



[Music]

Female Voice: You are now listening to the IELTS Podcast. Learn from tutors and ex-examiners who are masters of IELTS preparation. Your host Ben Worthington.

[Music]

INTRODUCTION

Ben: Recent General Task 1 letter questions and answers and sample essays or sample letters is probably the better way to phrase that. In this tutorial, **we've got three questions** seen on the [exam](#) by students very recently and we are going to just basically walk through how we can answer them; the phrases, the tone, the register, and how to attack it and how to write it.



Now, if you've been listening for a while, you probably know that in my personal opinion, this is probably one of the easiest. The reason it's one of the easiest of the writing tasks is because we are expected to use common phrases. These phrases range from please find my CV attached, don't hesitate to ask if you've got any more questions, I'm writing with regards to; all of these and you can find them on our website. We've got a full list of them-- sorry phrases for letters of complaint, letters of job application, all of them; all the different types that can be expected.

Let's jump into the first one. As I said, we've got three. One is formal or maybe-- yes, the second one is probably neutral and then the second one is a little bit informal or neutral and we'll start with the formal one. So, write a letter to your manager about your work from last year. Include what you did, what you think you could improve, and a training request.

Now, I know this will be formal because 1) it's my manager. 2) It's a work environment and 3) actually no. There's no third reason. Just those two clues we know it's going to be a formal letter.



Now, how do I organize this letter? Well, I will dedicate roughly a paragraph, which in Task 1 is probably two or three sentences, a paragraph per bullet point. This way I can be sure to get full points for task achievement and I'm going to use that as my structure. That's the most straightforward way to organize your writing for Task 1.

So, let's jump into it. Dear David Wallace or even better-- it's probably better Dear Mr. Wallace, I'm writing in response to your request for the annual self-appraisal report. Now, here you'll see first of all, I'm writing in response to your request or I'm writing to you regarding my annual self-appraisal report. Now immediately, this is a good sentence because 1) I clearly set out the intention of the letter. This is exactly what we want to do especially for formal letters, but for most of them, we don't have to be so forthright in all of them, but we definitely do for formal letters.



So, I'm writing in response to your request for the annual self-appraisal report. Now, the second reason it's a good opening sentence is because I'm not taking words from the question. I know that a report about my work or a letter about my work is basically a self-appraisal. It's an appraisal-- it's basically a request for an appraisal and this is topic-specific vocabulary. Also, I didn't mention last year. I said the annual self-appraisal report and it's quite straightforward.

Once again, in the next paragraph, I'm not going to use last year. I'm going to say over the last 12 months. This is basically using synonyms for year so I can improve my lexical resource score. So, over the last 12 months, I've managed to reorganize the entire accounting department by promoting Mr. Kevin Malone to a leadership position.

Once again, lots of topic-specific vocabulary: accounting department, promoting, leadership, position. It's absolutely packed with company vocabulary in this case, HR or human resource



vocabulary and also, you'll see that I'm explaining in this paragraph what I did which is exactly what is required from the task brief.

Next sentence: Miss Angela Martin has been transferred to become the product lead for the new range we launched. Again, more company talk: transfer, product lead, new range. So, it's all very topic-specific. Furthermore, to improve efficiency, I had to let go of Mr. Toby Flanders because we realized we could outsource his work abroad. Since his removal, the office morale has increased significantly. So, again it's all topic-specific vocabulary and this whole paragraph is all dedicated to what I did.

So, what's going to happen in the next paragraph? You guessed it. What do you think you could improve? How do I start? I think there is definite room for improvement in sales. So, I'm not just directly saying I can improve sales. I'm saying there is room for improvement and once again,



it's just using these collocations. There is room for improvement. This is band 7, band 8 level; probably higher.

A few employees get-- I think there is definite room for improvement in sales. A few employees get distracted too easily. We can solve this by implementing a cubicle system so as to reduce contact between staff. So, those who've worked in an office before or who are familiar with this vocabulary, a cubicle is when you have basically the whole office and each desk has its own walls. It's really quite severe and it's quite grim.

