (if you have opened with Dear Sir or Madam)

Yours sincerely, (if you do know the recipient's name and have used it at the start of the letter)

### Sample Formal Letter

**You need a reference letter from your Principal to secure a summer job. Write the letter you would like him or her to supply you with. The address you use should not be that of your actual school nor should you use your own name. (Junior Cert 2001)**

Note: Underline the key words. It is vital to read the question carefully – you are being asked to write the reference letter, not a letter asking your principal for a reference.

*Note: Whenever you are answering a functional writing task, you should ask yourself four questions before you begin:-*

**Q.** What **form** will this answer take?

**A.** This is a formal letter. Make sure you have a greeting, closing etc.

**Q.** What will the **content** be?

**A.** This is a reference letter so it should detail your strengths and your suitability for the job.

**Q.** Who will my **audience** be?

**A.** The audience will be a potential employer. The type of business is not specified, so you are free to write to whomever you want, or to write a very general reference letter that could be used for any job.

**Q.** What **register** will I use?

**A.** Your language should be formal and precise. You want the recipient of the letter to employ the student, so you should use persuasive language.

<p style="text-align: right;">St. Francis College, Main Street, Carrigaline, Co. Cork.</p> <p>The Manager, Castle Hotel, Midleton, Co. Cork.</p> <p>3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014</p> <p>Dear Sir or Madam,</p> <p>Orla Hurley has been a pupil at St. Francis College since 2010 and, as her principal, I have no hesitation in recommending her for a summer job in your hotel.</p> <p>Orla is a pleasant, hard-working, co-operative girl who always goes out of her way to help others. Last year, she was chosen by her classmates to be the third year representative on the Student Council and she undertook this role with diligence and enthusiasm. The majority of the meetings were in the evenings and Orla was unfailingly punctual and reliable. She was asked to take minutes of the meetings on a number of occasions and she showed great initiative in typing up the minutes and distributing them to all the council members the next day.</p> <p>In November, the transition year students were asked to help in organising the Open Day for prospective parents and Orla was given the task of preparing and delivering a short talk on her experiences as a pupil in the school. The parents were most impressed with her communication skills and many of them praised her to me later on.</p> <p>I believe that Orla would be an excellent employee and I am very happy to recommend her for a position in your hotel. If you require any further</p>	<p><i>Both addresses given.</i></p> <p><i>Date written in full.</i></p> <p><i>Appropriate salutation. For a general reference letter, you could write: 'To whom it may concern'.</i></p> <p><i>Having explained her relationship with the subject of the letter, the writer goes on to list the pupil's attributes. Specific examples are given.</i></p> <p><i>Example which is relevant to the job – good communication skills usually required in hotel work.</i></p> <p><i>Conclusion.</i></p>
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information, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above address.

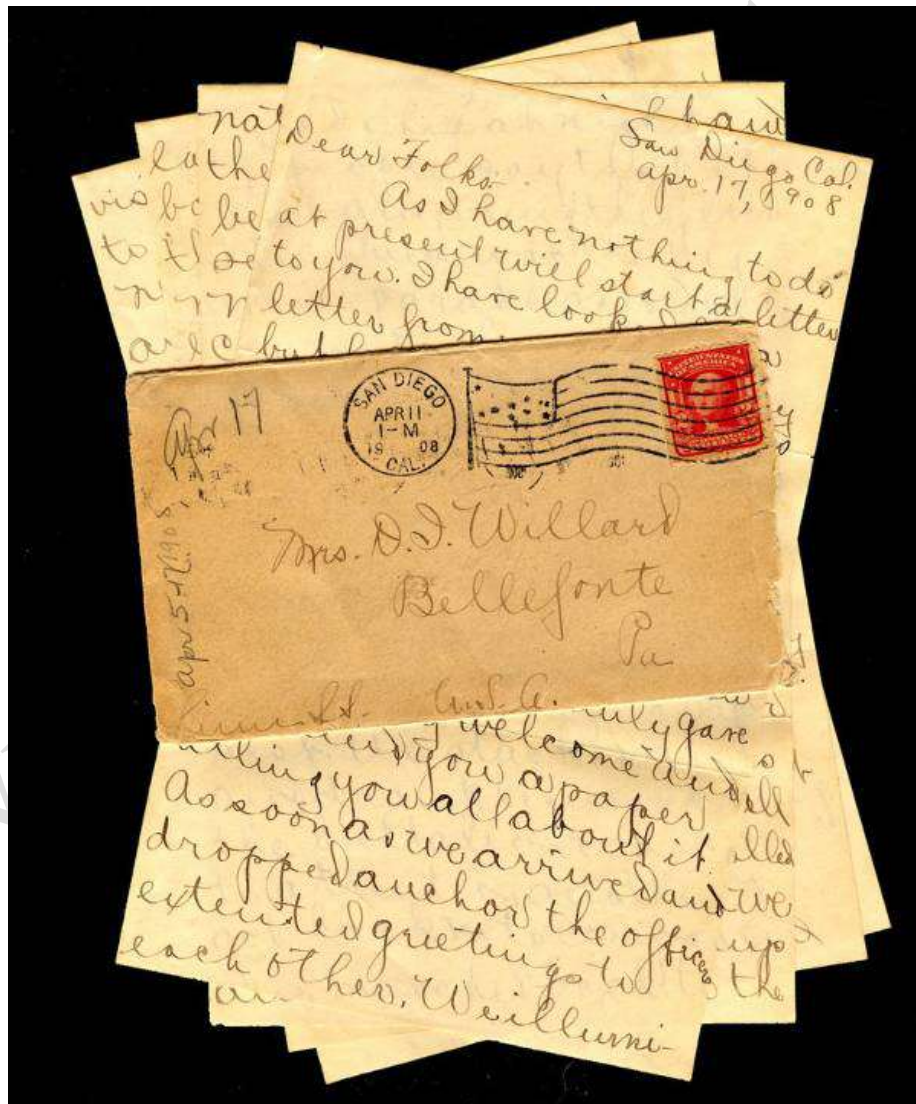
*Formal sign-off.*

Yours faithfully,

Maura Creedon

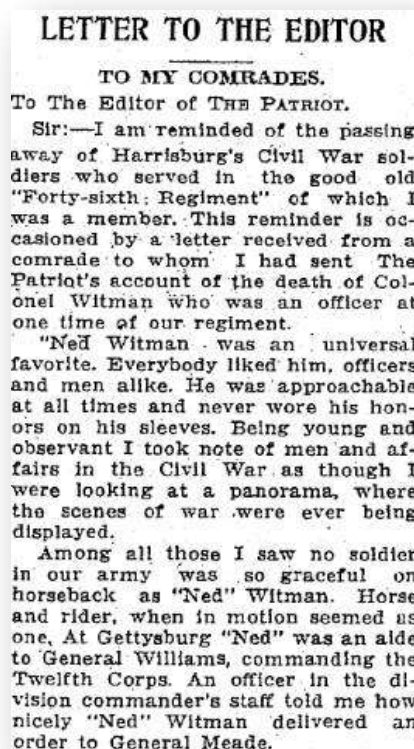
Maura Creedon

Principal



## Writing a Letter to the Editor

- Letters to the editor are similar to normal formal letters: only the layout is different.
- There is generally no need to write the editor's name and address at the top of the letter, but you may do so if you wish.
- In your opening sentence, you should give the name, writer and date of the article which prompted you to write the letter. If the letter is a general one, and is not in response to an article which appeared in the paper, then you should simply address the topic in the opening lines: 'The issue of exam stress is one which affects almost every student in this country.'
- You sign off by writing, 'Yours etc.' rather than 'Yours faithfully'.
- You do not put your name and address at the top of the letter, but at the very end, underneath your signature.
- Remember that your audience is the general public. Keep the tone formal throughout.
- Humorous touches are allowed, of course, but be careful here. Not everyone may share your sense of humour.



In 2004, one of the Functional Writing tasks was based on the article printed below. The task was phrased in this way, 'You feel strongly about Hugh Linehan's article in Section 1 of this paper (Page 2). Write a letter to the Editor of the newspaper in which you outline your views in response to the article.'

*"Call the usher! The pleasure of movie-going is becoming a pain, thanks to noisy, guzzling, mobile phone-using talkers, kickers and general pests." So said Irish Times journalist, Hugh Linehan, in an article in his newspaper. The article appears below in edited form.*

Shhhhhhhhhh!

Maybe it's because I'm a spoiled snobbish elitist – and that's not something I'm happy about – but I have to confess I'm finding it increasingly painful to go to the movies with the rest of you, the great paying public. It's not because of the cinemas – standards of projection, sound, seating and ventilation have improved out of all recognition over the last ten years – but (and I am sorry to say this) your standards of behaviour seem to be disimproving all the time.

Kickers are a real source of irritation. The kicker problem is exacerbated by the design of modern cinema seats – a kicked seat reverberates right along the row, so that it can be nigh-well impossible to figure out where it's coming from. In the 1970s, they called this Sensurround and people paid to experience it in movies such as Earthquake and Towering Inferno. Nowadays, you can have your own personal towering inferno as you reach boiling point after two hours of bone-shaking juddering.

Up until recently, the mobile phenomenon seemed to be spinning out of control. Cinemas were buzzing like beehives with the wretched things and some buffoons even had the cheek to strike up conversations on them during the film. There will always be buffoons, but a corner seems to have been turned in recent times. Thankfully, cinemas have now taken to putting reminders on the screen telling people to switch off their phones, and many appear to be doing so. On an electronically related topic, by the way, what sort of benighted fool needs a watch that beeps on the hour, every hour?

