

Exercise walk-through

Structure and formal language ■ 4.2

eXercise

You must be able to

- lay out a formal letter with the expected paragraphs
- use formal expressions accurately rather than approximately
- avoid the informal habits that break the register

Method — The four-paragraph shape

- 1 **Purpose** — why you are writing, in one sentence.
- 2 **Detail** — the facts: dates, references, what happened, in order.
- 3 **Request or argument** — what you want, or the case you are making.
- 4 **Close** — the next step, and an offer to provide more information.

Then the sign-off that matches your greeting.

Method — Formal expressions worth learning exactly

- **Opening:** *I am writing to enquire about... / to apply for... / to complain about...*
- **Referring:** *with reference to your advertisement of 12 May / further to our telephone conversation*
- **Requesting:** *I would be grateful if you could... / I should like to request...*
- **Enclosing:** *Please find attached my curriculum vitae.*
- **Closing:** *I look forward to hearing from you. / Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require further information.*

Learn six exactly. A half-remembered formal phrase reads worse than a simple correct one.

Method — Habits that break the register

- Contractions: *I'm, don't, we've*
- Exclamation marks
- Slang or abbreviation: *ASAP, kind of, a bit*
- Emotional wording: *ridiculous, a joke, furious*
- Addressing the reader as *you guys*

Practice 2.1 ■ 2 marks

Match each purpose to its opening phrase.

Purpose	Phrase
(a) You saw a job advertised	(i) I am writing to complain about...
(b) A product was faulty	(ii) I am writing to apply for...
(c) You want opening times	(iii) I am writing to enquire about...

Solution 2.1

Method: Formal expressions worth learning exactly

Worked steps

(a) ii, (b) i, (c) iii **B2****B1** *for two correct.*

Practice 2.2 ■ 1 mark

Rewrite each in formal language.

- (a) "I've been waiting ages and I'm fed up."
- (b) "Can you send me the info ASAP?"
- (c) "Thanks a lot, hope to hear back!"

Solution 2.2

Worked steps

- (a) "I have been waiting for a considerable time and am disappointed with the delay."
B1 (b) "I would be grateful if you could send me the information at your earliest convenience."
B1 (c) "Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you."
B1

Practice 2.3 ■ 1 mark

Put these paragraph purposes in the correct order for a formal letter: request, purpose, close, detail.

Solution 2.3

Method: The four-paragraph shape

Worked steps

purpose, detail, request, close **B1**.

Exam-style 3.1 ■ 8 marks

Your school is considering closing the library on Saturdays. Write a letter to the head teacher arguing against the decision. Give two reasons, suggest an alternative, and request a meeting. Write about 150 words.

Solution 3.1

Method: Formal expressions worth learning exactly

Worked steps

Content (4): two developed reasons, a workable alternative, and a clear request for a meeting. Language (4): consistent formal register, matching greeting and sign-off, accurate and varied sentences, clear paragraphing.

Exam-style 3.2 ■ 4 marks

Read this extract and identify **four** breaches of formal register.

Dear Sir or Madam, I'm writing 'cause your shop sold me a broken lamp!! It's honestly a joke. Get back to me ASAP. Cheers, Wei

Solution 3.2

Method: Habits that break the register

Worked steps

Any four **B1** *each*: the contraction “I’m”; the informal “‘cause” for “because”; the double exclamation mark; the emotional and slangy “It’s honestly a joke”; the abbreviation “ASAP”; the informal sign-off “Cheers”; and the mismatch of “Dear Sir or Madam” with anything other than “Yours faithfully”.