

## CHAPTER 5. HOW TO WRITE A REPORT FOR THE FCE EXAM

As part of your FCE exam, you may be required to write a report on a topic for your manager, teacher or for a peer group. The goal of a report is to state factual information and to give suggestions. The report should be written in a semi-formal register.

Remember that the examiners will be looking at the 4 main criteria.

- **Content (5 marks)**

- Does your report cover everything it needs to?

- **Communicative Achievement (5 marks)**

- Does your report follow the conventions of a report?

- **Organisation (5 marks)**

- Is your text organised and coherent?
- Do you use a variety of linking words (not just 'and' or 'but'!) and cohesive devices?

- **Language (5 marks)**

- Is the everyday vocabulary you have used appropriate?
- Do you use a range of simple and complex grammatical structures?

- How far any errors that you've made affect the report from being understood?

### Example Question:

The president of the English club has asked you to write a report on the advantages and disadvantages of studying English in the United Kingdom. Your report will be part of the final decision to organise a 2 week language immersion course in Oxford. You should include the views of people who have studied English in the United Kingdom. All in all, do you think this 2 week immersion course would be a good idea?

*Write your report in 140-190 words in an appropriate style.*

In a report you will be expected to use a clear layout with headings and bullet points where appropriate. However, be warned that you also want to demonstrate the high-level structures and vocabulary that you know, and too many bullet points will not allow you to do this. Find a happy medium between both.

Naturally, you will not be expected to actually *know* this information. Feel free to invent it. The examiners *are* looking for content, but this content does not have to be true.

Structuring the  
You will want to

1. The purpose
2. How you
3. Headings
4. Bullet points
5. A summary
6. Make a required

In our exam

1. The purpose  
the discussion  
part  
immersion
2. That  
English

Let's think

## Structuring the report

You will want to have a clear layout for your report:

1. The purpose of your report.
2. How you conducted your report.
3. Headings (one for each point you are making).
4. Bullet points/numbered lists (but not too many).
5. A summary of the situation.
6. Make a comment or suggestion, depending on what is required from you.

In our example, we know the following:

1. The purpose of our report is to talk about benefits and the disadvantages of studying English in the UK to be part of a decision on organising a 2 week language immersion course in Oxford.
2. That we will have interviewed people who have studied English in the United Kingdom.

Let's think **about** the advantages and disadvantages:

### Advantages of learning English in the United Kingdom

- You are constantly immersed in English-speaking surroundings.
- You experience the culture of the United Kingdom on a daily basis.
- You hear a wide variety of accents.

### Disadvantages of learning English in the United Kingdom

- Hearing and communicating in English all the time, even outside of classes, can be exhausting.
- The United Kingdom is expensive (the course as well as the cost of living).
- You can get homesick.

What do these advantages and disadvantages tell you? You could say that the disadvantages are quite weak and you can offer a solution to the price by having a group booking that **may be cheaper**.

**So let's write the report!**

Firstly we will need a title. This should be simple and factual. Let's call it **Report on the advantages and disadvantages**

of a 2 week immersion English language course in Oxford.

Then we will need an introduction. We will need to make our introduction a header.

### Introduction

Firstly we will need to introduce the reason for this report, so here are some examples that you can start your report with:

The purpose of this report is to...

The main objective of this report is to... consider the advantages and disadvantages

of a 2 week immersion English language course in Oxford.

The aim of this report is to...

Then state that you understand the brief by outlining that you have interviewed 30 students who have studied English in the United Kingdom.

*In order to explore this issue,  
To prepare for this report, I interviewed 30 students  
who had studied English in the United Kingdom.  
In order to prepare for this report,*

Then we will explore the advantages. This needs to be a separate header.

### **Advantages**

Here it is a good idea to make a paragraph about your advantages, so that you can demonstrate a wide range of grammatical structures. Try and build on your advantages.

*Many students I interviewed believed that being immersed in an English-speaking environment helped them to improve their English through media and hearing different accents. They also noted that they learned a lot about English culture this way and that it was exciting opportunity for them to experience the United Kingdom.*

**Below are some other phrases that you could include:**

*In the opinion of...*

*According to...*

*Many people believed that...*

*An overwhelming majority stated that...*

*A large number of students that I talked to said that...*

*Those interviewed believed that...*

The disadvantages can be listed below. You can either put these in bullet points, or write another paragraph. Again, we will need another header.

