

A1 WRITING

› **TEACHER GUIDE**

The purpose of the Teacher Guide

This guide is for teachers preparing learners for the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test. It offers valuable insights, strategies and practical tips to help learners strengthen their writing skills and build their confidence. It also supports you in addressing common challenges learners may encounter and helping them enhance their existing abilities.

It features a range of practice activities drawn from the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test, with follow-up tasks that can be easily tailored to your classroom needs.

You can download free practice papers for the ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test from the LANGUAGECERT website.

Visit: [languagecert.org](https://www.languagecert.org)



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> The importance of developing writing skills

Writing is a complex and demanding skill that requires learners to draw on a range of sub-skills: generating ideas, following a structured process, considering the purpose and tone, choosing words carefully, organising a text, focusing on syntax, applying the rules of grammar and punctuation, among others. However, writing is an essential part of formal and informal communication in everyday life.

The ability to express thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in writing is a skill learners will need to develop both inside and outside the classroom.



The challenges of writing in a second language

Writing in a second language presents several challenges that can make effective written communication difficult. One of the main obstacles is limited vocabulary, which can hinder the ability to express complex ideas clearly and accurately. In addition, differences in grammar and syntax between a learner's native language and the second language often lead to mistakes and awkward phrasing. Writers may also struggle with tone, style and cultural nuances, making it difficult to convey the intended message effectively. These difficulties can lead to frustration and a lack of confidence. However, with continued practice and exposure, significant improvement is achievable over time.

KEY FACTORS INFLUENCING EFFECTIVE WRITING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE



Limited vocabulary

A1 learners only know basic words and expressions, which can make it difficult for them to write exactly what they mean. As a result, their writing is often very simple or repetitive.



Grammar and sentence structure

At A1 level, learners are still practising how to form correct sentences. They often make mistakes with word order, verb forms (e.g. 'he go' instead of 'he goes') and articles ('a', 'the'), which can make writing unclear.



Spelling and punctuation

A1 learners are still getting used to how words look and sound in the new language. Spelling mistakes are common, and punctuation (e.g. using full stops and question marks) may be missing or used incorrectly.



Idioms and expressions

Since A1 learners haven't yet encountered idiomatic phrases or more natural-sounding expressions, their writing may sound simple or mechanical. They might also copy expressions without fully understanding them.



Cultural context and tone

A1 learners often don't understand how tone works in the new language. They may sound too direct or too informal because they haven't learned what's polite or appropriate in writing.



Structure and linking Ideas

A1-level writers usually write short, unconnected sentences. They may not make effective use of linking words (e.g. 'and', 'but', 'because'), so their writing can be difficult to follow.



Confidence and anxiety

Fear of making mistakes can prevent A1 learners from writing freely, leading to short, safe sentences and a lack of creative or personal expression.



Overthinking translation

A1 learners often try to write by translating from their first language word for word. This process can lead to unnatural phrasing or mistakes because direct translation doesn't always work.

Global Writing skills at A1 level

At A1 level, learners can



write brief texts such as postcards or notes (e.g. a holiday greeting, a short message to a friend)



complete forms that ask for simple personal details. These include writing their name, nationality, address, age and date of birth on forms such as hotel registration or school forms

A1 Proficiency Scales

The A1 Proficiency Scales outline the writing skills learners should be able to demonstrate at A1 level, as defined by the CEFR.

At A1 level, learners can:

- **write simple notes and messages** to friends.
- **describe where they live** using short phrases and sentences.
- **fill in forms with personal details** (e.g. *name, nationality, address*).
- **write simple, isolated phrases and basic sentences.**
- **write a short, simple postcard** (e.g. *holiday greetings*).
- **write short letters and messages with the help of a dictionary.**



Getting to know the ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test

>The ESOL for Schools test assesses all four skills (Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking) across two components – Written and Spoken. The Writing, Reading and Listening tests are part of the Written component.



The Writing test consists of two parts.



The overall duration of the Reading and Writing test is 1 hour and 20 minutes.



There is no break between the Reading and the Writing tests.



KEY FEATURES OF THE TEST

The table below summarises the key features of the test (skill assessed / focus, tasks presented, format of each part, marks awarded).

PART	SKILL & FOCUS	TASK	FORMAT	RAW MARKS
1	Write simple sentences to communicate ideas or basic information	Write on a given topic, e.g. about themselves, daily life, where they live, what they do, etc.	Four sentences (about 30 words)	12
2	Write a short simple text for an intended audience	Write a letter, email, card, postcard or message that addresses two content points	20–30 words	12

HOW THE TEST IS MARKED

- › The assessor uses four assessment criteria to evaluate the test taker's response: Task Fulfilment, Accuracy and Range of Grammar, Accuracy and Range of Vocabulary, Organisation.
- › The maximum score for each part is 12 marks (up to 3 marks per assessment criterion).
- › The maximum score for both parts is 24 marks.
- › Marks are then converted to a scaled score from 0–50.
- › There is no minimum score for the Writing test. However, in order to be successful, test takers need to attain at least 50% in the Written component, which consists of the Writing test, as well as the Listening and Reading tests.



