



Chapter 4

Writing formats

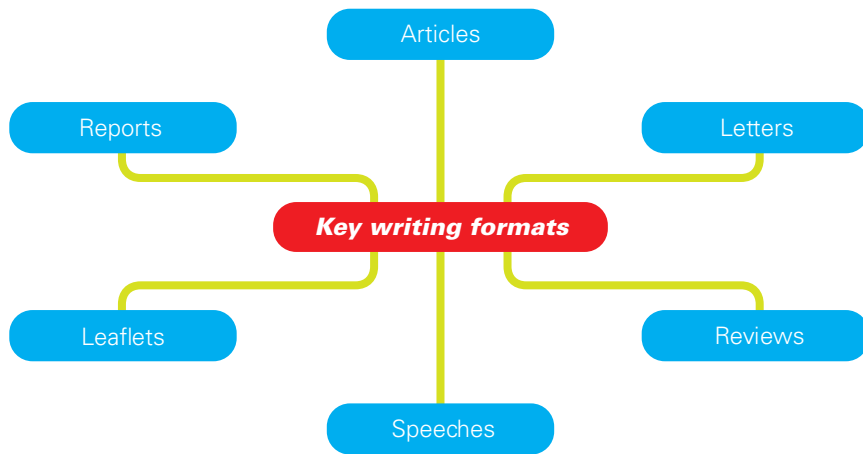
We all experience different writing formats in our everyday lives: the charity leaflet through the door, the newspaper we buy, the review we read for the film we want to watch at the cinema etc. The examinations and assessments in GCSE English and English Language require that you can recognise and write in a range of different key formats. You should consider these to be like formulae or the frames within which you write. For example, if you are asked to write a letter or an article in the exam, you need to know what makes a successful letter or article.

You might ask: why do I need to learn how to write an article or a review, for example? This is because in your everyday life, you will come across situations where you will probably read them and maybe even be influenced by them. You need to understand how they are created, what their purpose is and be able to interpret them and distinguish between the bias elements so that you can reach your own independent conclusions. Writing non-fiction successfully, especially letters, is an important functional skill in life.

This chapter is designed to give you an insight into the main features of the key writing formats and provide you with the opportunity to use them in your own writing. The features list for each format is not exhaustive and your teacher may point out additional ones.

Try to learn the features of each writing format, practise listing them and creating examples of your own in response to examination questions or tasks you have created. It would also be a good idea to start collecting real-life examples of writing formats as you come across them — try to highlight and label their key features. Focus on the formats you have had less opportunity to develop or are the least confident in tackling.

The key writing formats we are going to look at in this chapter are shown below.



A03

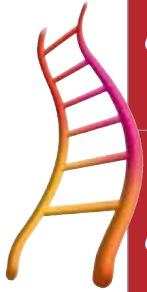
For GCSE English, your writing will be assessed against the following Assessment Objectives (AOs) in both Units 1 and 3. The key words are emboldened. These were explained in Chapter 2 (pages 36, 38 and 40). Note that at least one third of the available marks will be allocated to AO3(iii).

AO3(i)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate clearly and imaginatively, using, adapting and selecting vocabulary appropriate to task and purpose in ways that engage the reader.
AO3(ii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise information and ideas into structured and sequenced sentences, paragraphs and whole texts, using a variety of linguistic structural features to support cohesion and overall coherence.
AO3(iii)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect with accurate punctuation and spelling.

This Assessment Objective, AO3, is known as AO4 in the English Language specifications. The content is exactly the same and for ease of reference and to avoid confusion, it is mainly referred to as AO3 in this book.

For more information about where and how AO3 is assessed refer back to Chapters 2 and 3.

