

# CAE Writing Test Tips 2

## 5. Grading: Communicative Achievement

### TONE

Which is better English:

1. *Wasssssssup?!*

or

2. *Dear Sir or Madam*

Well, it depends who you're talking to! If your task is to write a report for your 'serious' organization you should use a formal tone. If you're writing a magazine article for teenagers you can be more informal.

The main tip is to be consistent - students often write a report that is 95% formal, and then throw in some exclamation points, slang, contractions, and informal vocabulary. That's bad! It suggest you don't have control over your tone.

### TASK TYPES

You should invest some time making sure you know the difference between a letter and an essay, and between a report and a proposal. Here are a few quick tips:

#### Essay

You need to give your opinion in an interesting way. CAE essays are often academic in tone, so practice of formal writing will be helpful.

#### Letter/email

Write an email with the same opening/closing as a letter. In these you write about your personal experiences. Your writing will have a purpose, like responding to a newspaper article you don't agree with.

### Report/Proposal

Use headings for each paragraph. The task will tell you some of the content you need to include and you'll be able to use your imagination to add some more ideas. You may be asked to evaluate if some goal has been achieved and/or to suggest alternative courses of action. A proposal will have more scope for making suggestions and more need for polite persuasive language.

---

### 6. Grading: Organization

Cambridge love linking words and cohesive devices. These are bits of text like 'firstly', 'whereas', 'in addition', 'however', and so on. Properly used, they will make your writing flow and make your text easier to read. You **can't** do well in CAE without using these phrases.

[Here's a great list of cohesive devices](#) - try to include them in your writing.

---

### 7. Grading: Language

Organising a text, using linking words, and getting all the content points is a great start, but for a high grade you'll need to use advanced vocabulary and more difficult sentence structures.

In the planning stage of the exam think about which high-level words you know for that topic and think in which paragraph you can use them. For example, if the topic is about transport you might use phrases like 'mass transit system', 'to commute', 'congestion,' and 'pressed for time'.

Then you need to use a variety of structures - passives, inversions, cleft sentences, questions, sentences with semi-colons. The more variety the better!

So instead of writing like this:

*A lot of politicians say they will improve bus and train services. Having trains is good for people who have to go to work. It means they don't have to take the car to work. It is probably faster. If everyone takes a train to work there won't be any traffic jams.*

You can produce this:

*Why do progressive politicians pledge to provide **mass transit systems** in their cities? The answer is clear: Not only do **pressed-for-time commuters** benefit, but there is also less pollution. Let **congestion** be a thing of the past; let flowers bloom next to every tram stop.*

In those three sentences there is one question; one colon; one semi-colon; one 'not only but also'; one imperative. Not bad, right? You can write like this if you practice and if you're not afraid to make some mistakes along the way.