

IELTS General Training Task 1 Planning your writing

An activity which helps students plan their writing for *IELTS* General Task 1 and use a process which helps them maximise their marks in each criteria.

Time required: 60–70 minutes

Additional materials required:

- sample task – one copy for each student: http://www.ielts.org/pdf/115029_General_Training_Writing_sample_task_-_Task_1.pdf
- Worksheet 1 – one copy for each student
- Worksheet 2 – one copy for each student
- Worksheet 3 – one copy for each student

Aims:

- to enable students to plan their writing to get good marks for task achievement and coherence
- to provide students with some useful lexis that will increase the formality and cohesion of their letters
- to help students paraphrase the rubric
- to raise students' awareness of the marking criteria and what they can do to help their grade for each one

Procedure

1. Introduce the topic of room-mates and write the following questions on the board. Ask students to discuss them in pairs for two minutes:

Have you ever had a room-mate? What are some good and bad things about having a room-mate?

How can a room-mate make it difficult for you to study?

What kind of accommodation do you think college students prefer?

Ask a few students to share their answers in open class.

2. Distribute the **sample task** face down and tell students not to turn over. Tell students they are going to see an *IELTS* General Writing Task 1 question and they have 30 seconds to decide who they have to write to and what three things they must do in their letter. Ask students to turn the paper over then after 30 seconds they must compare their answers with a partner. In feedback, elicit that they are writing to the accommodation officer of the college and that they have to cover the three bullet points.
3. Ask students to discuss the questions on **Worksheet 1, Part 1** in pairs or small groups. Feedback as follows:

Do you need to write in a formal or informal style? How do you know?

Formal. You are writing to the college accommodation officer. You are told to start 'Dear Sir or Madam'.

How many paragraphs do you think you need and what information will go in each paragraph?

One for each bullet point, plus a closing paragraph. Tell students this makes it really easy for the examiner to decide if you have done everything you need to, which is the first thing they look for.

How can you make it clear to the examiner that you are beginning a new paragraph?

Leave a line. Start with a topic sentence.

The first bullet point says 'describe the situation'. Do you think it's OK to do this by copying the rubric and changing the pronoun, like this?

I live in a room in college which I share with another student. However, there are many problems with this arrangement and I find it very difficult to work.

No, you must paraphrase.

Do you think there needs to be a connection between the problems you have, the reasons it's difficult to work and the kind of accommodation you prefer?

Yes. It makes the letter easier to follow.

4. Tell students they are going to prepare to write the first paragraph and have them discuss the questions on **Worksheet 1, Part 2**. Feedback as follows:

We usually start a formal letter by saying why we are writing. Do you know a useful phrase for that?

I am writing with regard to ...

Your letter is not good news for the accommodation officer. Do you know a useful, formal phrase for introducing bad news, or a problem?

I regret to inform you that ...

Do you know any words or phrases that mean the same as these?

a room in college = **college accommodation**

another student you share a room with = **my room-mate**

problems = **issues/difficulties**

difficult = **hard/not possible**

work = **study/**

5. Give students five minutes to write the opening paragraph using the phrases and words from the previous stage, then ask them to compare their work in pairs or small groups. Hand out **Worksheet 2, paragraph 1**, for them to compare.

6. Elicit the possible consequences of having a room-mate who plays loud music (can't concentrate on your work), then elicit what type of accommodation you'd prefer if you have this problem (quiet). Focus students on the table in **Worksheet 3**, and have them brainstorm two more issues along with the difficulties they create and the possible solutions.
7. Focus students on the sentence in **Worksheet 2, paragraph 2** and elicit the cause-effect structure. Elicit that the other two sentences in this paragraph (bullet point 2) will have the same structure. Elicit other phrases for introducing the effect (As a result; This means; As a consequence; Consequently).

Elicit what markers they could use when introducing the other problems (Another issue is; The final problem concerns).

Then ask students to complete the second paragraph in the space provided on Worksheet 2.

