

CAE Writing Test Tips 1

1. Introduction

You have 90 minutes to write two texts. Each text should be about 220-260 words long. Part 1 is always an essay, while in part 2 you have a choice of 3 tasks (letter/email; proposal; report; review).

The examiners assess you on 4 elements:

- **Content** - Did you do the task you were asked to do?
- **Communicative achievement** - Did you use the right tone and level of formality?
- **Organization** - Did you link paragraphs together? Is there a logical flow?
- **Language** - Did you show off your sparkling vocabulary or did you merely use First Certificate words? Did you make lots of grammar mistakes?

Before you continue with this guide, I strongly recommend you read about this free tool that will help you with your writing:

<https://www.grammarly.com/>

2. Time management

You have 90 minutes to write 2 texts. Both texts will be about the same length, and are worth the same number of points. Obviously, you should spend the same amount of time on each! Personally, I'd spend as much time planning as possible, since it makes everything else easier. The exact time split will depend on how fast you write, but try something like this:

- Planning - 10 minutes (Brain Storm)
- Writing - 25 minutes
- Checking - 10 minutes

3. You can't cook without a recipe

A lot of students hate planning and think it's a waste of valuable exam time. But do chefs walk into a kitchen and just start cooking? Of course not - they lay out their ingredients, make sure their utensils are clean, and have their recipe nearby.

Your plan is the recipe you'll use to cook up a great piece of writing. Think about how many paragraphs you want then get some ideas about the content of each. But even at this early stage you should start planning the *language* you want to use. Ask yourself questions like:

- Where can I use a passive form?
- Where can I use an inversion?
- What CAE-level vocabulary do I know about this topic, and where can I use it?
- How do I link from one paragraph to the next?

Thinking about solutions before you start writing is the easiest way to solve problems!

4. Grading: Content

PART 1

The first thing you're assessed on is your content. That basically means reading the task carefully and doing what you are told to do! In part 1 you are given three bullet points but are asked to talk about TWO of them. (You're also given some opinions on the topic that you can use if you want, but you don't have to.) Here's an example of the three bullet points and a task:

behave:

- giving rules
- setting an example
- offering advice

people's behaviour. You should **explain which way you think is more effective, giving reasons** to support your opinion.

If I were planning my answer, I'd probably choose 'giving rules' and 'setting an example' as my two points because I feel like I have more to say about those topics. (*How much would I write about 'offering advice'? Nothing! Because I should only write about two things!*)

Another important point is to say **which is more effective**. I'd probably write one paragraph about 'giving rules', and the next paragraph would be about 'setting an example' - I would be sure to give reasons why it was a more effective way to influence younger people.

PART 2

What about part 2? Again, it's important to read the question carefully and make sure you include everything it tells you to.

Here's the kind of task that will come up:

You studied English language in the mornings and worked for a local company in the afternoons. The programme organiser has asked you to write a report about your experience. In your report, you should evaluate the programme, explaining which part of the programme was more useful, and suggest changes you would recommend for next year's programme.

Write your report.

Here's an outline you could follow:

- Intro
- Evaluation of the programme
- The most useful parts of the programme
- Suggested changes for next year
- Summary

Not very imaginative, but you'd be guaranteed to get full marks in terms of **content!**