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General Task 1 – Letter purpose and expressions

Take a look at the IELTS questions below and see if you can understand the purpose of each one.

<p>A You recently experienced a problem at your local cinema. Write a letter to the cinema manager regarding the problem you had, and in your letter mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- which movie you saw and when you saw it- what the problem was- suggest what the manager should do to rectify the problem	<p>B You recently broke your leg. Write a letter to your classmate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- thank him/her for the card and presents you've received- explain how you broke your leg- say what you have been doing during your recovery
<p>C You've seen a job advertisement for the Children's Care association who are looking for volunteers. Write a letter to the organization and say:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- why you think you are suitable for that job- what interests you about this job,- how soon you are available to work	<p>D Your neighbour has written to you complaining about the lack of parking space in the street because of the increasing number of visitors to your house. Write a letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- explain the reasons for the visitors- apologise- say what you are going to do about it
<p>E You are getting married. Write a letter to an English-speaking friend to invite him/her to the wedding. In your letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- describe who you are going to marry- tell him/her what will happen on the wedding day- explain why it's important for him/her to be at the wedding	<p>F Your English speaking friend is moving to your neighbourhood with his/her children, and wants some information about the local school. Write a letter to him/her, and in your letter:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- describe the school and its facilities- give your opinion about the school- explain why his/her children will enjoy studying there

Here are some possible reasons for writing letters. Can you match them to the letters above? *(Answer at the end of this document)*

Respond to an invitation/request

Apply for a job

Thank somebody for something

Ask somebody to do something

Invite somebody to do something

Apologise about something

Complain about something

So your first task in the exam is to identify the purpose of your letter.

Look again at the questions on the first page, and decide if you need to write a formal or informal letter.

You write formal letters when you don't know the person you are writing to, or you don't know them as well as your friends and family. So you should write formal letters for A, C and D. It's also important to remember that you should write formal letters when you are complaining as this is culturally correct when using English.

Your second task in the exam is to work out whether your letter will be formal or informal.

Your answers to these two tasks will then help you to identify which letter expressions you should use. Examiners will be looking for appropriate expressions in your letters and you will be marked on this in the [content section](#).

From the table below you should aim to learn 1 phrase for each purpose so that you are prepared for the exam.

Formal phrases	Informal phrases
Apologising	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Please accept my apologies for...- I regret that...- May I take this opportunity to apologise for...- I apologise for...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I'm sorry that we...- I'm very sorry that I...- Unfortunately I...
Applying for a job	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I am writing in response to your advertisement for...- I would like to apply for the position of...	N/A
Complaining	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I am writing to express my concern about...- Even though I phoned you about...I have not...- I would like to draw your attention to...	N/A

Saying thank you	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I very much appreciate your... - I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for... - I would like to thank you for... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I'm grateful to you for... - Thank you so much for... - I'd like to thank you for...
Inviting someone to do something	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am writing to invite you to... - I would very much like to invite you to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We areWould you like to come? - I'd be so happy if you could come to...
Responding to an invitation/request	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I was delighted to receive... - Having received your request for...I would be delighted to assist you in... - Following your request for...I am happy to assist you in this matter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thank you so much for inviting me to...I'd love to... - I'd be happy to help you with...
Asking somebody to do something	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I would be extremely grateful if you could... - I am writing in the hope that you can... - I wonder if you would be able to... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Please can you... - I'd be grateful if you could - Would you mind....?

An important point to remember when writing formal letters is that you shouldn't use contractions. This means you should write ***I am*** and not ***I'm***. The contracted form is fine for informal letters and speaking.

Answer to the letter purpose question on the first page:

A – Complain B – Thank C – Apply for a job D – Apologise E – Invite F – Respond to request