




Writing in High School

Aari Juhanson MA
August 23, Pärnu 2025



Overview

Set-up

Letters

Essays

CAE Marking Scale

Reports

CAE tasks (proposals, reviews)

Administrative Intro

Year 1 (gr.10) - letters + reported speech (no AI)
Writing Course

Year 2 (gr.11) - essay + conditional + PV
Part of B2 Course

Year 3 (gr.12) - review (letter - peer-assessed, essay) + reports
+ prepositions for trends
- CAE tasks for test-takers
Writing Course 3 + 2

Letters

Formal vs informal

Also, like, want, pretty, way, etc.
omissions, e.g. *Looking forward to ...*
complaint is ALWAYS formal

Paired writing

Three types: complaint, application (2 different tasks), inquiry

→ Web search or instructive video

Polite reported questions

Handwritten first draft → improved version + photo (draft) in drive

Assessment - one type at random

Task 2 – Style Markers



Example of a powerpoint task for students to replace the informal with formal or decide to leave the informal / inappropriate out.

- **I want** → I would like to ... / Could you / Could you be so kind and ...
- **You'd better** ...
 - I would like you to ... /I would advise you to ...
- **Gotta** send **U** the **things**
 - I need/have to send you the documents/papers/etc.
- We **gonna** visit **them sightseeings** next month.
 - We are going to visit the/some sights next month.
- **Let me know** when you decide
 - Could you send me a reply at your earliest convenience ...
- **Why don't you** get better workers!
- **If you don't** pay my money back **I will send you somewhere where you don't wanna go!**
- **I'm into** many hobbies **like** swimming, basketball **and stuff like that....**
- ... and the last thing **I was really mad about** was ... it was in a **pretty rough** condition ...

Main Problems with Letters

Signposting vs expanding

Not expanding (enough)

Chatty, arrogant (lower case “I”)

Video by “Weird Al” Yankovic: Word Crimes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gv0H-vPoDc>

Possessive vs plural (“mothers milk”)

Logic (assuming roles)

Inquiry: questions AND/OR info

Linkers + commas

You found an advertisement in a local newspaper looking for someone to join a trip. Read the advertisement and your notes.

Ready for a Challenge?

We are looking for someone to join our hiking trip to the Himalayas (this spring).

You must be old enough, fit and prepared to live in difficult conditions.

For more information, please contact:
Jean Blake
Dunelm Street 27

Handwritten notes and arrows:

- minimum age? points to "old enough"
- cost? points to "For more information"
- dates? points to "(this spring)"
- which? points to "difficult conditions"

Write a letter expressing interest and ask for more information.

Use the pen name Mari Mets / Mart Mets for yourself. **Do not write** any addresses.

You should write **120 words**

Essays

Structure and essay formats

National Exam vs CAE

Advantages vs disadvantages

Ideas provided - READ the task

CAE: 2 aspects (w/o adv-disadv) + pick one

Argument

Position

Explanation

Your class has attended a panel discussion on facilities which should receive money from local authorities. You have made the notes below.

Which facilities should receive money from local authorities?

- museums
- sports centres
- public gardens

Some opinions expressed in the discussion:

"Museums aren't popular with everybody."

"Sports centres mean healthier people."

"A town needs green spaces – parks are great for everybody."

Write an essay discussing two of the facilities in your notes. You should explain which facility it is more important for local authorities to give money to, giving reasons in support of your answer.

Essay task from Cambridge C1 Advanced Trainer

You may, if you wish, make use of the opinions expressed in the discussion, but you should use your own words as far as possible.

Argumentation

Brainstorm

Review and pick

Write the argument - ONE sentence

Write the introduction

Grab the attention

Avoid repeating the task and/or the title

Avoid "In my/this essay I will discuss ..."

Step-by-step: keywords, arguments, intro, essay

Tasks from the National Exam, examples from classroom smartboard notes.

Should Smart Devices Be Banned in the Classroom?
Write an essay discussing advantages and disadvantages of using smart devices in the classroom and expressing your opinion. → Cor.

Advantages:
+ quick access to inf.
+ modern approach
+ easy to have texts + exps
+ basics to write on screen
+ e-textbooks
+ easy note-taking
+ answers in whh

Disadvantages:
- The main advantage of using dig. dev.-s in lessons is that it is modern.
- Further, another adv.-s would be easy note-taking options.

Arguments:
- bad for eyes
- engages all of your attention
- cheating (dishonest text-taking)
- disturbs focusing (wandering mind)
- handwriting issues
- lazy (why study → cheat!)