Anyway, next sentence. I also think we could outsource reception and secretary tasks abroad and further cut costs. So, maybe I let it slip there because I've repeated I think and I also think if I were reviewing this again, I'd probably rephrase that just to avoid repetition. So, anyway I left it in just so you can be aware and look and keep an eye out for those repetitive phrases that you



might find. Also again, lots of company vocabulary about outsourcing, about reception, about secretary, and cutting costs. Cutting costs is another collocation.

Final paragraph: what's going to happen? I'm going to totally respond to the question of a training request; the bullet point about a training request. Finally, I'm willing to implement all the above, but I believe it could be executed flawlessly if I were to receive training. So, we've got a hypothetical sentence there that I can just squeeze in to help me pick up points for grammatical range and accuracy.

I believe if the company allowed me one day off a week to complete my evening MBA-- So, again, I'm being very specific about the training I want and I'm using typical career language vocabulary, company language vocabulary and then to finish the conditional sentence, I would be able to not only save money for the company but also bring in new higher caliber team members.



So, once again, company-specific vocabulary or topic-specific vocabulary and it's clearly responding to a training request which is what the question requires. So, we'll get full points here. Each bullet point is addressed. We've got quite a wide range of lexical resource and it's all topic-specific vocabulary and it's all with the correct register.

I reviewed this afterwards and I actually did include a collocation which I got rid of and that was just natural because obviously, we're speaking this while we are writing it and sometimes a collocation will slip through. So, I changed that and it's just a good action to take, a good sort of like procedure to follow in that you review every single paragraph before finishing your work. In my case, I caught this contraction and as you know, we should not be using contractions for these formal types of letters.

Finishing: best regards, Ben W. So, there are no contractions. There's no informal speak. There's no exclamation mark. There are no direct questions. It's all very dry, very formal, and quite direct



and that is the style that we want for a formal letter, in this case, to our boss. A letter of complaint to a company would probably follow this style as well. A job application will probably follow this style.

So, this is probably a key factor with General Task 1. Have a look at the past papers. Have a look at the sample essays and you'll be able to recognize the tone, the register, and the phrases that are required for each one.

Next one: write a letter to your friend about a job opportunity you came across that they might find interesting. So, this is a friend and this one I wrote in a neutral style, probably a little bit lower than neutral. I've included contractions because it's a friend, but because it's a job opportunity, I didn't sort of like let it all out.



I didn't go totally informal because with your friends, with your close friends you can be more-- well, this is like a professional subject. It's a professional topic about jobs and career, so I'm not going to be totally relaxed, but it is going to be a little bit more relaxed than the first one.

So, let's go. Hello Gareth. I'm using his first name here. Obviously, he's my friend. I'm not going to say Hello Mr. Smith. Hello Gareth, I hope you are doing well. It's been a while since we spoke, but I remember you wanted to start a new career as an engineer. So, I'm giving some context here. Even though it's not in the bullet points, I'm just giving some context. It just breaks it up, makes it a bit easier.

Well, just yesterday, I was browsing the job section of The Guardian website and I saw a very enticing job advert. I've never heard of the company, but the job offer seemed amazing. So, this is what we talked about with register. Here I've relaxed it a little bit. I've said amazing which is



probably a little bit too strong if you're writing to your manager, for example and also, as you'll hear, I've used collocations here and I just put a little bit of story there. Hope you are doing well.

That's kind of an informal neutral way of just sort of like softening it. I'm not starting directly as I would do with the company letter which is I'm writing in regards to your recent situation of looking for a job. No, that's far too formal for your friends. If you do that, they'll think you're taking the mickey, all right? Also again, a little bit of story. A little bit more relaxed. It's closer to spoken English. Well, just yesterday, I was browsing the job section of The Guardian.

Now in this one, I did get it a little bit mixed up because the second bullet point is how you came across the job opportunity and the first bullet point is give some details about the job. Now, in my letter, it's kind of the other way around. That's not ideal, but it just seems more natural and as long as they are covered it's okay, but in general, if you can follow those bullet points, follow



them in order, but in this case, it just didn't seem natural to talk about the details of the job and then talk about where I came across it.

