

RW.6 · Key writing: a message of at least 25 words

A2 Key and B1 Preliminary (KET, PET) · Cambridge English · A2 Key (KET)

What this topic covers

Part 6 of the Reading & Writing paper: write a short **message** – a note, email or postcard – of **at least 25 words**, answering a friend’s message. The friend’s message always contains **three things** to do: usually two questions and one request or suggestion.

- Example task: your friend invites you to a picnic. *Say yes. Say what food you can bring. Ask what time it starts.*
- Memory hook: the task is a **menu with three dishes** . Serve all three, in order, and the marks follow.
- △ Under 25 words loses marks; the count includes everything, so count.
- The tone is friendly: short forms are welcome (*I’m, can’t, let’s*). This is the one exam where *I’m* is not just allowed but encouraged.

The menu method

1. **Circle the three jobs** in the task before writing a word.
2. Write **one or two sentences per job**, in order.
3. Open with *Hi / Dear + name* and close with *See you / Best / Write soon + your name*.

A full answer to the picnic task:

Hi Sam, I’d love to come to the picnic! I can bring some fruit and drinks.
What time does it start? See you, Lin

Three jobs, three sentences, 25+ words. Done. The exam rewards **completeness over beauty** – a correct boring answer beats a beautiful one that forgot the drinks.

The bank of useful sentences

Job	The sentence
accept	I’d love to come. / That sounds great!
refuse politely	I’m sorry, but I can’t come.
offer	I can bring some drinks. / Shall I bring anything?
ask	What time does it start? / Where shall we meet?
suggest	Let’s meet at the gate. / How about the park?

- Questions are free marks: *What time? Where? Who else is coming?* – one per task, word-for-word from the A1 question machine.
- $\triangle$ Every question needs its flip: “*What time it starts?*” $\times \rightarrow$ *What time does it start?* Topic A1-9’s flip still collects marks.

Watch out: traps for Chinese speakers

- $\triangle$ **Don’t skip a job.** Three jobs = the shape of the marks. One missing job is a missing dish; the examiners notice the empty plate.
- $\triangle$ **Don’t write a novel.** 30–40 words is the sweet spot. A 120-word masterpiece spends time Part 7 needs, and long answers grow error trees.
- $\triangle$ **Register : friendly, not formal.** No *Dear Sir*, no *Yours faithfully*. It’s a friend: *Hi Sam – See you – Lin.*
- $\triangle$ **Check the three classics:** third-person -s (*it starts*), articles (*a picnic, the park*), and verb forms after *can/can’t* (*I can bring*). Sixty seconds of checking is worth more than a fourth sentence.

Try it

Your friend Mia writes: “*I’m having a birthday dinner on Friday. Can you come? Tell me what food you like. And could you bring your guitar?*”

Write the reply (25+ words). Cover: yes/no, the food, the guitar.

Model: *Hi Mia, I’d love to come! I like fish and rice, please. I’ll bring my guitar, no problem. See you on Friday!* – Alex (29 words; all three dishes served.)

Check yourself

Answer first, then read the explanation.

1. How many jobs in a Part 6 task? – **Three.** Serve all three.
2. “*What time it starts?*” – $\times \rightarrow$ **What time does it start?** The flip collects marks.
3. 20 words – **too few.** Under 25 loses marks; count.
4. *Dear Sir* / *Yours faithfully* – $\times \rightarrow$ **Hi Sam** / **See you.** A friend, not a bank.
5. A perfect answer that forgot the guitar – **loses a dish.** Completeness over beauty.