

BEC Vantage Writing Part 2 – Teacher’s Notes

Description

Students match sentences with various functions, then learn what types of text they may have to write in Part 2. They analyse a sample answer to a Part 2 task, focusing on structure and the five ‘handwritten’ notes. Finally they decide if statements about Part 2 are true or false.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Time required: | 40 minutes |
| Materials required: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Student’s Worksheet (one per student)</i> ▪ <i>to increase students’ awareness of various language functions and of ways of expressing them</i> |
| Aims: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>to familiarise students with Part 2</i> ▪ <i>to increase students’ awareness of various language functions and of ways of expressing them</i> |

Procedure

1. Ask the class: if someone is in the sea and waves their arm at someone on the shore, are they greeting the person (i.e. signalling ‘hello’) or trying to attract the person’s attention because they’re drowning? [It could be either.] Explain that getting the right response in this case could be a matter of life and death, so it’s important that the function of the waving is made clear.
2. Write on the board *There’s a dangerous animal over there* and ask why someone might say that and what they’re trying to achieve [e.g. to warn someone else, so that that person doesn’t go there; to complain to someone for putting the animal there, so that they prevent people from getting near the animal, e.g. by removing it; to give information, so that the other person knows and acts on the information as they choose].
3. Ask why it’s important to know how to carry out functions like these in a foreign language [in order to get the response, you want, particularly in the examples of warning and complaining].
4. Write on the board *I’m sorry I can’t help you* and *How can I help you?* and ask what the speaker is doing in each case, i.e. the function of each sentence [in the first the speaker is apologising, in the second they’re offering]. Write *You never help anyone*, and *I think you should be more helpful* and ask for their functions [complaining and recommending (advising)].
5. Explain that you’re going to focus on functions and on Part 2 of the Writing test, where candidates need to express various functions. Give each person a copy of the **Student’s Worksheet** and ask them to look at the box in Exercise 1. Draw two columns on the board, headed *to make* and *to give*, and write *an apology* in the *make* column. Ask what else goes in that column, related to the verbs in the box [*a complaint, an offer, a recommendation*]. Ask which nouns go under *to give* [*an explanation* (draw attention to the absence of ‘i’), *information, a summary, an invitation*]. Draw students’ attention to the fact that *information* is an uncountable noun, so it doesn’t have *an*]. Write *apologise* and *apologies* and point out the different pronunciation of the ‘i’ between the verb and the plural noun.



6. Explain that in Exercise 1 they need to match each sentence with the function that is most likely. Ask them to do Exercise 1 in pairs, then check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
7. Ask them to look at Exercise 2 and elicit the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
8. Ask the students what they know or can remember about Part 2 and explain that they will have to write one of three types of document, as in the box in Exercise 3. Elicit the type of document that each sentence 1-3 describes and ask how the layout of a report or proposal is likely to be different from a letter or email [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**]. Ask which types they are familiar with writing in English or in their own language.
9. Say that Exercise 4 contains a standard Part 2 task. Ask them to read the instructions and task and tell them they don't have to write the answer. Ask which parts of the task are the 'handwritten notes' [the five phrases in a different font in boxes, i.e. 'Very useful for me – explain why', etc]. Point out that they have to write about all five notes in the test.
10. Explain that the two bullet points 'For 1 – 4, choose the best headings from the box' and 'Underline the parts of the proposal...' are not in the test, but are here to help them become familiar with the test. Remind them that this is a proposal and ask them what the writer is trying to do [persuade the reader to do something, i.e. let them go on a course].
11. Ask them to do Exercise 4 in pairs, i.e. choose headings for 1-4, and underline the parts of the proposal that deal with the 5 handwritten notes. Check the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
12. Ask them to look at Exercise 5, a brief summary exercise on Part 2, and elicit the answers [see **Key to Student's Worksheet**].
13. Finish by asking how they can apply what they've learnt to their work [e.g. paying attention to ways of expressing different functions; using headings in reports and proposals; using a fairly formal, business-like style. This might be useful when writing in their own language, as well as in English.]



Suggested follow-up activities

1. Ask students to do the Sample Task as homework. Remind them that in the exam they shouldn't spend more than about 30 minutes on Part 2, as the whole Writing test takes 45 minutes and Part 2 accounts for two thirds of the marks.
2. Show students several examples of Part 2 tasks from the Cambridge Business English Handbook, past papers and practice tests, so that they become familiar with the task. Help them to interpret the input material and discuss what to write about the 'handwritten notes'.
3. Ask students to write short reports in English about aspects of their work or studies, using headings.
4. Encourage them to check their own and each other's written work, correcting mistakes and suggesting improvements.



BEC Vantage Writing Part 2 – Answer Keys

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 1

1. Explaining – giving a reason. 'Explain' can also mean making something clear, without a reason.
2. Recommending (advising) – recommendations can be made to other people, or (as here) to two or more people including the writer
3. Apologising
4. Complaining
5. Informing (this is factual, without suggesting that the writer is complaining)
6. Summarising
7. Offering

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 2

1. B. A accepts responsibility for a mistake without apologising for it.
2. B. 'I am afraid' prevents the writer from seeming aggressive, and the reader is more likely to agree to do what's wanted. A is quite aggressive and is unlikely to make the reader agree.
3. A. B takes the delays as given, and doesn't explain them.
4. A. B is a question, it doesn't give information.
5. B. A gives information.
6. B. A is an instruction, not an offer.
7. A. B is an order, not a recommendation.
8. A. B adds another point, rather than summarising.