8. Ask the students to discuss the questions on **Worksheet 3** (below the table), then feedback as follows:

Paragraph 3

Why do you want to change to a different type of accommodation?

Because of the reasons in the previous paragraph. Therefore, you need to make the link clear. Elicit phrases for doing this:

'As a result of these problems ...'

'In light of the problems described above ...'

How can you say 'I want' in a formal letter?

e.g. 'I would be grateful if you would consider + VERB+ing ...'

Paragraph 4 and close

Paragraph 3 is asking the accommodation officer for help, so you need to thank them. What formal phrase can you use here?

'I would be very grateful for any assistance you can provide with this matter.'

How do you finish a formal letter that starts 'Dear Sir or Madam'?

'Yours faithfully'

Ask students to use these phrases to finish paragraphs 3 and 4 in the boxes provided on **Worksheet 2**.

9. Elicit the four marking criteria (task achievement; coherence and cohesion; grammatical resource; lexical resource) and make sure students understand what each one means. Ask students to look at their completed letters on **Worksheet 2** and discuss what features of their letters would help them get good marks in each criteria.

10. Possible answers:

Task achievement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal style achieved through useful phrases.• All three bullet points clearly answered in three separate paragraphs.• Polite, respectful style so it would have a positive effect on the target reader.
Coherence and cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Logical development of ideas (problem, effects, solutions).• Use of linking phrases and topic sentences in paragraphs.
Grammatical resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The formal phrases contain some quite advanced grammar.
Lexical resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The formal phrases contain some quite advanced vocabulary.• Paraphrasing the rubric shows a range of vocabulary.



IELTS General Training Writing sample task: Task 1

General Training Writing sample task – Task 1

Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You live in a room in college which you share with another student. However, there are many problems with this arrangement and you find it very difficult to work.

Write a letter to the accommodation officer at the college. In the letter,

- *describe the situation*
- *explain your problems and why it is difficult to work*
- *say what kind of accommodation you would prefer*

Write at least 150 words.



IELTS General Writing Task 1: Worksheet 1

Part 1 – analysing the question

1. Do you need to write in a formal or informal style? How do you know?
2. How many paragraphs do you think you need and what information will go in each paragraph?
3. How can you make it clear to the examiner that you are beginning a new paragraph?
4. The first bullet point says 'describe the situation'. Do you think it's OK to do this by copying the rubric and changing the pronoun, like this?:

I live in a room in college which I share with another student. However, there are many problems with this arrangement and I find it very difficult to work.

5. Do you think there needs to be a connection between the problems you have, the reasons it's difficult to work and the kind of accommodation you prefer?

Part 2 – writing the first paragraph

1. We usually start a formal letter by saying why we are writing. Do you know a useful phrase for that?
2. Your letter is not good news for the accommodation officer. Do you know a useful, formal phrase for introducing bad news, or a problem?
3. Do you know any words or phrases that mean the same as these?

a room in college = **college accommodation**

another student you share a room with =

problems =

difficult =

work =

IELTS General Writing Task 1: Worksheet 2

Paragraph 1	<p><i>Dear Sir or Madam,</i></p> <p><i>I am writing with regard to my college accommodation. I regret to inform you that I am experiencing a number of issues with my current room-mate which are affecting my ability to study.</i></p>
Paragraph 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>The worst problem is that he likes to listen to loud music when he studies, which makes it impossible for me to concentrate on my work.</i>••
Paragraph 3	
Paragraph 4 + close	



IELTS General Writing Task 1: Worksheet 3

Planning your letter – paragraph 2

Problem	Why does that make it difficult to work?	What kind of accommodation would you prefer?
<i>Loud music</i>	<i>Can't concentrate</i>	<i>Quiet</i>

Planning your letter – paragraphs 3 and 4

Paragraph 3

Why do you want to change to a different type of accommodation?

How can you say 'I want' in a formal letter?

Paragraph 4 and close

Paragraph 3 is asking the accommodation officer for help, so you need to thank them. What formal phrase can you use here?

How do you finish a formal letter that starts 'Dear Sir or Madam'?

