



# Skills for Life

## Writing Level 2 Examination Report

2011 – Test 106

## Skills for Life Writing Examination Report: Level 2

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This report is based on candidate performance on one version of the Skills for Life Writing Level 2 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 to an insurance company, a letter requesting help from Social Services for a neighbour, a newspaper article on polite behaviour and good manners and a report for work in preparation for a yearly performance review.

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 Text focus and found Sentence focus the most challenging overall. Candidates performed particularly well on Text focus in Task 1. Candidate performance was generally better in tasks 1 and 2 and less good in the Task 3 option. Although Task 3b was the less popular Task 3 option, there was little difference in candidate performance between the two tasks.

### Task 1 Insurance claim

This was a structured task that was dealt with effectively by the majority of candidates. Both content points were generally well dealt with, with appropriate expansion. Weaker candidates often provided an inappropriately informal closing formula for a formal email or the tone adopted in addressing the second point (why candidate feels the insurance company should pay for all the damage) was sometimes insufficiently polite. Candidates tended to write around the correct number of words though some produced considerably more than requested, a common feature of Task 1 responses.

Generally good use was made of the past simple, both active and passive, in explaining the damage caused by the burst pipes. When explaining what action was expected, candidates often made effective use of modal verbs, clauses of reason, and *would like* and *I think that* structures.

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

### Task 2 Social services

This was a more open-ended task and was dealt with effectively by the majority of candidates. The organisation and sequencing of ideas for this task was generally satisfactory, with appropriate use made of paragraphs and opening and closing formulae. Many candidates provided imaginative expansion of the first content point (explanation of Mrs Blackwell's situation) though expansion was sometimes excessive. Overall there was little misinterpretation of what was required in Task 2 and clear and coherent expression or expansion of views would have guaranteed a good mark in this focus. Occasionally, candidates mistook

the purpose of the social services visit and thought it would be primarily to them as the writer of the letter rather than primarily to Mrs Blackwell, but by and large most candidates were clear about who was intended.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some proficiency in the structures required for the explanation of Mrs Blackwell's situation and suggested the degree of help needed, producing compound and complex sentences with an adequate measure of control for this level. Sentences beginning with: *I think the main problems are...* and *The sort of help that she needs is...* were frequent.

The task generally elicited an adequate, and sometimes good, range of vocabulary relevant to this topic with appropriate collocations such as: *had a stroke* | *lives on her own* | *unable to cope* | *needs help with cleaning, washing, personal hygiene* | *keep in touch with*.

### **Task 3a Polite behaviour**

This was a guided task but one requiring significant input of the candidates own ideas regarding examples of polite behaviour and how important good manners are. Candidates generally responded to the task as required, but some candidates wrote in excess of the suggested number of words and, if over ambitious, sometimes with loss of coherence. Description and opinion was usually well balanced but a minority of candidates wrote excessively when citing examples and minimally or not at all on the latter aspect, and were accordingly marked down. Paragraphing was usually well managed with separate paragraphs for each example identified. In some cases, appropriate use was made of article format with good use of headings, appropriate register and tone.

Generally good use was made of the language of explanation and opinion, with frequent reference to simple and continuous present, conditionals, *when* and *whenever* clauses and a range of modal verbs.

Stronger candidates demonstrated a wide range of appropriate vocabulary in their examples of polite behaviour and why being polite is important, e.g. *regarded as inappropriate behaviour* | *shows a lack of respect for* | *burping or slumping at the table* | *become aware of* | *when to say please or thank you*.

### **Task 3b Yearly performance review**

This Task 3 option was chosen by fewer candidates and was attempted with mixed success. The most successful attempts at 3b were made by those with significant work experience. Many candidates presented a balanced report as required by the rubric, but some described duties and responsibilities or successes in too much detail, leaving insufficient time for the latter aspects, and were penalised accordingly. Reference to personal targets and training needs was often omitted. Ideas were generally arranged coherently with clear overall progression and paragraphing was generally good, sometimes accompanied by appropriate use of headings, though candidates occasionally revealed a tendency to over-paragraph.

