

2.1 Purpose, audience and register

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **purpose, audience and register** 目的、读者与语域 — deciding how formal to be, and keeping that decision consistent for a whole piece of writing.

You must be able to:

- work out the purpose and audience from the task before writing anything
- choose formal or informal language to match them
- keep the register consistent, and spot where a draft slips

1 Worked examples

■ Read the task, then answer three questions

1. **Who** will read this? A friend? A head teacher? A magazine's readers?
2. **Why** am I writing? To invite, to complain, to persuade, to report?
3. **What form** is it? An email, a letter, a report, an article, a review?

Those three answers decide everything else.

■ The register scale

Informal	Neutral	Formal
Hi Sam	Dear Mr Lee	Dear Sir or Madam
I'm really sorry	I am sorry	I would like to apologise
get in touch	contact me	I look forward to hearing from you
loads of people	many people	a considerable number of people
Can't wait!	I am looking forward to it	I anticipate the event with interest

■ Where students slip

- **Contractions** (*don't, I'm, can't*) belong in informal writing only.
- **Exclamation marks** almost never appear in a formal letter.
- A formal letter that begins "Dear Sir or Madam" ends "Yours faithfully"; one that names the reader ends "Yours sincerely".
- One informal phrase in an otherwise formal letter is noticed. Keep the register **consistent**.

2 Practice

2.1 For each task, state the audience and whether the register should be formal or informal.

(a) An email to your cousin about your holiday. [1]

(b) A letter to a company about a faulty phone. [1]

(c) An article for the school magazine about homework. [1]

2.2 Rewrite each sentence in a formal register.

(a) “Thanks loads for sorting that out.” [1]

(b) “I’m writing ‘cause your delivery never turned up.” [1]

(c) “Get back to me soon, OK?” [1]

2.3 Rewrite this formal sentence so it suits an email to a friend: “I would be grateful if you could inform me of your availability.” [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Read this extract from a letter of complaint to a shop manager. Identify **three** places where the register is wrong, and correct each one. [3]

Dear Mr Osei,

I’m writing about the jacket I bought last week. It’s rubbish — the zip broke after two days! I want my money back ASAP.

Cheers, Ana Silva

3.2 Explain why the phrase “I want my money back” is less effective than “I would like to request a full refund” in a formal letter. [2]

Solutions

2.1 (a) a family member / a friend — informal. (b) a company or its customer service department — formal. (c) other students at the school — informal to neutral, but written for a wide readership rather than one friend.

2.2 (a) “Thank you very much for resolving this matter.” (b) “I am writing because the delivery did not arrive.” (c) “I look forward to hearing from you.”

2.3 Any natural informal version, for example “Let me know when you’re free.”

3.1 Any three, each with a correction:

- “I’m writing” — a contraction; use “I am writing”.
- “It’s rubbish” — too informal and emotional; use “The jacket is of unacceptable quality”.
- The exclamation mark after “two days!” — remove it.
- “ASAP” — an abbreviation; use “at your earliest convenience”.
- “Cheers” — an informal sign-off; a named recipient takes “Yours sincerely”.

3.2 “I want” states a demand and sounds aggressive, which can make a reader defensive; “I would like to request” is polite and uses the expected formal wording, which is more likely to be acted on and matches the register of the letter.