

B2 First (FCE) Writing

Student Worksheet: From Draft to Exam-Ready

CambridgeMB



1. How much do you know about First Certificate Writing?

Decide if the statements are TRUE (T) or FALSE (F). If you think a statement is false, correct it.

1. In Part 1 of the Writing exam, you must write an essay. ____
2. In Part 2, you can choose which task to answer. ____
3. You should write between 140 and 190 words for each task. ____
4. You lose marks if you write more than the maximum word count. ____
5. The four marking criteria are: Content, Grammar, Organisation, and Vocabulary. ____
6. Spelling mistakes can affect your Language score. ____
7. Using very formal language is always the safest choice. ____
8. You can be penalised for copying directly from the question paper. ____
9. A Band 5 answer must be completely free of errors. ____
10. Paragraphing is assessed as part of Organisation. ____

Now discuss in pairs:

1. Which answer surprised you most? Why?
2. What do you think is the most common mistake B2 students make in the Writing exam?
3. Which of the four criteria do you find most challenging personally?

Exam dilemma! *You finish your article and count your words — 230. You have 3 minutes left. What do you do?*

- Leave it — more is better!
- Try to find any repetitive words or ideas to delete
- Just delete the last paragraph
- Panic!

Compare with a partner — then find out what Cambridge recommends!

1. Writing Criteria

Your examiner marks your writing using four criteria. Understanding these will help you write better — and score higher.

	What it means	Band 3 (Pass)	Band 5 (Excellent)
Content	Did you answer the task fully? Is all your information relevant?	<i>Minor details may be missing or slightly off-topic.</i>	<i>Everything is relevant and the task is fully answered.</i>
Communicative Achievement	Did you use the right style and format? Did you get your point across?	<i>The format is mostly correct (e.g. letter, article). The reader generally understands you.</i>	<i>The format and style are exactly right. You communicate both simple and complex ideas clearly.</i>
Organisation	Are your ideas logically organised? Are linking words used well?	<i>Ideas are organised with some linking words (however, although, etc.).</i>	<i>Ideas flow naturally with a variety of linking devices. Paragraphs are well-structured.</i>
Language	Did you use a range of vocabulary and grammar? How accurate are you?	<i>Everyday vocabulary used well; some complex structures tried. Errors don't stop understanding.</i>	<i>Wide range of vocabulary including less common words. Complex grammar used accurately and flexibly.</i>

2. Vocabulary Upgrade

One of the biggest differences between a Band 3 and a Band 5 is vocabulary range. Examiners notice when you rely on the same basic words

Spot the problem — then fix it

Read this short paragraph. Circle every use of the word “good”. Then rewrite the paragraph below using more precise alternatives.

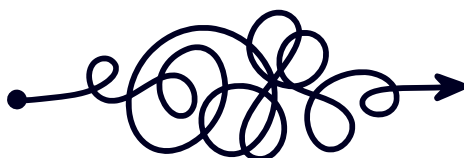
“Yesterday I visited a good museum. The exhibits were good and the guides gave good explanations. The food in the café was also good, and the views from the roof were really good. It was a good experience overall.”

Rewrite the paragraph here:

Word upgrade table

Fill in two or three alternatives for each basic word. Use a dictionary or thesaurus if you need to.

Basic word	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
good			
bad			
big			
said			
nice			
get			
think			
show			



3. Your Writing Task

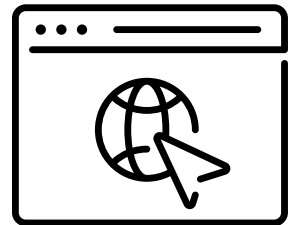
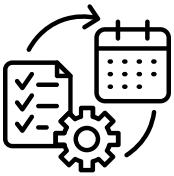
The task

You have seen this announcement on an international student website:

“We are looking for articles about a place that has changed a lot in recent years. Tell us what it used to be like, how it has changed, and whether you think the change has been positive or negative.

The best articles will be published on our website.”

Write your article. (140–190 words)



Before you write — planning (3–5 minutes)

Quick plan

What place will you write about? _____

What was it like before? _____

How has it changed? _____

Positive / negative / mixed? _____

Opening sentence idea: _____

Content	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have answered all parts of the task.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Everything I wrote is relevant — I haven't gone off-topic.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have developed the basic points with my own ideas.

Communicative Achievement	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I used the correct format for the task (article, email, essay, etc.).
<input type="checkbox"/>	My style and register are appropriate (formal / informal).
<input type="checkbox"/>	My writing achieves its purpose — the reader would be informed / persuaded / entertained.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I communicated both simple and more complex ideas.

Organisation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	My writing is divided into clear paragraphs.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Each paragraph has one main idea.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I used a variety of linking words (not just 'and' and 'but').
<input type="checkbox"/>	The reader can follow my ideas easily from start to finish.

