

Basic Structure of the OET Letter

In the OET writing test for nursing and medicine, you may have to write three types of letters. The following is a basic structure.

Referral Letter

You are sending the patient to another specialist or health professional for further investigation, treatment, assessment, definitive diagnosis, etc. This type of letter is backward-facing. You are relaying to the reader all the relevant information that has culminated in the need to refer the patient onward for specialist care.

Imagine you are the letter's recipient. You only include information that you know is necessary to do your job effectively and efficiently.

Introduction Paragraph

There are only four elements needed for the introduction paragraph.

1. Make the type of letter you are writing clear. These are two potential starts that do this
 - a. Thank you for seeing.....
 - b. I am writing to refer.....
2. Introduce the patient – name and age; occupation if relevant to the letter or just to give a bit of context to the patient.
3. A general statement about the dx and presenting complaint (why they are being referred) or provisional dx and presenting problem (if relevant).
4. A general statement of what you want from the reader (found in the writing task).
 - If the purpose is urgent (chest pain, testicular torsion, ectopic pregnancy etc.), please clarify by using the word urgent.

2nd to 4th Paragraph – depending on how many you need.

- History of relevant patient presentations. This can include one or multiple visits.
- If there are multiple visits, you may need to break them into separate paragraphs. Often, you can summarise a few in one paragraph and dedicate one paragraph to the final presentation that prompts the referral.
- Keep similar information together, whether that is by dates or symptomology.

Second Last Paragraph

- Medical hx (sometimes this will be mentioned in the above paragraph), family hx and social hx that the reader should consider.

Final Paragraph

- The plan going forward for the patient (relevant details that may impact their decision-making, such as other appointments, instructions given to the patient regarding medication, care etc.)
- What do you specifically require of the person who is receiving the letter?

Conditional Sentence and Ending

This is all you need

- If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Doctor/Nurse

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE STRUCTURE

In some letters, the 2nd last paragraph is better suited as the 2nd paragraph, especially with people who are being referred for chronic illness. The point is to make the letter flow logically so there is a precise sequence of events and the reader can take over care safely and effectively.

Transfer Letter

You are sending the patient to another institution, service or hospital. You are relaying to the reader all the relevant information about the patient so they can have their care continued in a similar service (GP to GP) or a different acuity service (ICU to rehab).

Imagine you are the letter's recipient. Include only information that you know is necessary to do your job effectively and efficiently.

Introduction Paragraph

There are only four elements needed for the introduction paragraph.

1. Make the type of letter you are writing clear. These are two potential starts that do this
 - a. Thank you for accepting.....
 - b. I am writing to transfer.....
2. Introduce the patient—name, age, and occupation if relevant to the letter or to give more context to the patient.
3. A general statement about the dx and reason for transfer.
4. A general statement of what you want from the reader (found in the writing task).
 - If the transfer is urgent, make sure you use the word urgent in this paragraph to clarify.

2nd to 5th Paragraph – depending on how many you need.

- History of treatment during hospital admission or at your service – only the relevant information to continue care.
- You may need to make this more than one paragraph. Think about the flow and timeline of the events.
- Keep similar information together, whether that is by dates or symptomology.
- Remember to mention the medical hx and medication dosages if relevant.
- Also consider where you will put the family and social hx if the reader needs to know. These are often put in the same paragraph.

Final Paragraph

- The plan going forward for the patient (relevant details that may impact their decision-making, such as other appointments, instructions given to the patient regarding medication, care etc.)
- What do you specifically require of the person who is receiving the letter?

Conditional Sentence and Ending

This is all you need

- If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Doctor/Nurse

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE STRUCTURE

The paragraphs' flow needs to be logical and easy to follow. The priority is to keep similar information together and show a clear timeline of events.

Discharge Letter

You are sending the patient back home and writing a letter to their GP. Another example is writing a letter to the staff of a Nursing Home – the nurses and GP will see this letter.

Imagine you are the letter's recipient. Include only the information you know is necessary to do your job effectively and efficiently. This often means you do not need to include any information that the reader would commonly know as a long-term patient of their service.

Introduction Paragraph

There are only four elements needed for the introduction paragraph.

1. Make the type of letter you are writing clear. These are two potential starts that do this
 - a. I am writing to inform you about the discharge of.....
 - b. Your patient, XXXXX is being discharged.....
2. Introduce the patient—name and age. You often do not need to include the occupation...they already know the patient.
3. A general statement about the dx and reason for admission.
4. A general statement of what you want from the reader (found in the writing task).

2nd to 4th Paragraph – depending on how many you need.

- History of treatment during hospital admission or at your service – only the relevant information to continue care. You can summarise this extensively. The priority is what needs to happen after discharge.
- You may need to make this more than one paragraph. Think about the flow and timeline of the events.
- Keep similar information together, whether that is by dates or symptomology.
- Remember to mention the medication dosages if relevant – if there are changes or new medications.
- You often do not have to put the social, family and medical hx as the receiver is already aware of the patient.
- This is a forward-facing letter. Most of the information will focus on instructions for the patient and the letter's recipient.

Final Paragraph – this may be multiple paragraphs.

- The plan going forward for the patient (relevant details that may impact their decision-making, such as other appointments, instructions given to the patient regarding medication, care etc.)
- What do you specifically require of the person who is receiving the letter?

Conditional Sentence and Ending

This is all you need

- If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Doctor/Nurse

PLEASE NOTE: THIS IS NOT A DEFINITIVE STRUCTURE

The paragraphs' flow needs to be logical and easy to follow. The priority is to keep similar information together and show a clear timeline of events. Also, remember that your specific request paragraph (final paragraph) may be multiple paragraphs.