

# A Guide to Functional Writing

Dear students,

In this guide, we hope to provide some guidelines as to how to tackle the Functional Writing section of the writing paper effectively.

This Section is classified as functional writing – simply because it serves as a function e.g. to inform, to address a concern, to invite or to voice a grouse.

Before you move on to the guidelines proper, here are some steps you must take when tackling the questions in this section of your English Paper 1.

1. Read the question carefully.
2. **Underline key words** in the question – that is, what you are expected to do. E.g. Use numbered paragraphs etc.
3. Determine the **purpose** of the writing exercise.
4. Determine the **format**.
5. Determine your **audience**. If it is a report to the Principal, your tone should be formal; if it is a letter to a friend, your tone will clearly be informal.
6. Start writing.
7. Make sure that you cover **all the given points** in detail and remember to use paragraphs.
8. Make sure that you have included a title, your name, signature and date your report.
9. \* Stop writing at the end of **25** minutes and **CHECK YOUR WORK!** This is crucial as it will help you to minimize the unnecessary loss of marks.

*Time may vary according to the paper you are sitting for.*

**We hope that this guide will indeed be very useful in teaching you the format and structures of good report and letter writing.**

**The English Department**

**High Expectations** - Start by doing what's necessary, then what's possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible. - Francis of Assisi

**CHECKLIST FOR FUNCTIONAL/DIRECTED WRITING**

In the functional/directed writing task or guided writing composition, you will be given very clear instructions in order to complete your writing task. You are being **guided very clearly** as to what you have to write.

You are being told just as clearly how to set out the answer.

In directed writing, you **MUST READ THE QUESTION CAREFULLY**. It is more a test of reading than continuous writing.

You **MUST NOT IGNORE** any **DETAILS** and you must not change important facts in the situation. If five points are provided, all five points must be included. Leaving out any point will lead to losing marks.

In Directed writing, you may be asked to write different types of functional writing

Some examples of the type of Directed writing you may be tested on:

**Letters Reports Accounts Statements Magazine articles Newspaper articles Speeches**

Practice all types of Directed writing tasks.

**After reading the question/task, ask yourself these questions**

QUESTION		POSSIBLE ANSWERS
Who am writing this for?	[AUDIENCE]	Teacher, Public, School Principal, Friend, Ministry official, Company manager, Town Council, Counsellor
Why am I writing this?	[PURPOSE]	To give account of something you witnessed, to complain, to convince and persuade, to explain, to inform, to instruct, to sell etc
How is this piece of writing going to appear?	[FORMAT]	Report, Accounts, Statements, Magazine Articles, Newspaper articles, Speeches, Review etc
What type of words will I use?	[LANGUAGE FEATURES]	Formal, informal, persuasive, informative, argumentative, factual, present tense, past tense, adjectives or adverbs etc

**CHECKLIST FOR FUNCTIONAL WRITING**

CHECKLIST	YES ✓	EVIDENCE	NO ✗	REMARKS
Have all the instructions been followed?				
Is the purpose of the writing clear?				
Is the format correctly used? E.g. Is there a proper addressee? Are there proper salutations/close? I				
Are the <b>words</b> used appropriate for the task?				
Is the <b>tone</b> appropriate for the task and audience?				
Have <b>ALL</b> the points been included?				
Have <b>ALL</b> the points been adequately <b>elaborated</b> ?				

**FORMAL LETTERS**

We use the following format for formal letters.

These would include letters of complaints, job application letters, letters to parents etc.

Bik 239

Bukit Panjang Ring Road

#01-100

Singapore 760239

Sender's Address

*(Leave a line)*

25 June 2001

Date

*(Leave a line)*

Name of Addressee (if given)

The Personnel Manager

Singapore International Airlines

2 Robinson Road

Singapore 234567

*(Leave a line)*

Dear Sir

**\*\*Salutation**

*(Leave a line)*

Re: Application for post of Systems Analyst

Title

*(Leave a line)*

I am writing in response to your advertisement dated 30 September 2000. I would like to apply for the post Systems Analyst in your company.

*(Leave a line)*

I am 30 years of age and have just completed ... ..

I look forward to your favourable reply.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully

**\*\*Valediction**

Signature

(Name in full)

**Formal Letters**

Please note the following:

\* Recipient's Address should have the following structure:

Name (if applicable)  
 Job Designation  
 Name of Company  
 Address of Company  
 Singapore

\*\* Sign off as 'Yours faithfully'

Note the **absence** of punctuation markers.