I have some sympathy for those who feel nauseated by the smell of warm buttery popcorn which is so much a part of the multiplex experience, but it doesn't bother me

that much. If people want to eat wildly overpriced, grease-saturated cardboard, then that's their business. At least popcorn has the virtue of being (almost) silent food – far better than the high-pitched crackle of the jumbo crisp packet or the extended kitchen-sink gurgle of the almost-drained Coke.

To my mind the real problem in cinemas these days is talkers. They're everywhere and they come in a variety of species. One kind can't help giving a blow-by-blow commentary on the movie. They're bad enough, but there is worse. Top of the list come those who just utterly ignore the film in favour of their own chat. Western society has devised countless places where people can communicate with each other, but cafes, restaurants or street corners are just not good enough for these people– apparently not when they can have the added pleasure of spoiling other people's enjoyment.

Then, there are those who think that any break in the dialogue has been inserted by the film-maker expressly for them to start talking. The minute there is a pause of more than a couple of seconds they launch into conversation. This is not to forget the downright stupid, who spend most of the time asking questions: "Who's she? What happened there?" By the time they've got an answer they've missed the next plot point, and the whole weary rigmarole starts all over again.

What is the reason for this plague? The general decline in politeness in society may have something to do with it, but it doesn't fully explain the seemingly unstoppable desire to talk when the lights go down. We don't want funereal silence; a good comedy, horror or action movie can be immeasurably improved by the communal experience of seeing it with an audience. People can shriek or laugh to their hearts' content, and there is a real

sense of a shared magical experience. After all, we're all together in the cinema ... in the dark. And you never know who is sitting next to you!



*Comment: You could write a letter complaining about Hugh Linehan's views, or agreeing with them. The question only asks that you express strong views; it doesn't say whether or not those views should lean in one direction or the other.*

*I have written two sample answers to this question: one agreeing with Hugh Linehan and one disagreeing with him.*

### Sample Letter 1

<p>Sir,</p> <p>In response to Mr. Hugh Linehan's article, "Shhhhhhhhhhh" (April 23<sup>rd</sup>), I feel I must offer a defence of cinema-goers.</p> <p>Mr. Linehan admits in his opening paragraph that he is a snob, and I am grateful to him for this as it saves me the necessity of doing so. His arrogant dismissal of other cinema patrons as "you, the great paying public" is small-minded and unworthy of a journalist writing for a national newspaper. Is he so different from the rest of us that he has to set himself apart and address his readers in this offensive manner? His claim that, "your standards of behaviour seem to be disimproving all the time" is ironic, in that it is not we the "great paying public" who are rudely and publicly denouncing our fellow citizens for nothing more than chatting, moving about and eating snack foods on our nights out at the cinema.</p> <p>I was offended by the tone of the opening paragraph, but as I read the rest of the article, I became more bewildered than offended. What does Mr. Linehan expect the cinema-going public to do about the seat design which irritates him so much? Why does he mention mobile phones, only to admit</p>	<p><i>There is no need to put the editor's name and address at the top of the letter, though you may do so if you wish.</i></p> <p><i>You should state who wrote the article to which you are referring, and the date it was published. You can make this up.</i></p> <p><i>I chose to stick closely to the original text, but you could discuss the topic in a more general way if you wished. I think it is safer to use the given text as a basis for your writing. It can help to keep your letter focused</i></p>
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<p>that they are not really a problem any more? As for the mention of beeping digital watches, well, it seems that Mr. Linehan is harking back to the eighties with this complaint. Those watches went out of fashion quite some time ago.</p>	<p><i>and structured.</i></p>
<p>Mr. Linehan's real gripe, though, is against those who dare to talk during the film. While I think most people would agree that incessant chatter is annoying when we are trying to concentrate, a night out at the cinema is meant to be a social occasion too, and it's understandable that people might wish to exchange a few words with their friend or their date now and again. It's not the theatre, after all. It's not as if the actors will be disturbed by someone asking their neighbour an occasional question.</p>	<p><i>Each paragraph should follow on naturally from the previous one.</i></p>
<p>It seems to me that Mr. Linehan would be better advised to avoid the cinema completely and stay at home with a DVD and some snack foods that he deems acceptable. I doubt that his fellow cinema-goers would miss his sighs and eye-rolling, nor would any of us miss his subsequent, mean-spirited grumbling about what should be a fun, relaxed night out.</p>	<p><i>Conclusion.</i></p>
<p>Yours etc.</p>	
<p>Fiona Whelan, 15 Main Street, Youghal, Co. Cork.</p>	<p><i>This is the appropriate way to sign-off when writing a letter to the editor. Put your name and address at the very end.</i></p>



## Sample Letter 2

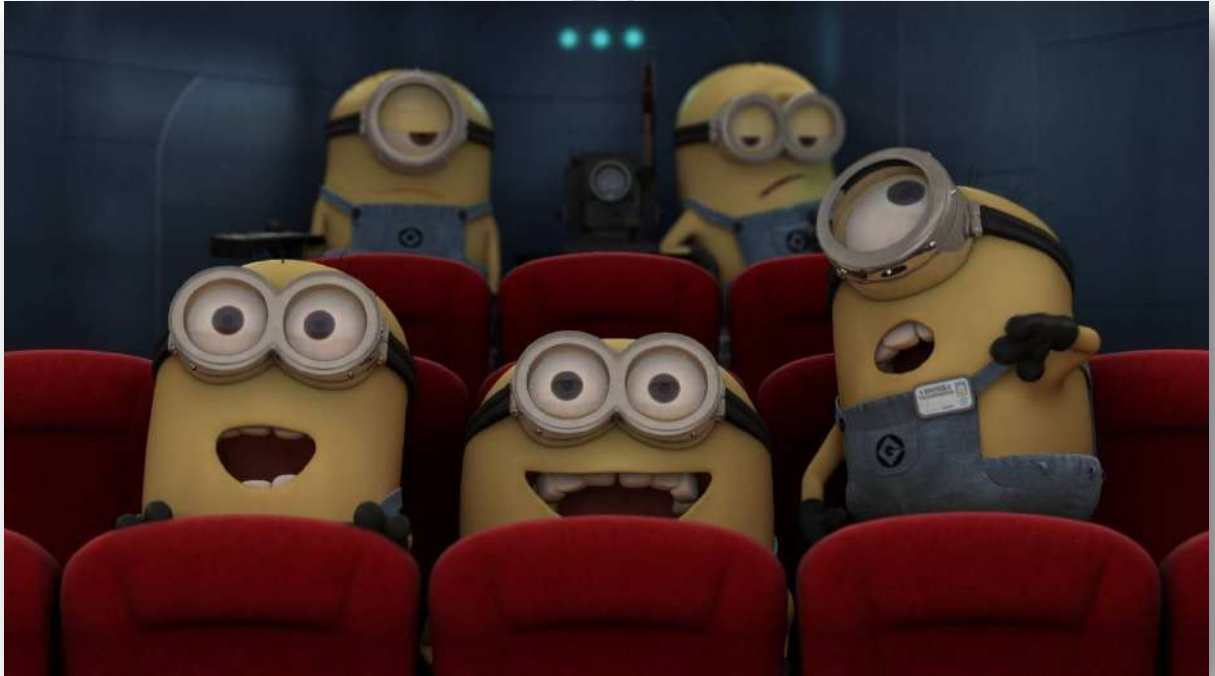
<p>Sir,</p> <p>I agree wholeheartedly with the sentiments expressed by Mr. Hugh Linehan in his article, "Shhhhhhhhhhh" (April 23<sup>rd</sup>).</p> <p>My friends and I go to our local cinema once a week, and it has become an increasingly unpleasant way to spend an evening, unfortunately. As Mr. Linehan points out, the thoughtlessness and bad manners of some cinema-goers ruin the experience for everyone else.</p> <p>Yes, we too have the kickers, the munchers, the slurpers and the talkers, and we also have the patrons who come in late, make everyone stand up so they can get to their "favourite" seat, and then proceed to behave as disruptively as possible. They flick popcorn at people in the rows in front of them, make and receive phone calls, yell greetings to friends at the other side of the cinema, and ignore anyone who asks them to be quiet. In fact, attracting their attention is a bad move, as they invariably shout insults at anyone brave enough or foolish enough to challenge them. I really wonder why these people bother spending eight euro on a ticket when they seem to have little or no interest in the film being shown.</p> <p>We have mentioned their behaviour to the cinema staff, but they seem unwilling or unable to do anything about it. I fail to see why they can't throw the trouble-makers out. Surely, in this age of CCTVs, it would be a simple matter to identify the culprits and ban them from entering the cinema again. Ticket sellers could easily be given photographs of the offenders and told not to allow them admission. Petrol stations routinely print out and display photographs of customers who drive away without paying. Cinemas should do the same.</p> <p>I am grateful to Mr. Linehan for raising this topic, and I hope that cinema</p>	<p><i>This letter is based on the problems outlined by Hugh Linehan in his article, but it goes on to deal with the issue in a more personal way.</i></p> <p><i>Writer's own experiences and views mentioned.</i></p> <p><i>Letters to the editor are often letters of complaint. Suggesting solutions to the problem is common in such letters.</i></p> <p><i>Conclusion, referring back to</i></p>
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owners and managers will take note. The majority of their income comes from people who want to enjoy watching a film in peace. If the disruptive element is not dealt with, then most people will simply choose to wait until new films are released on DVD and watch it in the comfort of their own homes.

Yours, etc.

Fiona Whelan,  
15 Main Street,  
Youghal,  
Co. Cork.

article which  
prompted the letter.





## Writing an Informal Letter

Note: Very few people write informal letters nowadays: instead they write emails. If you are asked to write an email, the language should be similar to that of an informal letter, but you would not put your address at the top of the page.

*Sender's Address*  
The Old Rectory,  
Kanturk,  
Co. Cork.

