

Writing an Informal Email

IGCSE English ■ Topic 3

IGCSE English



Tell a friend what matters

A first draft

"I went to a museum. It was great."

Why did you go?

What happened unexpectedly?

Which activity did you like most?

An **informal email** 非正式电子邮件 needs **relevant news** and a suitable **personal voice**.

Current Exercise 5: reader, task and range

Course	Cambridge English as a Second Language 0510, 2024–2026 and 2027–2029.
Response	An informal email, 120–160 words, for the stated purpose and reader.
Marks	Up to 6 for content and 9 for language; the response is assessed as a whole.
No automatic formula	A phrase or extra sentence does not automatically earn a mark. Relevant development, style, accuracy and organisation matter.

1

Why and to whom you
write

Original task: the museum visit

Task

You recently visited a science museum with your class. Something unexpected happened. Write an email to your friend Sam.

Explain why
your class chose
the museum

Describe the
unexpected event
and your response

Say what you enjoyed
most and why

120–160 words. You may invent plausible details consistent with this fictional task.

Read each command: original planning attempt

Plan

- 1 Identify the **prompts** 提示 and what each one asks you to do.
- 2 Choose: a **reason** for the visit; an **unexpected event** and your response; a **favourite activity** with a reason.

Check

Does “I went on Friday; it was great” answer these demands? What is missing?

Planning: worked choices

Why this museum?	Our class was studying space and wanted to explore how astronauts live.
Event and response	The lights failed; we waited in the corridor and asked the guide questions.
Favourite and why	Planning a Mars journey let us compare ideas and choose equipment together.
Check relevance	A date alone does not explain the choice of museum. These details are fictional choices, not facts about a real museum.

Cover prompts through meaning

Command	It needs...
"Explain why"	a reason
"Describe"	relevant information about the event
"Say what you enjoyed most"	a clear choice , with its reason

Address every point and develop it: a missing point weakens **task fulfilment**.

Judge the whole response against the criteria; a ticked planning box is a checking tool, not proof of quality.

A relationship, not task evidence



Friendship illustrates the reader relationship. The pictured people establish no facts about our fictional visit.

A friendly voice can still be clear

Informal 非正式 **tone** 语气 suits a friend: natural contractions, questions and reactions can help.



Language you can use
accurately



“Thanks for your email”
when no earlier message
exists

You do not need a question or exclamation mark in every email: warmth is more than **decorative phrases**.

Plan for this reader and purpose



An email still needs clear order and relevant information. A photograph cannot tell us that the task's prompts are covered.

2

How to build your email

Choose the opening and ending: original attempt

For our message to Sam, choose a **greeting** 问候语 and a **closing** 结束语:

greeting

“Dear Sir or Madam”

“Hi Sam”

closing

“Yours faithfully”

“See you soon”

Your turn

Explain your choices from the **relationship**. Does “Dear” by itself make a message formal? Must every friendly email end in exactly the same way?

Greeting and ending: worked choices



“Hi Sam” ...
“See you soon”
friendly museum news



“Dear Sam”
... “Best wishes”
also works



“Dear Sir or Madam” ... “Yours
faithfully”: a business pair sounds distant

“Dear” alone does not decide formality. A first name is natural here: choose a convention that suits the **context**.

Paragraphs organise connected news

Hi Sam,

reason for the
visit

event and
response

favourite activity

See you soon,

- Clear **paragraphs** 段落 help the reader follow the news
- One paragraph per prompt is a **useful scaffold**, not one paragraph per fact
- Keep the opening and ending brief; never a list of headings and bullet answers

An email scaffold for our actual prompts

Hi Sam,

We chose the museum to explore our space topic.

reason for the visit

The lights failed; we waited and asked the guide questions.

event and response

I liked planning a Mars journey because we compared ideas.

favourite and why

See you soon,

Lin

Check all requested points. This is one useful organisation, not a compulsory paragraph count.

Register repair: original attempt

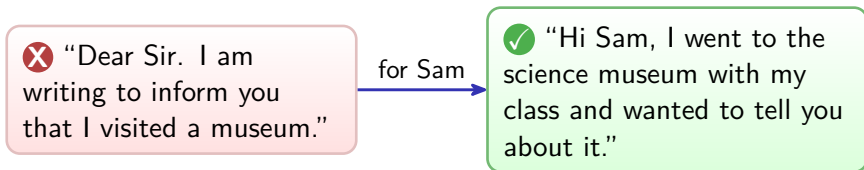
Opening to repair

“Dear Sir. I am writing to inform you that I visited a museum.”

Your turn

- 1 Rewrite this opening **for Sam**, keeping the visit.
- 2 Do not treat a date or invitation as a supplied fact: add one only as a plausible choice.

Register: possible revision



- “Guess what!” is another possible opening when it fits the news, not a compulsory formula
- **Short forms** 缩略形式 (I’m, didn’t, we’re) are common in friendly writing
- Full forms remain grammatical: the **overall voice** and accurate usage matter

3

Making your email better

Development: original attempt

Starting point

"I enjoyed the Mars activity."

Your turn

- 1 Add **what you did** and **why** you enjoyed it.
- 2 Does "My pencil was blue" improve the answer to this prompt?
- 3 Does repeating "It was really, really good" explain the enjoyment?

