

## Unit 2: Writing letters

### SUMMARY

You can use this summary to guide the learning objectives and target setting for your class.

#### Can-do statements:

By the end of this unit, students will be able to say:

- I can understand the difference in conventions between formal emails and formal letters.
- I can use features such as the passive voice, intensifiers and preposition + *-ing* in formal writing.
- I can use a number of set phrases in formal letters.

#### Skill focus

Formal letter layout: **Looking closely** ①, ⑤

Formality in writing: **Language focus**, ① ② ③ ④

#### Vocabulary

Formal letter phrases: *I am writing with regard to ..., ... should be addressed as a matter of urgency, As I am sure you will be aware ..., I would like to request that ..., Your prompt attention to this matter would be greatly appreciated, Yours sincerely, I am writing to inform you that ..., I would like to thank you for ..., Please accept my sincere thanks.*

#### Usage

Using the passive voice  
Using intensifiers  
Using preposition + *-ing*  
Using set phrases.

### CLASSROOM EXTENSION IDEAS

You can use some or all of these ideas to check and enhance your students' understanding as they work their way through *Unit 2 of Writing B2+ Upper Intermediate* in class.

#### Using *Getting Started*

1. Put students into pairs or groups to discuss the questions.
2. Brainstorm the formal letters that students have written recently, both in English and in their own language. Ask students how often they have to write formal letters and whether they find writing them easy or difficult.
3. If you are working through *Writing B2+ Upper Intermediate* in sequence, recap some features of formal emails (see *Unit 1*), which are also applicable to formal letters.
4. Ask students to discuss the following question in pairs. 'To what extent will formal letter writing become

obsolete now that correspondence is often done by email?' Discuss some ideas as a class.

#### Using *Looking closely*

1. Before reading, look at the layout of the letter. Ask students to create a plan of a formal letter, with boxes showing the correct positioning, alignment and punctuation of the following features:
  - Sender's address (*Answer: top right-hand corner, right aligned, no punctuation*)
  - Recipient's address (*Answer: top left-hand corner but below sender's address, left aligned, no punctuation*)
  - Date (*Answer: top-right hand corner below sender's address, right aligned, no punctuation*)
  - Salutation (*Answer: Below recipient's address, leave a space above, left aligned, comma at end, no indent*)
  - Paragraphs (*Answer: Below salutation, leave a space above, left aligned, no indent*)
  - Closing expression (*Answer: Below paragraphs, leave a space above, left aligned, no indent, comma at end*)
  - Sender's signature (*Answer: Below closing expression, leave a space above, left aligned, handwritten*)
  - Sender's name (*Answer: Below signature, left aligned, typed, no punctuation*)
2. Ask students to read the letter and discuss the answers to *Exercise 1* with a partner. Check answers as a class. Note that answers may vary.

#### Using *Language focus*

1. Before progressing, revise the form (form of *be* + past participle) and use of the passive voice. Tell students that we use the passive voice when the subject of the sentence is unknown, irrelevant or unimportant; to draw attention to the object, rather than the subject of the sentence; and to sound less direct. You could direct students to the *Collins COBUILD Intermediate English Grammar and Practice* for further practice of the structure.
2. Ask students to read the *Language note* and complete *Exercises 2* and *3*. Check answers as a class.
3. Present the features below and ask students to find examples of them in the letter.
  - Subjunctive form – a verb form that refers to a possibility rather than a fact. (*I would like to request that this issue **be** addressed ...*)
  - Nominalisation – the use of a noun instead of a verb, in order to create a stronger sentence. (*There has been **an increasing number** of road accidents ...*)
  - Use of formal set phrases. (*I am writing with regard to ...*)

4. Draw students' attention to the set phrases that use *as*. (*As a mother of two school-age children, as it stands, as a matter of urgency, As I am sure you will be aware ...*). Ask them to write four example sentences using the phrases with *as*. Ask students to compare their phrases with a partner and share some ideas in whole-class feedback.
5. Read out the *Language note* on Intensifiers. Ask students to complete *Exercise 2*.
6. Ask students which of the following adverbs can precede the adjective *dangerous*.  
very, absolutely, completely, utterly, extremely, really, totally  
(Answer: *very, extremely, really*)  
Ask students to complete *Exercise 4*.

