

Writing: guidance

In this part of the examination, you have to write one essay or letter. You are expected to write 150-200 words within the thirty-minute time limit. To achieve success, you have to be able to express your ideas clearly and logically, as well as accurately, using suitable vocabulary for the topic and a wide range of sentence structures. The answer can be written in either pen or pencil.

The topic of the writing task is given in a prompt of no more than 150 words which presents the topic. This prompt could be a letter sent to the advice column of a magazine or newspaper, or it could be an article from the same source. You have to choose one of the tasks, and write either:

- A** a letter in response to the prompt, giving your opinions and making suggestions.
- B** a short essay on the theme given in the prompt.

The prompt is there to give you ideas for your letter or essay.

Letter to an advice column

Read a letter to Agatha's advice column. People write to Agatha if they need help with a personal problem. Read the letter below from a person who is having arguments with her parents over what to study at university. After you have read the letter in the advice column, do one of the following:

Choose either task A **or** task B. For task A, you will write a letter. For task B, you will write an essay. Do only **one** of these tasks. If you write about something else, your paper will not be graded. Your writing will be graded on how clearly you express your ideas in English.

You will have thirty minutes to write. You should write about one page in thirty minutes. You may use **pen** or **pencil** for the Writing section of the exam. You may make changes, corrections or additions to the body of the letter or essay. Do not waste time copying it over.

Dear Agatha,

My parents and I have started to constantly argue about what subject I should study at university. The arguments are getting even worse now that it is nearly the time to complete the application forms and apply to universities.

Until now I have always gotten along well with my parents, and this is our first major disagreement. I want to study computer software programming, and my parents want me to become a doctor. Both my parents are doctors, as were my grandparents, and they see it as carrying on the tradition.

I have never wanted to be a doctor; I would hate every minute of it. It is not as though I have chosen a subject where I cannot get a job after leaving university, as I know I will be able to. How can we resolve this situation?

A Letter

Agatha has asked her readers to write an answer to the letter above and she will publish some of these replies. Write a letter giving some ideas on how to deal with the problem. Begin your letter with 'Dear Reader ...'

B Essay

Some people have become very successful in life despite the fact they have not been to university. How important do you think it is to have a university degree?

▷ Plan for a letter – giving advice or suggestions

- Paragraph 1
Notes Identify yourself and refer to the problem. Understand / Have same problem / Don't have to follow family tradition.
- Paragraph 2
Notes Make a suggestion. Speak to teachers / Ask them to speak to parents.
- Paragraph 3
Notes Make more suggestions and give examples. Job opportunities / Promotion and travel / Salary / Job satisfaction.
- Paragraph 4
Notes Ending. Wish reader good luck / Yours faithfully.

This basic plan can be used for all letters giving advice or making suggestions.

▷ Plan for an essay – giving your opinion

- Paragraph 1
Notes Summarize main problem and state your opinion. More young people at university / Good for students, country and economy.
- Paragraph 2
Notes State one aspect, give your opinion and support it. More students can gain qualification / Advance personal and professional ambitions.
- Paragraph 3
Notes State second aspect, give your opinion and support it. Huge competition and few jobs / Degree helps find a good job.
- Paragraph 4
Notes Summarize your points and restate your opinion. Better to go to university / Better opportunities and prospects.

Your opinion may differ from the one suggested above, however, this basic plan can be used for all essays where you are required to give your opinion.

- ▶ You will find a Writing bank with useful expressions and phrases for letter and essay writing at the back of the book on page 157.

An article

Read the newspaper article below about banning Mardi Gras.

Then choose either task A **or** task B. For task A, you will write a letter. For task B, you will write an essay. Do only **one** of these tasks. If you write about something else, your paper will not be graded. Your writing will be graded on how clearly you express your ideas in English. You will have 30 minutes to write and should write about one page.

You may use **pen** or **pencil** for the Writing section of the exam. You may make changes, corrections or additions to the body of the letter or essay. Do not waste time copying it over.

