



Skills for Life

Writing Level 1 Examination Report

2011 – Test 106

Skills for Life Writing Examination Report: Level 1

This report is based on candidate performance on one version of the Skills for Life Writing Level 1 tests in 2010/11.

The report is intended as an aid to teachers and colleges in preparing candidates for future Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life Writing tests. It includes a number of sample candidate answers accompanied by examiner comments.

Test 106

The four tasks in this test are: an email giving advice to a friend who plans to leave her course, a letter making suggestions to a community radio station, a text for a leaflet about New Year celebrations and a report for a yearly interview at work.

There are 36 marks available on the paper, 9 for Task 1, 12 for Task 2 and 15 for Task 3. The breakdown of marks available for each assessment focus (Text, Sentence and Word) is shown below:

	Text	Sentence	Word	Total
Task 1	3	6	0	9
Task 2	6	3	3	12
Task 3	6	6	3	15
Total	15	15	6	36

Candidates scored most highly on Word focus and overall, found Sentence focus the most challenging. The strongest performance was seen in Task 1, which focused on the familiar topic of studying versus employment. In this task, candidates did particularly well at Text focus, answering the question fully and organising their answer well. Candidates also performed well in Task 2 and in this task, they did slightly better at Sentence focus than at Text focus. Candidates performed less well in Tasks 3a and 3b, although there was little difference in overall performance between these two tasks. To score highly on Sentence focus, candidates were required to use more complex sentence structures, which was challenging for many candidates. It appears that the variety of topic and register encountered in these tasks enabled candidates to express their ideas in a relevant and meaningful way. The greatest enthusiasm was shown for the Task 3a option as candidates were able to transfer their own personal experiences in answering this question.

Task 1 Leaving course

This task was dealt with satisfactorily by the majority of candidates. The most successful responses in this task gave persuasive advice to Hilary in an appropriate tone and register and with appropriate opening and closing formulae. The best answers began with a suitably brief introduction whereas weaker candidates spent too long on pleasantries before coming to the main points of the email. A minority of candidates lost marks due to misinterpretation of the task. In these cases, candidates failed to read or understand the implications of *almost finished the course* or *suddenly decided to leave*. Instead, they understood the rubric as *finished the course* and *decided to leave*, congratulating Hilary on her achievements.

In general, candidates used modals, the imperative, first conditionals and clauses of reason successfully when offering advice. Embedded constructions were also sometimes successfully used by stronger candidates: *I don't know what makes you think that this is the right time... | The main reason why I think you are wrong is...*

Lexical accuracy is not assessed in email tasks and marks that would otherwise be available for Word are allocated to Sentence focus.

Task 2 Community radio

This was a guided task requiring the expression of opinions on what would be appropriate programming for a local radio station, and was dealt with satisfactorily by the majority of candidates. Generally, the structuring of the letter was good with clear opening and concluding paragraphs and middle paragraphs outlining proposals and opinions. Candidates responded well to the first question: *What do people in your community want to listen to?* However, the second question: *How can the radio help people in your area?* was not always dealt with as well. If the rationale provided for how the programmes might help people was clearly embedded however, candidates were not unduly penalised.

The task gave candidates the opportunity to use structures such as: *think/feel that* + modal forms, *would like (you) to* + infinitive, first or second conditionals, and present tenses. Generally, these were well managed by candidates.

There was generally a good range of appropriate vocabulary, accessible to all ESOL candidates. Candidates drew on vocabulary relating to a variety of fields of activity in radio programmes and employed phrasing such as: *you can include advice / people can participate in the programmes*. Some good understanding of appropriate collocations was also apparent: *multicultural programmes / give up smoking / a balanced diet / junk food*.

Task 3a New Year

This was a more open-ended task, requiring recollection of New Year celebrations and what makes them special in a country known to the candidate.

Generally this task was dealt with in a straightforward fashion with a sequential description of events leading up to New Year and the celebrations surrounding New Year itself. This was then followed by further paragraphs describing what made them special. Candidates occasionally omitted any clear reference to the second question and were accordingly marked down. Stronger candidates sometimes made use of rhetorical questions for the opening paragraph of the leaflet or used headings at appropriate points thereafter.

This task required frequent recourse to the present simple tense with good use made of *there is / there are* constructions, subordination with *when/after* clauses and relative clauses: *the people who / the rooms which*. *Enjoy + -ing* and *-ing* forms generally were also successfully used in most cases.

There was generally a good range of appropriate vocabulary, accessible to all ESOL candidates, and some good use of phrasing and collocation, for example: *candles represent goodness / traditional Polish food / members of the family kiss each other / people exchange greetings*.