Language	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I used a range of vocabulary — I avoided repeating the same words.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I included some less common or more precise vocabulary.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I used both simple and complex grammatical structures.
<input type="checkbox"/>	I checked my grammar and spelling carefully.

5. Peer Feedback

Swap your article with a classmate. Read their work carefully, then fill in one strength and one suggestion for each criterion.

Feedback written by: _____ **For:** _____

Criterion	One thing done well	One suggestion
Content		
Communicative Achievement		
Organisation		
Language		

Overall comment (1-2 sentences):

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B2 WRITING WORKSHEET — TEACHER'S GUIDE

Warm-Up — Answer Key & Notes

Suggested time: 8–10 minutes

ANSWER KEY — True / False:

1. TRUE — Part 1 is always a compulsory essay.
2. TRUE — Part 2 offers a choice of tasks: article, email/letter, report, or review (depending on the exam session).
3. TRUE — 140–190 words applies to both parts.
4. FALSE — There is no automatic penalty for exceeding the word limit, but examiners only read and assess up to the expected length. Extra words do not gain marks and may introduce more errors.
5. FALSE — The four criteria are: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, and Language. "Grammar" and "Vocabulary" are both part of the Language criterion.
6. TRUE — Spelling is assessed within the Language criterion.
7. FALSE — Register must match the task. An informal email written in very formal language will lose marks under Communicative Achievement.
8. TRUE — Lifting whole phrases from the question will be ignored by the examiner and not count towards the word count.
9. FALSE — A Band 5 answer may still contain occasional errors, as long as they do not impede communication. Control and range matter more than perfection.
10. TRUE — Paragraphing, use of linking devices, and overall text structure are all assessed under Organisation.

TEACHING TIP: Questions 5, 7, and 9 are the most commonly answered incorrectly by students. After checking answers, it is worth spending an extra minute on each: ask students why they thought the false statements were true. This surfaces common misconceptions before they affect exam performance. Question 4 often prompts a useful conversation about whether it is worth "padding" an answer — the answer is always no.

Exam Dilemma — Expert Answer & Teaching Notes

The correct answer is **B — Try to find any repetitive words or ideas to delete.**

Why: Cambridge does not apply an automatic penalty for exceeding the word count, but examiners are trained to stop reading at the expected length. This means anything beyond 190 words may simply not be assessed — including a strong conclusion. More importantly, overwritten answers tend to contain padding and repetition that weaken the overall impression, particularly under the Language and Organisation criteria

Follow-up question for class discussion: "Where in your article would you look first for words to cut?" — good answers include: redundant adverbs, repeated ideas across paragraphs, over-long introductions

1. Writing Criteria

Suggested time: 8–10 minutes

TEACHING TIP: Do not simply read through the table with students. Instead, give them one minute to read it silently, then ask: "Which criterion do you think you are strongest in? Which is your weakest?" A quick show of hands gives you useful diagnostic information and gets students personally invested before they write anything.

The Band 3 / Band 5 comparison is the key teaching tool here. Draw attention to the language of the descriptors — words like "generally", "a variety of", and "occasional errors" at Band 3 versus "control and flexibility" and "less common lexis" at Band 5. These distinctions are what students need to internalise.

NOTE ON LANGUAGE: Students often conflate grammar and vocabulary as a single thing. It is worth making explicit that Cambridge separates these only at C1/C2 level — at B2, both fall under "Language" and are marked together.

2. Vocabulary Upgrade

Suggested time: 10–12 minutes

ANSWER KEY — "good" paragraph rewrite: There is no single correct answer, but the rewrite should demonstrate awareness of register and precision. Below is a model rewrite for reference:

"Yesterday I visited a remarkable museum. The exhibits were fascinating and the guides gave clear, insightful explanations. The food in the café was also delicious, and the views from the roof were breathtaking. It was an unforgettable experience overall."

Accept any synonyms that are accurate and contextually appropriate. Push back on generic swaps (e.g. replacing "good" with "great" or "nice") — these do not demonstrate range.

ANSWER KEY — Word upgrade table (suggested answers): NOTE: Accept any accurate, contextually appropriate alternatives. These are examples, not the only correct answers.

good | excellent / impressive / outstanding

bad | dreadful / appalling / inadequate

big | vast / substantial / considerable

said | remarked / pointed out / acknowledged

nice | delightful / pleasant / charming

get | obtain / acquire / receive

think | consider / believe / argue

show | demonstrate / reveal / illustrate

TEACHING TIP: The paragraph rewrite works best as a pair activity — students compare their rewrites and discuss which alternatives are strongest and why. Encourage them to think about connotation, not just meaning: "dreadful" and "inadequate" both replace "bad" but carry very different weight.

