

Examinations

Cambridge Advanced Writing Guide (CAE)

Part 1

Input: You will be given 400 words of input, which you **MUST** use in your answer.

Likely tasks: Proposals /reports / letters (and note to go with it)

Double Trouble: Sometimes you have to write 1 longer and 1 shorter document!

Other possible tasks: an article, a report, a memo, a contribution to a leaflet or brochure, a review, a competition entry, an information sheet, an announcement or instructions

Number of words: 250

Marked for:

- Ability to follow instructions (DO NOT include addresses when writing letters.)
- Select appropriate information from the input material
- Write the documents in the correct format (Especially letters)
- Be convincing/persuasive/polite/assertive as needed
- Use the correct level of formality (Informal / formal)
- Range of language used and correct use of grammar

Part 2

Choose 1 task from numbers 2 – 5

It is not recommended you choose task 5 unless you have suitable work experience.

In part 2 you have considerably more freedom than in task 1 and some imagination is expected. Make sure you consider your target audience carefully adopt appropriate formality and make the answer interesting to read.

Marked for:

- These questions often have 2 aspects to them, you need to give both attention.
- Ability to follow instructions and then use imagination to make a complete document
- Write the documents in the correct format (Especially letters)
- Be convincing/persuasive/polite/assertive as needed
- Use the correct level of formality (Informal / formal)
- Range of language used and correct use of grammar

Types of document

Letter

Purpose: To persuade or inform the reader

Style: Normally formal, but some CAE letters are informal

Ideas: Make sure you clearly include the points in the question, DO NOT include addresses,

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Article & Review

Purpose: To interest and engage the reader

Style: include comments and opinions and can be relatively informal.

Ideas: You may include anecdotes, opinions, descriptions, statistics, suggestions and in some cases humour.

Reports & Proposals

Purpose: Written to a boss, teacher, club members, colleagues or students.

Style: Formal. You can use bullets and headings

Ideas: Recommendations, statistics, information to backup claims and possible consequences of inaction for proposals.

Competition Entry

More formal than an article and you are expected to persuade judges why your choice/entry is the best.

Leaflet

Purpose: Leaflets are written to inform people about an important issue or tourist attraction. (They're often travel leaflets.)

Style: semi-formal. You can use bullets and headings

Ideas: General information, advice, ideas and recommendations.

Recent Past Papers

June 2004

	Question	High marks	Mistakes	% Taken
Question 1	Report about a careers conference they had attended.	Reasons for going to the conference. Suggested improvements.	Misunderstood "book in advance". Didn't pay attention to all input.	100%
Question 2	An article on fashion and changing lifestyles	Able to link changes in fashion with social changes.	Only described changes in fashion without any opinions. Some did NOT talk about clothes.	48%
Question 3	Contribution to a book on TV in different countries.	Balanced viewpoint. Understood genre.	Too much focus on TV content. Didn't understand difference between channel and programme.	27%
Question 4	Report to improve housing and transport	Provided ideas and dealt with both issues	Thought the question included leisure facilities and no suggestions	10%

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Question 5 (<i>Not recommended for non-working students</i>)	Internet services provided by the candidates company	Both business and computer language. Used bullet points, descriptions and explanations.	Included company background rather than the overall status of the IT in a company.	15%
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December 2004

	Question	High marks	Mistakes	% Taken
Question 1	Proposal for end-of-term party	Recommendations as polite requests. Combined 2 pieces of input into one proposal.	Copied input language. Didn't answer all parts of the question.	100%
Question 2	Article on tourism in their region	Advantages and disadvantages of tourism. Commented on the Future	Did not answer specifically for their region. Did not cover all points.	49%
Question 3	Competition entry for best teacher	Enthusiastic tone and good description of the teacher. What effect they had on them.	Just said what they'd been taught without saying what influence they had.	20%
Question 4	Review of two Websites	Usefulness of sites and compared them. Used IT related vocabulary.	No comparisons and not enough info.	5%
Question 5 (<i>Not recommended for non-working students</i>)	Letter to business student coming for a visit to their company	Used letter format, welcoming tone and business related vocabulary.	Couldn't describe job requirements accurately.	25%

June 2005

	Question	High marks	Mistakes	% Taken
Question 1	Letter from a holiday club to an airline	Appropriate tone and language. Select the correct parts of the input to use in the letter.	Didn't paraphrase. Didn't understand reason for writing or chart.	100%
Question 2	Report on changing eating habits	Wrote about both aspects.	Didn't understand what a report was.	54%

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	Question	High marks	Mistakes	% Taken
Question 3	Competition entry for an Ambassador for youth	Put forward a convincing case for that person and issues they should address.	Created a reference rather than why they should fulfil that position.	15%
Question 4	discussing changes in professional sports	Concentrated on professional sports and showed a rich sports related vocabulary	Didn't know what professional meant and talked about sports in general	22%
Question 5 (Not recommended for non-working students)	Contribution to a book on motivating employees	Gave personal examples of how they motivated others.	Wrote about students rather than employees.	9%

December 2005

	Question	High marks	Mistakes	Taken %
Question 1	Letter on language learning CDs and note.	Logical argument with positive and negatives. Request appropriate action.	No request for action. (Penalised heavily) Inappropriate threats of lawyers etc. The Note was overlong.	100%
Question 2	Contribution to book on changing role of grandparents	Why the role had changed.	Described their grandparents lifestyles NOT their role as a grandparent.	27%
Question 3	Leaflet encouraging students to give a talk	Encouraged and persuaded students. Used bullet points effectively.	Some did not know what a talk was and were unable to show the benefits of giving a talk.	15%
Question 4	Article on television soap operas	Balanced article, differentiated between soap operas in general and a particular soap opera.	Just discussed plots and didn't effectively use examples. They also didn't discuss good and bad points.	34%
Question 5 (Not	Report on Workplace	Well organised reports with	Wrote about general	24%

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<i>recommended for non-working students)</i>	equipment and training programmes	suitable headings. Discussed both parts of the question.	working conditions, not what was specifically asked for.	
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June 2006

	Question	High marks	Mistakes	Taken %
Question 1	Report for a film club	Report format with headings, expanding on input and adding ideas	Bullet points with short phrases rather than sentences. Wrote for wrong audience. Made decisions rather than make suggestions.	100%
Question 2	Article about significant decisions	Formation of the third conditional	Wrote about decision making in general. Did not develop points fully.	46%
Question 3	Character reference for a friend applying for a job in an environmental company	Wrote the reference in the appropriate format. Knowledge of specific requirements	Inappropriate register, some made negative comments about their friend.	15%
Question 4	Reality show review	Produced a well organised and balanced review	Discussed reality shows in general without focussing on one show.	17%
Question 5 (<i>Not recommended for non-working students)</i>	Business letter to interest them in importing products.	Knowledge of a particular company and products	Lacked real knowledge of a company and failed to write a convincing letter.	22%

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Exercise 1 – Types of Document

Fill out the table with information on each task.

	Purpose	Style	Ideas
Article & Review			
Reports & Proposals			
Competition Entry			
Leaflet			
Letter			

Exercise 2 – Common Mistakes

List 10 common mistakes that students make in the CAE writing:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

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Teaching Ideas

- Get students to find examples of each type of document. They can either do this in the library or on the Internet. Newspapers are a great source of materials.
- Give students projects to create leaflets and then put the best ideas on display. (If you can involve local companies this will be very motivational.)
- Go to the local tourist board, they're often very happy to give you leaflets on their area.
- Read www.CambridgeESOL.org for sample papers etc.