Helping learners prepare for the ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test

Familiarising learners with the format and content of the test, as well as providing targeted practice, can significantly enhance their performance on Test Day.

In this section, you will find ideas for preparing learners for both parts of the test, followed by clear, easy-to-use classroom activities drawn from A1 Writing practice papers. These activities are designed to introduce learners to the test format and provide authentic practice. Additional activities are also included to reinforce learning for both sections of the test and offer opportunities for further practice.

Note: For less confident classes, consider breaking down activities into smaller parts (e.g. over two lessons). This can help build their confidence and make writing practice less daunting.

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HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR WRITING PART 1: SENTENCE WRITING

Learners write four sentences to communicate ideas or basic information about themselves or daily life. They should write about 30 words.

- › Ask learners to write some sentences about any of these topics: their family, their home, their neighbourhood, their town, their favourite activities/interests. (For the complete list of A1 topics, refer to the Qualification Handbook on the LANGUAGECERT website.)
- › Check they know how to form simple sentences with the correct word order and using the correct pronouns, possessives, tenses (e.g. *present continuous*, *present simple*) and conjunctions.
- › Remind learners that they must write complete sentences, and that no extra marks will be awarded for more than four sentences.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.

CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE WRITING PART 1



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Writing test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 1 of the Writing test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

Writing Part 1

Write four sentences about your family. Write about 30 words.

1.

2.

3.

4.

Sample taken from A1 Writing Part 1 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › What do you have to do in Part 1? (*answer: write four sentences about personal information or daily life*)
- › How many words do you have to write? (*answer: about 30 words*)
- › Can you choose the topic? (*answer: no, you will be given a topic to write about*)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity encourages personal engagement with the topic and provides practice for the Part 1 task.

Step 1

Ask learners to think about their family and what they might say about them. You could write some model sentences on the board first to guide them, e.g.:

› *My aunt is 35 years old.*

› *She lives in London.*

› *She has a daughter, Sue.*

› *Sue is 11 years old.*

Step 2

Elicit responses from a few volunteers and write them on the board. Be ready to support learners who need help and provide brief feedback if necessary (e.g. related to vocabulary and sentence structure).

Step 3

Give learners a copy of the task and ask them to write four sentences about their family. They can refer to the examples on the board for support but should try to write sentences that differ from the model responses. Allow two minutes for this task.

Step 4

Have learners share their responses with the class as part of a whole-class discussion and provide feedback if necessary.

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR WRITING PART 1 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more writing skills.

1. Lead a word shuffle activity

Prepare sentences related to A1 topics on separate strips of card (e.g. *'my / lives / London / in / brother'*). Cut each sentence into individual word cards. Put learners in pairs or small groups and give each pair/group a set of word cards. Learners discuss the correct order of the words to form a complete sentence (e.g. *'My brother lives in London.'*). After agreeing on the word order, they copy the sentence into their notebooks. To extend the activity, have pairs/groups write four new sentences on the same topic in the correct word order.

Note: For weaker classes, provide initial capitals and punctuation (e.g. *'My / lives / London. / in / brother'*).

This activity helps learners practise and internalise word order and sentence structure in a hands-on, collaborative way.

2. Organise a sentence building race

Prepare two sets of 8–10 sentences using simple structures and vocabulary suitable for A1 learners (e.g. *'My friend likes pizza.'*, *'We go to school by bus.'*, *'It is sunny today.'*). Write each sentence on a separate strip of paper and cut it into chunks. Put learners in two teams. Give each team the word chunks for the first sentence. Teams race to arrange the chunks in the correct order to form the complete sentence. They then show or call out the sentence to you. If it is correct, give them the word chunks for the next sentence. Continue until all sentences have been completed. The first team to arrange all their sentences correctly wins.

Matching activities promote recognition of sentence patterns and support early reading and writing skills. For A1 learners, mastering basic sentence structure is a foundational skill that underpins success in writing.

3. Generate ideas with visual prompts

Have learners create a mini-poster about themselves or another A1 topic using drawings and simple labels. They should give their poster a title (e.g. *'My Weekend'*) and write four complete sentences below it to describe it (e.g. *'On Saturday, I went to the park.'*, *'I played football.'*, *'On Sunday, I visited my grandparents.'*, *'We ate ice cream.'*).

