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IELTS

GENERAL

WRITING TASK

MASTERCLASS

**IELTS Writing Task 1 & IELTS
Writing Task 2**

MARC ROCHE

IELTS General Writing Task Masterclass ®

IELTS Writing Task 1 & IELTS Writing Task 2

Marc Roche

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About the Author



Marc Roche

Marc is originally from Manchester and currently lives in Spain. He is a father, teacher, trainer, writer, and entrepreneur. He has collaborated with organisations such as the British Council, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, and the University of Technology Sydney, among others. Marc has also worked with multinationals such as Nike, GlaxoSmithKline, and Bolsas y Mercados.

Learn more about Marc at amazon.com/author/marcroche

FREE Professional Writing Course



Details are available AT THE END of this book

About This Book

The writing part of the IELTS test is often quite confusing for candidates. “IELTS General Writing Task Masterclass” by Marc Roche and IDM Business & Law ®, is a complete IELTS preparation self-study book, which focuses on practical English writing skills for the official IELTS exam. This is an excellent book for preparing the IELTS Writing Task 1 & IELTS Writing Task 2 within the IELTS General Training exam.

You will be shown step-by-step how to answer the different questions and avoid the most common mistakes in the exam through a series of easy to follow instructions, exercises, and examples. By the end of this book, you will know how to achieve outstanding results in IELTS Writing Task 1 & IELTS Writing Task 2.

“IELTS General Writing Task Masterclass ®” from the IELTS Writing Masterclass series is perfect for Upper-Intermediate and Advanced students, and it is based on years of real classroom experience and years of research into second language writing skills acquisition. It contains IELTS writing exercises and specialised IELTS exam strategies to quickly improve your IELTS General Test results.

The 12 Rules of IELTS General Writing

1. Use correct spellings.
2. Avoid contractions like we're; use we are.
3. Never use 'slang' words like 'gonna'.
4. Use formal English words, such as 'discuss' rather than 'chat'.
5. Use correct punctuation: avoid very long sentences.
6. Write a mixture of short and longer (complex) sentences.
7. Use your own words, or give a clear reference to the source.
8. Write so that the reader understands exactly what you mean.
9. Connect your ideas clearly (e.g. Finally/In conclusion/However)
10. Use correct grammar that makes your meaning clear.
11. Do not write informally or in a very friendly way
12. Only give true data; do not invent or change it.

IELTS General Writing Overview

Length: 60 minutes

General Writing Test

	Word Task count	Advised Timing	Task description
1	150	20 mins	The candidate is presented with a situation and is asked to write a letter requesting information, or explaining an issue. The letter may be personal, semi-formal or formal in style.
2	250	40 mins	Presenting arguments and opinions in a discursive essay about a topical issue.

Source: IELTS.org

TIP: The exam says to write a 'minimum of 150/250 words but don't write much more. Aim for 10 or 20 words more at the most.

IELTS General

The Writing component of the IELTS General includes two tasks. Topics are of general interest to and suitable for candidates entering work and postgraduate studies or seeking professional registration.

Task 1

You will be presented with a problem or an issue and asked to describe, summarise, or explain the information in your own words. You may be asked to write a letter of application, a letter of recommendation, a letter concerning accommodation, or a letter of complaint, among other possibilities.

Task 2

You will be asked to write an essay in response to a point of view, argument, or problem. Responses to both tasks must be in a formal style.

Chapter 1: Formal Letters in English



PLAN: 5 min

WRITE: 12 min

REVISE: 3 min

We will examine the formal letter tasks in the IELTS General Training exam in this section.

Firstly, we will practice identifying key information in the question. Next, we will suggest ways to organise formal letters, and then we will look at the kind of language you should be using. Finally, we practice functional language, grammar, and vocabulary, which are essential and will help you gain lots of marks in the exam.

We will examine two formal letter and email types: the letter of reference and the application letter. These aren't the only types of standard letter or email you might be asked to write about in the exam, but they will serve as perfect examples here.

Letter of Reference

In this type of formal letter, you're asked to provide a reference for a colleague or friend to a prospective employer or educational institution.

