

Lesson Plan: Introduction to the B2 First for Schools Writing Paper

Time required: 90 minutes. This plan can be done over two lessons, or in one lesson by taking out some of the activities.

- Materials:**
- **Student Worksheets 1 – 3** (you could print these double-sided to save paper)
 - A copy of the B2 First for Schools **Writing Checklist** (optional)
 - Mini-whiteboards or scrap paper (optional)

- Aims:**
- To help learners get to know the two parts of the Writing paper
 - To encourage learners to reflect on their strengths and areas to work on in relation to the Writing paper
 - To highlight useful study tools, resources and strategies to help them prepare for the Writing paper

Useful Links

Cambridge English website – the starting point for access to sample papers, learner and teacher resources including Write and Improve, self-study plans and lesson plans

B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide – provides teachers with detailed guidance on assessing learners' writing

B2 First for Schools Writing Checklist – useful information for learners to help them understand the assessment criteria and check their written work

Information on the B2 First for Schools Exam Format – also includes information about the set text

Procedure

Lesson Stages

Lead-in: *to get learners thinking about the features of different genres of writing*

Put learners into small groups. Give them two minutes to brainstorm the different types of things they read and write both at home and in school. They can include examples of things they read/write in English or their own language and these can include anything from shopping lists and short text messages to novels and essays.

Feedback: Ask the groups to share some of their ideas with the class. Write a range of their answers on the board. Ask the class to think about different features of the texts you have written up on the board. Encourage them to discuss features of different text types, such as levels of formality, layout, organisation, length, style etc. Example questions you could ask are:

- Which texts are the longest/shortest?
- Which ones are the most/least formal?

Online option: The Word Cloud creator on **Mentimeter.com** is a useful free tool for brainstorming activities. Create a Word Cloud slide with the question 'What kinds of texts do you write at home and at school?'

Set the number of answers you want to allow students to contribute and give students the link to the question.

If your teaching situation allows, you can group learners in breakout rooms to submit their ideas.

After two minutes, share the Word Cloud with the whole class. Point out to the learners that the bigger words in the Word Cloud represent the things most of them said that they write, and the smaller words are those that fewer of them mentioned. After they have read the Writing paper overview in the next stage, you could refer back to the Word Cloud and circle the types of writing (essays, stories, etc.) that could appear in the Writing paper.

Introduction to the Writing Paper: *to familiarise learners with the format and range of text types in the B2 First for Schools Writing paper*

Learners will need a copy of **Student Worksheet 1**.

Ask the learners to read the Writing paper overview at the top of Student Worksheet 1, which describes the Writing paper format.

Check learners understand the format of the Writing paper by asking them to tell you if the following statements are true or false:

- You must complete two pieces of writing. (True)
- You don't have to write an essay. (False – in Part 1 you must write an essay)
- Both pieces of writing are the same length. (True)
- You have 1 hour and 20 minutes for each piece of writing. (False – this is the total time)

NOTE: If you plan to use the set text with your class, you may also wish to talk about it here. If you are not planning to use it, tell learners they should not attempt to answer this question in the exam.

Exercise 1

a) Ask learners to look at the examples of possible questions types in column one and match these to the extracts in column two. Give them some time to compare their answers in pairs.

Feedback: Check the answers as a class. See **Answer Key**.

b) Draw or project the cline from *formal* to *informal* on the board. Ask learners where they would put *an essay* on the cline (this should be between neutral and formal). Put learners in pairs or small groups to decide where the other text types from Exercise 1 a would usually go.

Feedback: See **Answer Key**. You could ask two students to come to the board and mark up the answers from the class. Take the opportunity here to stress to learners the importance of keeping the reader in mind when they write because this will help them choose an appropriate style and include only relevant information.

c) To further explore the idea of keeping the reader in mind, focus learners' attention on task c. Ask them to underline examples of the features mentioned (e.g., descriptive vocabulary, linking words, questions) that they can find in the extracts in the table.

Feedback: See **Answer Key**. You could also draw their attention here to the use of typical vocabulary related to film reviews (*blockbusters, star-studded*) and the use of *narrative tenses* (*Past Simple, Past Continuous and Past Perfect*) that are typical in stories.

Online options: It's a good idea to email the Student Worksheets to your students in advance of the lesson. If appropriate, you can put the learners into breakout rooms to complete these exercises in pairs.

A sample question: *to familiarise learners with a typical Writing Part 2 question and encourage them to reflect on the types of texts they are most comfortable with writing at this stage.*

Learners will need a copy of **Student Worksheet 2**.