Anyway, the offering-- so now I'm going to go to bullet point no.2 or bullet point no. 1; give some details about the job. The offer includes... Once again, I'm using different language from the question. I don't say job. I'm saying the offer. The offer includes free training then on-the-job mentoring-- a nice little collocation there-- with the senior executives followed by a free course endorsed by the leadership bureau. Plenty of little details here, plenty of topic-specific vocabulary: mentoring, senior executives, leadership bureau.

Also, the financial package was truly exceptional. Again, it's quite strong language more so for your friend rather than your superior, rather than your boss-- especially considering all the training involved. Maybe a little bit of repetition there, but sometimes we have to repeat it just to



avoid confusion. If I keep using synonyms throughout and never repeat the same word, it could get a little bit confusing.

With this job, you work 30 weeks a year in the office and 15 at home. So, it's quite realistic and it sounds very attractive. You also get a new MacBook Pro, broadband internet paid for, and your expenses are reimbursed for setting up your new home office. Beautiful. So, here when I was reviewing it, I added reimbursed because I realized I used paid for twice. So, reimbursed is more specific and helps me avoid repeating the same phrases.

Final bullet points: explain why you feel the job would be suitable for your friend. Again, I'm not going to use words from the question. How am I going to start this paragraph? Well, I immediately thought of you because I know you love learning and training and have always wanted to be mentored. So, I'm directly answering the question now and I'm just going to add some more details there.



It also seemed to tick all the boxes... A little phrase there. It's not informal, but it's not formal either. It's neutral, but it just shows the examiner that I've got a high level and I know when to use the right expressions. So, it also seemed to tick all the boxes for work-life balance which I know is necessary right now because of your newborn.

So, again I'm putting it in context. I just wanted an excuse to use work-life balance because I know it's a useful phrase to help me score around 7 or an 8 and let's put it in context because of your newborn. Anyway, I have attached the link and the screenshot of the advert. I'd apply promptly though because it seems like they'll get a lot of applications.

Why did I include that sentence? Well, I just wanted to use-- actually, I wanted to use the word candidate, but in the end, I settled with applications; typical job vocabulary and also, I just wanted to say I've attached the link just adding a little bit more detail there and a little bit of



advice and you can see I've been using contractions here. It's my friend. I'm not going to have to write out the full construction every time and then all the best, Ben W.

Straightforward. It's quite easy I think. It's not an exact match of writing what's coming out of my mouth. I did have to edit it, maybe improve some phrases, but it's much closer to spoken English than the previous one which was a little bit more rigid.

Final one: your friend is about to move into a new house. Write a letter to your friend. In your letter, offer to help him or her move. Explain how exactly you can help and ask him or her some questions about the new house.

Now, because of the context, I know this is my friend that I've known maybe for a couple of months, maybe my childhood friend. It doesn't really matter, but because of the context, I'm helping them with a personal task then I can go a little bit-- not totally informal, but it can be



quite informal. So, how do we make it a little bit more informal and it is necessary to get the register, to spot the register we're going to use here.

How do we do it? Well, the context as I said, I wouldn't be helping a distant work colleague to move house. It's very unlikely. So, just because it's-- just reading the context here. So, that's going to dictate what kind of language I'm going to use and you'll probably spot some of the phrases here that we wouldn't use in the previous two.

So, Hi Donald, I hope you're doing well and your ankle has improved. I knew it was giving you a few problems. Again, so it's quite personal. We only help close friends I assume to move houses so anyway. Anyway, I heard you have to move out soon, so I thought we could use my transit van to help get the whole project completed faster. Let me know if that's what you need. I'd love to help out.



