

# CHAPTER 1. HOW TO WRITE A LETTER FOR THE FCE EXAM

When writing a letter for an FCE exam, you will need to focus on the four marking criteria used in the writing exam:

- **Content (5 marks)**
  - Does your letter cover everything it needs to?
- **Communicative Achievement (5 marks)**
  - Does your letter follow the conventions of a letter?
- **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 letter being understood?

In the FCE exam, you can have two types of letter: **formal** or **informal**.

## **WRITING A FORMAL LETTER**

### **Example 1:**

*You see a job advertised in your block of flats.*

#### **PET SITTERS WANTED**

We are looking for pet sitters to look after our clients' pets whilst they are on holiday.

Write to our company detailing your experience and stating the reasons why you are suitable for this job.

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

## **Example 2:**

*You have recently organised a school trip to London and you receive this email from a parent.*

*I understand that you organised a trip to London recently. I was absolutely shocked to hear from my daughters about the trip not meeting their expectations. They said the activities were incredibly boring, the food was disgusting and the accommodation was dirty.*

*I would appreciate an explanation regarding this trip.*

*Jack Greenwood*

**Write an email in 140-190 words in an appropriate style.**

In a formal letter, you will be required to write a letter regarding a post that you have seen or a formal letter which has been sent to you. You do not know the person who has put up the advertisement well and so you will be using a **formal register**.

### **Starting your letter**

When opening a formal letter, you should greet the person with:

**Dear [name]** if you know the name of the person that you are writing to (it is best to use 'Mr', 'Mrs', 'Miss' or 'Ms' as opposed to their first name).

**Dear Sir / Dear Madam / Dear Sir or Madam** if you do not know the name of the person that you are writing to.

### **The Body of the Letter**

The body of your letter should address the points that the letter brings up.

In **example 1**, we need to discuss the following:

- Our skills
- Our experience

- Why we are suitable for this job

In **example 2**, we need to discuss the following:

- The activities
- The food
- The accommodation

In the second example, you can choose to either defend your decisions on activities, accommodation and food (in a polite way!) or to apologise for the trip.

Remember to be ***polite***, which means using conditional phrases, indirect questions and a formal register.



## **Openers**

This is where we acknowledge the existence of the advertisement or the email.

Possible openers for **example 1**:

- I am writing in response to your job advertisement...
- I am looking for part-time work and I would like to apply for the position of pet sitter...

Possible openers for **example 2**:

- In response to your email regarding the recent trip to London, I would like to...
- I am writing with regard to your email that I received...

## **Main Content**

This is where we address the skills required for the job advertisement or the issues raised in the email.

Main content for **example 1**:

- With several years experience in pet sitting...
- As a hardworking, flexible person I am the ideal candidate for this job...
- Due to my love of animals...

Main content for **example 2**:

- I would like to offer my apologies for...
- Regarding the activities that you mentioned...
- I would be interested to know if you would like to see a brochure for the accommodation in which we stayed...

## Closing

When closing a letter or email, we should sum up what we have said in the letter, what we would like the recipient to do, talk about a future event or offer a solution.

### Closing for **example 1**:

- I look forward to discussing my application with you further...
- If you have any questions regarding my application, please do not hesitate to contact me...

### Closing for **example 2**:

- I would like to offer you a full refund for the trip...
- I hope that my email has explained the situation fully for you and put your mind at ease...

## **Signing Off**

In order to sign off a formal letter, we have two options:

**Yours faithfully,** - when you do not know the recipient's name

**Yours sincerely,** - when you do know the recipient's name.

After this, you add your name in the paragraph below.



## 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?

*With*

*I would know how to best help them, if it ever came to this.*

*I am writing to you to apply for the position*

*iguanas and hedgehogs*

*meadow*

*Yours faithfully,*

*I look forward to hearing from you to discuss my application further.*

*whilst*

*You see a job advertised in your block of flats.*

## **PET SITTERS WANTED**

**We are looking for pet sitters to look after our clients' pets whilst they are on holiday.**

**Write to our company detailing your experience and stating the reasons why you are suitable for this job.**

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

Dear Sir or Madam,

..... of pet sitter that I saw  
advertised in my block of flats.

..... several years' experience in pet care, I am the  
perfect candidate for the role. I have worked in an  
animal shelter for many years, as my parents own a pet  
shelter where we care for various pets in and around  
the area ..... people are on holiday.

I am hardworking and reliable, with experience handling pets, from dogs and cats, to more exotic animals like ..... I enjoy the exercise of walking dogs and as I am sure you are aware, near my block of flats is an excellent ..... to take out the dogs for hours at a time.

Due to my father also being a veterinary surgeon, I am skilled in realising when animals are sick or injured and

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Jack Parsons

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

# **10/10 EXAMPLES OF FCE LETTERS**

## **FORMAL LETTER SAMPLE**

*You see a job advertised in your block of flats.*

### **PET SITTERS WANTED**

We are looking for pet sitters to look after our clients' pets whilst they are on holiday.

Write to our company detailing your experience and stating the reasons why you are suitable for this job.

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



Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you to apply for the position of pet sitter  
that I saw advertised in my block of flats. - **This is a  
relevant opening paragraph**

With several years' experience in pet care, I am the  
perfect candidate for the role. I have worked in an animal  
shelter for many years, as my parents own a pet shelter  
where we care for various pets in and around the area  
whilst people are on holiday. - **Use of linking words  
other than "and" / "but"**

I am hardworking and reliable, with experience handling  
pets, from dogs and cats, to more exotic animals like  
iguanas and hedgehogs. I enjoy the exercise of walking  
dogs and as I am sure you are aware, near my block of  
flats is an excellent meadow to take out the dogs for  
hours at a time. - **High level vocabulary**

Due to my father also being a veterinary surgeon, I am  
skilled in realising when animals are sick or injured and I  
would know how to best help them, if it ever came to this.



I look forward to hearing from you to discuss my  
application further.

Yours faithfully,

Jack Parsons

**This paragraph:**

- **Demonstrates clear understanding of grammatical structures**
- **Has an appropriate ending**
- **Has an appropriate formal style**