Task 3b Yearly interview

This was a guided task that was dealt with effectively by the majority of candidates. The most successful attempts at the task worked systematically through the bullet-pointed questions in sequence, making use of headings for each section of the report. Weaker candidates sometimes made inappropriate use of letter format.

Generally, the third bullet point referring to future plans was dealt with less comprehensively than the first two (commenting on performance over the year and describing training needs) or, in some cases, omitted.

Generally, candidates demonstrated adequate control of past tenses and subordinate clauses with *when* in responding to the first question, of *would like* and *I realise that* structures when responding to the second question and *will* for future reference when responding to the third question.

Vocabulary use was often more abstract in this task than in the other tasks, relating to organisation of work, team work, interpersonal skills and job satisfaction in response to the first question. Examples of good collocation were: *improve my telephone skills / deal with difficult clients*. The most frequent reference when discussing training was to various computer skills and programmes. Future plans stressed company loyalty or, occasionally, running their own business.

Recommendations for Candidate Preparation

All Cambridge ESOL Skills for Life tests are based on the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum* and cover all the Basic Skills Standards in each mode at each level. Therefore, by following the *Adult ESOL Core Curriculum*, teachers will be preparing their students for the tests. Candidates will benefit from being reminded of the following Dos and Don'ts:

Do

- Do complete all the tasks in the paper.
- Do make use of the guidelines which tell you how much to write and how much time to spend on each task.
- Do make sure that your handwriting is clear and easy to read.
- Do read the task instructions carefully and check that you have done what the instructions say.
- Do think carefully about your relationship to the intended audience and your reason for writing.
- Do write in sentences where you are asked to do so.
- Do make use of appropriate opening and closing formulae (such as *Dear Fatima* and *Yours sincerely*) in letters and messages.
- Do spend time planning your answers.
- Do spend time checking your answers for accurate spelling and grammar.

Don't

- Don't worry if you run out of space: your centre will provide extra paper which will be marked in the normal way.
- Don't write a full, rough copy of your answer. Just write a few notes to plan your answer.
- Don't write in pencil.

- Don't spend too long on one answer.

Sample Scripts

Sample scripts are provided for each task in the question paper. Please note that it is not possible to reproduce the candidate answers in the original handwriting, and so any references in the commentaries to quality of handwriting will not be reflected in the samples provided.

Level 1 (Test 106) Sample Scripts and Commentaries

Level 1 Script A

Task 1

(About 10 minutes)

Your friend Hilary has almost finished a three-year college course but she has suddenly decided to leave and find a job.

Send an email to Hilary, saying what you think about this decision, giving your reasons.

Write about 80 words.

To:

Hilary@pls.ac.uk

Subject:

Leaving college

Hi Hilary!

I'm surprised with your's decition I thought you gona make it. Of course everybody needs money but just to drop it in a midle or almost in the end... I don't think is a good idea.

I know it's a good oportunity to get the job now, but think about future. Many of them will wait after graduation.

Again unfinished studies will say about you, that you can't finish what you begin till the end.

I hope you will change your's decition and I hope to see you back.

Best regards

Level 1 Script A Task 1			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has covered both points and intended audience would be fully informed.	3	3
Sentence focus	Sentence grammar is sufficiently controlled for meaning to remain clear. There is evidence of complex sentences but with some awkwardness.	2	3
Word focus		Not assessed in this task	

Level 1 Script B
Task 1

(About 10 minutes)

Your friend Hilary has almost finished a three-year college course but she has suddenly decided to leave and find a job.

Send an email to Hilary, saying what you think about this decision, giving your reasons.

Write about 80 words.

To:

Hilary@pls.ac.uk

Subject:

Leaving college

Hi,

hilary. It's Nice to hear from you again. I think that you should stay in collage course. You have only half a year to finish. So don't be foolish and stay. Look, you have whole life before you. If you leave collage and start a job. You will be working for rest of life. Don't rush. Take it easy. Finish collage and after that start look for a job. What is more, If you finish collage it will be easier to find a better job

To sum up, dou not leave, stay and If you have problem with money, Don't hestiate ask me for help or support.

Yours Marek

Level 1 Script B Task 1			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Both points are covered with suitable expansion and the intended audience would be informed.	3	3
Sentence focus	Evidence of ability to construct complex sentences.	2	4
Word focus		Not assessed in this task	

Level 1 Script C
Task 2

(About 25 minutes)

You see this notice in your local shop window.

COMMUNITY RADIO NORTH

Community Radio North is a local station for the community. We want to make sure our programmes are interesting to people in the local area. Can you help us with ideas? What do people in your community want to listen to? How can the radio help people in your area? We welcome your ideas.

