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INTRODUCTION

Ben: The best IELTS Writing Task 1 structure. In this tutorial, we are going to look at how to build the structure or how to structure your IELTS General Writing Task 1 answer and we've got about eight points. First, we're going to look at the types of letters you're going to write with example questions then we're going to look at the structure. We will then look at the salutations, then we'll look at the importance of white space and then there's just four more parts. There are



the body paragraphs, the summaries, and endings. We'll look at some example questions with the answers and summarizing sentences.

WE'RE GOING TO HELP YOU GRASP THE MAIN ELEMENTS

This tutorial is going to help you grasp the main elements that you should include in your GT Writing Task 1 answer and along the way, I'm going to give you a few tips and advice and insider knowledge I guess you could say as to how best to prepare for this. As you've heard as well, we've got a lot of examples because basically examples are a fantastic way to really understand what's going on.

Now, if you are home, if you are in lock down because of the coronavirus, then it's probably interesting for you to know-- it's probably worthwhile that you know that now if you get the



online course there are \$50 discount coupons because we recognized that a lot of our students are now at home, so it's a good time to invest in yourself, take advantage of this situation.

As I said in a previous podcast, it's up to us to turn every disadvantage into an advantage. One of the ways we can do this is recognize now our study time available has increased significantly. So, we're giving away \$50 coupons which you can use against the online course which includes a General Task 1.

CHECK OUT OUR IELTS FORUM

Also, we've launched an [IELTS forum](#) and you can join there, ask questions and I'll be responding. Daphne is responding. Ellen might be as well and also because of this corona crisis and we don't know how long it's going to continue, what we've done is if you buy your course



now you've got till December. Normally, it's like 100-day access or 90-day access. Now, you've got till December, okay?

So, it's just one way that we can all help each other in getting through this and making the most of the situation because that's exactly what we want to be doing. We want to turn this disadvantage into an advantage.

FEATURES OF GENERAL WRITING TASK 1

Let's jump into it. So, as you heard, first we're going to be looking at basically the features of the General Training Writing Task 1. So, it's 20 minutes long, probably-- not probably, definitely accounts for about 30% of your entire writing score. There are basically three types. It's going to be either informal, neutral, or formal.



If it's an informal letter, then it's going to be to a person that you know probably quite well. You're on a first-name basis. Some sample questions include thanking a friend or a colleague, providing information to a family member, inviting a friend to a summer holiday, or asking for advice from a friend, from a family member, from a colleague. The important thing here is if you are on a first-name basis with this person, then it's going to really influence how you write the letter and will give you examples about this in a second.

NEUTRAL OR FORMAL LETTERS

Then we've got a neutral or formal letter. This is going to be someone that you may have met once that maybe you don't know them that well and you probably address them by their last name. Example letters: you could be writing a letter of complaint to your landlord, you could be



writing a letter, a suggestion or giving a suggestion to your manager at work or you could even be making a request to a neighbor, of course, but that would be more neutral rather than formal.

Then the final one we've got is a formal letter and this is a letter to a person that you've never met. You do not know their name. This is why we use Dear Sir/Madam. In this instance, we'll probably be possibly applying for a job, writing a letter of apology. For example, explaining why you missed a college exam or you could be writing one of the famous letters of complaint about a poor quality or service you experienced.

Now, if it's formal, if it's neutral, or if it's informal whichever one it is, you've definitely got to structure your letter and write it in the most efficient manner possible especially the neutral and the formal ones. Now, I've seen letters or for example, in the online course, we've got a General Writing Task 1 task which the students have to write and it's about explaining your absence from a college exam and I saw plenty of letters where the student would really go off topic and talk



about why they couldn't go there, but they went really into pinpoint detail about this illness that they had and they explained the whole story when really all they had to say was I had dengue fever, but they really wrote out the whole drama.

I had dengue fever. I couldn't get out of my bed, so that means that I couldn't reach for my mobile phone and I was too sick to find a computer blah, blah, blah. All they had to say was that I was bed bound and I had dengue fever. So, just be careful here that the structure is insanely important and it is definitely worth planning beforehand, but we're going to get to that.