General grade criteria for writing in English and English Language

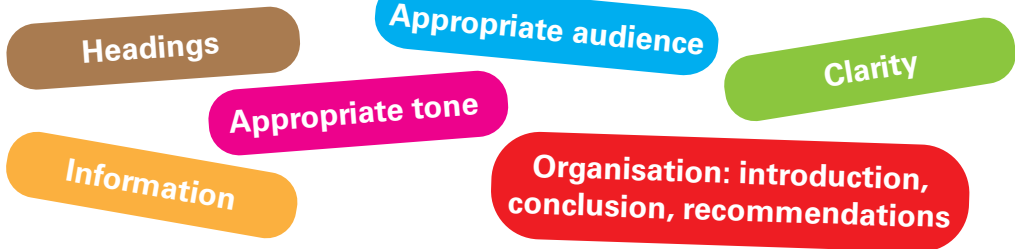


Grade A	Candidates show a confident and assured control over a range of forms and styles and these are appropriate to different tasks and purposes. Texts written are engaging and hold the reader's interest throughout through logical arguments, persuasive force or creative delight; these are very important aspects and qualities of A-grade writing.
Grade C	Candidates successfully adapt their writing to the required forms and styles for different tasks and purposes. Texts are written which engage the reader's interest. The structure of the text is supported by effective paragraphs which make the sequence of events and development of ideas coherent. A range of varied sentence structures is used to create different effects. Vocabulary choices are varied. Punctuation and spelling are accurate.
Grade F	Candidates' writing shows some adaptation to the required forms and styles for the task and purpose. Texts are written which communicate simply and clearly with the reader. The structure of the text contains events which are logically sequenced. Paragraphs are straightforward and effective. Sentence structures, including some that are complex, are usually correct. Vocabulary is sometimes chosen for variety and interest. Basic punctuation and spelling are mostly accurate.

Remember: A-grade writers show a confident and assured control over what they write every step of the way. C-grade candidates adapt their writing successfully to the different forms and purposes but have not mastered the control exhibited by an A-grade writer. F-grade candidates manage to adapt some of what they are writing and communicate simply and clearly with the reader.



Reports



Task A

Find an example of a report on the internet and try to imitate its style in writing your own report.

Remember: you also write reports in school in your science experiments. Look back at one you have done and identify the format features for a report.



Articles

Catchy title, often with a pun
(play on words)

Caption

Clear first paragraph

Three or four content paragraphs

Photograph related to the article
(do not draw, write a one-line
description in the space)

Charts, diagrams etc. (indicate where
these would go, but do not draw)

Short and clear summary

Task A

Read the article below and identify evidence/use of the above features in it.

Mississippi madness



TopFoto

Travel chaos struck drivers when this bridge across the Mississippi started to creak and its concrete pillars collapsed

The motorway bridge was one of the most used stretches of road across the Mississippi in Minneapolis. Over 140,000 vehicles crossed it each day. An even expanse of concrete, it didn't even look like a bridge.

There were no high towers or suspension cables. Yet its smooth surface was hiding a tragedy waiting to happen. The effects of corrosion, the weight of all the traffic and the weather had gradually eroded the bridge's structure.

On Wednesday 1 August at the height of the rush hour it gave way.

Task B

Now try writing your own article using the format features listed above.

Assessment for Learning

Cut out two newspaper articles. Stick them into your book and identify the features of this writing format, the article. Use these to write your own examples and ask a friend to see if they can identify the obvious features in the articles you have created.

Letters

Formal

Informal

Layout

Appropriate start/sign off:

Dear Sir/Madam.../...Yours faithfully

Dear Mr Sears.../...Yours sincerely

Dear Chris.../...Take care

Dear Alex.../...Speak soon

**Task A**

Write a letter complaining to your local council about teenagers causing trouble in your local area.

Student response to Task A

Katie Cartwright
 49 Bristol Close
 Banks
 Birmingham
 B22 3JC

Councillor T. Reeves
 333 Robin Drive
 Banks
 Birmingham
 B22 5JC

Dear Councillor Reeves

I am writing to express my concerns over the growing levels of anti-social behaviour in my local area. As a resident of Banks for 20 years, I have never known things to be so bad. I feel I am living my life in fear of reprisals from teenagers who are just out of control and out of touch with how people are feeling about their behaviour.

Many members of the local community feel as strongly as I do. A lot of trouble has been caused by teenagers who are joyriding in cars very much under the wrong impression that scaring residents, especially children, is cool. Only last week a child was quite seriously injured as he ran away frightened from one such car, straight into a side street without looking, where another car was speeding past. Extremely frightening! Does something more serious need to happen to make the council do something to stop this? We have complained so many times but no one seems to listen...

I look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely

K. Cartwright

(Ms Katie Cartwright)

Assessment for Learning

Before you read the examiner's comment below, identify the format features this student has used successfully. Point out and correct the ones this student has not quite managed to develop.

Examiner's comment

This student has used the required format of writing a formal letter, using formal language. The text itself is interesting and engaging and the reference to the incident involving a child at danger from a joy-rider gives the letter substance and a sense of reality.

The structure is supported by effective, varied paragraphs, containing coherent ideas. Vocabulary is varied and punctuation and spelling are correct and accurate. This fulfils the writing criteria for a Grade C.

