Read and write a semi-formal letter for IELTS General Training Writing Task 1

This worksheet will help you:
• identify semi-formal language features in a letter
• write a semi-formal letter

Exercise 1

Read the IELTS General Training Writing Task 1 below and complete the following sentence by crossing out the incorrect words:

• The letter has to be semi-formal or formal in style because it’s to someone you know socially / professionally and about something important / unimportant.

WRITING TASK 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You work for an international company, and would like to spend six months working in its head office in another country.

Write a letter to your manager. In your letter
• explain why you want to work in the company’s head office for six months
• say how your work could be done while you are away
• ask for his/her help in arranging it

Write at least 150 words.
You do NOT need to write any addresses.

Begin your letter as follows:

Dear .................,

Writing exercise from page 28 of IELTS 13 General Training.
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Exercise 2

Read the sample answer below and tick (✔) or cross (✘) each of the following statements.

- The writer explains why they want to work in the company’s head office for six months ☑
- The writer suggests how their work could be done while they are away ☑
- The writer asks for their manager’s help in arranging it ☑

A sample answer written by a native English speaker (me):

Dear Brian,

I’m writing to ask if you’ll be able to assist me in arranging a transfer to the head office in Sydney for six months.

I know this request may come as a surprise but I’ve been thinking about it for a while and I recently saw an interesting opportunity posted on the intranet. The vacancy is a six month contract to train new recruits in what I’m doing now, and it would give me a chance to share my knowledge and build my skills as a trainer. I’ve already spoken to the hiring manager, Linda Smith, and she suggested I present the opportunity to you before formally applying.

Having just finished the procedural updates, I have some time to train someone here to cover my role, and I’d be happy to suggest a couple of people who I think would be interested and capable.

If you’re happy with the above, I would really appreciate it if you could contact Linda Smith and recommend me for the position.

I’m looking forward to hearing what you think or if you have any questions.

Regards,

Pete

Word count: 181
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Exercise 3

Without looking back at the letter, underline the best option for a semi-formal letter in each of the following examples.

a. I am writing to ask... / I'm writing to ask.
b. ...for assistance... / if you'll be able to assist me... (e.g. ...if you'll be able to assist me / for assistance in arranging a transfer)
c. ...consult / put it to (e.g. She suggested I consult / put it to you...)
d. I'd be happy to suggest... / May I suggest...
e. Would you be able to...? / I would really appreciate it if you could...
f. I'm looking forward to... / I look forward to... (e.g. I'm looking forward to... / I look forward to hearing what you think)
g. Regards / Yours faithfully

Now look back at the letter to check your answers.

Exercise 4

Read the IELTS General Training Writing Task 1 below from IELTS Trainer General Training and complete the following sentence by crossing out the incorrect words:

• The letter has to be semi-formal or formal in style because it's to someone you know socially / professionally and about something important / unimportant.
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Writing Task 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on this task.

You work for a company. You have seen some information online about a training course that would be useful for your work. Write a letter to your manager. In the letter:

- give details of the course
- say how the course would be useful
- explain how the company could help you do this course.

Write at least 150 words.

Writing exercise from page 50 of IELTS Trainer 2.

Exercise 5

Underline the best option to use in a semi-formal letter in each of the following examples.

a. I've recently seen a training course... / I have recently seen a training course...
b. I'd like to ask whether the company would... / Would the company...?
c. ...give / provide (e.g. The course would give/provide me...)
d. I need... / I would need... (e.g. To attend the course, I need / I would need your...)
e. ...approval / okay (e.g. ...your approval/okay to take two days out of the office)
f. Thanks for thinking about this / Thank you for considering this
g. Kind regards / Regards
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Exercise 6

Plan and write a semi-formal letter for the Writing Task in Exercise 4. You can use the best options from Exercise 5 in your answer if you need help.

When you’ve finished your letter, check that you’ve included all of the required information (i.e. the three bullet points in the Writing Task), used paragraphs to separate the information, and used language features appropriate for a semi-formal letter (e.g. a semi-formal opening/closing, contractions, and some more formal vocabulary).

Then compare your answer with the sample answer below.
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ANSWERS

Exercise 1:
The letter has to be semi-formal or formal in style because it’s to someone you know professionally (your manager) and about something important.

Exercise 2:
• The writer explains why they want to work in the company’s head office for six months ✔
• The writer suggests how their work could be done while they are away ✔
• The writer asks for their manager’s help in arranging it ✔

Exercise 3:

a. I am writing to ask... / I’m writing to ask... I’m is less formal than the formal uncontracted form ‘I am’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
b. ...for assistance... / if you’ll be able to assist me... (e.g. ...if you’ll be able to assist me / for assistance in arranging a transfer). The use of more personal language like ‘...if you’ll be able to assist me’ is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
c. ...consult / put it to (e.g. She suggested I consult / put it to you...). The verb ‘consult’ is more formal than the phrasal verb ‘put it to’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
d. I'd be happy to suggest... / May I suggest... ’I’d be happy to suggest’ to make a suggestion is less formal than the formal ‘May I suggest...’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
e. Would you be able to...? / I would really appreciate it if you could... The polite request ‘I would really appreciate it if you could...’ is more formal than the direct request ‘Would you be able to...?’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
f. I'm looking forward to... / I look forward to... (e.g. I’m looking forward to... / I look forward to hearing what you think). ‘I’m looking forward to...’ is less formal than the formal ‘I look forward to...’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.
g. Regards / Yours faithfully. ‘Regards’ is a less formal closing than the formal ‘Yours faithfully’ and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

Exercise 4:
The letter has to be semi-formal or formal in style because it’s to someone you know professionally (your manager) and about something important.
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ANSWERS

Exercise 5:

a. I've recently seen a training course... / I have recently seen a training course... I've is less formal than the formal uncontracted form 'I have' and more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

b. I'd like to ask whether the company would... / Would the company...? The polite request 'I'd like to ask whether the company would...' is more formal than the direct request 'Would the company...?' and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

c. ...give / provide (e.g. The course would give/provide me...). The verb 'provide' is more formal than the verb 'give' and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

d. I would need... / I need... (e.g. To attend the course, I need / I would need your...). The use of the modal verb 'would' is more polite than the statement 'I need...' or 'I will need', and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

e. ...approval / okay (e.g. ...your approval/okay to take two days out of the office). The noun 'approval' is more formal than the noun 'okay' and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

f. Thanks for thinking about this / Thank you for considering this. The exclamation 'thank you' and the verb 'consider' are more formal than 'thanks' and 'think about', and are more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

g. Kind regards / Regards. 'Regards' is a less formal closing than the formal 'Kind regards' and is more appropriate for a semi-formal letter.

Exercise 6:

Compare your answer to the sample answer below.

• Did you include the same kind of information?
• Did you organise the information the same way?
• Are there any semi-formal language features in the letter that you could have used in your letter?
Dear Katy,

I’ve recently seen a training course that I think would be very useful for me in my role, and I’d like to ask whether the company would be able to support my attendance.

The course is on project management and is being run by Milford Business Association over two days next month (September the 1st and 2nd). The presenter, Erin Watson, is well-known in the field and coming over from Australia specifically to run the course.

The course would provide me with practical skills that I could then apply to the upcoming projects we have scheduled. I’d also be happy to share what I learn on the course with the rest of the team here in a workshop or informally.

To attend the course, I would need your approval to take two days out of the office and for the business association to invoice the company.

Thank you for considering this and I’m looking forward to hearing what you think.

Regards,

Pete

Word count: 160