

O'level English Language Guidelines

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Paper 1:

The first question involves directed writing, which could be any one of the following ten tasks:

1. Formal letter*
2. Informal letter*
3. General Report*
4. News Report*
5. Article*
6. Account*
7. Statement
8. Leaflet
9. Speech
10. CV (covering letter only)

*indicates more common tasks

=> Always follow formats for directed writing tasks.

=> All directed writing tasks other than the letters have formats as a part of the question.

=> Focus on the mood of the question and follow it.

=> You are restricted for your expression: limited use of ornate vocabulary and absence of emotion is required.

=> There are 3 marks for the 3 bullet points.

=> The detail of these points should have varied length.

=> You must also focus on the first and last part of the question. In their hurry, candidates tend to forget these and focus on the bullet points only.

=> There is a need to identify the fixed and flexible information in a question. The flexible part gives writing variation and individuality.

=> No need for any rough draft (pure waste of time).

=> Bullet points given in the question may not be necessarily developed into paragraphs. Make your own paragraphing order.

=> Focus on the following aspects while attempting any directed writing task:

- Audience-suitable vocabulary, sentence length, tone and register
- All tasks except news report (which has indented format) must have block format (In block format, all paras start from the left with no space when a particular new paragraph starts).

- Avoid contradictions, ambiguities and confusions.
- Use of appropriate vocabulary is extremely important.

News Report Features:

- ⇒ Formal language: no irrelevant descriptive details, personal opinions or comments.
- ⇒ No use of first person or personal point of view.
- ⇒ Consists of short paragraphs, which begin by telling the most important information and lead the reader to the least important. (You may have noticed that actual news reports in the paper often have paras as short as a single sentence. Totally acceptable though sentence variation is also important!)
- ⇒ The report should answer the following questions regarding the situation: What? Where? When? Why? Who? How?
- ⇒ Include direct quotes from eyewitnesses.
- ⇒ Format:

Headline

Byline

City, Date

....short paras dealing with what, where, when, who, why and how.....

- ⇒ Include an eye-catching headline
- ⇒ Unemotional style of writing
- ⇒ Provide concise factual account of a recent event- local, national or international.

General Report Features:

- ⇒ Use block format
- ⇒ Leave a line after every paragraph
- ⇒ Last paragraph can be a recommendation, may include personal opinion.
- ⇒ Formal tone and register
- ⇒ Subheadings should be crisp
- ⇒ Use of first person may be needed
- ⇒ Format:

To:

From:

Date:

Subject:

Subheadings may be used for every paragraph.

Name and signature in the end.

Newspaper/Magazine Article Features:

- ⇒ Formal but opinionated and personalized tone that could be chatty.
- ⇒ Convincing vocabulary.
- ⇒ Use of 'I'.
- ⇒ Personal opinion.
- ⇒ Format/paragraphing order:

Strap-line

Headline

By (name of author)

Abstract

Orientation

Complication (as mentioned in the question)

Evaluation (writer's view)

Conclusion ('wrap-up' comment)

The second question of paper 1 involves creative writing. Candidates are allowed to choose one topic from five/six given ones. The topics given include:

- Narrative

- Descriptive
- Argumentative
- Open topic

Narratives and descriptions are considered 'safe options'.

Use techniques such as flashbacks, flash forwards, multiple plotting and twist endings to make narratives more interesting and complex.

A good piece of descriptive writing has the following components:

- Use of all five senses
- Use of adjectives and adverbs
- Use of figurative language (similes, metaphors, alliteration, personification, oxymoron, onomatopoeia etc)
- All aspects of a single topic must be considered
- Don't tell the reader, SHOW the reader with your words i.e. create a vivid picture in the reader's mind.

I hope this was helpful. 😊 😊 😊

Mega Lecture