Note: You can find a complete list of A1 topics in the Qualification Handbook on the LANGUAGECERT website.

This activity combines creative expression with structured writing, making the task personal and meaningful. Visual prompts lower the cognitive load and provide concrete support for learners who find it difficult to generate ideas for writing.

HOW TO PREPARE LEARNERS FOR WRITING PART 2: AN INFORMAL RESPONSE

Learners write a short, simple text. They should write between 20–30 words.

- › To help them prepare for the task, provide learners with plenty of similar text types (e.g. *letters, cards, postcards, messages*) and have them practise writing their own.
- › Ensure they know the correct way to start and end each of these text types and encourage them to memorise a few set phrases/expressions they could include in their answer, such as '*Thanks for*' and '*Say hello to*'.
- › As part of their practice, learners could write a draft of their text, but they won't have time to do this in the test.
- › Tell learners they must address all the points included in the rubric – they will lose marks for any that are not covered in their answer.
- › Remind learners that they will lose marks if they write fewer than 20 words. But they won't be awarded extra marks if they write more than 30 words.
- › Try the practice activities below to familiarise learners with the task and for targeted test practice.



CLASS ACTIVITIES TO PRACTISE WRITING PART 2



Familiarisation activity

This activity can be done before the test activity to check what learners already know about this part of the Writing test, or after the test activity to check what they can remember.

Show learners Part 2 of the Writing test from a practice paper and give them enough time to familiarise themselves with the layout, structure and format of the task.

Writing Part 2

Write a letter to your friend. He/she wants to visit your town. Tell him/her about:

- the weather
- what he/she can see.

Write between 20 – 30 words.

Sample taken from A1 Writing Part 2 practice paper

Now hide the task and ask learners the following questions to see how much they can remember:

- › What do you have to write in Part 2? (*answer: a letter*)
- › How many points do you have to write about? (*answer: two points – the weather and what you can see in your town*)
- › How many words do you have to write? (*answer: between 20–30 words*)

TEST ACTIVITY

This activity draws on learners' prior knowledge to engage them with the topic and provides practice for the Part 2 task.

Step 1

Tell learners they are going to write a letter to a friend about the weather and what there is to see in their town. Before they do the task, ask them these two questions, encouraging whole-class participation and eliciting as much relevant language as possible:

- › A friend asks you to tell him/her about the weather in your town. What do you say?
- › A friend asks you what he/she can see in your town. What do you say?

(example answers:

The weather is (always/sometimes/often/never) hot/warm/cold/cloudy/rainy.

You can see a park/hospital/shopping centre/shops/cafés/cinemas in my town.)

Step 2

Give learners a copy of the task and have them write their letter based on the ideas that the class generated in Step 1 or their own ideas. Set a suitable time limit.

Step 3

Put learners in pairs to compare their responses. Then ask a few volunteers to read out their letters to the rest of the class. Provide feedback as necessary.

MORE CLASS ACTIVITIES FOR WRITING PART 2 PRACTICE

Here are some additional activities that use the task content in a different way to give extra practice and build more writing skills.

1. Set a text matching challenge

Prepare two sets of cards – one with a variety of short personal text types (e.g. a thank-you card, a birthday message, a holiday postcard, a party invitation) and another with matching prompts (e.g. *'Write a thank-you card', 'Write a birthday message', etc.*). Put learners in pairs or small groups and give each pair/group both sets of cards (make sure you have enough sets for every pair/group). Learners work together to match the texts to the prompts. Once they have finished, they discuss their choices, identifying set phrases (e.g. *'Thanks for your message', 'I hope you're well'*) and noting how each text starts and ends. This can be done in pairs / small groups or as a whole-class discussion.

Note: You could also turn this activity into a race between pairs/groups.

This activity familiarises learners with real examples of short personal texts, while raising awareness of functional language and format conventions in context.

2. Create a functional phrases gap-fill task

Show the class pictures of popular celebrations, birthdays, festivals or school trips and ask questions, e.g.:

Put learners in pairs and give each pair two or three short texts of different types (e.g. an email to a friend, a text message, a postcard). The texts should have gaps where set phrases or expressions are missing. For example: *'Hi Anna! _____ your email. It's hot in my town today. You can see lots of shops. _____ soon!'* Learners complete the gaps, drawing on the set phrases and expressions they have learned, e.g. *'Thanks for', 'See you', 'Write to me'*. Once they have completed the task, ask pairs to share their answers with the rest of the class.

This activity supports learners' recall of high-frequency expressions, which they can use in their own writing, and helps them develop a sense of structure and tone.