If time allows, ask students to underline which words from their rewrite they think would genuinely impress an examiner, and which are just "safe" choices. This is a productive conversation to have before they attempt the writing task.

Part 3. Your writing task

BOLD LABEL: Suggested time: 5 minutes planning + 20–25 minutes writing

ABOUT THE TASK: The article task asks students to write about a place that has changed, covering three points: what it was like before, how it has changed, and whether the change is positive or negative. This structure maps neatly onto paragraph planning (introduction + 2–3 body paragraphs + conclusion) and rewards students who manage their time and ideas in the planning stage.

The task is deliberately open — students can write about their own town, a place they have visited, or somewhere they know well. This reduces the risk of content being too thin and gives stronger students room to include personal voice, which is rewarded under Communicative Achievement.

TEACHING TIP — PLANNING: Do not let students skip the planning box. Five minutes spent on a plan consistently produces better-structured writing. If students finish the plan

quickly, ask them to add one "upgrading" note — e.g. "I will use a relative clause in paragraph 2" or "I want to use 'whereas' to show contrast."

TEACHING TIP — TIMING: Warn students at the halfway point (approx. 12 minutes in). At B2, many students write too slowly or spend too long on the first paragraph. A brief time check halfway through trains exam pacing.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN MARKING: Content Has the student addressed all three points in the prompt? Articles that only describe the change without evaluating it will score Band 3 at best for Content.

Comm. Ach. Is this recognisably an article? Look for an engaging opening, a clear point of view, and a concluding statement. A piece that reads like an essay or report will lose marks here.

Organisation Are there at least 3 paragraphs? Is the linking varied — not just "First... Then... Finally..."?

Language Has the student used any less common vocabulary? Any complex structures (relative clauses, passives, conditionals, inversion)?

Part 4 — Self-assessment checklist

Suggested time: 5 minutes

TEACHING TIP: The checklist is most effective when students complete it immediately after finishing their article — while the writing decisions are still fresh. Ask them to be honest: the point is not to feel good about every box, but to identify one or two specific targets.

After students have ticked (or not ticked) their boxes, ask the class: "Which box was hardest to tick honestly?" This is a more productive question than "who ticked everything?" and leads to richer discussion.

For homework or a follow-up lesson, students can use their unticked boxes to set one written target: "Next time I write, I will ____." Stored in a vocabulary or exam notebook, these targets compound over time.

EXTENSION: For stronger classes, ask students to go back into their article and highlight one sentence per criterion that they are proudest of. This reinforces positive awareness alongside the self-critical lens.

Part 5 — Peer feedback

Suggested time: 10 minutes

TEACHING TIP: Peer feedback works best when students understand what they are looking for before they read their partner's work. Spend one minute before the swap

reminding students: "You are not correcting grammar — you are looking for strengths and one suggestion per criterion."

OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP: After peer feedback, give students 5 minutes to make one revision to their article based on the feedback they received. Even a small revision consolidates the lesson and signals that feedback is actionable, not just evaluative.

Sample Band 5 Article (teacher reference)

Model answer — for teacher reference or class discussion. Do not distribute before students have written their own article.

ARTICLE TEXT:

A Town Transformed

Twenty years ago, the town where I grew up was a quiet, largely unremarkable place. The high street was lined with small family-run shops, and on weekday afternoons it was not unusual to see more pigeons than people. Few outsiders had any reason to visit.

That has changed beyond recognition. Following the opening of a new university campus on the outskirts, the population has grown considerably, and with it the range of cafés, restaurants, and cultural venues in the centre. Streets that were once deserted in the evenings are now lively well into the night.

Whether this transformation has been wholly positive is, however, a matter of debate. Long-term residents frequently point out that rents have risen sharply and that many of the independent businesses that gave the town its character have been replaced by chains. What was gained in energy may have come at the cost of identity.

Personally, I find it a fascinating rather than a straightforwardly happy story — a reminder that change, however welcome in some respects, always leaves something behind.

[189 words]

EXAMINER COMMENTS (for use in class discussion): Content All three task points addressed fully. Personal evaluation is clear and developed.

Comm. Achievement Unmistakably an article — engaging opening, authorial voice, reflective conclusion. Holds the reader's attention throughout.

Organisation Four well-structured paragraphs. Varied linking: "however", "whether", "following", "with it". No over-reliance on basic connectors.

Language Less common lexis: "unremarkable", "outsiders", "outskirts", "considerably", "sharply", "identity". Complex structures: passive ("has been replaced"), nominal clause ("Whether this transformation has been wholly positive"), inversion-adjacent construction ("What was gained...

may have come"). Occasional stylistic fragment ("Few outsiders had any reason to visit") used deliberately for effect.

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