Assessment for Learning

- 1 Imagine you are a teenager who has read this letter in your local newspaper. Using the Grade C criteria in the 'Key words success ladder for AO3(i) and AO3(ii)' on page 48, write a Grade C formal letter as a response, in role, as a teenager who is upset by this damaging view of what seems to be all teenagers.
- 2 Read through your letter and draw arrows to highlight and label where you think you have met the Grade C criteria. Set yourself a target, highlighting one thing you need to improve. Address this in your next attempt.
- 3 Once you are confident you can do this, try to redraft your letter to meet the Grade A criteria in the 'Key words success ladder for AO3(i) and AO3(ii)' on page 48.

Leaflets

Purpose/audience

Heading

Sub-heading

Bullet points

Pictures

Language

Overall impact



You will have many leaflets posted through your door, maybe even given out at school. Collect these and make a list of common and uncommon features. You may even spot some new features. You can view many different types of leaflets on the internet too.

Speeches

The rhetorical devices listed on page 75 in Chapter 5 are vital in writing speeches and persuasive texts. Refer to these to help you write your answers to the tasks in this section.

Persuasive

Opening to draw audience in

Rhetorical techniques

Outline

Main parts

Conclusion

Task A

Write a speech opposing the view that most young people are involved in anti-social behaviour. The speech is to be given at a meeting of the local community and students from the area.

Student response to Task A

Ladies and gentleman, fellow students, welcome to today's meeting about anti-social behaviour.

I would like to begin this speech by pointing out that not all teenagers are involved in anti-social behaviour. In fact, they suffer at the hands of the very society in which we live. You may ask why that is. It is the same question other students from local schools and I have been asking of ourselves.

We are not all the terrible vicious vandals that the press would have you believe. We are not crazy bullies you have to confront on every street corner. No we are not!

At every opportunity given to us, many of us have raised money for local charities such as Cancer Research and children who have to spend their time in hospices, who are not as fortunate as we are...

Examiner's comment

This student has used the format of a speech successfully and included some rhetorical devices such as repetition, emotive language and forceful phrases. The speech is successful in its purpose and makes the reader consider how teenagers are presented in the media.

Paragraphs are used effectively and spelling and punctuation is accurate. This fulfils the writing criteria for a Grade C.

Assessment for Learning

Continue this speech for another three paragraphs. Try to include at least three new rhetorical devices that have not been used in it so far. When you have finished writing, either underline the rhetorical devices you have used yourself or swap with a friend and see if you can identify them in each other's work. Check you have used them correctly. Make any necessary corrections.

Reviews

Keep the reader's interest

Some detail...but should not give too much away

Often about films, plays, books, shows etc.

Lively, engaging

Task A

- 1 Read this review of the film, *The Poison Chalice*. Pick out the key features of a review.
- 2 Write a review of your own favourite film in the same style. Refer back to the general criteria for writing in English and English Language on page 61 to remind yourself of what is required.

Review

The Poison Chalice



This is a film for the whole family, though if you are an older viewer, the plot is a little simplistic on occasions. The band of brothers fight just a little too readily but the quest for immortality is portrayed brilliantly, encapsulating both suspense and entertainment while holding the viewer's interest. Ganronde, the protagonist, half-man,

half machine, has powers which have developed since the prequel and his band of followers, the brothers, are enslaved to him after he saves their lives.

Set in the year 2090, the journey that the men go on, after drinking from the chalice, leads them through new lands and their meeting with Ganronde's mother, Dinessa, in the land of dreams is quite moving, as we learn of his desire to avenge his father's death at the hands of humankind who existed many moons ago.

As the plot develops, it does become much more complex and intriguing. This is a film that will take you to the edge of your seat as secrets are revealed and each man in the band of brothers experiences poisonous revelations about their lives, leaving us asking questions about our own...

Extract from a film review for *The Poison Chalice*, 2011 release, by Zakki Matthew.



Assessment for Learning

Look back at the general criteria for writing in English and English Language on page 61 and check which ones your answer meets. Have you written an A or C grade answer?

You can use the checklist below to help you check if you have met the C-grade criteria. Check you:

- Adapt your writing to the required format.
- Engage the reader.
- Use effective paragraphs.
- Sequence ideas and events coherently.
- Use a range of varied paragraphs.
- Vary vocabulary choices.
- Use accurate spelling and punctuation.

Highlight and label where each of these requirements is met in your work.

And finally...

Familiarise yourself with the different writing forms and formats. Learn the different styles for each writing format. Consider **form**, **audience**, **purpose** and **tone** in your writing. These are the 'tools' that prepare you for writing well.

Practise writing in a range of different formats. Create questions of your own to practise what you have learned. Plan and answer them in timed conditions. Discover what your strengths and weaknesses as a writer are, set personal targets and focus on improving these areas in your work.

Writing is like any other craft: master the key skills and you are well on the way to being an engaging and successful writer.