You may find it helpful to note down useful expressions which you can include,

Some Useful Language for this type of letter or email

I have known X for

I am confident that

I have no hesitation in recommending him

X is sociable, reliable, self-confident, outgoing

X possesses a thorough grounding in ...

stand him in good stead

as is shown by the fact that ...

As you may know, your writing will be assessed in terms of:

Task Achievement

Coherence and Cohesion

Lexical Resource

Grammatical Range and Accuracy

Including all the relevant content in your letter and presenting it clearly will contribute hugely towards you scoring well as the target reader will be fully informed.

Candidates often lose marks in the exam, either because

they have included irrelevant information, they've forgotten to include something important, or misinterpreted the question.

Here is a typical example of a formal letter question. We will practice identifying key content to avoid losing marks. We'll work through the task chronologically.

Read the example and answer the following question.

1. What is the first key piece of information you need to refer to in your answer?

A friend of yours is applying for a job in a popular shop as a retail shop assistant for English speaking tourists visiting your city. The shop has asked you to provide a character reference for your friend.

The reference should indicate

- how long you have known each other.
- It must include a detailed description of the person's character
- the reason why he or she would be suitable for the job.

Write at least 150 words

This seems like an obvious question, but it's vital to understand that they ask you to write a reference. Firstly, this indicates that we need to be thinking about a formal register, and it also helps us start the letter.

For example:

"To whom it may concern,

Mary and I have been working together at J&J Retail for ten years.

....."

2. What is the next vital information?

We need to pay attention to the type of job we are writing the reference for. The job, in this case, is a retail assistant for a popular shop. It is important to remember that the information we provide must be relevant to this position.

3. What qualities or skills does a suitable candidate for almost any job need to have?

You can use the following ideas for any job reference.

i. Personal and social skills (people skills/inter-personal abilities): The successful candidate will need to have good personal and social skills, so we must emphasise the person's personal and social skills in the context of their application.

ii. English language skills: we must emphasise his or her English language skills, as all jobs that you will be asked to write references for in this exam will require the candidate to speak good English to communicate with customers, clients, tourists, guests, etc....

iii. Time-management ability is another skill that every person needs for a job, so regardless of the job they present you with, you can talk about this.

4. So what's next?

Previous experience. We need to mention any relevant work the person has done in the past that will support their application. Again, we could link this with the earlier part about their people skills or their time-management skills.

We need to show the person is suitable for the post, but this doesn't necessarily need to be in a separate paragraph. You can write about their experience in the same section while you describe their character and skills.

Alternatively, it could be something you include at the end of the letter, but either way, you always need to emphasise the person's suitability for the post.

Organisation (Reference and Application):

Reread the example and answer the following questions.

1. How many paragraphs would you have?
2. Which sections would deal with which issues?

Example Question

A friend of yours is applying for a job in a popular shop as a retail shop assistant for English speaking tourists visiting your city. The shop has asked you to provide a character reference for your friend.

The reference should indicate

- how long you have known each other.
- It must include a detailed description of the person's character
- the reason why he or she would be suitable for the job.

Write at least 150 words

One idea is to organise this around two or three content paragraphs along with an opening and closing paragraph, so four or five paragraphs in total.

Paragraph 1

The first paragraph is going to deal with our reason for writing. In this case, our motivation is to write a reference for a

friend (or in the letter of application to apply for something). In a letter of reference or a letter of application, the first main content paragraph usually outlines the person's skills and experience, perhaps including any relevant qualifications they might have.

Paragraph 2

Then, we could move on to look at the person's character and their personal qualities.

We could deal with our friend's suitability for the post in these two paragraphs if we wanted to, or we could choose to have a third content paragraph where we emphasise the person's strengths once again.

Finally, we would end the letter with a closing remark such as: *"Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions."*

Organising your paragraphs logically like this would make the letter coherent overall. It would give the reader a visual guide to your organisation, especially if you leave a line of space between each paragraph. It would also help you deal with the main sections of the letter in a logical order.