Write to me, Joss Collins, Manager of Community Radio North.

Write a letter to Joss Collins.

Write about 140 words. You do not need to write the address or the date.

I saw the advert in the local shop, I think is really good of you to be interested in improving and helping people in our community.

I can say you have interesting programs already. For instance I hear your station every morning, but I think you could help people if you include counsels to families in one of your programs. Families are living difficult times because of the lack of communication and respect, you can include positive advice and experiences of people who enjoy their family life.

the Radio can help very much the community when people is allowed to participate in the programs. I mean It is good to ask questions that could be answered by the audience. So you can know people worries and opinions.

I do not have experience about how to do Radio programs but I am sure people like to participate and exprese themselves. So the radio programs must be interactive.

Level 1 Script C Task 2			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Intended audience would be adequately informed. Satisfactory level of detail to achieve purpose. Text is coherent and organised into paragraphs.	2	3
Sentence focus	Candidate shows evidence of ability to construct complex sentences but there are some problems with punctuation. Sentence grammar is sufficiently controlled for meaning to remain clear.	2	2
Word focus	Some evidence of range with minor spelling errors. Candidate's handwriting is always legible.	2	2

Level 1 Script D
Task 2

(About 25 minutes)

You see this notice in your local shop window.

COMMUNITY RADIO NORTH

Community Radio North is a local station for the community. We want to make sure our programmes are interesting to people in the local area. Can you help us with ideas? What do people in your community want to listen to? How can the radio help people in your area? We welcome your ideas.

Write to me, Joss Collins, Manager of Community Radio North.

Write a letter to Joss Collins.

Write about 140 words. You do not need to write the address or the date.

Dear Joss Collins,

I am a new resident in Bedfordshire. I have arrived here from West Yorkshire, and all my friends are living there. I am a new in Bedfordshire and feeling lonely because this area infamiliar for me. When I am at home I enjoy listening programmes of the Community Radio North. I think that some programmes are very interesting and useful, especially for me, because they help me to know about local news, people and traditions.

Level 1 Script D Task 2			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has attempted to address points but only from a personal perspective. Intended audience would only be partially informed.	1	1
Sentence focus	Some attempt at complex sentences but overall the letter is too short to show range.	1	1
Word focus	Vocabulary relevant to task and mainly accurately spelt.	2	2

Level 1 Script E
Task 3a

(About 40 minutes)

In order to celebrate the different cultures in your area, your local council is planning to publish a leaflet about New Year celebrations. You have been asked to write about New Year in a country you know.

Describe what happens at New Year and what makes it special.

Write the text for the leaflet.

Write about 200 words.

I lived in UK for long time now so I write about New Year in here. Is called newYear becoos is last of December and first day in Ganuary but not feel very new – weather always cold and very dark so parsonally I don't think to celebrate.

Anyway peepul do. Chirstmas is time for family but from what I seen New Year more about spend with friends. Always a lot of restaurants have special menu for very expensive dinner and peepul go in big groups for eating there. Or they have party in home and inviting friends to come. I think tending to be grown ups and not so many kids but might be wrong. Other things you can do is going abroad to sunshine. I like this idea!

Not really special foods. Most important thing to happen is that Big Ben in London say midnight. People count down from ten to one and then drink champaign and wish 'Happy New Year'. They go round to kiss others and sometimes sing a Scottish song.

In next day is a holiday and peepul say about changing way of life and be better. Often making a list called Resolutions like give up smoking but

normally not happening!

British people like New Year becoos get holiday next days. Like I said not a good time in the year but important to start again.

Level 1 Script E Task 3a			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has completed the task, though treatment of the second point is minimal. Text is organised into paragraphs.	2	3
Sentence focus	Candidate shows some evidence of control over verb tenses. Sentence grammar is sufficiently controlled for message to be communicated, though there are isolated losses of clarity.	1	2
Word focus	Candidate uses vocabulary appropriate to task. Although candidate makes repeated errors in the spelling of 'people' and 'because', candidate can spell the majority of words used in daily life.	2	2

Level 1 Script F
Task 3a

(About 15 minutes)

In order to celebrate the different cultures in your area, your local council is planning to publish a leaflet about New Year celebrations. You have been asked to write about New Year in a country you know.

Describe what happens at New Year and what makes it special.

Write the text for the leaflet.

Write about 200 words.