Paragraphs should all start from the left. To differentiate one paragraph from another, leave a line.

**STRUCTURE OF FORMAL LETTERS**

We use the following structures for formal letters.

**Letter of Application**Opening

**I am writing in response to your advertisement dated 1<sup>st</sup> October 1999 and would like to apply for the post of Web Page Designer in your company.**

Closing

**I sincerely hope that you will consider my application and I await your favourable reply.**

**Thank you.**

**Letter of Complaint**Opening

**I am a resident of the Choa Chu Kang estate and I am writing in to complain about the cleanliness of my block.**

Closing

**I seriously hope that you would look into the complaints that I have raised and remedy the situation as soon as possible.**

**Thank you.**

**Letter of Invitation**

Opening

**On behalf of the school, we would like to invite you to our Annual Speech and Prize Giving Day to be held on April 7 2001 in the school grounds.**

Closing

**We sincerely hope that you will accept our invitation and we look forward to your presence on that day.**

Thank you.

**INFORMAL LETTERS**

**We use the following format for informal letters. These would include letters to friends or members of the family. The tone of the letter should be friendly at all times.**

Blk 239  
Bukit Panjang Ring road ----- Your address  
#01-100  
Singapore 760239

14 April 2001 ----- Date

Dear Mary ----- Salutation

Yours sincerely ----- Valediction

Tom

**REPORT WRITING**

We use the following format for general reports. This would include reports on accidents in school, explosion in lab ,theft in school etc

<hr/>	Title
<b>Ending</b> <b>Report by :</b> _____ <b>Signature :</b> _____ <b>Date :</b> _____	

We use the following structure for such reports:

**First paragraph : State the 4 Ws ----  
Who , What , where and when**

Example

On 20 March 2000, an explosion occurred at the school's Chemistry laboratory at about 10 a.m. when Secondary 4C was having its lesson.

**Your subsequent paragraphs should highlight the series of events or happening in a chronological sequence.**

**End your report with a general comment based on the topic.**

Example

- Police are still continuing their investigations.

**REPORT WRITING**

We use the following format for reports to authorities. This would include reports on accidents in school, explosion in a lab, theft in school to the Principal, eye witness accounts to the Police or other relevant authorities etc.

<p><b>To: The Principal</b> _____ → <b>Person in charge</b></p> <p><b>Bukit View Secondary School</b> _____ → <b>Organisation</b></p> <hr/> <p>_____ → <b>Title</b></p> <p>Reported by : _____</p> <p>Signature : _____</p> <p>Date : _____</p>	<p>← <b>Ending</b></p>
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We use the following structure for such reports:

**First paragraph : Introduction yourself and state purpose of report**  
**Next, state the 4 Ws – Who, What, Where and When**

**Example**

I am Susan Tan Wei Ling of Secondary 5A and I am writing to inform you about an incident that happened in school. On 20 March 2000, an explosion occurred at the school's Chemistry laboratory at about 10 am when secondary 4C was having its lesson.

Your subsequent paragraphs should highlight the series of events or happenings in a chronological sequence.

**End your report with a general comment.**

**Example**

- Police are still continuing their investigations.



**Informative Articles**

Eg. A web page on the school

Use a simple title eg. Welcome to our Homepage...

**You should use the following structure:**

1<sup>st</sup> Paragraph - **Brief History of the School**

Bukit View Secondary School started functioning in January 1986 with Secondary One and Two students with Mr Ow Chiong Hoo heading the school. Mrs Mary Owyong was the second principal from Dec 1996 to Feb 1998. In August 1998, Mr James Ong Chye Hin was appointed as the new Principal of the school.

2<sup>nd</sup> Paragraph - **Start giving the details that is required of you in the question**

**News articles**

They must include a **catchy headline** and a by-line.

Types of News Articles

You should include use the following structure.

- 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph- Summarise the whole article.
- Next paragraph- Give series of events in **chronological sequence**.
- Last paragraph- Give general comment on incident.