### **Disadvantages**

*However, many students raised the issue of the cost of the course and the cost of living in the United Kingdom. They also claimed that they found living in a constant English-speaking environment was exhausting and a few discussed feeling homesick.*

Or:

*However, the following issues were raised:*

- *The course was expensive, as was living in the United Kingdom.*
- *They felt exhausted through constantly communicating in English, even outside of classes.*
- *Certain students felt homesick.*

**You could also use the following phrases:**

Many students raised the issue that...

The interviewees raised the following points...

On the other hand...

Finally, you can sum up the 'findings' of the report and give your opinion on the topic. Here you will have your final heading.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

**In your conclusion**, summarise the points made. Balance the **good with the bad** and decide which side you are on, offering a **solution to** some of the disadvantages that you came across.

Although certain students mentioned feeling homesick, the overwhelming response was that the students found that their English greatly improved whilst studying in the United Kingdom. I would therefore suggest that the English club organises the 2 week English language immersion course in Oxford. In order to keep costs low, the English Language course should look at discounted group bookings to lower this cost.

Here are some extra phrases that could be used in your conclusion:

*Taking the advantages and disadvantages into account...*

*Having weighed the pros and cons...*

*I suggest that...*

*I would make the following recommendations...*

*Overall, it appears that...*

### **Exercise 1:**

**Look at the gaps in the sample answer below:**

**Where could you use these linking words, phrases and discourse markers to complete the text?**

The president of the English club has asked you to write a report on the advantages and disadvantages of

studying English in the United Kingdom. Your report will be part of the final decision to organise a 2-week language immersion course in Oxford. You should include the views of people who have studied English in the United Kingdom. All in all, do you think this 2-week immersion course would be a good idea?

*Write your report in 140-190 words in an appropriate style*

Complete this sample answer with the phrases below

- to organise a 2-week language immersion course in Oxford.
- Disadvantages
- To prepare for this report
- would therefore suggest
- Introduction
- Conclusion
- Overwhelming
- as well as
- Advantages

.....

The purpose of this report is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of studying English in the United Kingdom and will part of the final decision

.....

.....

....., I interviewed 30 students who had previously studied in the United Kingdom and gathered their opinions on the subject.

.....

Many students I interviewed believed that being immersed in an English-speaking environment helped them to improve their English. They also noted that they learned a lot about English culture this way

..... being an exciting opportunity for them to experience the United Kingdom.

However, the following issues were raised:

- The course was expensive, as was living in the United Kingdom.
- They felt exhausted through constantly communicating in English.
- Certain students felt homesick.

The ..... response was that the students found that their English greatly improved whilst studying in the United Kingdom. I

..... that the English club organises the 2 week English language immersion course in Oxford. I suggest a group booking might allow the cost to be kept low.

**Now read the 10/10 Example at the end of this chapter to check your answers**

# 10/10 SAMPLE FOR AN FCE REPORT

## Introduction

The purpose of this report is to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of studying English in the United Kingdom and will part of the final decision to organise a 2 week language immersion course in Oxford.

To prepare for this report, I interviewed 30 students who had previously studied in the United Kingdom and gathered their opinions on the subject.

## Advantages

Many students I interviewed believed that being immersed in an English-speaking environment helped them to improve their English. They also noted that they learned a lot about English culture this way as well as being an exciting opportunity for them to experience the United Kingdom.

### Disadvantages

However, the following issues were raised:

- The course was expensive, as was living in the United Kingdom.
- They felt exhausted through constantly communicating in English.
- Certain students felt homesick.

### Conclusion

The overwhelming response was that the students found that their English greatly improved whilst studying in the United Kingdom. I would therefore suggest that the English club organises the 2 week English language immersion course in Oxford. I suggest a group booking might allow the cost to be kept low.

## **Notes:**

- **Clear headings for each section**
- **Responds to the brief**
- **Appropriate opening**
- **Variety of linking words**
- **Bullet points which fit in with the style of a report**
- **Strong conclusion which sums up findings**
- **High level vocabulary**
- **High level grammatical structure**