

Writing a Formal Letter or Email

IGCSE English ■ Topic 4

IGCSE English



Writing a Formal Letter or Email

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

Writing a Formal Letter or Email

└─ 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

Writing a Formal Letter or Email

└─ Approach

Letter structure

Dear Sir/Madam,

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

Yours faithfully,

Writing a Formal Letter or Email

└─ Approach

Building a formal letter or email

Dear Sir or Madam,
I am writing to ask about ...

I would be grateful if you could ...
Yours faithfully,
B. Chen

first paragraph: say **why** you are writing

middle paragraphs: **one point** in each

end: what you would like to **happen next**

match the pair:
Dear Sir or Madam, → **Yours faithfully**,
Dear Mr Lee, → **Yours sincerely**,

The shape of a formal letter - and the greeting decides the sign-off

Writing a Formal Letter or Email └─ Approach	
Opening and closing	Clear paragraphs
■ Open with <i>Dear Sir/Madam</i>, or <i>Dear Mr Lee</i>, ■ If you start with a name, close with <i>Yours sincerely</i>.. If you start with <i>Sir/Madam</i>, close with <i>Yours faithfully</i>..	■ First paragraph: say why you are writing. ■ Middle paragraphs: give your points, one idea in each. ■ Last paragraph: say what you would like to happen next.

Writing a Formal Letter or Email └─ Approach	
Sincerely vs faithfully	Formal language
you know the name <i>Dear Mr Lee, → Yours sincerely,</i> you do not <i>Dear Sir/Madam, → Yours faithfully,</i>	<i>I am writing to...</i> <i>I would like to...</i> <i>I would be grateful 感激 if...</i> Keep sentences clear & complete, and check grammar & spelling.

Writing a Formal Letter or Email └─ Approach	
Keep a polite tone	Exam tips
informal - to a friend formal - to someone you do not know I'm writing ... I am writing to ... Guess what! I would like to tell you ... Thanks a lot! I would be grateful if ... full forms, no short forms no chat, no slang, no jokes polite, respectful requests Turning friendly phrases into formal ones	■ Match the greeting to the ending: <i>Dear Mr Lee</i> → <i>Yours sincerely</i>; <i>Dear Sir</i> or <i>Madam</i> → <i>Yours faithfully</i>. ■ Say why you are writing in the first line: "I am writing to apply for..." saves words and sounds formal. ■ Do not use short forms: write "I am" and "do not", never "I'm" or "don't". ■ One paragraph per point, and end by naming the action you hope for: "I would be grateful if..." ■ Stay polite even in a complaint: "I was disappointed to find..." wins marks; "This is terrible!" loses the tone.

Writing a Formal Letter or Email └ Approach When to write formally	Writing a Formal Letter or Email └ Approach A model formal letter
The second writing task sometimes asks for a formal 正式 or semi-formal 半正式 letter or email.	Same task, opposite register. Notice what changes. <i>Dear Sir or Madam,</i> <i>I am writing to suggest an improvement to the town library. At present it closes at five o'clock, which is too early for students who finish school at four.</i> <i>If the library opened until seven on two evenings a week, many more students would be able to use it.</i> <i>I would be grateful if you would consider this suggestion.</i> <i>Yours faithfully,</i> <i>Li Wei</i> The task names the format 格式, the purpose 目的 and the reader: use all three. <i>Yours faithfully</i> follows <i>Dear Sir or Madam</i>; <i>Yours sincerely</i> follows a name.

2 Recap	Writing a Formal Letter or Email └ 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.
-------------------------------	--

Writing a Formal Letter or Email └ Recap 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	Writing a Formal Letter or Email └ Recap 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 
---	---