3<sup>rd</sup> June 2014

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

It is usual to begin the first paragraph directly underneath the comma after the recipient's name. You may skip a line between paragraphs if you prefer, of course. The most important thing is that you are consistent. In an informal letter, the tone can be much more relaxed. You may use some slang but avoid text language and of course, bad language. If you must use exclamation marks, use them with caution and never use more than one at a time.

The content of an informal letter depends on the person to whom you are writing and the reason for your letter. Use personal stories and try to keep the tone lively and interesting.

You may be telling your friend or family member about something interesting that happened recently. Remember to plan your answer and use paragraphs, just as you would in an essay.

How you sign off depends again on the person to whom you are writing. 'Love', is probably the most common way to sign off. Other possibilities are, 'All the best', Regards, 'Thanks again' or 'Best wishes'.

### Sample informal letter

**Imagine the girl in the picture is your pen pal. Write a letter telling her about a good book you have enjoyed recently. *Junior Certificate 2003***

<p>25 Castle View, Macroom, Co. Cork.</p> <p>14<sup>th</sup> April 2011</p> <p>Dear Marta,</p> <p>How are you? It was great to get your last letter, telling me all about your school and your family. It sounds like you're having a tough time revising for your summer tests. Ugh. I know how you feel. I hate them too.</p> <p>If you are looking for something to distract you from all the study, I can recommend a book you might enjoy. It's "The Diary of Anne Frank", and it's a book everyone should read. If you can't get it in your library, let me know and I'll send you a copy for your birthday.</p> <p>The book is written by Anne Frank, a young Jewish girl living in Holland during World War Two. She and her family are forced to hide in an attic to avoid capture by the Nazis and her diary entries really bring the incredible story to life. It's hard to believe that someone our own age had to stay hidden in such a small space for so long, in fear of her life. The more I read, the more I felt that I knew Anne; her diary entries are like a window into her heart and soul. There were times when I didn't like Anne very much and other times when I agreed with everything she said. I won't tell you too much about the story in case you are planning to read it. You really should, it's the best book I have read in a long time and I think you'd love it too.</p> <p>If you have read anything recently that you think I'd enjoy, let me know. I think we share a lot of the same tastes and I'd trust you to pick something interesting. My best friend here, Rebecca, is great but she hates reading and is no help at all when it comes to choosing books. She's more of a TV addict.</p>	<p>Only give <u>your</u> address when writing an informal letter.</p> <p>Chatty, informal tone.</p> <p>Book review, as asked for in the question. Review is linked to letter by mention of shared interests.</p>
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Well, I'd better sign off now. I can hear Mum calling me from upstairs, which probably means that she's seen the state of my bedroom. If she has, I'm in big trouble.

Write soon. I love catching up with all the news and hearing what you've been up to.

All the best,

Karen

*Signs off informally.*



## Instructions

This task, which seems very easy at first glance, requires you to be very organised in your approach. Planning is essential. Remember, you are writing to inform.

- If you have the choice, write a set of instructions for a simple, basic game or task with which you are very familiar.
- Think through each of the steps involved and make a quick plan. This need only be a word or two for each step of the instructions. By doing this, you will ensure that you tackle the points in the right order and that you do not leave anything out.
- Give a brief statement outlining the aim of the game or the purpose of the instructions: "The aim of 'Snap' is to win the game by collecting all the cards from the other players."
- If this set of instructions requires the reader to have any special equipment or ingredients, list these first.
- Use headings, numbers or bullet points.
- Keep your sentences short and clear.
- Don't use technical terms your reader may not understand. If you do have to use any technical terms, explain them clearly and concisely in a way that anyone could understand.
- You may wish to advise the reader how to avoid certain common pitfalls. For example, if you were writing a piece on travel, you might wish to say something like: "Before you leave for the airport, weigh your bag on your bathroom scales. Check that it is under the weight allowed by your airline (usually 20 kg) as if it exceeds this limit, you will be charged extra."

Note: I have just given you instructions on how to write instructions. Look at the way the points were organised and the order in which they were made. Did you understand them?

**Choose one of your favourite games and, for the benefit of a person who does not know how to play it, explain the purpose and general rules of the game.**

### **Sample Answer**

<p>SNAP</p> <p>The aim of 'Snap' is to win the game by collecting all the cards from the other players.</p> <p>You will need:</p> <p>A deck of cards. This can be a standard deck or, if very young children are playing, a deck of picture cards. It does not matter, as long as there are matching pairs in the deck (two dogs, four horses etc.).</p> <p>A second deck of cards may be needed if there are more than four players.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two or more players sit in a circle around a table. All players should be easily able to reach the centre of the table.</li> <li>2. All the cards are shuffled and dealt out to the players. The cards must be dealt face-down and the players may not look at their cards.</li> <li>3. If there are more than four players, a second deck may be used.</li> <li>4. Players stack their cards neatly if the dealer has not already done this.</li> <li>5. The player to the left of the dealer takes one of his/her cards and places it, face-up, in the centre of the table. He/she does not look at the card before doing this.</li> <li>6. The next player does the same, and so on around the circle of players.</li> </ol>	<p><i>If you are allowed to choose a game of your choice, then it is a good idea to pick a very simple game.</i></p> <p><i>Try to keep your instructions consistent. Keep an eye on the tenses you use.</i></p> <p><i>Clarity (be clear) and brevity (keep your instructions as brief as possible) will get you a high grade in a task like this.</i></p>
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<p>7. If two cards placed consecutively are of the same numeric value (regardless of suit) the player who sees the match first calls "Snap!" and places his or her hand on the pile. If several players call "Snap" at the same time, the player whose hand reaches the pile first wins the turn.</p> <p>8. The player who wins the turn takes all the cards from the centre of the table, shuffles them, and places them face-down underneath his or her own stack of cards.</p> <p>9. Any player who runs out of cards is disqualified and must leave the game.</p> <p>10. A player who calls "Snap" when there is no match must forfeit two of his or her cards to each of the other players.</p> <p>11. The winner is the player who ends up with all the cards.</p> <p>12. If the players mutually agree to end the game early, then the winner is the player with the most cards.</p>	<p><i>Possible pitfalls addressed.</i></p>
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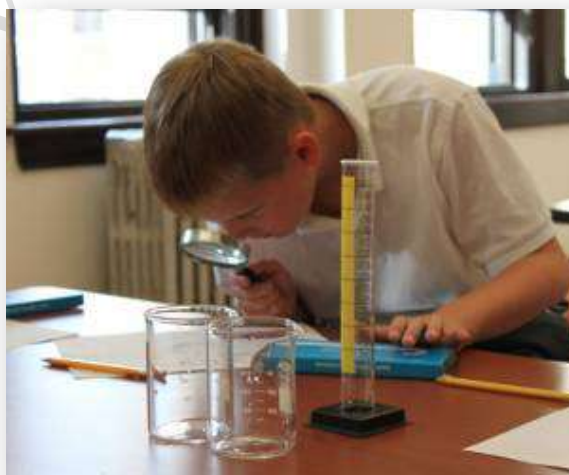


**Write a list of safety guidelines to be displayed on a poster EITHER in your school's Science Lab OR in the Woodwork, Metalwork or Home Economics room. 2007**  
**Junior Cert Exam**

**Sample Answer**

<b>Science Laboratory Safety Guidelines</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not enter the laboratory without a teacher's permission.</li> <li>2. Long hair must be tied back, and all dangling jewellery removed before entering the laboratory.</li> <li>3. Lab coats must be worn at all times.</li> <li>4. Students must wear goggles and/or gloves when instructed to do so by a teacher and must not take them off until the teacher says it is safe to do so.</li> <li>5. Keep the aisles clear of bags, coats and any other personal items at all times.</li> <li>6. Only place books or other equipment on the desk if instructed to do so by a teacher.</li> <li>7. Do not touch any equipment, chemicals or other materials in the laboratory area unless you are instructed to do so by a teacher.</li> <li>8. Do not bring food or drink into the laboratory.</li> <li>9. Do not taste anything in the laboratory. If any substance is accidentally taken into the mouth, the student must spit it out immediately, rinse out his or her mouth with water and then report the incident to a teacher.</li> </ol>	<p><i>I list out the rules in a sensible order. For example, students are told how they should dress before they are told how to safely complete an experiment.</i></p> <p><i>Instructions are clear and brief.</i></p> <p><i>Safety is number one here, so I tell students what to do if something goes wrong.</i></p>

<p>10. All cuts, burns or breakages of equipment must be reported to a teacher.</p> <p>11. Before using any chemical, the label on the bottle must be checked twice to ensure it is the correct chemical for that particular experiment.</p> <p>12. Do not overfill test tubes.</p> <p>13. When heating a test tube, ensure that the top of the tube is pointed away from yourself and any other students who are nearby.</p> <p>14. All equipment must be carefully cleaned and returned to its proper place in the laboratory.</p> <p>15. Wash your hands when you have finished your practical work.</p> <p>16. Behave in a responsible manner at all times.</p>	<p><i>The instructions follow a logical order throughout.</i></p>
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## Speeches or Short Talks

You may be asked to write a short talk or a speech as part of your Functional Writing Section or you may choose to write a speech in the Personal Writing Section. Whichever is the case, the most important things to remember are:

(a) your audience and (b) to plan what you are going to say.

If you are giving a talk, the tone and the form of address can be less formal than in a speech.

Imagine you are delivering the speech aloud. You want to capture your audience's attention and hold it. You don't want them to wonder what the speech was about or what point you were trying to make.

- Before you even begin to plan your talk/speech, underline the key words in the question and decide the following:
- Have I been asked to write a speech or a short talk?
- Who is my target audience? Who will be listening to me?
- What will my speech or talk be about? What point or points will I be trying to make?
- Open with the correct form of address: "Ladies and Gentlemen" or "My fellow students". You always begin by addressing the most important person in the room: "Lord Mayor, my fellow students..."
- If you are giving a talk, the tone and the form of address can be less formal than in a speech.
- Rhetorical questions, an argument framed in the form of a question to which there can be only one possible answer, may be used. 'Why should

we allow our parents to rule every aspect of our lives?' (Answer expected – we shouldn't.)