So, again contractions. I'm putting it in context. I've got a van. I heard because we've got mutual friends, so it's all relevant here. Transit van as well is topic-specific vocabulary maybe whole project completed faster was a little bit-- maybe a little bit too formal, but it's better to play safe and go for formal or neutral rather than lowering the bar so much and also, I thought I would get more points for saying transit vans help get it done faster. I thought I'd get more points if I said get the whole project completed faster.

So, it would have to be on a weekday before 11 a.m. though because later, I need to get to work. I think if we start early, we can get in a few runs back and forth from your current house to your new one. So, I've already offered to help with my van and then I'm explaining exactly how I can do this because I'm some kind of tradesman and I'm working, so I've got to use my van and my van is free between 7 and 11 it seems.



So, also hopefully, you'll have noticed we're using the word get a lot because get is quite-- not specific. It's quite general, but we can use it a lot in phrasal verbs which is the language we normally use when we're speaking with friends. For example, I'm not going to say because I need to commute to work. No, it's a little bit too formal. I need to get to work. I think if we start early we can get in a few runs back and forth... A few runs that basically means just a few trips there and back. ...back and forth from your current house to your new one.

Again, explain how exactly you can help. I can help lift and move the boxes, but ideally, you'd need to pack up-- again, topic-specific vocabulary-- you'd need to pack up all your stuff beforehand. So, stuff; I could maybe say belongings. Stuff is fine I guess. Again, it's the tone here. By the way-- so there with those last two paragraphs, I've finished off how specifically I'm going to help.



Now, next bullet point. Final bullet point: ask him or her some questions about the new house. By the way-- once again, it's closer to spoken English. By the way. By the way, your new house is near Vernon's, right? On Privet Drive opposite the old petrol station in Shire town. So, here direct questions, confirmations, question tags, all of these which is how we speak in normal English-- with your friends in spoken English. If it isn't, then let me know ASAP-- just a little acronym there-- because any further might mean a different plan.

So, it's very close to spoken language. We can use ASAP in spoken English and it is a little bit more informal. We definitely wouldn't use it in the first letter. So, final sentences: also, if I remember correctly, there is a very large drive and garage at the front? Direct question. This is important so we can load and unload quickly.

There we're just getting some more topic-specific vocabulary in there about moving house. Obviously, we have to pack, unpack, load, unload and I'm basically just asking these questions



about the new house and giving a reason why I'm asking them which is obviously necessary. All the best mate question-- there's no question mark-- all the best mate, Ben W.

So, you can see just to summarize, contractions used throughout. It's very close to spoken English. We've got quite a few phrasal verbs: help out, getting a few runs. And then topic specific vocabulary: transit van, drive, garage, pack, load, unload. So, don't relax too much if you have to write a letter to your friend. Although it's close to spoken English, still review it and try and look for an opportunity for phrasal verbs and topic-specific vocabulary.

Now, if you're struggling with this, we can help you. We can give you feedback. We can help you improve. We're getting some amazing results and we'd love to see your essays. So, have a look at the online course. It's the Jump to Band 7 or It's Free and it's not only for students who are at 6.5, but it's-- we're currently working with a student who needs to get a 7.5.



And there are quite a few of those actually. They're doing general tasks. They're making applications for the Canadian immigration process, but we're also working with a few students to get them up to a 6.5 and it's a similar structure but obviously, with the different teachers we adapt it based on the essays we're getting. So, it's the same course, but the teachers can adapt how they're teaching, how they're giving your feedback, and making sure that-- there's no point teaching you advanced techniques if you're aiming for a band 6.5, for example. So, we adapt it according to your ability.

Now, that's everything from us. Remember to sign up if you're a little bit stuck. We can give you help and don't hesitate to send us an email if you are struggling. So, that's ieltpodcast@gmail.com or ben@ieltpodcast.com. Have a great day. Keep moving forward and if you're in lockdown it does end. We were in lockdown a while back. It does end. Things do get back to normal. So, hang in there and keep moving forward. Have a great day. Thanks for listening.

IELTS GENERAL TASK 1

Best IELTS
Letter Writing Samples for 2020



[Music]

Female Voice: Thanks for listening to ieltspodcast.com