Candidates were generally able to demonstrate some proficiency in the language of description, narration and opinion, producing compound and complex sentences with an adequate measure of control. Present tense forms, active and passive and *to* + infinitive structures were evident when describing duties and responsibilities, together with past tense forms and embedded structures when narrating successes and difficulties of the previous year: *The main difficulty I faced was when...*

The topic elicited an appropriate range of vocabulary associated with a range of occupations, the most common being nursing, different aspects of IT, office duties and stock control and engineering. Suitable collocations were evident in many responses to this question, featuring expressions such as: *maintained a good level of customer service* | *improvements in patient care* | *checked thoroughly for any defects*. Vocabulary used was often very appropriately work-specific, reflecting the candidate's particular experience.

## 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 2 (Test 106) Sample Scripts and Commentaries

### Level 2 Script A

#### Task 1

(About 15 minutes)

You recently had a problem with burst water pipes in your house, which caused damage both upstairs and downstairs. You contacted your insurance company. However, they have agreed to pay for only part of the damage.

Write an email to Mrs James at your insurance company to explain the situation, and say why you feel they should pay for all of the damage.

Write about 120 words.

<b>To:</b>	cjames@insurecare.co.uk
<b>Subject:</b>	My claim

I write this letter to inform you, that I've been with your Insurance Company for so long. I want you to considered what am going through, which I need you to help me and pay for all the damage.

I insured my house, so that something like this happen, I know what you can do, so that I don't have to worry. But if it's gonna be like this, then I'll find other quotation with other companies which will offer me better.

It's not fair for me, to pay you all that money, for every month, on time, and I have to be treated that way.

Please try and see my situation and help me, which, I haven't broken your agreement with your company. thank you, I will really appreciate.

**Level 2 Script A Task 1**

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Task is not complete and intended audience would not be informed. Register is not always appropriate.	1	1
Sentence focus	Grammar is sufficiently controlled for most meaning to remain clear.	1	2
Word focus		<b>Not assessed in this task</b>	

## Level 2 Script B

### Task 1

(About 15 minutes)

You recently had a problem with burst water pipes in your house, which caused damage both upstairs and downstairs. You contacted your insurance company. However, they have agreed to pay for only part of the damage.

Write an email to Mrs James at your insurance company to explain the situation, and say why you feel they should pay for all of the damage.

Write about 120 words.

To:

cjames@insurecare.co.uk

Subject:

My claim

Dear Mrs James

I am writing this letter regarding a problem in my house. as you know I recently had a problem with burst pipes. Unfortunately, you said yesterday, that you will pay for part of the damage. I do not agree with that.

First of all, I have to spent a money to redecorate the house. The floor, walls and some furniture are damage as well. And not only upstairs, but also downstairs. If you will give me money for only part of the damage, I will not be able to buy beds or wardrobes for my children.

Second reason is that - the contractt says "our company pay for all of the damage". Regarding that contractt, which is signing between me and your insurance company, I claim to do it.

I have been your good customer for 5 years. My house was extensive damage. It is tragedy for me and my children.

I look forward to your repley.

Your faithfully

**Level 2 Script B Task 1**

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has completed task effectively. Intended audience would be fully informed.	3	3
Sentence focus	A range of language is attempted but ambition sometimes leads to error.	2	3
Word focus		<b>Not assessed in this task</b>	

**Level 2 Script C**  
**Task 2**

**(About 30 minutes)**

You see this notice in your local library.

<p><b>HELP FROM SOCIAL SERVICES</b></p> <p>Do you know someone who needs help to manage in their own home?</p> <p>Social Services can provide help with meals, housework and personal care.</p> <p>If you know someone who needs help, write a letter, giving details of their situation and describing what help they need. We will arrange a visit to assess how we can help.</p> <p>Contact John Swift at Social Services.</p>
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Your elderly neighbour, Mrs Blackwell, is unwell and needs help. You offer to write to Mr Swift at Social Services for her.

Write your letter.

Write about 200 words. You do not need to write the address or the date.