- Be definite in your speech, you are trying to win the audience over to your way of thinking.
- Quotes can be helpful when writing talks or speeches. "As Benjamin Franklin said, 'By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail'."
- 'Persuader' words can be used to good effect:

*Clearly*

*Plainly*

*Surely*

*Undoubtedly*

*Obviously*

### **Sample Talk 1**

**You have been asked by the Principal of your school to speak to the students preparing to take their Junior Certificate examinations in June 2010. Based on your experience of preparing for your own Junior Certificate examinations, write the text of the talk you would give to the students offering them guidance and encouragement. 2009 Junior Certificate Exam**

Hello, everybody. I can see that you're all wondering what on earth a transition year student is doing on stage at the third year assembly, but there is a good reason. Mr. Duffy asked me to say a few words to you about the day you think will never come: the tenth of June 2010. Yes, I know it seems a long way away now, but trust me, it will be upon you sooner than you think.	<i>Informal opening is appropriate for a talk.</i>
You have probably already been given a lot of advice and heard a lot about the exam from parents, teachers and even brothers and sisters. It's	<i>Rhetorical questions draw the listeners in</i>

<p>hard to take it all in though, isn't it? I know I felt fed up when I was constantly being told to revise, to plan, to focus, to organise myself... It seemed that the nagging would never end. Oddly enough, though, as the exams got closer, I discovered that the advice was sound and that my parents and teachers actually knew what they were talking about. If I could go back in time and sit where you are sitting now, I'd listen a lot more carefully to everything I was told, believe me.</p>	<p><i>and make them feel that the speaker is on their side.</i></p>
<p>The one thing I would definitely do differently if I had my time over is be more organised. I would strongly advise you all to make a study timetable and stick to it. Tidy up your desk and put all those loose sheets into folders. I remember searching frantically for some Irish essay notes the week before the exam, to no avail. When they finally did turn up – under a pile of history notes in a bottom drawer - it was the week after the exam, naturally. If you sort yourself out now and stay on top of your homework and do a little bit of revision every night, you will be fine. Don't let things pile up until closer to the day of the exam. That never pays off. As Benjamin Franklin famously said, "By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."</p>	<p><i>The task specified "advice" so it is important to give some solid, practical advice.</i></p>
<p>It's not all doom and gloom, though, preparing for the Junior Cert. Yes, it is an important exam and yes, it is your first big state exam, but you will get through it. We all do. If you take a bit of time now to think ahead and organise yourself, it will be a piece of cake, honestly. And don't forget that if your parents see that you are on top of your work from the start of the year, they will be far less likely to nag you and much more likely to let you go out with your friends at the weekend! That's one of the best reasons I can think of for sorting yourself out in September and not letting the work mount up.</p>	<p><i>The task also stated that students should be encouraged.</i></p>
<p>Finally this morning, I'd just like to say that I'm sure you'll all do brilliantly in June. Give it your best shot, and remember, "Tús maith, leath na hoibre". It may be a cliché, but it's true. A good start really is half the work. The best of luck to you all.</p>	<p><i>Definite conclusion.</i></p>

## Sample Answer 2:

*Note: Whenever you are answering a functional writing task, you should ask yourself four questions before you begin:-*

**Q.** What **form** should this answer take?

**A.** This is a talk or a speech. Make sure you have a greeting, closing etc.

**Q.** What should the **content** be?

**A.** If you have read the question carefully, you will see that it asked you to do three things:

- a) Discuss the importance of treating everyone in the school equally
- b) Suggest ways in which mutual understanding should be encouraged
- c) Explain the impact this would have on the whole school

**Q.** Who is my **audience**?

**A.** Your audience is students in your year group.

**Q.** What **register** should I use?

**A.** This is a piece of persuasive writing. You should include several features of persuasive writing such as rhetorical questions, 'persuader' words and phrases, and inclusive language: 'we all know' etc.

*Because you are speaking to students the same age as yourself, your language can be quite relaxed. However, it is important to remember that you are trying to impress the examiner in reality, so be sure to avoid text-speak, bad language and too much slang.*

A talk is usually less formal than a speech, so a general opening such as this would be appropriate. However, it is important to show audience awareness throughout. This is not simply an opinion piece, it is a talk and must be treated as such.

➤ **Good morning, everyone.** I'm sure that you have all noticed the posters around the school this week, promoting Equality in the Community. The aim is a wonderful one but the question is, what can we do to make our world a fairer place?

Well, that is why the principal asked me to take the stage this morning and propose some ways in which students could start working towards an equal community in our school.

When I was asked to give this talk, I took some time to talk to

a number of students in each year group, and I was startled to find that almost everyone feels they could be dealt with more fairly in the school community.

A number of junior cycle students reported feeling like the 'babies' of the school and told me they were sick of older pupils looking down on them and telling them they didn't know how things worked in this school without ever taking the time to explain how exactly things did work!

The question asked you to comment on the importance of treating everyone equally in your school community.

Across the year groups, students who had come here from other schools or other countries expressed unhappiness at the way they were viewed as 'outsiders' and not made to feel welcome. It seems that the issue of equality is one which needs to be addressed as soon as possible in order for us to have a happy and a healthy school community.

I can tell from the uncomfortable silence in the hall that a lot of you know exactly what I'm

You should address your audience throughout the talk.

talking about when I tell you this. Maybe you haven't deliberately excluded someone, and maybe you haven't gone out of your way to make anyone feel less worthy or unwelcome, but can you

honestly say that you have done the opposite? Have you ever taken a moment to help out a person who is not in your year group or group of friends?

If you want to do something about that, well, I have some good news for you. You can change this today. It's very easy. Just imagine yourself in another pupil's shoes and ask how you would like to be treated. That might sound overly simple, but it is the key to equality. Treat others as you would like to be treated. Be patient with those who do not know how things are done in the school, and do not use your experience as a tool to belittle others, but rather as a way to help them. A friend of mine goes to a school where fifth and sixth year students mentor first and second year students and I think that is something we should consider bringing in to our school. In fact, I would like to see this expanded to include teaming all new students, in any year, with a student who has been in the school for a number of years and is willing to help someone new settle in. The greater the links between the students, the more understanding and equality we can hope to see developing.

This deals with the second requirement of the question, which was to show how mutual understanding could be encouraged.

We all want our school to be a place we can be proud of now and a school we will be proud of having attended in the years to come. If we want a great school, then we have to acknowledge that we have a role to play in achieving that goal. I propose that we ask our Student Council to set up a mentoring programme for the incoming first years and any other new students. A box should be placed outside the school office so that students who are interested in participating could leave their contact details.

I believe that this would be a huge boost to the students' morale and would ensure that each and every pupil was able to fit in and feel equal to any other pupil in the school, no matter how long they had attended. Such inclusiveness would undoubtedly add to the school spirit and make this an even better place than it is already! So what do you say to an end to complaining and a start to a new era of co-operation and equality for all? Let's be the students who make the difference and make our school a place each and every one of us can be proud of.

This deals with the third aspect of the question, which is the impact your proposed changes would have on the school as a whole.

Thank you for listening so patiently and I feel sure, looking around the hall, that all of us are more than willing to take that extra step to ensure that this is a place that all of us – from first to sixth years – will view as somewhere we are comfortable, happy and fairly treated. It's not a lot to ask, and I know we are more than capable of delivering it.

It is a good idea to end on a positive note. Don't introduce any new ideas in your conclusion, but rather use it to consolidate the ideas you have already mentioned within the piece.

### Sample Speech

**Your community has been offered €100,000 euro for use on any local project. Write the speech you would make to a meeting of your local Community Association in which you outline the project that you think the money should be spent on.**

<p>Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Niamh McCarthy and I am a resident of Oakfield Park. Like everybody here tonight, I was extremely pleased to hear that the local businesses have donated such a large sum of money, €100,000 to be exact, for use on a community project. As you all know, there has been much excitement generated and many people have strong views on how the money should be spent. Although we may have different proposals, I'm sure you will all agree with me that this is a marvellous opportunity for us to improve our local amenities in a way that can, and should, benefit the whole community.</p> <p>I have heard several different ideas put forward on how the money should be used to help specific groups within the area: the elderly, children, teenagers and so forth but what I am proposing is something which I believe will benefit every single member of our community.</p> <p>Everybody here is familiar with the large plot of waste ground between the library and the boy's primary school. At the moment, this is nothing more than a dumping ground for rubbish, it is a dreadful eyesore which badly needs to be tackled once and for all.</p> <p>I propose that we use the money to turn this overgrown field into a community park, with a playground at one end and the rest landscaped with trees and grass. We could also lay some cement pathways and place a number of benches around the park. I have spoken to a landscape gardener who says that all this could be easily achieved for €100,000. The land is owned by the Council and they have already stated that they would have no objection to such a plan, indeed, they have agreed to maintain it by mowing the grass and picking up any litter.</p> <p>A local park with a playground and benches would be an ideal area for</p>	<p><i>Greets the audience appropriately, this is a speech, not an informal talk.</i></p> <p><i>Gives brief introduction to purpose of speech.</i></p> <p><i>Tries to <u>persuade</u> audience to agree.</i></p> <p><i>(Refer to section on persuasive writing.)</i></p> <p><i>Sets out basis of proposal,</i></p> <p><i>acknowledges other viewpoints but says own idea is better.</i></p> <p><i>Introducing specifics of proposal by using contrast - how the park is now.</i></p> <p><i>Concrete proposal, definite plans.</i></p> <p><i>Optimistic that it can be easily achieved.</i></p> <p><i>Outlines benefits.</i></p>
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<p>people of all ages to stroll and meet friends and a playground would be of great benefit to parents of young children. Such an amenity would also enable residents to walk their dogs and would be a safe place for teenagers to meet and chat.</p> <p>I would strongly encourage you to accept this proposal as I believe it will kill two birds with the one stone. An ugly eyesore will be removed and replaced with an attractive, functional park. In catering to young and old and providing a place in which all the members of our community can enjoy themselves, won't we be truly benefiting everyone in our area, not just one specific group? I think so and I hope you do too.</p> <p>Thank you for giving me the chance to speak to you all here this evening. I look forward to your decision.</p>	<p><i>Rhetorical question to persuade audience to agree.</i></p> <p><i>Ends speech quite formally.</i></p>
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## Competition Entries

The form a competition entry should take is usually dictated by the person or organisation setting the rules and regulations.