So, let's just have a look at your general structure anyway. We're going to start with a salutation, of course. Depending on the recipient, this will determine how we open. Is it going to be hi? Is it going to be hey? Is it going to be dear? Is it going to be Dear Sir/Madam? Then we're probably



going to put the purpose of our writing, okay? This varies slightly differently if it is an informal letter, which we'll get to in a second.

Then we've got our body paragraphs; body paragraph one to explain the situation, outline the problem. Body paragraph two, probably offer a solution or suggest desirable action. Then we've got a concluding sentence or a summary sentence and then we're going to say a farewell. Obviously, this is going to change depending on who we are writing to.

It's really important here that when we are structuring our General Task 1 that we leave white space and indents. So, after our salutation, we start the next paragraph with a space of about two sentences in and then we start writing and then after that paragraph we skip a line.

We leave a white space, an entire white space between each paragraph and we'll start the next paragraph with a small indent. This is basically talking to the students who will write a one



paragraph letter. Do not do this. This will cost you points. It's harder to read as well. So, just to summarize, please write this down.

START WITH A SALUTATION

So, if you're doing GT 1, we start off with a salutation, the next paragraph is the introduction; the purpose why we're writing. First body paragraph will explain the situation or outline the problem. Next paragraph is going to offer a solution or suggest desirable action. Then we've probably got a summary and then we've got a farewell; best regards, see you later alligator, whatever, okay? Obviously, it depends on who we're writing to.

Let's have a look at the salutation, basically the greeting. If it's an informal letter, we can say Dear Luca, Dear Abby, or we say Hi Luca. As I said, friend, family member, colleague; basically if you're on a first-name basis. If it's a formal letter, then it's going to be Dear Mr. Smith, Dear



Ms. Weaver and then the final one; if it's a formal letter, a job application, then we're going to go for Dear Sir/Madam and then a comma.

By the way, we put a comma after the ending of all our greetings. Dear Luca, Dear Mr. Smith, Dear Sir/Madam, and then we leave a blank line and we start our new sentence about a centimeter, two centimeters in. We leave this indentation. This is just the structure. This is just the process. This is what is expected.

Now, when we're writing our introduction, if it's a formal letter-- this is exactly what we teach on the [online course](#). We write something like I am writing to inquire about... or I am writing to express my concern about... I am writing to complain about... I am writing to apologize for my absence. This is one of the reasons why a lot of people believe General Task 1 is easier than Academic Task 1.



The reason is because you've got these copy/paste sentences that you can memorize and in some parts of the exam, you could possibly lose points for memorizing sentences especially if you use them incorrectly. However, in General Task 1, you're expected to use these phrases. This is the style that we have to write with, okay? We've got these sentences. We need to use them.

Now, if you're writing a neutral or a formal letter, it's going to be the same. Dear Ms. Weaver, I am writing to thank you for... I am writing to inform you about... and so on and so forth. Note in both of those cases, we did not use a single contraction. Full construction; I am writing to you, okay? I am writing to inquire about... I am writing to inform you that... This structure is very important; this style. No contractions. No contractions. Write it down in capital letters.

INFORMAL LETTERS



Informal letters, however, we have our Dear Luca, Dear James, Dear Ben. It's going to be warm. It's going to be friendly and we're going to use contractions. Here there's a slight deviation. In these letters, we don't have to start our first sentence with I'm writing to tell you about my new marriage. I'm writing to tell you about my new baby boy. No.

These letters resemble more a conversation, okay? For example, we're going to use casual language and we're going to use contractions. I'll give you an example. We've got our letter Dear Luca, new line, indentation. I hope you, Abby, and Joe are all well! It was so wonderful to spend time with you in Chicago last month. It felt great to catch up with you, get to know your little champ and have fun together so long.