Dear Mr Swift,
I'm writing this letter to you on behalf of my neighbour who is a
older person. I want to know what kind of help she can receive from you
because she is really in need.
Mrs Blackwell is my neighbour. She is a kind person, she likes to leave in
a quiete area. She doesn't like noise. She lives alone in the house. She has
got a cat. Every Monday she has a visit of an other elderly person like him.
but this is not enough. She supposes to be in a care where people can

see her regularly. She seems to be ill. her number house is 195 in King Street (South Harrow), and telephone is 02088467552.

When I'm writing I notice almost 3 weeks without seeing her outside. I don't know what happened. I think you are the only and right person who can help her.

I think I gave you already her details so if you could come in person or either to contact her by phone.

I appreciate your courage and support.

Your Faithfully,

**Level 2 Script C Task 2**

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	There is little explicit information given about second point but enough is implied to consider point addressed. (See first paragraph and top of second page.)	2	3
Sentence focus	Very simple language. Candidate has problems with pronouns and verb forms.	1	1
Word focus	Limited range of vocabulary for this level. When range is attempted it is often unsuccessful, e.g. 'I appreciate your courage.'	1	1

**Level 2 Script D**  
**Task 2**

**(About 30 minutes)**

You see this notice in your local library.

<p><b>HELP FROM SOCIAL SERVICES</b></p> <p>Do you know someone who needs help to manage in their own home?</p> <p>Social Services can provide help with meals, housework and personal care.</p> <p>If you know someone who needs help, write a letter, giving details of their situation and describing what help they need. We will arrange a visit to assess how we can help.</p> <p>Contact John Swift at Social Services.</p>
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Your elderly neighbour, Mrs Blackwell, is unwell and needs help. You offer to write to Mr Swift at Social Services for her.

Write your letter.

Write about 200 words. You do not need to write the address or the date.

<p><i>Dear Mr Swift</i></p>
<p>I saw the adverb in our library "Help From Social Services". Regarding it,</p>
<p>I would like you to know that my neighbour – Mrs Blackwell needs such a</p>
<p>help. She is seventy five years old. I have been her neighbour for 3 years.</p>
<p>I have visited her in my free time. I am very busy person – I am working full</p>
<p>time and after work I go to college. I think, Mrs Blackwell needs more attention</p>
<p>and help.</p>
<p>Unfortunately, she lost her lovely husband 5 months ago. She was happy</p>
<p>married. Her husband help her to do shopping, cleaning the house. They</p>
<p>spent plenty of time together playing the games, going to the park. They were</p>

lovely couple. I have always seen their hospitality. They invited many people to their house.

Now, Mrs Blackwell is depressed. She does not want to go out and talk with people. Most of her time she spends at her home. She is not willing to talk even with me. It is giving me cause for concern.

Also, she has got a problem with a heart. Two months after her husband's death, she had a heart attack. She spent three weeks in a hospital. I spoke with a doctor, who said that her situation is not good. She should have someone to support her, not only mentally but also doing housework.

This is why I am asking you about help. She is not able to do housework. She needs someone to do shopping. But the most important thing is – to give her good company. She is very sensitive and she needs someone to listen to her carefully, and give opportunity to talking about her problems.

I would like to contact you as soon as possible. Tomorrow, I am going to her and I will tell her about social service and help, which she can get from you. My number phone is 07789151241.

I look forward to your reply.

Your faithfully

Ewa Bartosiewicz

**Level 2 Script D Task 2**

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	A full and effective realisation of the task.	3	<b>6</b>
Sentence focus	Candidate demonstrates an adequate range of language although it is not always controlled, e.g. problems with articles, use of adjectives/adverbs.	2	<b>2</b>
Word focus	A good range of appropriate vocabulary, e.g. 'giving me cause for concern', but there are spelling mistakes, e.g. 'contact', 'tomorrow'.	2	<b>2</b>

**Level 2 Script E**  
**Task 3a**

**(About 45 minutes)**

Your local newspaper is currently running a series of articles, written by readers, about the importance of good manners in different cultures. The newspaper is particularly interested to hear about what is regarded as polite behaviour in social situations (for example, dress codes, being a guest in another person's house, eating habits).