Read the question carefully. Is there a word limit? Ask yourself how many lines of your answer book this would take up, assuming an average of ten words to the line.

◆ Does the question tell you how the entry should be laid out? If not, then you are free to choose a layout that suits you best. In general, however, it is probably best to stick to a simple layout: on or two paragraphs outlining the reasons why you should be chosen.

◆ Does the question tell you what the content of the entry should be? Check and double check the wording of the question.

1. How many parts are there to the question? Are you told what the content of your entry should be? Is the word 'and' used in the question? Remember, this may mean there are two or more topics that you will need to cover in your answer.

● You are trying to **persuade** the person judging the competition that you are the best choice. Bear this in mind when selecting your register. Use plenty of strong adjectives and adverbs when appropriate. Don't use qualifiers such as 'quite' and 'fairly'. These will weaken your case. Would you give a place on a space mission to someone who said that they were 'quite good at science' or 'fairly okay with heights'?



## **Sample Answer**

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) is running an international competition to send one student from Ireland on the next moon mission. You wish to enter the competition.

The following are the competition entry requirements:

1. Entries should be between 170 and 200 words

2. You should outline

- Your suitability for the mission
- Why you wish to participate in the mission

### **Complete your competition entry.**

*(Junior Certificate Examination 2008)*

Q. What **form** will my writing take?

There is no definite format expected for a competition entry but you must be aware of the restrictions on the length of the piece. There is no need to count the words. Instead, you should have a rough idea of how many words to the line you write on average and multiply that by the number of lines you are using in the answer book. So, if you average ten words to the line, then you will want to use up no more than about two thirds (twenty lines or so) of the answer book. The examiner will be experienced enough to judge at a glance if your piece is much too long or too short, so don't worry about the exact number of words. It is only a guideline.

Q. What will be the **content** of the piece?

A. You must address both parts of the task. In other words, outline both your suitability for the mission and your reasons for wanting to participate. Both sections need not be dealt with in the same amount of detail, but it would be a good idea to think of it in terms of writing one short paragraph for each aspect.

Q. Who will my **audience** be?

A. The audience will be adults whose job it is to pick the winning entry.

Q. What **register** will I use?

A. Your language should be persuasive and enthusiastic.

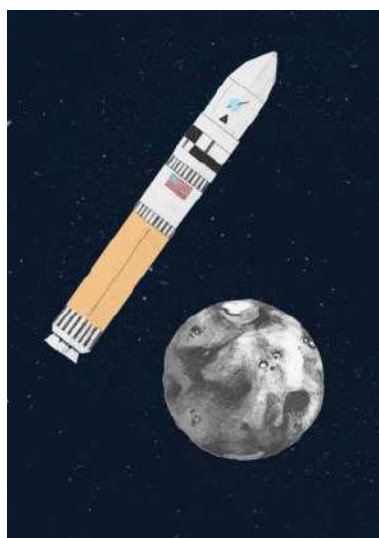
Why on earth should you send an Irish student into space? And why me in particular? Well, I believe I am the right choice. I am a keen science student and I was the leader of the winning team at this year's prestigious 'Young Scientist' competition. Our project, 'Reaching Out to the Stars' looked at the possibility of colonising other planets. I believe our success proves that I work well with others and that I have plenty of initiative.

I have always dreamt of going into space, and the 'Young Scientist' project only fuelled that desire. Ireland does not have a space programme, but we have many potential space travellers and scientists: students who would be a positive asset to NASA in years to come. I believe that my participation in this mission would generate huge Irish interest in NASA and in the study of science. I would love the chance to come back and tell other students what space travel is really like, and why they too should pursue their dreams of working with NASA some day. My dream is to reach out, not just to space, but also to future generations of scientists.

*A rhetorical question can be a good way to draw the reader in and make them want to read on.*

*Scientific experiences are linked to this mission.*

*Having mentioned your suitability for the mission, you must also say why you wish to go.*



## Reports

When you are writing a report, ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Who has asked me to write the report and why?
- ◆ What is the problem or issue on which I am reporting?
- ◆ Do I need facts and figures?
- ◆ What topics are to be covered?
- ◆ What is supposed to happen as a result of the report?

Planning your report

- ◆ Give your report a title. This can be a simple rewording of the question.
- ◆ State the aim of the report in the introduction/title.
- ◆ Say who commissioned (asked you to write) the report and what was examined as a result.
- ◆ State what research was carried out.
- ◆ Look at the facts, detail any problems and highlight any good points.
- ◆ If you wish, you may use bullet points or numbers to organise your findings.
- ◆ Draw a conclusion from what you have just outlined.
- ◆ Make recommendations for remedying any problems.

## Sample Report

**You are a member of your school's Student Council. As there are now students from a range of different nationalities attending the school, your Principal has asked the Council to come up with some suggestions to help your school to develop as an intercultural community. Write a report to be submitted by the Student Council to the Principal outlining your ideas. 2008 Junior Certificate Exam.**

<p><b>Report on the ways in which the school could be developed as an intercultural community.</b></p> <p><b>Terms of reference</b></p> <p>This report was compiled by the Student Council and commissioned by Mr. Eoghan Herlihy, Principal, St. Columba's College, Ennis, to investigate the ways in which changes could be made to the school in order to reflect the different nationalities of the students attending the school. The report also includes recommendations based on the findings.</p> <p><b>Methods of gathering information</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ A total of 150 students were given a detailed questionnaire designed to establish what they are dissatisfied with at present and what changes they would like to see brought about. A copy of this questionnaire is posted on the school noticeboard and may be viewed at any time.</li><li>➤ Students were encouraged to add their own suggestions at the bottom of the questionnaire.</li><li>➤ The staff was also questioned and asked if there were any suggestions they would make or whether they had ideas about ways in which classes could be tailored to help develop an awareness of the different nationalities within the school.</li></ul>	<p><i>Title /</i> <i>Introduction</i></p> <p><i>Who</i> <i>commissioned the</i> <i>report.</i></p> <p><i>Procedure.</i></p>
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## Findings

- 89% of the students surveyed feel that the school needs to change to accommodate the growing number of students from other countries.
- 94% of students surveyed feel that they do not know much about the customs, language and culture of the other nationalities represented in the school and they say they would like to know more.
- The staff members who were interviewed all agreed that they would be happy to work with the Student's Council in helping to teach students about other cultures. However, they said that they would prefer if students in third year and sixth year did not spend more than one hour a month of class time on any subject which is not on the syllabus. They feel these students should be concentrating on their exam subjects.

*Findings. Bullets and numbering are optional.*

*Language of information used throughout. No opinion given.*

## Conclusions

- Based on the findings of this report, it would appear that the majority of staff and students are keen to see the school develop and to embrace the different cultures which are now so widely represented within our community.
- Students came up with a number of suggestions which met with the teachers' approval and which, it is felt, could be implemented without much difficulty.

## Recommendations

1. The art classes should make posters for the reception area of the school, welcoming visitors in each of the different languages of the

<p>different nationalities represented in the school.</p> <p>2. On an agreed day each month, students should be allowed to use the cookery room to make foods from different countries. These could be put on tables in the assembly room and tasted at lunch time.</p> <p>3. First year and transition year students could do projects on the countries which are represented in the school, and the resulting projects could be hung in the assembly area for all students to read.</p> <p>4. CSPE classes could give students from other countries the opportunity to talk to their fellow classmates about their countries of origin, and how they feel about living in Ireland.</p> <p>Signed Marie O'Sullivan Chairperson Student Council</p> <p>17<sup>th</sup> April 2014</p>	<p><i>Suggestions / Recommendations</i></p> <p><i>Name of person who compiled report (optional).</i></p>
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## Reviews

When you are writing a review of a film, book, concert or television programme, remember to give your own opinion. Think about the content and decide what you are going to say about the quality.

Your review should be structured as follows:

2. **Introduction** – tell the reader what you are going to review.
3. If it's a book, give the title and the name of the author.
4. If it's a film, give the names of the principal actors and the director.
5. If it's a concert, give the name of the band and the venue.
6. **Description** – Describe the film/book/CD/concert in some detail but remember not to give away the ending.
7. **Evaluation** – Tell the reader what you thought of the film etc. Your opinion is important, it is what the reader wants to know. Explain why you liked or disliked it. Think of the advice you've been given for answering questions on Paper 2, a lot of it applies here. It is not enough to say that you found the film 'boring' or 'brilliant', you must say why.
8. Think of your audience when you say what you liked and disliked about the film/book/event. Are you writing for your peers (school magazine) or a serious publication? Is this film or book in a series with which they are likely to be familiar? (For example, James Bond, Twilight, Harry Potter.) You may wish to



refer to previous books/films if that is the case. 'This is the third book in the "Twilight" series and it came as somewhat of a disappointment to me,' etc.

9. **Recommendation** – End with a recommendation in favour of the film/book if you liked it. If you didn't, advise your readers not to waste their time and money.