So, you can see here it's just touching base. It's called touching base; just catching up and then we go into-- Anyway, the reason I'm writing is that I have some good news. So, it's not as



efficient as a formal or neutral letter. You're just touching base. This is your friend or a family member. So, just bear this in mind.

Also hopefully, you'll have heard there were contractions there and the language was much less formal. We're talking about little champ instead of your adolescent offspring, okay? So, just bear that in mind. Also, even though we are writing more casual and even though it's closer to a more spoken structure, we are still going to use proper punctuation. So, just keep that in mind.

BODY PARAGRAPHS

Let's have a look at the body paragraphs. So, as I said, it needs to be broken up. If you just write a lump of text and there are no paragraphs there, you're going to lose points. So, in the first body



paragraph, we explain the situation or outline the problem. Then the next body paragraph, we offer a solution or suggest desirable action.

Now, what's beautiful about this is that you will answer or structure your letter following the question prompts, okay? It could not be easier. So, if we've got an informal letter to write and it says something like a friend is considering buying a house. Write a letter to your friend advising them not to move into this neighborhood. Recommend that your friend doesn't go ahead and doesn't buy it. Give reasons behind your decision and suggest possible alternative areas that you know.

If we get this, then we can basically just dedicate a paragraph to each of those bullet points. So, 1) we're going to advise our friend not to go ahead with the purchase. Body paragraph 2, we will explain why they shouldn't and then in the final paragraph, we will explain alternatives. We are going to follow the structure. If we do this, we're going to get maximum points for task response



and it's also just going to make our letter incredibly more coherent because the question prompts we get obviously follow a logical structure as well.

And we use this exact same strategy for a formal letter-- for a neutral letter-- sorry-- and for a formal letter. So, if we got the question prompt we've recently attended a professional course. Write a thank-you letter. In the letter, you should include what the course was about. Explain why the course was helpful and suggest other co-workers should attend the course.

What do we do here? Well, first of all, we get the salutation right. Dear Mr. Smith, for example. I am writing this letter to thank you-- and then we can jump into it. What was it about? The course we attended in Massachusetts-- if you can spell that, you're going to get points Massachusetts-- Anyway, the course we attended in Manchester was truly an eye-opening experience. We managed to learn about operational efficiency, safety in the workplace-- and this is just a good



opportunity to squeeze in some vocabulary as well, okay? That's the whole paragraph; probably one or two sentences more.

Next paragraph following the bullet point: It was really helpful because... If you see the why in a question prompt, then you're probably going to need to reply with because. It was extremely useful for my career because... and we just go into details there and ideally park it with vocabulary as well. I do feel I'll be able to handle work conflicts much more effectively and also, I think I vastly improved the quality of my network which is going to undoubtedly help the company in the long run.

Then the final question prompt is suggest other co-workers who should attend the course. I'll suggest two other co-workers. They should attend the course. In this, we're going to say I think this would be an extremely useful course for the accounting departments, for the marketing



department, and most definitely the production department, okay? Just a sentence off the top of my head.

And then remember sort of like the final part we're going to talk about-- sorry, the ending. Best regards, so on and so forth, okay? By the way, in your informal letter, P.S. is totally fine. So, all the best. Take care. Hope to see you soon! Ben. P.S. give your dog a good warm cuddle from me or give your cat a warm cuddle from me. Smiley face. It's just more realistic and everybody reads the P.S.

SUMMARISING SENTENCES

Summarizing sentence; this is a really good piece of advice and this is what we're going to add into the new GT Task 1 course. It's just going to wrap up your letter and it's just going to pull it all together, okay? It lends the letter a feeling of closure and adds like a logical ending, okay? So,



in the informal letter, we could say something like thanks again for the trust you showed in my opinion. Notice here that we're not going to say thank you again because thanks is fine and also I'm going to follow the same rules as we started out with.

We'll be using contractions. It's going to resemble more spoken English than written English, but don't overdo it here. Don't start writing I'm gonna see you in the summer. Can't wait to get smashed. We do not do that. Do not write that. It is still an IELTS exam at the end of the day. So, looking forward to seeing you. Can't wait to have another game of chess. That's much, much better, obviously.