### Optional extension work: Gradable and Non-gradable adjectives

1. You can use the photocopiable worksheet *Gradable and Non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 1* in these ways.
  - Make one copy of *Gradable and Non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 1* for each pair of students and cut along the dotted lines. Ask students to match the gradable adjectives with non-gradable adjectives with a similar meaning.  
(Answers: *disappointed – devastated; sad – tragic; busy – overwhelmed; pleased – delighted; surprised – stunned; necessary – essential; shocked – appalled; good – fantastic; dangerous – lethal; bad – appalling; wrong – unacceptable; dishonest – unscrupulous; unnecessary – pointless*)
  - Play the 'Matching game' in groups of four. Turn the slips of paper upside down. Students must find pairs of adjectives with a similar meaning by turning two slips of paper over. If the words match, they keep the slips and have another go. If the pairs do not match, they replace the slips of paper and the game continues with the next player.
2. You can use the worksheet *Gradable and Non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 2* in the following ways:
  - Make one copy of *Gradable and Non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 2* for each pair of students and cut along the dotted lines. Ask students to put them into groups – those that can be used with gradable adjectives, those that can be used with non-gradable adjectives and those that can be used with both.  
(Answers: *Use with gradable adjectives: extremely, very, fairly, quite, rather, reasonably, a bit; Use with non-gradable adjectives: absolutely, totally, completely, utterly; Use with both: really*)
3. You can use the photocopiable worksheet *Adjective - Adverb collocations* to demonstrate how some adverbs and adjectives often go together.
  - Follow the instructions on the worksheet.
  - Explain to students that there are some adverbs and adjectives that often go together (collocations). To practise such expressions, hand out the photocopiable sheet *Adjective – Adverb collocations*.  
(Answers: **1** highly **2** blatantly **3** astronomically **4** heavily **5** deeply **6** widely **7** utterly **8** bitterly **9** perfectly **10** well **11** terribly **12** most)
  - Students can test each other on the adverbs by saying a sentence and leaving a gap for their partner to fill.

### Using Looking closely

1. Ask students to discuss their answers to *Question 1* in pairs or small groups.
2. Tell students to look for intensifiers in this email and note them in their vocabulary books.  
(Answers: *deeply; sincere*)

### Using Language focus

1. Complete *Exercise 1* as a class.
2. Ask students to rewrite the sentence beginning *While being excited...* in different ways using *Although, Even though, but, however* and *even so*.  
(Answers:  
*Although / Even though I am excited about my move, I am deeply sorry to leave behind colleagues from whom I have learned so much.*  
*I am excited about my move, but I am deeply sorry to leave behind colleagues from whom I have learned so much.*  
*I am excited about my move. However / Even so, I am deeply sorry to leave behind colleagues from whom I have learned so much.*)
3. Discuss the extent to which the two clauses are interchangeable by asking whether *While being excited about my move, I am deeply sorry to leave behind colleagues* has the same meaning as *While being deeply sorry to leave behind colleagues, I am excited about my move*. (Answer: *Same meaning in general, but the second clause holds the new, interesting information, so the emphasis changes.*)
4. Complete *Exercise 2*. Highlight that the emphasis in the rewritten sentences must be the same as the original sentences. Allow students to compare their ideas in pairs before checking answers as a class. They should pay attention not only to the verb form, but also to the order of the two clauses.
5. Complete *Exercise 3*. You can also ask students to underline fixed formal phrases from the letter on page 12. Encourage students to pick out phrases rather than individual words or full sentences. Tell students to use their underlined phrases to make their own sentences. For example: ***I would like to inform you that your order is ready to collect.***
6. Complete *Exercise 4* and check answers.

7. Students create their own 'spot the error' questions on slips of paper by choosing sentences from the letter on page 14. They alter the sentence so that it contains an error. Distribute the slips of paper around the class. Students work in pairs to identify and correct the mistakes.
8. Ask students if they have ever written to a newspaper, and if so, what they wrote about. Tell them to read the letter in *Exercise 5* and consider which pairs of sentences could be joined to create one sentence, and how best to do this. They can compare their answers in pairs.