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 3

1. C – report
2. A – business correspondence
3. B – proposal

Reports and proposals should be divided into sections with headings to show what each section is about (unlike letters and emails). They don't include the writer's postal or email address.



Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 4

1. Benefits
2. Dates
3. Additional place
4. Booking

1st note: The finance section would be particularly valuable, as financial issues are central to decisions about production.

2nd note: The trainers are all experienced managers, so I'll be able to learn about management practice as well as theory.

3rd note: Since our new product conference is in the first week of September, I would only be able to attend the May course.

4th note: Juan Lopez would like to attend the course too, as he also lacks managerial experience.

5th note: If you agree, please book this month, in order to make a 5% saving.

Key to Student's Worksheet Exercise 5

1. False. There is only one task, which is obligatory.
2. True
3. False. You should write about all five.
4. True



BEC Vantage Writing Part 2 – Student's Worksheet

Exercise 1

Under each sentence 1 - 7, write the most appropriate function from the list in the box. There is one function that you will not need.

| | | | |
|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| apologising | complaining | explaining | informing |
| inviting | offering | recommending (advising) | summarising |

1 This problem was caused by a temporary breakdown in the computer system.

.....

2 I think we should consider changing our supplier.

.....

3 I am very sorry about the inconvenience this has caused you.

.....

4 I am very dissatisfied with the service I received when I called your company.

.....

5 I placed my order on 28 September, and it was delivered two weeks later.

.....

6 To conclude, I am very disappointed with the product, for all the above reasons.

.....

7 Would you like us to send you a replacement?

.....

Exercise 2

For each function, 1- 8, decide which sentence is better, and what is wrong with the other sentence.

1 Apologising

A This was our mistake.

B We very much regret that this has happened.



2 Complaining

- A This is a disgraceful way to run a business.
B I am afraid I am far from satisfied with this.

3 Explaining

- A Staff shortages have led to delays in production.
B We need to reduce delays in production.

4 Informing

- A The current model is scheduled to remain in production for two more years.
B How long do you expect the current model to remain in production?

5 Inviting

- A Our new product range will be launched on 28 September.
B Would you like to attend the launch of our new product range on 28 September?

6 Offering

- A Please deal with the matter.
B Shall I deal with the matter?

7 Recommending (advising)

- A It would be worth cleaning the machine thoroughly once a week.
B You must clean the machine thoroughly once a week.

8 Summarising

- A Overall, I am very disappointed with the response from your finance department.
B In addition, it took your company three weeks to respond to my last email.

Exercise 3

Match each description, 1-3, with the type of text that you may be asked to write in the exam (A-C).

| | A business correspondence | B proposal | C report |
|---|--|------------|----------|
| 1 | A document containing what you have found out about a problem or situation, and possibly making a recommendation | | |
| 2 | A letter or email, for example to a customer or supplier | | |
| 3 | A document in which you recommend an action and explain why | | |



Exercise 4

Look at this task and at the sample answer on the next page.

- Your company has agreed to pay for you to go on a training course. You have received a leaflet about a suitable course.
- Read the leaflet below, on which you have already made some handwritten notes.
- Then, using **all** your handwritten notes, write a proposal for your Training Manager, explaining why you would like to attend the course.
- Write **120 – 140** words.

Management: the basics

Programme includes:

- Setting targets
- Finance for beginners
- Communication skills

Very useful for me
- explain why

Five-day course

All trainers have at least ten years' management experience

Good - can learn from
their experience

12-16 May or 1-6 September

May better
- say why

10% reduction if you book two or more places!

Suggest colleague
who might benefit

5% reduction on bookings received this month.

Great! Book now



- For **1 – 4**, choose the best headings from the box.
- Underline the parts of the proposal that deal with each of the five 'handwritten' notes on the task.

Additional place
Managers

Benefits
Price

Booking
Products

Dates
Trainers

To: Nils Andreasen, Training Manager
From: Kelly Green
Subject: Training course

I am interested in attending the 'Management: the basics' training course.

1

Following my recent promotion to assistant production manager, it would be very useful to study management systematically. The finance section would be particularly valuable, as financial issues are central to decisions about production.

The trainers are all experienced managers, so I'll be able to learn about management practice as well as theory.

2

Since our new product conference is in the first week of September, I would only be able to attend the May course.

3

Juan Lopez would like to attend the course too, as he also lacks managerial experience. There is a discount if two places are booked.

4

If you agree, please book by the end of this month, in order to make a 5% saving.

Exercise 5

True or false?

- 1 There is a choice of tasks in Part 2.
- 2 You are told whether to write a piece of business correspondence, report or proposal.
- 3 You can choose which handwritten notes to write about.
- 4 You should write in a fairly formal, business-like style.



BEC Vantage Writing Part 2 – Sample Task

- You are a manager in the customer services department of a large store. Your line manager has asked you to write a report on the results of a recent customer survey.
- Look at the information below, on which you have already made some handwritten notes.
- Then, using **all** your handwritten notes, write your **report**.
- Write 120 – 140 words.**
- Write on the opposite page.

Results of Customer Survey

| Responses: | Good | Poor |
|--------------------|------|------|
| staff friendliness | 30% | 70% |
| product range | 62% | 38% |
| opening hours | 87% | 13% |

new training
for staff
should help!

suggest products
to attract more
customers

give
reason
for this

Additional customer comments:

- difficult to find things
- not enough parking

new store layout
next month

say why this is no
longer a problem