3. Provide sticky notes for planning practice

Give each learner a copy of the task and two sticky notes – one for each content point. Working individually or in pairs, they write one sentence on each sticky note, e.g. *'It's snowing in my town today.'* and *'You can see a park with lots of trees.'* They then use these sentences to write a text of between 20–30 words, e.g. *'Hi Ben, thank you for your letter. It's snowing in my town today. You can see a park with lots of trees. See you soon.'* Learners share their ideas with the rest of the class or, if working in pairs, with their partner.

Although learners won't have time to write a draft in the test, giving them structured planning practice can be valuable. This visual and tactile approach supports learners who benefit from more structure and reinforces the importance of addressing both content points clearly. In addition, breaking the task into smaller parts makes it more manageable.

4. Practise word limits with speed writing

Introduce a short writing task (e.g. *'Write a message to a friend about your weekend'*) and give learners five minutes to write their response. Afterwards, they count the number of words and check if they stayed within the 20–30-word range. Put learners in pairs to check each other's texts and give feedback on what could be added or removed if their partner has written too much or too little.

This activity builds learners' time management skills and focuses attention on the word count, helping them keep their writing concise while meeting all task requirements.



A1 General Writing Tips

- › Ensure learners are aware that both parts of the Writing test are mandatory and that they will need to answer both.
- › If doing the paper-based test, learners should make sure their writing is legible – they could lose marks if the Examiner can't understand what they've written.
- › Tell learners to aim to finish early, allowing them time to review their work. A piece of writing can always be improved!

Ensuring learners are ready for the ESOL for Schools A1 Writing test

When learners have finished preparing for the Writing test, it's important that they retain key information about it. On Test Day, learners often experience nerves, which can lead to forgetfulness or confusion about the procedures. Taking extra time to review test expectations and ensure learners are fully prepared can help alleviate anxiety and ensure the test process runs more smoothly.

Here's a list of questions to remind learners of what to expect in the Writing test (you may wish to add some of your own):

- › How many parts does the Writing test have? *(answer: two parts)*
- › Do you have to answer both parts? *(answer: yes, both parts of the test are mandatory)*
- › Is there a choice of topics? *(answer: no, only one set topic is given for each part)*
- › What do you have to write? *(answer: four sentences in Part 1; a short simple text, e.g. a letter, email, postcard or message, in Part 2)*
- › How long is the Reading and Writing test? *(answer: 1 hour 20 minutes for both the Reading and Writing tests. Note: there is no break between these two tests)*

Helpful resources and contact information

At LANGUAGECERT, we're committed to providing comprehensive support for both learners and teachers.

Our website offers a wealth of free resources to help prepare for both the Written and Spoken components of the ESOL for Schools A1 test.

Handbooks provide teachers with practical tips and valuable strategies for effectively preparing learners for the test. They also include detailed descriptions of tasks at every level. Our free downloadable practice papers are an excellent tool for helping learners become familiar with the format and content of the test.

ESOL for Schools Written component resources:

- Listening-Reading-Writing Qualification handbook
- Qualification Overview handbook
- Assessing Writing Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Sample Answer Sheets
- Teacher Guide (Listening, Reading, Writing)

ESOL for Schools Spoken component resources:

- Speaking Qualification handbook
- Preparing Learners for the ESOL Speaking Exams Guide
- Assessing Speaking Performance handbook
- Official Practice Papers
- Teacher Guide (Speaking)

Additional support available:

- Books
- FAQs
- Live and pre-recorded webinars

To access these resources, visit: www.languagecert.org/en/preparation

Further information

For more information about the LANGUAGECERT ESOL for Schools test, visit our website www.languagecert.org or contact our Customer Services team.

Appendix

Appendix: Essential language structures and functions for A1

At A1 level (for Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking), learners are expected to be familiar with a number of structures and language functions as shown in the table below.

› Functions/notions

Directions
Describing habits and routines
Giving personal information
Greetings
Telling the time
Understanding and using numbers
Understanding and using prices

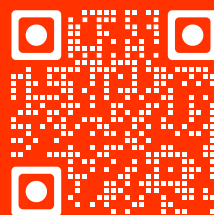
› Discourse markers

Connecting words – *and, but, because*

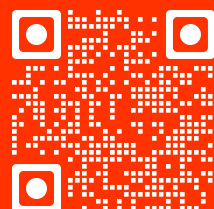
› Grammar forms

Verb forms
Adjectives: common and demonstrative
Adverbs of frequency
Comparatives and superlatives
going to
How much/many and very common uncountable nouns
I'd like
Imperatives (+/-)
Modals: *can/can't/could/couldn't*
Past simple of to be
Past simple
Possessive adjectives
Possessive s
Prepositions: common, of place, including *in/on/at*
Present continuous
Present simple
Pronouns: simple, personal
Questions
There is/are
to be, including question + negatives

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