Keywords:
- fasten typing, lecturers, editing

Now less than in the past
The number of people reading is lower than ever. (audible inf., videos, no need to read)
In the past, reading used to be a privilege to the wealthy, but today it is something every person can and should do.

Reading has been slowly losing popularity since technology took over.
The average amount of readers will probably keep on declining in the future. (entertainment, less in the future)
The leading cause of lack of reading is technological advancement. (clips, download data)

As technology evolves, the more options there are for acquiring information without reading long books. (audio books, docum.-s, videos)

Reading helps visualize and capture the knowledge and the power OF words. (words impactful, lives, exp vocab, visualization)

Why read books?
Reading has a positive impact on the human mind. (exp. vocab, improve skills, self-expression)
Nowadays, everything is made easy for everyone. In order to keep the brain functioning, people should train their brain by reading. (brain exercise, vs. thinking)

BINGO TIME!

Essay: Issues & Assessment

Linkers! Commas!

! CANNOT !

Register/tone

"I", "we", "you"

Sentence fragments, colloquialisms

Overexploitation of 'get' & pronouns

Possessive (Estonians mental health)

Logic issues due to verbosity

Conclusion

empty (intro + conclusion = idea)

unbalanced

fails to follow the task

Online assessment:

Moodle SEB

Cathoven

Comments

Rewrite the final
(AI)



Color code from Cathoven website.

C2.9+

Vocabulary		C2.9+
Verb form		B1.6
Clause		B1.6

Comment:

Task: (2.5p) A1 - link to the task? A3 - one or two arguments (overlapping)

Org: (2.5p) A1 - what is your argument/point: to live better or that moving is not a problem? Logic in A2 unemployed people and getting older (retiring) are not the same. 'furthermore' inappropriate.

Voc: (2.5p) title caps!, sp (studYing, fuRthermore), spkn (Also, return back)

Gr: (2) agr (Estonian people wants), w.o. (intro), T,

Essay example with the help of Cathoven CEFR-Checker.

NB! Be aware of spelling issues.
Comment examples from feedback to students.

Comment:

Task: OK 4p

Org: LD (A2) inappropriate, conclusion has some new notes. - 3p

Voc: redundancy (return back), vocab (broadens horizonS, meet with new people vs meet, In Estonia, they have - who have? They do not have to return to Estonia - who?), spkn (Also,), sp (develope) - 2.5

Gr: w.o. (intro), agr (in another countries --> in other countries, there are snow), commas! - 3

CAE Marking Scale

C1	CONTENT	COMMUNICATIVE ACHIEVEMENT	ORGANISATION	LANGUAGE
5	All content is relevant to the task. Target reader is fully informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task with sufficient flexibility to communicate complex ideas in an effective way, holding the target reader's attention with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.	Text is a well-organised, coherent whole, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns with flexibility.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, effectively and precisely. Uses a wide range of simple and complex grammatical forms with full control, flexibility and sophistication. Errors, if present, are related to less common words and structures, or occur as slips.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present. Target reader is on the whole informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward and complex ideas, as appropriate.	Text is well organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices and organisational patterns to generally good effect.	Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately. Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility. Occasional errors may be present but do not impede communication.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Irrelevances and misinterpretation of task may be present. Target reader is minimally informed.	Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the target reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas.	Text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices.	Uses a range of everyday vocabulary appropriately, with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis. Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control. Errors do not impede communication.
0	Content is totally irrelevant. Target reader is not	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>		

Marking scale from

<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/600976-teacher-guide-for-writing-c1-advanced.pdf>