Examples of 1<sup>st</sup> paragraphs

- A 20-year old Saudi bride was among the 44 children who died when the main tent of a wedding caught fire yesterday.
- A disabled snatch thief was nabbed by passers-by when the motorcycle he was riding pillion on crashed into a divider along Jalan Ipoh, said the police.
- Three people were killed and 162 people were listed missing after a Philippine passenger boat caught fire off the central island of Cebu, the coast guard said yesterday.
- A young woman bank officer drowned in a diving accident on Saturday while on a holiday at a resort on the Spratly Islands, off the Sabah Coast

**Speeches**

We use the following structure for speeches:

**First paragraph: Salutations**

**Introduce yourself and state purpose of speech**

Example: A very good morning to Mr Ong, Mr Loh, teachers and fellow Bukit Viewans. I am John Lim of Sec 5N1 and I am here to speak in support of my friend, Mohd Noor of Sec 4N1 who is standing for elections to the Student Council

**Your subsequent paragraphs should highlight the points that are given in the question. Maintain a persuasive tone throughout the speech [or whatever tone the task requires you to maintain]**

**End your report with a personal comment or a general comment.**

**Example**

I hope I have convinced you that Mohd Noor is an ideal choice and should be elected to the Student Council.

Thank you.

**Hard work** -The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it. - John Ruskin

**PAPER ONE**  
**POINTERS TO REMEMBER**

- ✓ Read the rubrics carefully.
- ✓ Select your question carefully.
- ✓ Write the Q NO before you start work.
- ✓ **PLAN** your essay [ intro/build -up/climax/conclusion] before you start writing [5-10 minutes]
- ✓ **WRITE** your essay **NEATLY** [leave lines to help make your writing more legible] [40-45 minutes]
- ✓ **CHECK** your work [10 minutes] **YOU MUST NOT LEAVE OUT THIS STAGE OF THE WRITING PROCESS IF YOU WANT TO PASS AND DO WELL!!!!!!**

**CHECK**

- ✓ **TENSES**
- ✓ **SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT**
- ✓ **PUNCTUATION [ESPECIALLY IF YOU USE DIALOGUE]**
- ✓ **ENSURE THE FULL STOP IS USED**
- ✓ **VERB FORMS**
  - to + \_\_\_\_\_
  - modals(e.g can . shall) + Base verb
  - has/have/had + past participle
  - do/did/does + base verb

**USE**

- ✓ **VIVID VERBS/ ADJECTIVES/ADVERBS [REFER TO HANDOUTS-LEARN!!!!!!]**
- ✓ **USE SIMPLE SENTENCES [WITH GOOD LANGUAGE]**
- ✓ **USE LINKING WORDS THAT HELP DEVELOP THE ESSAY LOGICALLY/SMOOTHLY**

**AVOID**

- X USING 'AND', 'BUT' or 'SO' TO BEGIN SENTENCES.
- X CONTRACTIONS [EXCEPT IN DIALOGUE]

*'Because'*

**SECTION TWO**

- ✓ **READ QUESTION CAREFULLY**
- ✓ **DECIDE ON AUDIENCE , PURPOSE, LANGUAGE & FORMAT**
- ✓ **INCLUDE ALL POINTS GIVEN & ELABORATE**
- ✓ **ELABORATION MUST BE SUFFICIENT AND RELEVANT**
- ✓ **CHECK THE TENSE TO BE USED**

## PAPER TWO POINTERS TO REMEMBER

- Read at least summary question before reading the passage
- Read Questions carefully (Circle key words)
- Understand questions before looking for answer
- Look out for WH words ( When/where/why/how/what)
- Go to relevant part of passage to look for the answer.
- Look for links between the Q and info in the paragraph
- Links can be similar words/word associations/transitional devices/linking words
- REMEMBER TO RE-PHRASE THAT REQUIRE OWN WORDS

### RUBRICS: Always read rubrics given

E.g.

- Quote a word which indicates....
- Quote a phrase which show....
- Explain in your own words....
- Leave a space of **one** line between your answers to each part of a question e.g. between **1(a)** and **1(b)**. Leave a space of at least **three lines** after your completed answer to each whole question.
- Use only material from line \_\_ to line \_\_

### SUMMARY: READ THE Q CAREFULLY

#### CONTENT :

USE THE CHECKLIST Q TO HELP YOU CONFIRM WHETHER YOUR POINTS ARE RELEVANT

#### LANGUAGE

**STYLE** Make the points identified more **concise** by **rephrasing** or **omitting unnecessary words**. Some adjectives may be necessary for the summary. Think before deciding to omit the words.

Re-phrase only when you are very sure the substitution does not change the original meaning

**USE OF ENGLISH** Check your summary for

- mechanical accuracy - grammar, punctuation, spelling
- sentence structure
- organisation and linking
- Ensure that the summary is within the word limit.
- Do not omit articles or other important parts of speech (to stay within the word limit)

WHATEVER YOU DO .....

✓ **THINK FIRST**

✓ **ANALYSE**

AND THEN

✓ **WRITE**

✓ **MUST CHECK** before submission