Expressing Ideas

But what about how you express ideas within paragraphs? How can you link ideas in and between sentences? Let's look at some of the ways you can do this.

Linking Words:

The first method is linking words that you've probably used in your writing for a while. Words or expressions like *firstly* or *in addition*, or *for instance*, enable you to link ideas simply and effectively.

Discourse Markers:

The assessment criteria often refer to discourse markers. These are just slightly higher-level linking words or expressions such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, or *by way of example*.

Exercise 1:

Look at the gaps in the sample answer below:

Where could you use these linking words and discourse markers to complete the text? You will not need to use all of them.

Firstly, in addition, for instance, moreover, furthermore, or by way of example.

To whom it may concern,

Mary and I worked together at J&J Retail for ten years.

It is my pleasure to recommend her for the position of Shop Assistant.

1....., Mary is a self-confident and outgoing person who finds it easy to relate to people from all kinds of backgrounds.

During her time at J&J Retail, Mary proved to be friendly, communicative, hard-working, and excellent at managing her time. 2....., Mary is the kind of person who works well with others, as she displays excellent sensitivity and sympathy. She was always willing to contribute and help her colleagues. 3..... at J&J Retail, she was popular and fully committed to the organisation's objectives.

4..... at J&J Retail, Mary demonstrated excellent English language skills dealing with English-speaking customers daily. She passed her English exams around six months ago and has a keen interest in fashion, which I am sure will stand her in good stead when she is helping customers in English.

I recommend Mary without reservation — she would be an excellent asset to your company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your Name and Surname

Sample Answer (Letter of Reference):

To whom it may concern,

Mary and I worked together at J&J Retail for ten years.

It is my pleasure to recommend her for the position of Shop Assistant.

Firstly, Mary is a self-confident and outgoing person who finds it easy to relate to people from all kinds of backgrounds.

During her time at J&J Retail, Mary proved to be friendly, communicative, hard-working, and excellent at managing her time. In addition, Mary is the kind of person who works well with others, as she displays excellent sensitivity and sympathy. She was always willing to contribute and help her colleagues. Moreover, (Furthermore) at J&J Retail, she was popular and fully committed to the organisation's objectives.

By way of example, (For instance) at J&J Retail, Mary demonstrated excellent English language skills dealing with English-speaking customers daily. She passed her English exams around six months ago and has a keen interest in fashion, which I am sure will stand her in good stead when she is helping customers in English.

I recommend Mary without reservation — she would be an excellent asset to your company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Your Name and Surname

(Word count: 197)

Notes: Well done if you answered correctly, but be careful when you write, as there is always the danger that you can overuse devices like these. This makes your writing seem unnatural and demonstrates to the examiner that you do not understand how to use them.

To avoid this issue, let's look at some other cohesive devices you can use to help you organise your ideas.

Reference pronouns:

Reference pronouns like *this*, *that*, *they*, or *it* are commonly used to refer back to something or someone recently mentioned.

Relative clauses:

Relative clauses can be used to give added information to a statement, and they allow you to link ideas together in well-formed sentences.

Substitution:

Other forms of cohesive devices include things like substitution. This is where you use a synonym, for example, to refer backwards or forwards to a connecting point in the text.

E.g., Replacing a verb phrase:

The management team at J & J Retail were delighted with Mary, and so were the rest of the staff (and the rest of the staff were also very happy with her).

Using paragraphs and a variety of cohesive devices effectively will help you score well in the “Coherence and Cohesion” and “Task achievement” parts of the assessment criteria. **Tip:** When you're reading, make a point of looking out

for cohesive devices like those we've looked at in this section.

Letter of Application

In this type of formal letter, you're asked to write a formal letter or email applying for a job, accommodation, or place on a course. Again, the recipient of this letter is a prospective employer or educational institution.

Cover letters, sometimes called letters of application, are crucial parts of your application, whether you're a university student or a candidate looking for a job. While there are virtually no limits to the different designs you can use for your letter of application, there are some general guidelines you will want to apply to make sure it is appropriate for the exam. It is first essential to make sure your cover letter has an excellent appearance regarding both structure and language.