Write an article for the newspaper, giving examples of polite behaviour in social situations and your views on the importance of good manners.

Write about 280 words.

To the Metro daily newspaper.

Dear Metro readers!

I have been reading this newspaper in the last half a year continuously. I really enjoy your articles, specially when readers can put their opinions into words, maybe with some argument having discussions or just giving some information.

Recently I read an interesting article about good manners in different cultures.

I really found it fascinating and interesting how people can behave differently in the same situation just because they have different habits, customs.

For example I'm from Hungary and in my country is acceptable to say thank you whenever you finished your dinner, to show respect for the person who made

the food. And also there is some religious root in it because I remember my

granmother said it was God who gave us the food. But for example here in England

there is no need to thank for your food what you had and I remember when I first

came to the country (I was working as an au-pair) I wanted to be polite and

everytime when we had dinner in the family I said: Thank you and left the table.

They were looking at me strange and a bit later we find out, this was new for them.

This was just a little exam.

The and of the day I defenetly think it is really important to try to behave politely,  
respect each other and tolerate each other traditions.

Best regards, Megi Agani

<b>Level 2 Script E Task 3a</b>			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Minimal treatment of second point; only one example given. Candidate's views on the importance of good manners are also minimal.	2	3
Sentence focus	Evidence of complex structures; language reasonably controlled.	2	4
Word focus	Some spelling errors; adequate range of vocabulary.	2	2

**Level 2 Script F**  
**Task 3a**

**(About 45 minutes)**

Your local newspaper is currently running a series of articles, written by readers, about the importance of good manners in different cultures. The newspaper is particularly interested to hear about what is regarded as polite behaviour in social situations (for example, dress codes, being a guest in another person's house, eating habits).

Write an article for the newspaper, giving examples of polite behaviour in social situations and your views on the importance of good manners.

Write about 280 words.

*"What is Good manners"*

*Hello, my name is Klara and I am writing because in my opinion this subject is very subjective and dubious.*

*I Read all the articles and I want tell to all the writers, you are not correct, everything is a cultural question.*

*I am not from this country and when I arrive my first cultural shock it was when I saw all the girls on Friday night with a short dress, and don't think it is a question of conservaturism, I was schocked because was snowing and a very cold night.*

*Can we tell they don't have dress codes? Or they dress like that because they like schock the people?? No, they are dressing like that because is them habits and culture.*

*Another example, the weading, dress codes, in England you have to dress a suit or a beautifull and fashion dress. Why are you ask??*

*Because is the culture. I can let you know in my country you can go to a*

*wedding with jeans and nobody will look at you in a different way.*

*We can talk now about eating habits, one more time I have to tell you, it's a cultural question, and I can give you a lot of examples too.*

*In India, the natives eat with their hands, is that unpolite or bad manners? No, they just don't use forks or knives because it's their culture. In England, people put bread in the side of the soup, I can remember my mum arguing with me because of that, one more time a cultural issue, in my country putting bread in the side of the soup or cookies in the side of the tea is very, very rude, impolite.*

*For all that my conclusion and my advice is very simple and practical... In England be English. In France be French, in India be India.*

*Learn about good manners in different cultures and apply all your knowledge when you travel around the world. This is what I have done since I arrived in England, first months I learned a lot about the culture and now, nobody can tell me I am impolite or have a different behavior. Simple and practical, different cultures, different behaviors.*

<b>Level 2 Script F Task 3a</b>			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has made a good attempt at the task, though coverage of the second point is minimal and opinion is not evident.	2	4
Sentence focus	Overall poor control; problems with tenses, verb forms and questions.	1	2
Word focus	Numerous spelling mistakes.	1	1

**Level 2 Script G**  
**Task 3b**

**(About 45 minutes)**

You are about to have your yearly performance review with your line manager. In preparation, you must write a report outlining the following:

- the main duties and responsibilities of your post
- the successes you have had over the last year
- any difficulties you have had over the last year.