Choose information for a **purpose**, not to make the response longer.

Development: worked revision

Revision

"I enjoyed planning a journey to Mars because we could compare ideas and choose the equipment together."

reason 原因
answers why

example 例子
makes it concrete

detail 细节
relevant information

It is **developed** 展开的: it links the activity to the enjoyment. Pencil colour and repetition add nothing.

Relevant explanation develops an idea

I enjoyed the Mars activity.

— bare choice

I enjoyed it because we could compare ideas.

— relevant reason

We planned the journey and chose equipment together.

— explaining detail

Development depends on relevance, not a word count or an automatic mark ladder.

There is no automatic mark ladder. Additional words help only when they serve the task.

Check grammar in the event's time frame

Repair

"Last Friday I **have visited** the museum. While we waited, the guide **answers** our questions."

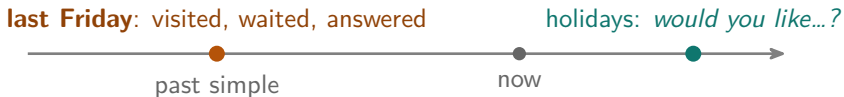
Your turn

- 1 Correct the two verb forms for a **completed past** account.
- 2 Why need a future invitation at the end not use the same tense as the visit?

Grammar: worked check

Corrected

"Last Friday I visited the museum. While we waited, the guide answered our questions."



- "Last Friday" is a completed time: **past simple**
- The guide's answers belong to the same past event
- Background, earlier events and future plans can use different tenses: do not force one tense, or add complex forms just to display them

4

A model email

Read the model against the actual task

- An original teaching model: **134 body words**, not officially marked
- Finish **your own plan** before reading
- Its details are plausible fiction, not a real museum

As you read, find...

- 1 the **reason** for choosing the museum
- 2 the **unexpected event** and the response
- 3 the **favourite activity** and its reason

Museum model: greeting and reason

Model email, part 1

Hi Sam,

How are things? I went to the science museum with my class last Friday, and I've got to tell you about it. We chose the museum because we were studying space and wanted to see how astronauts live.

friendly greeting and opener

prompt 1: the reason, highlighted

Museum model: unexpected event and response

Model email, part 2

The visit didn't start smoothly. Just as our guide began explaining a model spacecraft, the room lights went out. We waited in the corridor while the staff checked the problem. At first I was disappointed, but our guide used the time to answer our questions.

the unexpected event

the response

a feeling: "disappointed"

Museum model: favourite activity and close

Model email, part 3

My favourite part came later, when we tried planning a journey to Mars. I enjoyed comparing ideas with my classmates rather than only looking at displays. It made our science lessons feel much more real.

Would you like to go together during the holidays? Let me know when you are free.

See you soon,

Lin

prompt 3: the activity and why

a friendly invitation and closing

Trace each prompt to developed content

Reason for the visit	The class's space topic explains why they chose the museum.
Unexpected event	A lighting failure interrupts the visit.
Response	They wait in the corridor and use the time for questions.
Favourite and why	Planning the Mars journey lets classmates compare ideas.
Optional closing invitation	It suits the relationship but does not replace any requested point.

Review a weak draft: original attempt

Weak draft

“Hi Sam, I went to a museum on Friday. There were many rooms and a café. The trip was great. See you soon.”

Your turn

- 1 Which requested points remain **unanswered**?
- 2 Repair the **content** before adding friendly phrases.
- 3 Why does “the trip was great” not identify and explain a favourite activity?

Weak draft: worked diagnosis

Missing reason	Friday is a date, not why the class chose the museum.
Missing event and response	Rooms and a café do not describe what happened unexpectedly or how the group reacted.
Missing favourite and why	“Great” does not identify an activity and explain its appeal.
Next step	Use a prompt plan and add relevant explanation rather than repeating an adjective.

5

Exam tips

Verified 2025 connection: different demands

0510/12 June 2025, Question 16

An email about a family weekend away: why the family went, a problem, and how it affected them.

why the
family went

what the
problem was

how it
affected them

two separate demands: naming a problem does not explain its effects

Our museum model answers a different task: learn the **method** of reading the question, not our story.

Review the whole response

Content	All prompts answered with relevant development and a consistent account.
Voice	Suitable for the stated reader; natural language used accurately.
Organisation	Clear order and meaningful connections, with readable paragraphs.
Language	Check word range, sentence boundaries, spelling, verb forms and links.

A detail, contraction or exclamation mark does not automatically earn a mark.

Independent writing: original transfer task

Task

Write 120–160 words to a friend about helping at a school book exchange.

Explain why
you volunteered

Describe a difficulty
and your response

Say what you learned

Your turn

Invent plausible details. **Plan and draft** your complete response before seeing the possible plan.

Check yourself

Possible plan

You wanted more students to find **affordable reading**; mixed-up labels caused a **difficulty**, so you helped sort books; you **learned** to give clear directions and check details. Other coherent accounts are valid.

Check your draft

- Does every requested point have **relevant development**?
- Do your events, times and reactions **fit together**?
- Review your **voice**, **order** and **language**.
- Why can a friendly greeting not repair **missing content**? Why does unrelated detail not guarantee a better mark?