Ensure you learn the name of the person or organisation you're writing if they appear in the instructions. The name must always be spelled correctly.

The next thing you want to do is to demonstrate your qualifications for the job. It is best to write two powerful sentences explaining why you have the necessary skills to perform the job you are interested in. After this, you will want to let the potential employer know that your resume is enclosed. It is also essential to make sure you don't end the letter incorrectly.

Sample Task

You see this advertisement in an international student magazine.

Write an application to become a volunteer.

Volunteers needed

We are looking for volunteers to help out at a famous international sporting event. We're looking for friendly, respectful people with good language skills, good team skills, and a 'can-do' attitude. We need people to welcome delegates, provide customer service, and solve problems.

If you think you have what it takes, apply now.

You should write at least 150 words.

Spend around 20 minutes on this part.

The first key piece of information in a letter of application is the fact you've seen the advertisement and where you saw it. This will be the perfect way to start the letter.

Remember that you also need to confirm which position it is you're applying for. This exam is designed to be as realistic as possible, but there may be more than one position in real life. If you didn't mention the specific job, the reader would not be fully informed.

For example:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to apply for the Volunteer position advertised in the International Student Magazine.

Language Skills

In this example, the international sporting event will give you the chance to emphasise your language skills, such as your ability to speak English fluently.

As with the letter of reference, language skills are something you can and should always mention in a letter of application in the IELTS General exam. All positions advertised will require the candidate to speak or write in English.

Suitability for the job

You need to explain your suitability for the job. The question will sometimes state what the required skills or knowledge are, but typically you'll have to include your experience, your qualifications, if any, and personal qualities.

Finally, it would be a good idea to point out that you're available for an interview and perhaps to state any times when you're not available. If you cover all these points in your answer, logically, persuasively, and in an appropriate format, you should score well in terms of content and communicative achievement.

Sample Response (Letter of Application)

Dear Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. [Hiring managers name – “Dear Sir or Madam” if name or gender are unknown]

I wish to apply for the role of [Volunteer] advertised in the [International Student Magazine]. Please find enclosed my CV for your consideration.

As you can see from my attached CV, I have over [time period, e.g., five years] experience in [e.g., volunteering or customer service], and I believe the knowledge and skills built up during this time make me the perfect candidate for this position. I am also keen to keep improving my English, as this is not only a hobby but also a real need.

In my current role as a [job title] at [employer name], I have been responsible for [e.g., a 5% increase in revenue], which when coupled with my enthusiasm and dedication [insert skills relevant to the role – usually found in the job description], has helped the business to [measure of success].

I am confident that I can bring this level of success to your organisation and help [company name] build upon its reputation as an outstanding company. With my previous experience and expertise, I believe my contribution will have an immediate impact on the business.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss my application further.

Yours sincerely/Yours faithfully,

[Your name]

(Word Count 222)

Organisation & Essential Language: Formal Letter of Complaint

As the title suggests, in this section, we will focus on the features of organisation.

In the last section, we looked at two common types of formal letter, which often appear in the exam: the letter of reference and the letter of application. As previously mentioned, both of these tasks are very similar in structure and ideas. In this section, we will use a different example to see the slightly different tone and style required in each type of letter.

Up until now, we have concentrated on spotting the critical content. The essential content is the information we need to respond to in our letter. If you haven't done this yet, stop for a second and note the key points in the letter of reference and the letter of application.

As we saw in the previous section, we need to respond to all of these critical points in our letter to score well in the exam.

Your overall organisation of the piece of writing is vital. This includes using logical paragraphs, for example, and the precise organisation of ideas within paragraphs. You do this by using linking words, discourse markers, and other devices. The examples in the previous section show you exactly how to organise your letter of reference and letter of application. Still, they do not show you how to organise other types of letter.

This section will look at paragraphing a letter of complaint and at these additional organisational features.

Read the letter of complaint task below and answer the following question:

Question to think about:

How would you organise the paragraphs in your letter if you were answering this question? Think about how you might

organise the underlined points into logical, coherent paragraphs.