Report

National Exam report vs CAE report

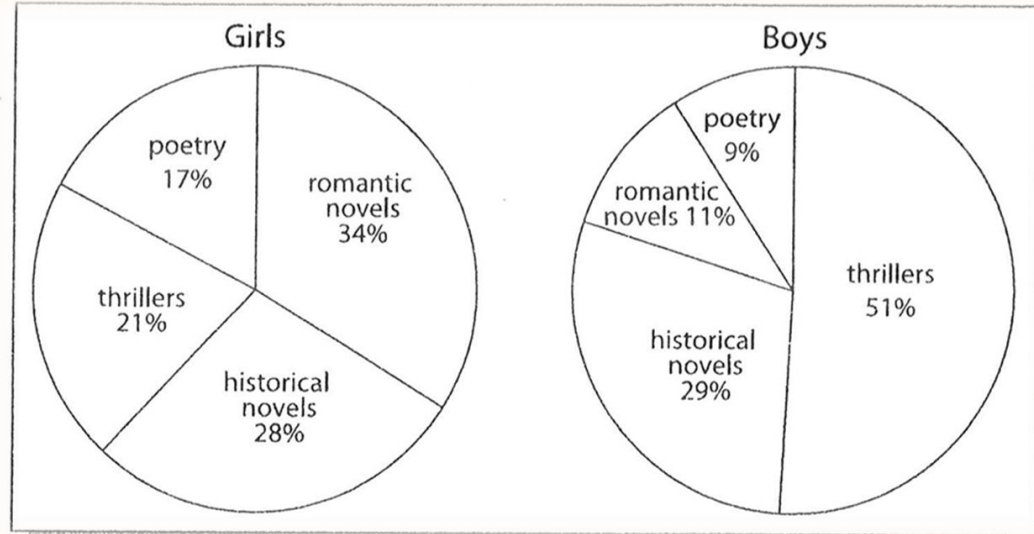
Report, NOT a letter

Why subheadings?

Sample task: intro + subheadings

Prepositions and reporting phrases
generalization - fact - hypothesis

Confusion: Conclusion OR/AND Recommendations



Report example from the National Exam

Report Issues and Assessment

Missing, lacking or essay intro

Confusing/Irrelevant subheadings

Lack of comparison

Language

- omissions/logic

- possessive

- lacking relevant rhetoric

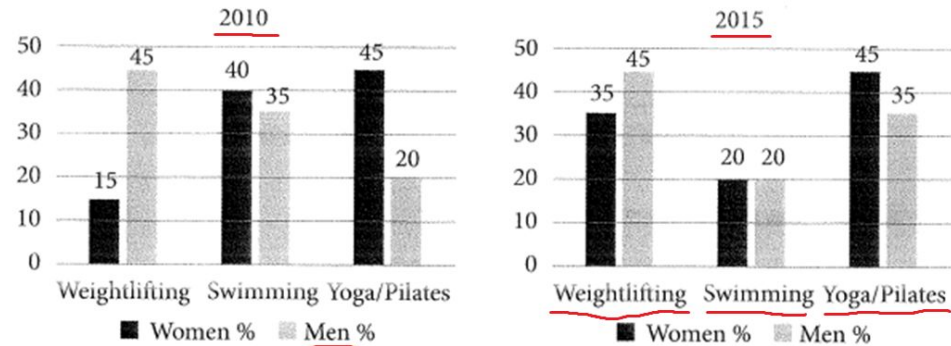
- signposting

- prepositions

Recommendations AND conclusion

→ Pass - Fail assessment

You are an exchange student in Edinburgh, Scotland, and a new sports centre has asked you to carry out a survey among the students to see which exercise routines they prefer. Look at the charts below showing the results of the students' preferences five years ago and now.



Write a report to Mr Jones, sports centre manager, describing the results. Speculate on the reasons for the changes and make recommendations for the sports centre on which facilities and training opportunities to include in the future. You should write at least **200 words**. Use the pen name Mari/Mart Mets for yourself if necessary.

Report example from the [National Exam 2016](#)

Cambridge C1 Tasks & Resources

CAE Report - no data, follow the task (facts, explanations, recommendations)

Proposal → convince and persuade (report layout, conditionals, adjectives)

Review → why try?!

! Audience !

Resources for students:

Cambridge C1 Advanced youtube "To the Point with Ben", "Teacher Phill" et al.

Write and Improve: <https://writeandimprove.com/>

Road to Grammar: <http://www.roadtogrammar.com/textanalysis/>

English Vocabulary Profile: <https://englishprofile.org/?menu=evp-online>

Oxford Text Checker: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/text-checker/>

Cathoven Language Hub: <https://www.cathoven.com/cefr-checker/>

Vocabulary Lists by Theme: <https://www.enchantedlearning.com/wordlist/>

Questions?

Thank you :)

*An excerpt from a study aid/document -
List of Synonyms - for my students, to help
them with options.*

*The words in the list come from student
writings where I have noticed their need
for alternative ways to express themselves.*

*The words in Estonian appear in
alphabetical order, but their possible
translation options have no particular
order (yet) and students have to make sure
they know in which context they can use
the words provided.*

*It is available for my students as a pdf file
in Tera and I keep updating it.*

Synonyms - K

- KASU SAAMA
- benefit
- profit
- learn from
- gain
- earn
- thrive
- capitalize on
- take advantage of
- make the most of
- KASUTAMA, RAKENDAMA
- use
- utilize
- apply
- implement
- exploit
- employ
- handle
- exercise
- KINNI(S)TAMA, TUGEVDAMA (teadmisi)
- reinforce
- strengthen
- support
- boost
- sustain
- back up
- retain
- preserve
- maintain
- KÜLG
- side
- aspect
- quality
- characteristic
- feature
- outlook
- appearance