

Exploring Skills for English Tests

Writing Part 2: B1 and B2

Format and requirements

Candidates are presented with a statement setting out an issue or providing a viewpoint or similar. This is followed by a sentence, telling candidates how to respond and a series of 3 bullet points.

The statement introduces a topic that can be explored and discussed by candidates. The statement is followed by a series of bullet points which list the areas of content that candidates should focus on in their response. The topic and language within the task will be level appropriate and will draw from everyday life situations.

The candidate response should address the instructions they have been given (discuss, describe and so on) and cover all bullet points. The candidate response should be well-structured with an introduction, the main body of their response and a conclusion. The response should be appropriately paragraphed.

The task may ask candidates to present their own opinions and candidates should ensure they provide these in their response.

Skills/functions being assessed

The following list provides examples of the skills or functions which may be elicited:

- Describing a situation
- Discussing a question
- Discussing advantages and disadvantages
- Comparing and contrasting
- Discussing solutions to a problem
- Discussing the impact of something on everyday life

Tips for teachers

Provide candidates with

- practice in writing discursive pieces which have an introduction, a main body and a concluding sentence/paragraph
- practice in paragraphing and organisation of ideas in a discursive text
- practice in writing within the Skill for English word limits
- language for comparing and contrasting, discussing different points of view, considering advantages and disadvantages of an action/position and presenting their own opinion(s)
- opportunities to explore different situations (for example, the climate, media, pollution and so on)

Tips for learners

- Read the task carefully and try and write within the given word limit: very short responses may be penalised as they won't cover all the bullet points
- Think about how your answer is paragraphed and make sure you have an introduction, a main body and a conclusion and remember to link your ideas
- Address all the bullet points in the task: you can add to these if you want and ensure points and arguments flow

Sample Writing Part 2 Task

'Schools should only teach the most important subjects like maths and science. Art and music are a waste of time.'

The first sentence provides a context and topic.

Discuss this view and include your own opinion. You should write about

- essential school subjects
- optional school subjects
- your personal subject preferences

Bullets indicate what should be included in the response.

You should write between 170-200 words.

The word count shows how much candidates should write.

Sample Writing Part 2 Response

In secondary schools, children study several subjects. These include English, Mathematics and Science. These are considered important subjects and are compulsory mainly because they cover essential skills we will all use in our everyday and working life. It is important that children learn how to write, perform and understand mathematical problems.

First paragraph provides an introduction.

Subjects such as the sciences will be more important in the future, especially where knowledge of computers is concerned. So, children with a sound understanding of these subjects are more likely to have a successful future. So, these are essential subjects that we all must learn.

Second paragraph addresses bullet 1.

However, children often complain about studying subjects which they may never use as adults such as art or music. They feel that they are wasting their time. They may only get to learn a little bit about these subjects and never develop a deep understanding of them. These subjects should be optional.

Third paragraph addresses bullet 2.

Cohesive markers help to organise text

Personally, I do think it is important that children are exposed to subjects such as art because this develops a greater understanding of the world around them. It is also important to keep both sides of the brain active and the creative side is just as important as the logical side.

Final paragraph addresses bullet 3 and provides a conclusion.

Note: this sample task is for guidance purposes only. For examples of level-specific listening tasks, please refer to the Skills for English Practice Tests available through the Skills for English website: <https://skillsforenglish.com/language-learning/>