Exercise 2

Put learners in pairs. Ask them to read and underline key words in the **sample question** in Exercise 2.

They should then discuss their answers to questions a – d with their partner. Remind learners they can check the Writing paper overview from Student Worksheet 1, if they are uncertain about questions a and b.

Feedback: Check the answers with the whole class to questions a and b – see **Answer Key**. Nominate a few students to share their answers to questions c and d.

It's a good idea to encourage learners to identify the text types they need to improve on and where their strengths lie. Activity 1, on page 12 of the **B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide**, is a lesson plan and self-evaluation template designed to raise learners' awareness of their strengths and identify the tasks that suit them best. It is ideal for use later in your course when learners have practised answering a few different questions.

A sample answer: *to ensure learners have a realistic idea in mind of the type of text content, length and writing level expected for this question type. Learners will also read the text for gist.*

Exercise 3

Ask learners to quickly read the sample answer from p38 of the **B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide** and answer questions a and b). They can then compare their answers with a partner.

Feedback: Check the answer to question a – see **Answer Key**. Nominate some students to share their opinion of the story in the sample answer. Learners may have a tendency to focus purely on accurate use of grammar and vocabulary in the text rather than the content and the effect on the reader – point out that accurate grammar and vocabulary is only one part of what makes a good piece of writing. This will lead you into the next stage which focuses on the assessment criteria.

The assessment criteria: *to give learners a brief overview of how the Writing paper is assessed*

**Note that the B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide gives you a more complete understanding of this.*

You will need a copy of **Student Worksheet 3** for each learner.

Exercise 4

Put learners into pairs or small groups to discuss and evaluate the sample answer from Exercise 3, using the assessment criteria. Monitor to support and prompt as necessary.

Alternative option: if you have more time you could download, print off and give learners a copy of the **Writing Checklist** which provides more information about the criteria with a checklist they can use.

Feedback: There are no right or wrong answers here. The aim is to encourage learners to think about the assessment criteria as they plan, write and check their work. One option that works well is to take a class vote by asking each group to discuss and award a grade for each of the four assessment criteria. If you have access to mini-whiteboards (or scrap paper that is blank on one side), groups can write their grades on the paper or boards and hold them up.

You may find that your learners are too harsh or too generous with their grading. The examiner's grades and comments on this piece of writing have been provided in the **Answer Key** for your information but you could share the grades with your learners. You can compare the examiner's grades with the grades they awarded.

Online options: You can also take a whole class vote online using the *scales* slide option on **Mentimeter.com**. Edit the statements to reflect the exam criteria and give learners the link, so each group can vote.

Exercise 5

Put learners into small groups to brainstorm more ideas to help them improve their writing. They should then choose three of the ideas that they brainstormed that they would like to try. Here are four extra ideas you could suggest if learners struggle to come up with their own:

1. Write new and useful vocabulary you come across in your reading in a notebook or on vocabulary cards. Include the meaning, the pronunciation and an example sentence. Test yourself regularly.
2. Find a 'study buddy' – a friend or classmate. Test each other on vocabulary and use the **Writing Checklist** to give each other feedback on your work.
3. Look at more sample answers (there are several more you can share with your learners in the **B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide**), focus on the criteria that have been completed well and make some notes about how the writer achieved this.
4. Complete some timed writing tasks to help practise completing the writing paper in the required time. You should also count your words while you are practising, so you know what 140 to 190 words looks like in your handwriting, as you shouldn't spend time counting words in the exam itself.

Feedback: Share ideas as a class and encourage students to note down any good ideas from other groups on their worksheet.

Online options: If you are online or have a classroom projector and access to the internet, you could briefly show learners the resources available on the **Cambridge English website**.

Homework:

Set the sample question on **Student Worksheet 2** for homework. Tell learners that this week, they will try out one of the ideas from the mind map. Supply them with the **Writing Checklist**. Once they have completed their writing task, ask them to evaluate their writing, working from the checklist.

It is still important that the teacher checks their writing too (remember that the **B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide** is there to help you mark and assess your learners' writing).

Once you have marked and returned their work, ask the learners to reflect on what they learned from trying the practice question and working with the checklist. Show the following questions on the board and put them in pairs to discuss:

- How useful was the checklist – e.g. what did you learn from using it? What did you find challenging?
- Based on your own evaluation and your teacher's comments, identify at least one area you need to work on next time.

As learners discuss, monitor and check whether they have correctly identified the area/s they need to work on.

Feedback: Briefly ask learners to share any comments / difficulties about using the checklist.

