

ESOL Skills for Life

Marking guidance for Writing assessments

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Introduction

This document provides guidance for tutors who are preparing learners for ESOL Skills for Life Writing assessments from Entry 1 to Level 2. It can be used together with the sample papers at <https://esbuk.org/web/online-resources/>. Writing assessments are completed at the candidate's centre and sent to be marked by trained and standardised ESB International markers, so you can feel assured that your learners will be assessed accurately. This guidance explains the requirements to achieve the assessment criteria for each level and task.

English Speaking Board (International) Ltd has a policy of marking positively: in other words, learners are given credit for what they have achieved successfully, and are not penalised for errors. In this document, where reference is made to 'accurate' or 'correct', markers would expect approximately 75% of what the learner has written to be accurate for that level in order to achieve the Assessment Criterion (AC).

All word counts are approximate. Responses are not penalised for being over or under-length, but those that are more than 10% shorter than the recommended word length are likely to be too brief to achieve all of the criteria securely, and those that are longer are likely to be verbose and contain irrelevant information.

Please refer to the Specifications <https://esbuk.org/web/qualifications/?feesSearch=Skills+for+Life> and the Adult ESOL Core Curriculum <https://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/content/etf1194> for details of skills and language at each level.

Entry 1

Task One

Text	Audience	Word length
Form	Official, employer, organisation	15
1.3 Use capitalisation correctly		
The learner should demonstrate accurate use of capital letters for names, places and the beginning of a sentence.		
2.1 Record personal details on a simple form correctly		
The learner can complete the fields accurately and appropriately. The form should be functional, i.e. it communicates sufficient meaningful information to the reader to serve its purpose. Blank fields are acceptable if that is appropriate to the learner. Spelling and punctuation are not taken into account for this AC. The use of capitals for the entire form is acceptable.		

Task Two

Text	Audience	Word length
Note, message, postcard, list	Friend, relative, neighbour, acquaintance	25
1.1 Construct simple complete sentences correctly for an intended audience		
The learner can write complete simple sentences, using relevant Entry 1 structures correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If the learner has used a more complex sentence which may contain errors, then the correct phrases are taken into account. There should be a minimum of two complete sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. Content should reflect the requirements of the question, i.e. be relevant to the question and address all the points.		
1.2 Use full stops correctly		
There are full stops to mark the end of simple sentences.		
1.3 Use capitalisation correctly		
The learner should demonstrate accurate use of capital letters for names, places, the pronoun 'I' and the beginning of a sentence.		
1.4 Spell words correctly		
Entry 1 words are spelled correctly: learners should demonstrate correct spelling of some personal key words and some simple common words. Errors do not impede communication. Where learners attempt to use higher-level vocabulary they are not penalised for spelling.		

Task Three

Text Invitation, email, note	Audience Official organisation, employer, friend, relative, neighbour, acquaintance	Word length 25
1.1 Construct simple complete sentences correctly for an intended audience The learner can write complete simple sentences, using relevant Entry 1 structures correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If the learner has used a more complex sentence which may contain errors, then the correct phrases are taken into account. There should be a minimum of two complete sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. Content should reflect the requirements of the question, i.e. be relevant to the question and address all the points.		
1.2 Use full stops correctly There are full stops to mark the end of simple sentences.		
1.4 Spell words correctly Entry 1 words are spelled correctly: learners should demonstrate correct spelling of some personal key words and some simple common words. Errors do not impede communication. Where learners attempt to use higher-level vocabulary they are not penalised for spelling.		

Entry 2

Task One

Text	Audience	Word length
Form	Official, employer, organisation	15
2.1 Record personal details in a form correctly		
The learner can complete the fields accurately and appropriately. The form should be functional, i.e. it communicates sufficient meaningful information to the reader to serve its purpose. Blank fields are acceptable if that is appropriate to the learner. Spelling and punctuation should not be taken into account for this AC.		
1.5 Use upper and lower case letters correctly		
In the form, it is acceptable to use upper case for all fields. If the learner uses upper and lower case letters, capitals should be used for days, months, names of people and places.		