For our neutral letter or for the formal letter, we're going to do the same. We're just going to wrap it up and add that sense of closure to the letter. Now, the farewell is quite easy as well. If we've got a formal letter, we're going to go for yours faithfully and then the full name; Ben Worthington. Yours faithfully, new line, Ben Worthington. A neutral letter we can go with yours



sincerely, full name; Ben Worthington. An informal letter, we can just say all the best, best regards, warm wishes, hugs and kisses.

Be careful though; don't get these mixed up. You don't want to write a letter to your manager and finish it with hugs and kisses, okay? Also, at the end you just put-- in my case, I would just put Ben. I'm not going to put Ben Worthington. If it's a letter to my mom and I put Ben Worthington, she'll be a little bit worried.

Now, after you've finished especially for the formal and the neutral letters, we don't write anything else, okay? With the informal one, a P.S. cannot hurt, but just remember for the neutral ones and the formal ones it's not necessary. That's when we end, all right?

That's everything from me in this tutorial. Remember if you want to really improve as well with your General Writing Task 1 remember to look at those phrases. A few off the top of my head



include if you have any further questions, don't hesitate to contact me or you can find my contact details attached in the next sheet. Please don't hesitate to contact me between the hours of 7:00 and 10:00 Monday to Friday.

I am writing to complain about the recent development with the road. I am writing to apply for the job I saw on the Monster website April 2, 2020. So, just keep in mind that a good memorization of these types of sentences is also going to be helpful.

Now, just a few more things before we finish related to corona. There's basically no escaping. Even though you're listening to an [IELTS podcast](#), you're still going to get exposed to corona in an auditory sense. Obviously, you can't catch the virus listening to this podcast. So, anyway, what I want to say is that if you are in lock down, make the most of it. Just turn this lemon into lemonade as the Americans say. Make the best of this situation.



Personally, I've been in lock down now for about two weeks and what's working for me personally is just having a structure and a plan. If I don't have a structure and a plan, I can quickly lose the day and it's not healthy and you don't feel good if you're losing the day, but if you've got a structure, you've got a list of tasks that you want to get through, then it's going to be much easier.

By the way, I've said this before, but it's related to systems and goals. We may have the goal of getting a band 7. We may have the goal of getting to Canada or getting to England, but the goal isn't what is going to get you there. It's the system behind the goal. What are you going to do every day in order to get that goal?

There's a really interesting story about a famous golfer who was so obsessed with his system and he was in a final like Grand Master's competition and he was so obsessed with this system of his golfing. That's all he concentrated on. He wasn't thinking about the grand prize. He wasn't



thinking about how many puts or how many shots he has to take until he's finished. He was just focusing on getting each put perfect and he was on the final one and he made the shot and he won the competition and he had no idea that that was the final one.

So, this just shows the level we want to meet with our system. This is what's going to get us the results and this is why the online course is exactly this. It's a system for you to follow and gives you structure.

So, if you're a little bit lost, a little bit worried and a little bit anxious about structuring and about getting a system in place in order to improve your score, then maybe the online course is going to help you and it's going to lend itself-- it's going to give you a structure as to what to do each day and how to do it. Also, in a previous podcast, we talked about the coronavirus and a list of



actions you can take that you can fit into your system and probably talking more about this in future episodes.

MAKE THE MOST OF THE SITUATION

So, that's it from me today. I hope you have a fantastic day. Make the most of this situation. How can you turn it to your advantage? That's it. If you need some more IELTS materials, then go to ieltspodcast.com/sign and you can get a free eBook there with some sample essays, with some vocabulary lists and all of that.

As you know, we've got forum.ieltspodcast.com up and running. We've also got the YouTube channels and remember if you know anybody who's struggling with their IELTS scores, then get in contact and we can help you. Take care and keep moving forward. Bye-bye.



[Music]

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