Now, ask the learners to keep the areas they need to work on in mind and look back at the ideas for improving their writing in the mind map from the previous lesson (Exercise 5 - **Student Worksheet 3**). They should pick another idea to try but they must agree their choice with you, so they should be prepared to justify it. For example, they could say why it could help them with the area they need to work on.

TIP: Encourage learners to make their choices SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound). For example, instead of *read lots of different kinds of texts...* or *do a self-study lesson* suggest making a more specific goal such as *read 2 different kinds of text each week*, or *work on a self-study lesson for one hour this weekend*.

Student Worksheet 1

Writing paper overview

Part 1: There is one question. You must write **an essay** (140 – 190 words).

Part 2: There are four questions, and you must choose only one. You could write **an article, email, essay, letter, review or story** (140 – 190 words).

NOTE: Part 2: Question five is about the set text. Only answer this question if you have studied it in class, with your teacher.

Time: 1 hour and 20 minutes

Exercise 1

a) Read the list of examples in the table below. Match the extracts from the texts (a – f) with the examples (1 – 6).

Examples of question types	Extracts
1. an essay for school about the benefits of studying online	a) <i>If you enjoy star-studded, action and adventure blockbusters, then this is definitely for you.</i>
2. a review of a film for a local newspaper	b) <i>Hey! It is so great to hear from you. How was your holiday?</i>
3. a story for an English-language teen magazine	c) <i>Janey was shivering as she walked up the overgrown path to the old house, its dark windows like blank, staring eyes. She had never felt so nervous.</i>
4. an email to a close friend	d) <i>Are you trying to make a study plan for end-of-term exams? Here are our top tips for getting the most out of your study time.</i>
5. a letter to a university	e) <i>In conclusion, while it is clear that some students have benefited, others have experienced problems such as no access to suitable computing equipment.</i>
6. an article for your school magazine	f) <i>I am writing with regards to your English courses for the next academic year.</i>

b) Think about the style of writing in each extract. Where would you place it on the line below?

formal

neutral

informal

c) Here are some other features of different styles of writing. Can you find an example of each one in the extracts in the table from Exercise 1a)?

- descriptive vocabulary to help the reader imagine the scene
- use of linking words to help the reader follow an argument

- asking a question to get the reader's attention

Student Worksheet 2

Exercise 2

- Read the sample question below. Is this question from Part 1 or Part 2 of the Writing paper?
- Do candidates have to answer it or is there a choice?
- Would you enjoy writing an answer to this question? Why? Why not?
- Which types of text are you most comfortable with writing: articles, stories, letters and emails or essays?

Sample question

You have seen this announcement in an English-language magazine for teenagers.

Stories wanted

We are looking for stories for our new English-language magazine for teenagers. Your story must begin with this sentence.

When Susie's family arrived at the hotel, they were surprised to see hundreds of photographers waiting outside.

Your story must include:

- a famous person
- a request

Exercise 3

This is a sample answer to the question in Exercise 2. Read the text and answer the following questions:

- Why were photographers waiting outside the hotel?
- Did you enjoy the story? Why? Why not?

Sample answer

When Susie's family arrived at the hotel, they were surprised to see hundreds of photographers waiting outside. They had no idea what was going on. Everyone acted like crazy. It wasn't a famous hotel. The only think less famous than the hotel itself are the clients of this hotel. So why would any photographer and or journalist be interested in this place?

Because they already had a reservation, they entered the hotel. Everything seemed normal, until they went on a dinner. They hadn't had a proper meal the whole day, so a restaurant in the hotel was what they were had been looking forward to.

After they recieved their meal, their happiness disappeared. It was disgusting, the steaks they ordered were dry like a shoe. Before they managed to chew those steaks, the celebrity showed up. It was Gordon Ramsay, a famous chef. He was had been shooting his series "Hotel Hell" here. He asked everyone to leave. Unusual request, but not from him. That was it, he closed the kitchen. Everyone knew what that meant...and regreted every bite

Student Worksheet 3

Exercise 4

Cambridge examiners look at four things when marking the Writing paper.