No more Mardi Gras

The City Council passed a law yesterday banning the annual Mardi Gras parade. People complained about the amount of drunkenness, violence, crime, and garbage left after the event. Cleaning up the garbage costs the Council increasing amounts of money each year, and they finally decided to stop the parade for this reason. Unfortunately, not everyone agrees with City Council, and a demonstration is planned for this Saturday so

hotel and restaurant owners can show their feelings. Many young people too, feel it is unfair, and that the Council are spoiling their fun, as well as breaking a tradition that has gone on for over one hundred years. Last year's Mardi Gras cost the Council millions of dollars for the clean up operation, damage to property and time spent on dealing with complaints. Mayor Jackson said that enough is enough and the money could be better spent elsewhere in the city.

A Letter

Write a letter to the newspaper expressing your opinion on the banning of the Mardi Gras. Tell the newspaper whether you are in favor of the ban or against it. You must explain your views in the letter and can make suggestions.

B Essay

Drunkenness and violence among young people are on the increase, and not just at Mardi Gras time. What do you think is the cause of this? Give some examples of how drinking and violence could be handled by young people and the police.

▷ Plan for a letter – giving your opinion and making suggestions

- Greeting Notes Address reader in appropriate style — formal / informal
Dear Sir or Madam / Dear Mr Abbott (make up a name).
- Paragraph 1 Notes Introduce yourself and state reason for writing.
I am a local resident / In favor of Mardi Gras ban.
- Paragraph 2 Notes Present details of problem.
Streets full of trash / Violence / Vandalism and graffiti.
- Paragraph 3 Notes Make first suggestion
Money saved on policing and cleaning spent on community project / Baseball stadium.
- Paragraph 4 Notes Make second suggestion
Organize concert or competition instead of Mardi Grass.
- Paragraph 5 Notes End letter
Happy to meet and discuss suggestion / Yours faithfully / Yours sincerely.

▷ Plan for an essay – discussing the cause of a problem and how to solve it

- Paragraph 1 Notes State the topic and give examples.
Young people drink too much alcohol / Violence at football matches and in the street.
- Paragraph 2 Notes State cause of alcohol problem.
Advertising of alcohol on TV / Peer pressure.
- Paragraph 3 Notes State cause of violence.
Violence on TV / Unemployment / Boredom.
- Paragraph 4 Notes Suggest one or two solutions.
No alcohol at sporting events / More youth centers, sports centers etc. / Teachers give advice and counseling.
- Paragraph 5 Notes State results of suggestions in Paragraph 4.
Young people benefit / The community benefits.

Writing: practice

Read a letter to Agatha's advice column. People write to Agatha if they need help with a problem. Read the letter below from a person who is worried about her friend. After you have read the letter in the advice column, do one of the following:

Choose either task A **or** task B. For task A, you will write a letter. For task B, you will write an essay. Do only **one** of these tasks. If you write about something else, your paper will not be graded. Your writing will be graded on how clearly you express your ideas in English. You will have 30 minutes to write. You should write about one page in 30 minutes.

You may use **pen** or **pencil** for the Writing section of the exam. You may make any changes, corrections or additions to the body of the letter or essay. Do not waste time copying it over.

Dear Agatha,

My friend, Susie, is always on a diet and I'm worried that she is making herself ill. She is convinced that she is fat, when in fact she is now very thin and looks terrible. Her appearance is very important to her, so she will not go out with me at all as she thinks she is too fat and everyone will laugh at her. I keep telling her she is not fat, and now think that she should see a doctor. She doesn't seem to have any other problems, and gets on well with her parents. At school she gets good grades, but will not eat in the cafeteria at lunch recess and tries to avoid playing any sports. I think she is hardly eating anything at all, and I want to help her. What can I do? Please help me.

A Letter

Agatha has asked readers to write giving suggestions on how to deal with this problem. Agatha will publish some of the letters. Write a letter which begins, 'Dear Reader, ...'

B Essay

Write an essay about the subject of young people dieting. Do you think that teenagers are influenced by the models they see on TV or in magazines? Does this put them under pressure to be thin? Can they be too thin? Discuss your views and give some examples.