Task Two

Text	Audience	Word length
Note, message, letter, invitation, descriptive text	Friend, relative, neighbour	60
1.1 Present information in an appropriate format for the intended audience		
Learners use the appropriate layout and conventions for the task, and include relevant information to achieve the required purpose. If appropriate layout is to be assessed, instructions for learners will be included in the paper. If they are not stated, the candidate is not penalised. A letter should begin with 'Dear' and have a suitable ending. Content must reflect the requirements of the question, i.e. be relevant to the question and address all the points.		
1.2 Construct simple and compound sentences correctly		
Learners write a minimum of 3 simple and compound sentences correctly. An attempt at 1 compound sentence is needed. If the learner has used a more ambitious sentence which may contain errors, then correct phrases are taken into account.		
1.3 Use adjectives correctly		
The learner uses a range of adjectives appropriate to the context and level. Spelling is not taken into account for this criterion.		
1.4 Use punctuation correctly		
Entry 2 punctuation is used accurately i.e. full stops and question marks.		
1.6 Spell words correctly		
Learners spell Entry 2 words appropriate to the level and context correctly. Errors do not impede communication. Any common misspellings and attempts at higher level words are not penalised.		

Task Three

Text Invitation, e-mail, note	Audience official organisation, employer, friend, relative, neighbour, acquaintance	Word length 70
1.1 Present information in an appropriate format for the intended audience Learners use the appropriate layout and conventions for the task, and include relevant information to achieve the required purpose. If appropriate layout is to be assessed, instructions for learners will be included in the paper. If they are not stated, the candidate is not penalised. A letter should begin with 'Dear' and have a suitable ending. Content must reflect the requirements of the question, i.e. be relevant to the question and address all the points.		
1.2 Construct simple and compound sentences correctly Learners write a minimum of 3 simple and compound sentences correctly. An attempt at 1 compound sentence is needed. If the learner has used a more ambitious sentence which may contain errors, then correct phrases are taken into account.		
1.3 Use adjectives correctly The learner uses a range of adjectives appropriate to the context and level. Spelling is not taken into account for this criterion.		
1.4 Use punctuation correctly Entry 2 punctuation is used accurately i.e. full stops and question marks.		
1.5 Use upper and lower case letters correctly Capital letters are used correctly i.e. for days, months, 'I', names of people and places.		
1.6 Spell words correctly Learners spell Entry 2 words appropriate to the level and context correctly. Errors do not impede communication. Any common misspellings and attempts at higher level words are not penalised.		

Entry 3

Task One

Text	Audience	Word length
Form	Official, employer, organisation	50
3.1 Complete a form with open and closed responses correctly The learner can complete the fields accurately and appropriately with personal details. The form should be functional, i.e. it communicates sufficient meaningful information to the reader to serve its purpose. The open response should be appropriate and intelligible. Grammar and spelling errors are not taken into account to achieve this criterion.		
2.2 Structure main points in short paragraphs There are a minimum of 2 paragraphs. This can be indicated by indentation, a new line or annotation on the text.		
2.6 Spell words correctly The learner spells words appropriate to the level and context, and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication, and attempts at higher level words are not penalised.		

Task Two

Text	Audience	Word length
Article, description, report	General, organisation	100
1.1 Plan text for the intended audience There is a relevant plan. The plan can be in any form as long as it has a link to the task, e.g. list, mind map or spidergram.		
2.1 Produce content for the intended audience At Entry 3, the learner must use appropriate register. In addition, the learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every bullet point addressed. If appropriate layout is to be assessed, instructions for learners will be included in the paper. If they are not stated, the candidate will not be penalised. A letter should begin with 'Dear' and have a suitable ending.		
2.2 Structure main points in short paragraphs There are a minimum of 2 paragraphs. This can be indicated by indentation, a new line or annotation on the text.		
2.3 Sequence text chronologically The learner organises the written response logically, using connectives, discourse markers and conjunctions appropriate to Entry 3. Discourse markers and connectives are clear indications that the learner has achieved the AC. However, if they are not present but there is a well-structured and clearly organised sequence, this is acceptable. Overall, the text needs to be cohesive.		

2.4 Use grammar correctly

The learner can write 4 sentences correctly using Entry 3 grammar, e.g. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. Entry 3 tenses are used accurately, including simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, as appropriate to the task. Errors do not impede communication. If the learner has used a more complex sentence which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences, as they are assessed in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) will not be penalised twice.

2.5 Use punctuation correctly

Candidate uses Entry 3 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. capital letters for beginning of sentences; 'I' and proper nouns; full stops, question marks and exclamation marks.