It would be no harm to prepare a review of a film/book/concert/CD that you enjoyed. This way, you will have some facts if such a task should come up in the exam.

### **Sample answer**

#### **Review**

**Write a review for your school magazine of any film that you have enjoyed. Your review should encourage other students to go and see it.**

<p>Brace the mainsail and shiver those timbers. Gore Verbinski's superb, swashbuckling "Pirates of the Caribbean" weighed anchor at cinemas nationwide this weekend, and, in the interests of keeping the readers of our school magazine informed, I rushed off to see it.</p> <p>There has been so much hype over this long-awaited release that I'm sure everybody knows the basic plot, but just in case any of you have had your noses so firmly stuck in your school textbooks that you haven't been able to keep up with what's new in the world of films, here's a brief synopsis.</p> <p>Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) is a pirate who's famous for his ineptitude. He manages to gallantly rescue the governor's beautiful daughter Elizabeth Swann (Keira Knightly) from drowning, but immediately finds himself arrested for piracy and is flung in jail. However, his luck turns again when the town is attacked by the pirate captain Barbossa (Geoffry Rush). Barbossa kidnaps Elizabeth, and the heroic young</p>	<p><i>Introduction mentions director and name of film.</i></p> <p><i>Keeps audience in mind.</i></p> <p><i>Description, giving enough detail to let the readers judge whether or not it's the sort of story that might interest them, but the ending is not given away.</i></p>
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blacksmith Will Turner (Orlando Bloom) springs Jack from jail so that they can team up to save the girl, whom Will has loved from afar for a long time. But Barbossa is no ordinary pirate. He and his crew are cursed to walk the Earth as the living dead until a blood sacrifice can restore their humanity. And Barbossa seems to think Will is the ideal candidate for this sacrifice. Why should he think that? And will the damsel in distress be rescued? Well, if you want to find out, you'll have to go and see the film.

It's the perfect choice for a fun evening at the cinema as it has it all. There are swordfights, chases, battles and a love interest, of course. There is virtually no let-up in the action from start to finish. I was on the edge of my seat for most of it, and the twists and turns in the plot kept me guessing throughout.

The film is rated PG-13, but I don't think it's suitable for the under twelves, even if they are accompanied by an adult. Without giving too much away, some of the scenes with Barbossa's undead crew would be very frightening for a younger audience. But anyone of my age – 15 – would probably relish the scare.

This is a must-see film. It's long: nearly two and a half hours, but the characters are so engaging and the action so entertaining that you won't notice the time fly by. Go this weekend. You won't regret it.

*Tone is positive, as the task asked that the readers be encouraged to go and see the film.*

*Evaluation – the writer gives opinions and explains them.*

*Mentions those to whom the film might appeal.*

*Recommendation.*

## Blurbs

You may be asked to write a blurb for the back of a DD cover, for example. This is a **shorter** task than a review for a magazine or a newspaper, but there are similarities. The main difference between a review and a blurb is that the blurb must always be positive. You want to write it in such a way that the person who picks up the book or the DVD will be intrigued and enticed and want to buy the item. A blurb is like a cross between an advertisement and a review.

The length of the blurb may not be specified, but as a general rule you should not exceed 150 words or fifteen to twenty lines (half to three quarters of a page) of your answer booklet. Remember, this is a rough guide. There is no need to count your words, even if a word count is specified. Just bear in mind that the average word to the line is eight, so 150 words would be between fifteen and twenty lines of the answer booklet. (There are usually thirty lines on each page.)

The task, like an advertisement, will test your ability to write briefly but persuasively. This can be more difficult than it might appear. If you are thinking of attempting a blurb should the question come up, you should definitely have had plenty of practice in writing them beforehand. Read the blurbs on the back of your DVD covers, games and books at home to give yourself some inspiration.

**Most books and DVDs have a short blurb on the outside of the back cover. Typically this is a brief text which describes and praises the plot, characterisation, acting, etc. Write such a blurb for any book or DVD of your choice. (2006 Junior Certificate Examination)**

Q. What **form** will my writing take?

This will be a short blurb.

Q. What will be the **content** of the piece?

A. You will have to give a brief description of the plot of the film or book, plus any relevant information about actors, directors etc.

Q. Who will my **audience** be?

A. The audience will be the general public.

Q. What **register** will I use?

A. Your language should be persuasive, descriptive and enthusiastic. In as short a space as possible, you should convince people to buy the DVD or the book.

### Sample Answer

<p><i>Pompeii</i> by Robert Harris</p> <p>It's August in Italy. The heat has driven Rome's wealthiest citizens to their summer villas in Pompeii. But their water supply is dwindling. The Aqua Augusta has dried to a trickle, and without water, life in the towns on the Bay of Naples is under threat.</p> <p>It's up to the young engineer Attilius, to save the day. But Ampliatus, a corrupt millionaire, seems bent on stopping Attilius from finding the source of the water failure. Why? Ampliatus' beautiful daughter is determined to thwart her father's murderous plans and to help Attilius. What none of them realise, however, is that time is running out. Mount Vesuvius is about to blow, with unimaginable force. Who will survive one of the most destructive forces ever unleashed by nature?</p> <p>Robert Harris' explosive blockbuster brings to life the thrilling story of the most famous volcanic eruption in history.</p>	<p><i>Name the book and the author before you begin your blurb.</i></p> <p><i>Give enough details of the plot to interest potential readers. Mention tension, complications or conflict. Asking questions is a good way of doing this.</i></p> <p><i>Your language must be very positive throughout.</i></p>
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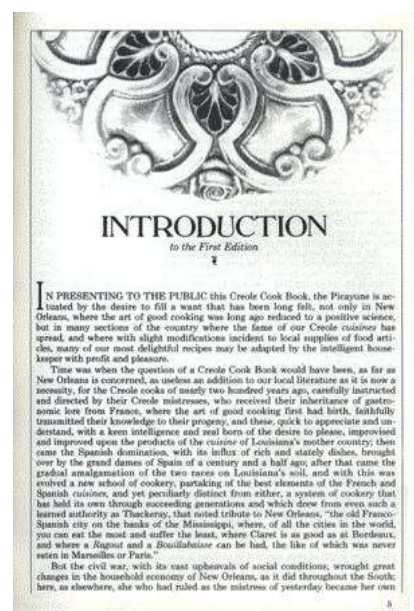
## Introduction to a Book

Usually, those who write forewords are people who are famous in their own right and know a great deal about the subject of the book. Still, there is no reason why you should not be just as capable as any of them!

When writing a foreword, you need to bear in mind the guidelines you are given in the exam question, if any. If you are asked to mention certain things, then be sure to do so. You don't have to spend the same amount of time on all of them, but they must be dealt with.

Regardless of the guidelines, you should address each of the following:

- What the book is about
  - Why the book was written
  - Why it is important and worth reading
  - Outline any benefits to the reader (maybe they will learn about a specific topic or be better able to cope with certain circumstances or even just indulge in some escapism and light-hearted entertainment).
  - Keep your tone chatty, personal and engaging.
  - All you need to do is share your opinions with the readers. Remember, they have probably bought the book already if they are reading the introduction.
  - Refer to specific chapters or stories in the book.
- Obviously, you can make these up!



**Sample Question:**

Your class has decided to produce a collection of writing (e.g. poems, stories and articles) by young people about happy memories. Write the text for the introduction of this book, in which you explain the purpose of the book and why your class thinks it is important to celebrate our happiest memories.

**Sample Answer:**

When our class first came up with the idea of compiling this collection of writing as a fund raiser for the Make-A-Wish children's charity, we wondered what we should choose as a topic for the book. After several discussions (some quite heated!) someone suggested that we should focus on happy memories as that is exactly what we hope to provide for those children fighting life-threatening illnesses.

Once we had decided on the topic, we put posters around the school inviting submissions in the form of poems, stories or articles about happy memories. To say the response was enthusiastic would be the understatement of the year! Within a fortnight, we had over one hundred and fifty pieces to sort through. It was a tough task as there were so many students keen to share their wonderful, funny and warm experiences but we finally narrowed our selection down to the final forty. I think you will agree that the result is a success.

I would encourage you to dip into the book at random any time you feel that you need to be cheered up. One of my favourites is Conor O'Reilly's hilarious poem 'Sink or Swim' in which he describes the summer his older brother taught him how to surf, not without some serious difficulty! I also loved Clodagh Murray's 'Santa Claws' in which she remembers getting a kitten as a surprise Christmas present after years of pleading with her parents for a pet. Whatever you select, I am sure you will find the pieces as heart-warming, entertaining and uplifting as I did.

Hopefully our fund-raising for Make-A-Wish will enable other young people to have similarly happy memories and perhaps they will even contribute to our next book! Thank you for supporting our cause and enjoy this treasure trove of nostalgia!

## Newspaper Articles

When you are writing an article, you should include:

- **Headline, by-line and subheading.**
- The headline is the title, it should be clear and maybe even amusing, depending on the topic and the publication for which you are writing. For example, in a light-hearted article, the title might be snappy or humorous, using alliteration or a play on words.
- The by-line is the name of the person who has written the article. It is placed under the headline.
- Decide on the type of publication for which you are writing. This will determine the tone of your article and the type of language you use. If you are writing for a magazine, you may decide to use a more light-hearted approach than if you are writing for a serious broadsheet.
- Think about the type of language you should use. If you are writing a serious article about a controversial topic, you may choose to use the language of argument or persuasion. If you are writing a more light-hearted article on a less serious topic, you may use the language of persuasion and include several personal anecdotes (funny little stories from your own experiences.)
- Read as many articles as you can between now and the Junior Cert. Most of the major newspapers are available online, so you don't even need to buy a paper to keep up with the news.

Two main types of article:

### **News Report/Sports Report.**

When you are planning a news story, think of an upside down pyramid. The most important information is at the top (beginning of article) and the least important information is at the bottom (end of article). This way, the article will still make sense even if it is severely edited due to space restrictions.