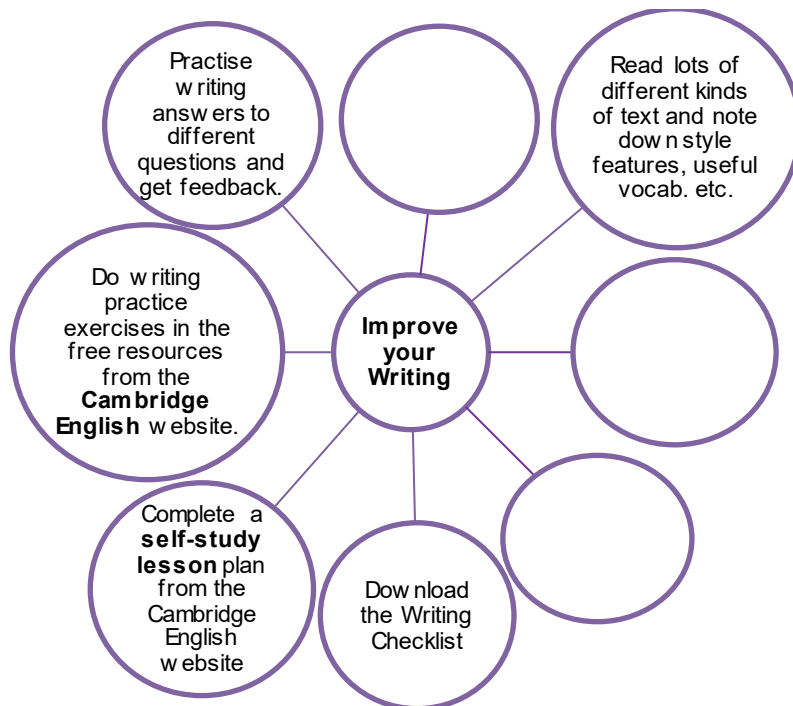
Content: You have done what the task asked you to do. You have included all the important information.
Communicative Achievement: The writing is appropriate for the task. You used the right style for what you're trying to communicate.
Organisation: The writing is put together well. It is logical and ordered, e.g. there are clear paragraphs, some linking words and so on. The ideas are clearly connected.
Language: There is a good range of vocabulary and grammar, and these are used accurately. Even if there are some mistakes, the reader can still understand the text.

Look again at the candidate's answer in Exercise 3. Candidates can score a maximum of 5 marks for each criteria giving a total mark out of 20. Discuss in pairs:

What mark would you give this piece of writing? Make notes and be ready to give reasons for your answers.

Exercise 5

There are lots of ways to improve your writing skills. Work in groups to brainstorm and add three or more of your own ideas to the mind map below. Now choose the three ideas you would like to try.



Additional support for learners

You can find the Writing Checklist, self-study lesson plans and free practice exercises on the **Cambridge English website**.

Upload your writing and get immediate feedback at **Cambridge English Write and Improve**.

Answer Key

Exercise 1

a) 1. e), 2. a), 3.c), 4. b), 5. f), 6. d)

b) Generally speaking, the language used in essays and letters (or emails) to people you don't know are more formal. Emails (and letters) to people you know are more informal. Magazine articles and stories are usually more neutral, but this depends on the topic and reader.

c)

- lots of descriptive vocabulary to help the reader imagine the scene: *the story e.g. overgrown, old, windows like blank, staring eyes*
- use of linking words to help the reader follow an argument: *the essay e.g. in conclusion, while*
- asking a question to get the reader's attention: *the article - Are you trying to make a study plan for end-of-term exams?*

Exercise 2

a) Part 2

b) Candidates have a choice of four possible questions. Question five is the set text – candidates should only attempt this task if they have studied the book in class.

Exercise 3

a) They were waiting for celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay, who was filming an episode of 'Hotel Hell' there.

Exercise 4

Examiner's grades and comments **B2 First for Schools Assessing Writing Guide**

Subscale	Mark	Commentary
Content	5	All content is relevant to the task. The story carries on from the prompt and includes a famous person and a request, so the target reader is fully informed.
Communicative Achievement	4	The conventions of a story, such as chronological development, narrative verb forms, and varying sentence length for dramatic effect, are used to hold the target reader's attention. Straightforward and complex ideas are communicated: <i>They had no idea what was going on; Everything seemed normal, until; They hadn't had a proper meal ... ; That was it.</i>
Organisation	3	The text is generally well organised and coherent, using a variety of linking words and cohesive devices: <i>So why would ... ? Because they already; After they recieved; those steaks; knew what that meant.</i>
Language	5	A range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, is used appropriately: <i>the clients; had a reservation; a proper meal; looking forward to; disgusting; to chew; a celebrity; showed up; a famous chef; shooting his series; regreted every bite.</i> A range of simple and complex grammatical forms is used with control and flexibility: <i>They had no idea ... ; The only thing less famous than the hotel itself; why would ... be interested; was what they had been looking forward to; He had been shooting his series.</i> There are a few errors, which do not impede communication.