### Using *Get writing*

1. Suggest to students that they write the letters in stages. In the first stage they decide the content of their letter: what information they will include and in what order. They should write up a rough version, without worrying too much about its level of formality. Then they can focus on incorporating features of formal writing into their letter such as:
  - the passive voice
  - nominalisation
  - intensifiers / gradable and non-gradable adjectives and adverbs
  - preposition + *-ing*
  - fixed phrases.
2. You can approach the *Get writing* tasks in a number of ways:
  - Write a very simple letter on the board, for example *Thanks for showing me round Japan. Here's a present for you and some photos too. From Jo.* Elicit ideas from the class as to how to make the letter more interesting and appropriate. Finally, students write a more detailed version of the letter.
  - Make a copy of the photocopiable sheet *Get writing – example sentences* for each pair of students. Cut out the sentences along the dotted lines and hand out the sentences to each pair. Ask students to decide which letter in *Get writing* the sentence best fits. Advise students that some sentences can fit into more than one letter. Check answers. Then students can choose one of the letters to write in full.

(Suggested answers:

**Letter 1** *We were delighted by ...; I found my stay most enjoyable; I would like to compliment you on the ...; In particular, I enjoyed ...; Should you ever pay a visit to ..., you are most welcome to ...; As a token of my appreciation, I have enclosed ...; I am most grateful to you for taking the time to ...; Please pass on my thanks to ...; I remember you saying how much you liked English tea, so ...*

**Letter 2** *Your service was exemplary; I wondered whether you might be interested in seeing ...; We were delighted by ...; I found my stay most enjoyable; I would like to compliment you on the ...; The staff were a credit to you; Please pass on my thanks to ...; I would be honoured if you would add it your collection behind the reception desk.*

**Letter 3** *I ask that something is done to remedy the situation as soon as possible; I was shocked to find that ...; Frankly, this is unacceptable; I trust that you will discuss this issue at the next committee meeting; It is the responsibility of ... to ...; I was totally appalled by ...; This matter has gone on for long enough.)*

### Using *Next steps*

1. If you have access to computers, you can do this part during class time. If not, you can set it as homework. You can find sample formal letters on a variety of topics on these websites:
  - <http://letterwritingguide.com/>
  - <http://www.writeexpress.com/>
2. Copy and print a selection of letters. Hand out one letter to each student. Each student should highlight one example of formal writing. Encourage them to look for:
  - the passive voice
  - nominalisation
  - intensifiers
  - preposition + *-ing* patterns
  - other formal fixed phrases.

When they have highlighted something, they can pass on their letter to another student and take a new one. Continue until each letter has five annotations.

### PHOTOCOPIABLES

#### Gradable and non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 1

disappointed	devastated
sad	tragic
busy	overwhelmed
pleased	delighted
surprised	stunned
necessary	essential
shocked	appalled
good	fantastic
dangerous	lethal
bad	appalling
wrong	unacceptable
dishonest	unscrupulous
unnecessary	pointless

## PHOTOCOPIABLES

## Gradable and non-gradable adjectives and their adverbs 2

really	absolutely
very	extremely
totally	completely
quite	fairly
rather	reasonably
utterly	a bit

### PHOTOCOPIABLES

#### Adverb and adjective collocations

Choose the correct adverb to complete the sentences. Use each adverb once only.

1. I think it's	astronomically	unlikely that Marta will get the job.
2. I think it's	bitterly	obvious why we can't make these changes.
3. House prices have become	blatantly	high recently.
4. The bus service is	deeply	subsidised by the government.
5. We were	heavily	saddened by the news.
6. It's	highly	believed that Francis Bacon contributed greatly to Shakespeare's plays.
7. The news was	much	devastating.
8. I was	perfectly	disappointed when I didn't get the job.
9. I think it's	terribly	clear why we can't buy more equipment.
10. I'm	utterly	aware of the consequences of taking this action.
11. I'm	well	sorry for the inconvenience.
12. Your help was	widely	appreciated.

### PHOTOCOPIABLES

#### Get writing – example sentences

I ask that something is done to remedy the situation as soon as possible.
Your service was exemplary.
I was shocked to find that ...
I wondered whether you might be interested in seeing ...
We were delighted by ...
Frankly, this is unacceptable.
I found my stay most enjoyable.
I would like to compliment you on the ...
In particular, I enjoyed ...
I trust that you will discuss this issue at the next committee meeting.
It is the responsibility of ... to ...
Should you ever pay a visit to ... you are most welcome to ...
As a token of my appreciation, I have enclosed ...
The staff were a credit to you.
I was totally appalled by...
I am most grateful to you for taking the time to ...
This matter has gone on for long enough.
Please pass on my thanks to ...
I would be honoured if you would add it your collection behind the reception desk.
I remember you saying how much you liked English tea, so ...