Unless you are writing a news article for a tabloid paper, your piece should not be opinionated. The language of information should be used.

LEAD / HEADLINE

Who? What? Where? When? Why?

Detail 1 Detail 2 Detail 3

Final Detail

### **Feature Article**

A feature article is usually intended to amuse or inform. It often centres around human interest stories and can be opinionated. Personal anecdotes may be used and the tone is frequently light-hearted. Of course, the topic may be a serious one, in which case, the tone should be adjusted accordingly. Read the question carefully and if it is linked to the Reading section, for example, then study the text on which it is based. This will give you a clear idea of what is required.



### Sample News Article – Taken from The Irish Times.

<p><b>Gardaí Threatened In Firearm Incident</b></p> <p>Linda McGrory</p> <p>An investigation is under way after gardaí were threatened with a firearm as they broke up a row outside a rural pub in Co. Donegal in the early hours of yesterday.</p> <p>The incident happened in Gleneely, a village about five kilometres from Carndonagh, following an altercation between several locals and a number of people from the North.</p> <p>Gardaí say a man produced a .38 revolver and pointed it at them as they responded to the melee outside the Orchard Bar at about 12.30 am.</p> <p>Supt William Johnston, who is leading the investigation, said the man fled the scene in a 4x4 vehicle after discarding the firearm. Supt Johnston said the area was sealed off and a number of people were interviewed. The weapon was later recovered in undergrowth a short distance from the pub.</p> <p>A man originally from the North was arrested during a follow-up search of a house about four miles from the village. At least one stolen car was recovered from the back of the property, say gardaí. The man was brought to Buncrana Garda station where he was detained under Section 30 of the Offences Against the State Act.</p> <p>"An incident room has been set up at Buncrana Garda station to piece together what happened on the night and it is envisaged a number of people will be interviewed further as part of the investigation," Supt Johnston said.</p> <p>Buncrana gardaí are appealing for witnesses to the incident.</p>	<p><i>Headline</i></p> <p><i>By-line</i></p> <p><i>Main fact</i></p> <p><i>Facts become less important to main body of article as we read on. The piece could be cut at any time and it would still make sense.</i></p> <p><i>Quotes from source.</i></p> <p><i>The writer does not express any opinion on the story.</i></p>
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## 2005 Exam Papers

**Look at the Food Pyramid that appears on Page 4 of Paper x. The recommended servings on the right state the fundamentals of a healthy diet**

**Using the information provided, write a short article for your school magazine promoting healthy eating.**

*A feature article is usually intended to amuse or inform. It often centres around human interest stories.*

<p>We all know we should eat healthily. We've been told it by our parents for as long as we can remember; we're told it in school, and we're told it by the media. Yet we choose to ignore the advice, by and large. Well, maybe it's time we started listening and stopped snacking.</p> <p>If we eat healthily, we'll look better, feel better, and have more money to spend on the things we really want. Not only do they do they do our skin and hair no favours, but processed, sugary foods are ridiculously expensive compared to the healthier options of fruit or a sandwich. One trip to the shop to buy crisps, cola and chocolate can easily set you back by five euro. If you do that five or six times a week, you're potentially wasting a huge amount of money. Just think. If you saved that money up for twelve weeks or so, you could buy a laptop or an iPhone. That sounds much more tempting than that daily bag of pick 'n mix, doesn't it?</p> <p>So, now that we've looked at some of the reasons not to eat unhealthy food, it's time to look at ways to make it easier to eat healthily.</p> <p>One of the first things you should do every day is to make sure you eat a good breakfast. Bread and cereals provide plenty of slow-release energy and will ensure you don't get the craving for tuck shop Mars Bars at ten thirty. Fruit is a great way of getting natural sugars at breakfast time. Try a smoothie or even a glass of juice instead of a cup of tea with your cereal and toast.</p>	<p><i>Use of "We" makes the article more personal and less like a lecture.</i></p> <p><i>Balance: "started listening and stopped snacking".</i></p> <p><i>Rhetorical questions appropriate for persuasive writing.</i></p> <p><i>This article is to <u>promote</u> healthy eating, which means <u>persuading</u> the readers to take your advice.</i></p> <p><i>Money and appearance are important to many teens. These points show an awareness of the audience.</i></p>
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<p>It might be a good idea to make your school lunch before you make your filling breakfast. It's difficult to imagine you'll be hungry again after a bowl of porridge, a smoothie and a couple of slices of hot, buttered toast. When you are making your lunch, try to avoid biscuits and bars. A sandwich, a fruit yoghurt and some cheese makes a healthy lunch.</p> <p>It is said that it takes three weeks to break a habit. That is not a lot of time. So, try a healthy eating regime for three weeks. If, at the end of that time, you don't look better, have more energy and more money and wonder why you ever craved junk food, then I'll eat my hat!</p>	<p><i>Practical, positive advice.</i></p> <p><i>Brief conclusion, referring back to opening paragraphs.</i></p>
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## Proposal

While this task has never been set as an exam question in the Junior Cert itself, it did come up in the DEB Pre in 2013. The reading comprehension in the Pre was an extract from the blog of Claire Hennessy, a young writer.

Imagine you have been asked to recommend a guest speaker to address students in your school. You wish to nominate Claire Hennessy, the author of the writer's blog in Section 1 of this paper. Write out the recommendation you would make.

### Sample Answer 2:

*Note: Whenever you are answering a functional writing task, you should ask yourself four questions before you begin:-*

**Q.** What **form** should this answer take?

**A.** This is a recommendation. It is a proposal, so you should think of it as a letter you are sending to an individual or group. As this question asks you to recommend someone to speak at your school, you might want to address your proposal to the principal, the head of the English Department or the Board of Management. You should give reasons for your choice.

**Q.** What should the **content** be?

**A.** You should try to think of three or four reasons why you would choose Claire Hennessy. Think of why she might appeal to students in your school and what she would have to offer them by way of advice etc.

**Q.** Who is my **audience**?

**A.** Your audience is students in your school.

**Q.** What **register** should I use?

**A.** This is a piece of persuasive writing. You should include your own opinions throughout. The members of the 'selection committee' are not specified, so it is as well to err on the side of caution and keep your language as formal as possible, under the circumstances. You will not be penalised for being too correct, but you may be penalised for being too informal.

FAO: Mr David Lordon,  
Head of English,  
Christian Brothers College,  
Cork.

From: Killian McCarthy, Student Council President

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2014

Re: Guest Speaker during Library Week

As president of the Student Council, I was asked to recommend a guest speaker to address the students at the upcoming assembly to mark the start of Library Ireland Week. I believe that the popular young Irish writer, Claire Hennessy, would be an ideal choice for this role.

I borrowed this from the Media Studies section of the exam, but you could make up any plausible reason for inviting a guest speaker to the school. You don't have to come up with a reason, of course, but it does give a focus to your talk.

One of the main aims of the school's involvement in Library Week is to encourage all students, from first year to sixth year, to enjoy both reading and writing, and I am positive that hearing Claire Hennessy reading from some of her own books as well as addressing students on tapping into their own creativity would go a long way towards helping us to make this a reality.

I have been a fan of Claire Hennessy's work for many years and I know that if she were given the opportunity to read a few passages from her books she would hook others just as she hooked me. Young people are notoriously intolerant of anything that does not instantly capture and hold their attention, and Hennessy's publishing success proves that she has the ability to tap into this most difficult of markets.

It is not just Claire Hennessy's books that make her an ideal guest speaker, however. In recent months I have begun to follow her regular blogs in which she talks about her life and work. What struck me the most about her blog is how interesting and funny she is. I am sure that anyone who can write so entertainingly will be an equally amusing and fascinating speaker. Hennessy's tone in her blogs is relaxed and chatty but at the same time she motivates her readers to

While it does not matter in which order you approach the questions on Paper II, I would strongly advise you to do the Reading section first when tackling Paper I. This is because the Functional Writing question/s can be based on the Reading section and you do not have time to go through the whole comprehension passage a number of times for different purposes.

In general, it is better to answer the text-based questions first as they can often provide useful material for your own writing.

stick at their work. I know that I nodded in agreement as I read her description of needing a second alarm clock to drag her out of bed and battling the lure of the internet in order to get her work done, and I have no doubt that other students in the school would find her honesty and work ethic both relatable and inspiring.

Another reason for Hennessy's suitability as a guest speaker is that she would appeal to students from first year to sixth year. After all, she wrote her first book when she was only twelve, and has gone on to become a hugely successful author and teacher of creative writing. That last point is important in that it shows Hennessy is used to talking to and encouraging young people. In her blog she writes enthusiastically about her interactions with her students and says that she enjoys helping aspiring writers 'to discover their own strengths and weaknesses and what way of writing suits them best.' I think it is clear from this that Hennessy would be more than capable of addressing and inspiring the full range of ages in the school. Indeed, she says in one of her blogs that she is well-used to school visits and considers the question and answer sessions to be great fun. Such a positive attitude would endear her to all the students, I am sure, as well as firing their own enthusiasm for writing.

You should let the examiner know that your talk is coming to an end. A talk that ends abruptly indicates that your answer was not well planned.

In conclusion then, I am certain that should the school be fortunate enough to secure the services of Claire Hennessy as a guest speaker, it would be an occasion to remember and a most fitting

introduction to a week of literacy and learning.



## Advertisement

- An advertisement is meant to grab the reader's attention immediately.
- Decide what type of customer you are trying to attract. This will dictate the tone of your advertisement.
- Start with a strong headline if possible, making a bold statement and arousing curiosity.
- You may wish to ask a provocative question, 'Have you had enough of boring TV programmes?'
- Introduce your product in an appealing way.
- Use bullet points to list the attractive features you have on offer.
- Elaborate on these points in the next part of your ad. Explain the benefits of these features in more detail.
- Be clear and be positive.
- Use plenty of adjectives.
- Make sure your grammar and spelling are correct.