You should also identify your targets and training needs for the coming year.

Write about 280 words.

— Main duties & responsibilities

• as a staff manager, my main responsibility is the staff and the work they are producing.

• I have to organise the workload.

• make sure that planned work is done on time

• monitoring how things are going

• solving any problem regarding my staff

Last year the atmosphere around the staff was brilliant, which caused that things were going along nicely. Even though there were many occasions when some of the staff were absent due to personal and health reasons, fortunately we were able to cope with the situation. And even got ahead of the schedule, but we had to deal with immense pressure at times.

It has been a good year, the staff wasn't unhappy of my leadership at any time.

All this was a new experience for me as a first year staff manager and as well

as for the staff. But still I see some patches in the skills of the staff, they

are just performing at a normal level on which I think they have the ability

to do far better than this. So my target is to come up with the right

inspiration to benefit fully of their skills and cut down the pressure which is

created when the planned work isn't done on time.

And in conclusion I don't think any kind of training is required as they are fully

skilled to produce the goods to this company. Which I will try my best to

achieve this and the best for the company for the next year as well.

<b>Level 2 Script G Task 3b</b>			
Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Candidate has referred to personal targets but training is implied for staff rather than for self so maximum Band 2.	2	4
Sentence focus	Clear evidence of complex language but some inaccuracy, particularly with relative clauses, detracts from the overall effect.	2	4
Word focus	Wide and appropriate range of vocabulary e.g. 'with immense pressure at times'.	3	3

**Level 2 Script H**  
**Task 3b**

**(About 45 minutes)**

You are about to have your yearly performance review with your line manager. In preparation, you must write a report outlining the following:

- the main duties and responsibilities of your post
- the successes you have had over the last year
- any difficulties you have had over the last year.

You should also identify your targets and training needs for the coming year.

Write about 280 words.

*Report*

*From: Paulina Bodak – restaurant supervisor*

*To: Thierry Martinez – line manager*

*The aim of this report is to draw your attention to results of my yearly performance. To complete the report I summarized all my yearly work and divided into three main group, where I will show you my progress.*

*The main duties and responsibilities as a restaurant manager.*

*As the supervisor mainly I have to watch and direct a work of other staff. In my situation there are four people for who I have to give orders. I must take care of their behaviour and good manners towards customers. I must also give a good example not only by giving the right orders but also helping them as much I can. Training is one of the main duties of mine and that is very*

*important to pass the knowledge very simply but exactly with precision.*

*The successes over the last year.*

*I must say that last year had been a quite difficult for me, as it was a first on the new position. During that period I managed to settle well in that position and felt very comfortable. The new ideas like, fresh flowers in the restaurant, complementary drinks, gift vouchers and free appetizers are a great success in bringing more customers to our place. What is more, a good team work seems to improve a lot since I have started. Staff proved to work harder and learned better communication skills what really ease the job. A lot of 'thank you letters' and more bussy restaurant proved my hard work and I treat it as a great success.*

*Difficulties over last year.*

*The responsible position is pretty stressfull and I had some problems which I had to faced it. For instance one of the worst was a conflict between two members of the staff. It was problem of age gap, because the older one took an advantage of the younger. To solve that problem I had to change the staff's rotation and give them different shifts to avoid further conflict.*

*Furthermore I had a couple of unhappy customers who complained about the food and slow service, which I solved with a free meal and an appology.*

*To summ up, I would like to tell you that I am very happy on my position and do my best in the future.*

*In the near future I would like to organize special evenings – dinner dance with a quizzes. I think it would be a good idea to give an extra training.*

**Level 2 Script H Task 3b**

Commentary		Band	Mark
Text focus	Training is expressed as a responsibility rather than a personal need. Targets are not explicitly mentioned.	1	2
Sentence focus	A mixture of well-controlled and less well-controlled language is presented.	2	4
Word focus	A good range e.g. 'to avoid further conflict' with some spelling errors e.g. 'bussy'.	2	2