Task Three

Text	Audience	Word length
Narrative, letter, e-mail	Friend, general	100
2.1 Produce content for the intended audience		
At Entry 3, the learner must use appropriate register. In addition, the learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every bullet point addressed. If appropriate layout is to be assessed, instructions for learners will be included in the paper. If they are not stated, the candidate will not be penalised. A letter should begin with 'Dear' and have a suitable ending.		
2.3 Sequence text chronologically		
The learner organises the written response logically, using connectives, discourse markers and conjunctions appropriate to Entry 3. Discourse markers and connectives are clear indications that the learner has achieved the AC. However, if they are not present but there is a well-structured and clearly organised sequence, this is acceptable. Overall, the text needs to be cohesive.		
2.4 Use grammar correctly		
The learner can write 4 sentences correctly using Entry 3 grammar, e.g. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. Entry 3 tenses are used accurately, including simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, as appropriate to the task. Errors do not impede communication. If the learner has used a more complex sentence which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences, as they are assessed in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) will not be penalised twice.		
2.5 Use punctuation correctly		
Candidate uses Entry 3 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. capital letters for beginning of sentences; 'I' and proper nouns; full stops, question marks and exclamation marks.		
2.6 Spell words correctly		
The learner spells words appropriate to the level and context, and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication, and attempts at higher level words are not penalised.		

Level 1

Task One

Text	Audience	Word length
Form	Official, employer, organisation	150
3.1 Complete a form with open and closed responses correctly Information required on the form is written correctly. Appropriate responses indicate form-filling instructions and conventions have been understood. The form should be functional, i.e. it communicates sufficient meaningful information to the reader to serve its purpose. The open response should be appropriate and easily intelligible. Grammar and spelling errors are not taken into account to achieve this criterion.		
2.1 Produce content appropriate to purpose The learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every part of the question addressed. If appropriate layout is considered as part of the AC, instructions for learners will be included in the paper.		
2.5 Use punctuation correctly Candidate uses a range of Level 1 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. capital letters and full stops to indicate the beginning and end of sentences; commas in lists, between clauses and after connectives; apostrophes for possession and omission; bullet points and dashes.		
2.6 Spell words accurately The learner can spell personal key words, words appropriate to Level 1, and context and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If there are errors in attempts to use specific special interest vocabulary or a broad range of lexis, these are not penalised.		

Task Two

Text	Audience	Word length
Email, letter	friend, relative, colleague, tutor, official	150
2.1 Produce content appropriate to purpose The response is laid out following conventions for the genre and purpose of the task. The learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every part of the question addressed. If appropriate layout is considered as part of the AC, instructions for learners will be included in the paper.		
2.2 Use appropriate language for a given task The learner can use a range of Level 1 lexis appropriately, and appropriate register that is currently acceptable for this type of functional text. Spelling is not considered in this AC as it is marked in AC 2.6.		
2.3 Structure text in a logical sequence for purpose Writing is logically ordered using connectives, discourse markers and conjunctions appropriate to Level 1. However, if these are not present but there is a well-structured and clearly organised sequence, this is acceptable to credit the AC. Paragraphs are used correctly.		

2.4 Use grammar correctly

There are at least 5 accurate sentences using Level 1 grammar, i.e. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. The learner uses Level 1 tenses and voice correctly, e.g. simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, and the active and passive voice as appropriate to the task. If the learner has used complex sentences which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences as these are marked in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) is not penalised twice. Errors do not impede communication.

2.5 Use punctuation correctly

The learner uses a range of Level 1 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. capital letters and full stops to indicate the beginning and end of sentences; commas in lists, between clauses and after connectives; apostrophes for possession and omission; bullet points and dashes. Learners should use appropriate Level 1 punctuation and are not expected to use the full range suggested in the mark scheme or specifications when they are not appropriate.

Task three

Text	Audience	Word length
Narrative, account, article, report	official, general	200 (plus plan)
1.1 Plan text for a specific purpose		
Candidate writes a relevant plan which must relate to the purpose and topic of the final text. The plan can be in any form e.g. list, mind map, spidergram.		
2.2 Use appropriate language for a given task		
The learner can use a range of Level 1 lexis appropriately, and appropriate register that is currently acceptable for this type of functional text. Spelling is not considered in this AC as it is marked in AC 2.6.		
2.3 Structure text in a logical sequence for purpose		
Writing is logically ordered using connectives, discourse markers and conjunctions appropriate to Level 1. However, if these are not present but there is a well-structured and clearly organised sequence, this is acceptable to credit the AC. Paragraphs are used correctly.		
2.4 Use grammar correctly		
There are at least 5 accurate sentences using Level 1 grammar, i.e. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. The learner uses Level 1 tenses and voice correctly, e.g. simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, and the active and passive voice as appropriate to the task. If the learner has used complex sentences which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences as these are marked in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) is not penalised twice. Errors do not impede communication.		
2.6 Spell words accurately		
The learner can spell personal key words, words appropriate to Level 1, and context and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If there are errors in attempts to use specific special interest vocabulary or a broad range of lexis, these are not penalised.		