An advertisement may well be shorter than some of the other writing tasks but that does not mean it is the easiest option. In an advertisement, each word must work for you. Your job is to capture and hold your reader's attention. People skip over ads in magazines and newspapers, how will you make yours stand out?

**Sample Advertisement - taken from Discover Ireland.ie**

**You are asked to write an advertisement promoting Ireland as a fun place to visit.**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discover Ireland.ie</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Right Here, Right Now</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Take Your Pick From Thrilling Water Sports to High Culture</b></p> <p>Ireland's got a lot up its sleeve when it comes to things to do!</p> <p>Did you know that we're now one of Europe's top destinations for whale watching, or that surfing dudes flock to our beaches to catch sky - high waves, or that you can clip - clop along country roads in your own horse drawn caravan?</p> <p>If you don't like getting intimate with the great outdoors, you can occupy yourself with a diverse range of sightseeing attractions from ancient monuments to multi - media interpretative centres, top theatres and art galleries and some of the most memorable festivals around the world!</p> <p>And if you are looking for a special gift, take a look at our Irish Crafts Section for details of shops, galleries and studios recommended by the Crafts Council of Ireland.</p> <p>It's all on your doorstep, so what are you waiting for - there's more to life than work, so let's play!</p>	<p><i>Sense of immediacy added by words, 'Right Here, Right Now'.</i></p> <p><i>Mentions variety, appeals to many different types of tourist.</i></p> <p><i>Rhetorical questions, one of the features of persuasive writing.</i></p> <p><i>Draws the reader in.</i></p> <p><i>Something for everyone, positive, upbeat tone.</i></p> <p><i>Lists more available options – short and to the point.</i></p> <p><i>Makes visiting Ireland sound fun. Challenges reader to discover it for themselves.</i></p>
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The purpose of an interview is to learn more about the person being interviewed, their background, life, work, likes, and dislikes.

**Points to note**

- Give the name of your publication / radio station / TV show.
- State the name of the person you are interviewing and give some brief background information.
- Give each speaker a new line each time they ask or answer a question.
- Put the initials of the speaker before their question / answer each time.
- The interviewer's questions and comments should be short, one sentence should be plenty.
- The interviewee can answer in more detail, usually a short paragraph.
- The interviewer's tone is usually fairly neutral.
- The interviewee's tone is usually relaxed and chatty.
- It can be a nice touch to end the interview with some information about the book, film, concert etc. For example, you might mention where and when the concert is taking place. See the end of the interview with Drew Barrymore for another example.

<p>In a recent interview for 'movies.ie', Jane Smith caught up with Drew Barrymore to talk about voicing the pampered pooch in "Beverley Hills Chihuahua", working with animals, and her thoughts on the Oscars...</p>	<p><i>Gives background to interviewee and name of publication.</i></p>
<p>JS: What a fun movie, well done! I must ask you, as an actress, did you find it difficult to voice a talking dog in this film?</p>	<p><i>Abbreviations given for names of interviewer and interviewee.</i></p>
<p>DB: "Well that was easy for me because I have three rescue dogs so the panting and barking was my favourite part of it. But I did kind of channel to my dogs and tried to imagine how they think and feel."</p>	<p><i>Light hearted questions – appropriate for an interview of this type. The subject is not a serious one.</i></p>
<p>JS: What are your dogs' names?</p>	<p><i>Short questions.</i></p>
<p>DB: "Flossie, Templeton and Vivien. Vivien came almost three years after Flossie and Templeton, who are brother and sister. She is the ultimate diplomat. Flossie and Templeton were rescues at six weeks old."</p>	<p><i>Longer answers.</i></p>
<p>JS: What kind of dogs are they?</p>	
<p>DB: "I don't know. They're certainly not pure breed. I love mutts. I like their personalities. Vivien's an Australian Border Collie mutt from the pound. She went right up to Flossie and got on her back in the submissive position and started licking her face. With Templeton she got up and started chewing on his leg and wrestling with him. She understood that Flossie needed to remain the queen and that Templeton would remain the playmate."</p>	
<p>JS: Are most of your friends four-legged or famous?</p>	
<p>DB: "(Laughs) Some of the people I'm friends with are in the business, but my best friend is a make-up artist. I have friends who aren't in this industry but that's also what I live and breathe a lot of the time so of course you do end up with similar people.</p>	

<p>JS: Do you remember your first pet?</p> <p>DB: "My first animal was a grey cat that I named Gertie because my godfather Steven Spielberg got her for me and I named her Gertie after my name in ET. She didn't have much personality though. I was much more the whip-cracking joker in that film. Gertie wasn't like that."</p> <p>JS: Do you think you'll ever complete your journey and win an Oscar?</p> <p>DB: "I don't like to talk about things like that. I think it jinxes it."</p> <p>JS: What would you choose, an Oscar or a husband for life?</p> <p>DB: "You cannot say that. You just cannot ask that question."</p> <p>"Beverly Hills Chihuahua" is in Irish cinemas from Jan 16th.</p>	<p><i>Says where and when film can be seen.</i></p>
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Sample Interview 2, taken from a website.

<p><u>Love at First Bite</u></p> <p>Stephenie Meyer talks about vampires, teen love, and her first novel, 'Twilight'</p> <p>By Rick Margolis -- School Library Journal, 10/1/2005</p> <p>RM: Were you surprised when Twilight was purchased for over \$500,000, and its film rights were sold?</p> <p>SM: It felt very strange, like some sort of practical joke for quite a while. And now, I still don't believe it. It's kind of surreal to me every time I hear somebody say, "Wow, I really loved it."</p> <p>RM: How would you describe the story?</p> <p>SM: I have a hard time with that. Because if I say to someone, "You know, it's about vampires," then immediately they have this mental</p>	<p>'Snappy' title. (Excuse the pun.) Name of interviewer, name of publication.</p> <p>Relaxed, chatty tone.</p> <p>Short question.</p> <p>Longer answer.</p>
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<p>image of what the book is like. And it's so <i>not</i> like the other vampire books out there—Anne Rice's and the few that I've read. It isn't that kind of dark and dreary and blood-thirsty world. Then when you say, "It's set in high school," a lot of people immediately put it in another pool. It's easy to pigeonhole with different descriptions.</p> <p>RM: When you were a teen, did you fall hard for somebody, like Bella falls for Edward?</p> <p>SM: Yes, I did once, and it wasn't one of those happy things.</p> <p>RM: Was it difficult to portray vampires sympathetically?</p> <p>SM: They ended up being vampires in the way they are because I have strong opinions on free will. No matter what position you're in, you always have a choice. So I had these characters who were in a position where traditionally they would have been the bad guys, but, instead, they chose to be something different—a theme that has always been important to me.</p> <p>RM: <i>Twilight's</i> emotional intensity reminds me of Jane Austen and the Brontë sisters.</p> <p>SM: I love Austen and the Brontës. L. M. Montgomery's <i>Anne of Green Gables</i> books were also a big influence on me, and Orson Scott Card is one of my favourite authors. Shakespeare is a big influence. I'm always coming back to things he has done.</p> <p>RM: How did you juggle writing a novel with raising three young sons?</p> <p>SM: I did a lot of writing at night, because after they were in bed was the best time to concentrate. But during the day, I really couldn't stay away from the computer; so I was up and down a lot. I'd sit down and write a few lines, and then I'd get up and give somebody juice, then sit down and write a few more lines, and then go change a diaper.</p> <p>RM: What are you working on these days?</p> <p>SM: Right now, I'm actually working on sci-fi. But again, it's sci-fi for people who don't like reading sci-fi.</p>	<p><i>Refers to interviewee's personal experiences.</i></p> <p><i>Short answer indicates the topic is best left unexplored.</i></p>
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## Describing a Picture

- This is quite unlikely to come up, but it was a question in the past so I am including it for that reason. While this option may seem off-putting at first, it is actually quite easy once you know how to approach it.
- The purpose of this task is to test your ability to describe the picture as accurately as you possibly can.
- You are not required to give your opinion on the picture or to interpret it in any way, as you would be asked to do in the Media Studies section.
- Structure your answer logically. Start with an overall description of the entire picture, e.g. "This is a picture of an old, two storey mansion house."
- Divide the picture into sections and describe each section in turn.
- Give specific detail about what you see in each section of the picture.
- When you are describing the visual text, be as precise as possible. Use the following terms:
  - ◆ Background
  - ◆ Foreground – the space to the front of the photograph.
  - ◆ Frame – the borders of the picture.
  - ◆ Left, right, centre, top etc.
  - ◆ Black and white / full colour / monochrome

If you observe any special features, such as camera angles or lighting effects, comment on them.

**Tip:** Imagine you are describing the picture over the phone. The person on the other end of the line is an artist, who will draw a picture based on your description. Have you given them all the information they need?



This is a black and white picture of an old, derelict, two storey mansion house. To the left of the house is a small wing with four windows. There appears to be a wing to the right of the house too but we can only see the roof and chimney as there is a large metal container blocking the view. The main part of the house has four windows on the ground floor, five on the second floor and three on the roof. All of the windows are long and divided by small panes, in the Georgian style. The front door of the house is flanked by two columns. There are chimneys at either end of the roof on both the main house and the two wings. The house is unpainted and the façade consists of large, flat, stone slabs, all cut to the same size. There is a notice stuck to the right hand column at the front door; it is not clear but appears to be a builders' warning sign.

In the foreground, there is a pile of what appears to be builders' rubble and to the left of the frame is a heap of bricks or slabs beside a shipping container. The container is angled to the right, pointing away from the house. The driveway in front of the house is in poor condition.