

Writing a Formal Letter or Email

IGCSE English ■ Topic 4

IGCSE English



What we will cover

- 1 Spotting a formal task
- 2 A polite tone
- 3 Letter structure
- 4 Sincerely vs faithfully
- 5 Formal language



1

Approach

Spot the task, keep it polite

- a **formal** 正式 task – to someone you do not know
- a **polite** 礼貌 tone – no slang; full forms (“I am”)

Manager, head teacher, organiser –
write as if they will print it.



Formal letter: polite structure and clear purpose

Letter structure

Dear Sir/Madam,

Yours faithfully,

- open: *Dear Sir/Madam,*
- first para: **why** you write
- middle paras: your points
- last para: what you want to **happen next**
- close: *Yours faithfully,*

Sincerely vs faithfully

you know the name

*Dear Mr Lee, → Yours **sincerely**,*

you do not

*Dear Sir/Madam,
→ Yours **faithfully**,*

Formal language

I am writing to...

I would like to...

*I would be **grateful** 感激 if...*

Keep sentences clear & complete, and check grammar & spelling.

Formal language

informal - to a friend	formal - to someone you do not know	
I'm writing ...	I am writing to ...	full forms, no short forms
Guess what!	I would like to tell you ...	no chat, no slang, no jokes
Thanks a lot!	I would be grateful if ...	polite, respectful requests

2

Recap

Worked example – formal phrasing

Rewrite for a formal complaint: “Your delivery guy was super late and I’m really mad about it.”

- “guy”, “super”, “really mad” are **informal and emotional**.
- Stay **polite**: anger weakens a complaint, **facts** strengthen it.
- “The delivery arrived over three hours late, causing considerable inconvenience.”
- Then **say what you want**: “I would be grateful if you could refund the charge.”

Formal complaint = **what happened** + **what it cost you** + **what you want done**. Be specific (“three hours”), never emotional – calm is more persuasive.

Topic 4 – key takeaways

1

Tone

polite & formal; no slang or short forms

2

Structure

open, reason, points, request, close

3

Sign-off

name → sincerely; Sir/Madam → faithfully

4

Language

formal phrases; clear, checked sentences

Check yourself

- 1 Should a formal letter use “I’m”?
- 2 How do you close after “Dear Mr Lee,”?
- 3 How do you close after “Dear Sir/Madam,”?
- 4 What goes in the first paragraph?

**Answers**

1. no – use “I am” 2. Yours sincerely 3. Yours faithfully 4. why you are writing