Level 2

Task One

Text	Audience	Word length
Form	Official, employer, organisation	150
3.1 Complete a form with complex features correctly Information required on the form is written accurately and in the appropriate field. The responses indicate form-filling instructions and conventions have been understood. The form should be functional, i.e. it communicates sufficient meaningful information to the reader to serve its purpose. The open response should be appropriate and easily intelligible. Grammar and spelling errors are not taken into account to achieve this criterion.		
2.1. Produce content which meets the purpose effectively The response is laid out following conventions for the genre and purpose of the task. The learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every part of the question addressed. If appropriate layout is considered as part of the AC, instructions for learners will be included in the paper.		
2.5 Use punctuation correctly The learner uses a range of Level 2 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. commas, semi-colons and colons, inverted commas and apostrophes. Learners should use appropriate Level 2 punctuation and are not expected to use the full range suggested in the mark scheme or specifications when they are not appropriate. Errors do not impede communication.		
2.6 Spell words accurately The learner can spell personal key words, words appropriate to Level 2, and context and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If there are errors in attempts to use specific special interest vocabulary or a broad range of lexis, these are not penalised.		

Task Two

Text	Audience	Word length
Email, letter	Official, employer, organisation, friend, relative	150
2.1 Produce content which meets the purpose effectively The text is of an appropriate register for the purpose and audience, and is laid out following conventions for the genre. The learner must include relevant information to achieve the purpose, i.e. the response must be relevant to the task, with every part of the question addressed. If appropriate layout is considered as part of the AC, instructions for learners will be included in the paper.		
2.2 Use language effectively The learner uses a range of Level 2 lexis appropriate to the task and audience.		

2.3 Structure text coherently for purpose

The format, layout and conventions are appropriate to the task. The learner effectively uses structure and paragraphing appropriate to the task.

2.4 Use grammar correctly

There are at least 5 accurate sentences using Level 2 grammar, i.e. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. The learner uses Level 2 tenses and voice correctly, e.g. simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, and the active and passive voice as appropriate to the task. If the learner has used complex sentences which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences as these are marked in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) is not penalised twice. Errors do not impede communication

2.5 Use punctuation correctly

The learner uses a range of Level 2 punctuation accurately and appropriately, e.g. commas, semi-colons and colons, inverted commas and apostrophes. Learners should use appropriate Level 2 punctuation and are not expected to use the full range suggested in the mark scheme or specifications when they are not appropriate. Errors do not impede communication.

Task Three

Text	Audience	Word length
narrative, essay, report, article	Official, organisation, employer, general readers	250
1.1 Plan text for a specific purpose		
An appropriate plan is produced which informs the purpose, structure and content of the final text. The plan can take any form, e.g. a list or mind map.		
2.2 Use language effectively		
The learner uses a range of Level 2 lexis appropriate to the task and audience.		
2.3 Structure text coherently for purpose		
The format, layout and conventions are appropriate to the task. The learner effectively uses structure and paragraphing appropriate to the task.		
2.4 Use grammar correctly		
There are at least 5 accurate sentences using Level 2 grammar, i.e. simple, compound and complex sentences with correct subject-verb agreement. The learner uses Level 2 tenses and voice correctly, e.g. simple and continuous past, present and future tenses, and the active and passive voice as appropriate to the task. If the learner has used complex sentences which may contain errors, then correct clauses are taken into account. Spelling and chronology are not considered in these sentences as these are marked in ACs 2.6 and 2.3. A repeated error (e.g. failure to use a direct or indirect article) is not penalised twice. Errors do not impede communication		
2.6 Spell words accurately		
The learner can spell personal key words, words appropriate to Level 2, and context and key specialist words correctly. Errors do not impede communication. If there are errors in attempts to use specific special interest vocabulary or a broad range of lexis, these are not penalised.		

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