The persian New Year, Nowruz

The word Nowruz is a compound of two words, now means new and the word ruz means both day and time. Literally means the new day, Nowruz is usually translated as new year. Nowruz begins on the 1st day of spring the 21st of March. In Iranian calendars is 1st of Farvardin. A few days before the arrival of Nowruz, a rather large table cloth is spread on the table of the main room of the houses and these items are placed on it:

- Lightened candles, which represent the goodness and enters life with the coming of spring
- A copy of Quran or Bible or Avesta is placed on the sofreh
- Haft sin or seven edible things the names of which in persian begin with S are placed in a tray or next to each other of sofreh
 - sib (apple) health, natural beauty, fragrance.
 - sumaq (sumac) colour of the sun at sunrise.
 - sir (garlic) medicine for recovering from evil.

- samanū (a paste made with wheat sprouts) sweetness, having many children
- senjed (jujube fruit) love
- sohan (a candy made with honey and nuts) sweetness in life.
- serke (vinegar) age and patience.
- sabzeh (wheat or lentil sprouts) purity, good future
- sekke (coins) wealth

and then the hour during which the old year end and the new year begins all the members of family kiss each other and exchange Nowruz greetings and give the children or younger their gifts

Level 1 Script F Task 3a

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Both points covered with good expansion which would engage the intended audience. Bullet points and notes are appropriate to leaflet format.	3	5
Sentence focus	Sentence structure appropriate for leaflet format.	3	5
Word focus	Good range of highly relevant vocabulary with minimal spelling error.	3	3

Level 1 Script G
Task 3b

(About 40 minutes)

You receive this form from your manager at work. Read the form and complete the report as requested.

Write about 200 words.

Yearly Interview

You will soon have an interview with your manager to discuss your work this year and in the near future. To prepare for the interview, we would like you to write a report about:

- what you think you have done well and not so well in the last year
- what training you think you need
- your future plans.

In the last year I was working in different things in the same Area. When I had started I was so worried about talk with public and in the same time do my office job. That was very excited for me because I could practice English and computer as well. I think I have done well my work with the public. I have tried always to help them as I have had a lot of pacience with non English speakers, because I know what they feel. Also I have made improve in the computer, stast and telephone skills. I think my weak area was the communications with the manager, because How I have tell to him I get problems for understand him because he has a deep voice, and because that I have difficulties for make some jobs as I need to ask a lot of times and I cannot do exactly what he ask me.

If you ask me about training I need to tell you, I need more English, no just receive class if not practice, I need talk more and also with people who can show me my mistakes. Will be usefull received telephone training and also some course for help me How deal with difficults clients.

My future plans are improve my English and to be a fluent English speaker as well

How incorporate in the English society.

Level 1 Script G Task 3b			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Points covered with adequate expansion but occasional losses of 'clarity'.	2	4
Sentence focus	Sentence grammar is sufficiently controlled for meaning usually to remain clear but there are a number of non-impeding basic errors.	2	3
Word focus	Range of vocabulary which is mostly used appropriately, with some spelling errors.	2	2

Level 1 Script H
Task 3b

(About 40 minutes)

You receive this form from your manager at work. Read the form and complete the report as requested.

Write about 200 words.

Yearly Interview

You will soon have an interview with your manager to discuss your work this year and in the near future. To prepare for the interview, we would like you to write a report about:

- what you think you have done well and not so well in the last year
- what training you think you need
- your future plans.

I think I have done well many thing in the last year. I did work well and also I always was on time. I had never been late on work. I always bit early on the work.

I like that work because we are 5 people working in that place. I think I like work in the group.

I think I haven't done so well is that 3 months ago I wasn't well when I took some holidays from work. I didn't go to work for 2 weeks.

When I took some holidays that time one another person was on holidays. I think that time company lost there contant with there customer. Because company didn't finish work on time. That's what I didn't do so well.

I think I need couple of trainings. Because I work on night shift. None of us have any training like "first aid or fire". I think I need

training about first aid and fire.

Last time when I was working then other person had accident on the work then we had called to the ambulance if one of us had training about first aid then didn't have to called ambulance because it wasn't a big accident. It was a little cut with knife on his finger.

My further plans are we need a one fork lefter driver who just do the fork lefting because if we don't a fork lefter driver then other people have to do work own there own. So time things are very heavy then we have to do help each other. I think we need a cleaner as well because when we finish work then we have to clean every thing. We do cleaning very fast but sometime we don't have time for cleaning. then next day we have to do that first then we start work.

Level 1 Script H Task 3b

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Points 1 and 2 sufficiently covered, and point 3, although an unexpected interpretation, is accepted.	2	3
Sentence focus	Sentence grammar is controlled enough for meaning to remain clear but use of language is unambitious with a number of basic errors.	2	3
Word focus	Range of vocabulary with some errors. Most common functional words are spelt correctly.	2	2