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CELPIP Writing Cheat Sheet

Both Writing tasks on one page, a checklist for each, the plan and phrases for every paragraph, the format mistakes that cost marks, plain sentences made polite, and a sample answer for each task.

The two tasks at a glance

	Task 1: email	Task 2: survey
Time	27 minutes	26 minutes
Length	150–200 words	150–200 words
Reader	A person named in the task: friend, manager, landlord, company	The people running the survey
Tone	Friendly for a friend; formal for a company, landlord or office	Neutral and polite
Greeting and sign-off	Yes: “Dear Ms. Lee,” … “Best regards,” and your name	No: no greeting, sign-off or name
Subject line	No: the answer box is plain text	No
Paragraphs	4: purpose, one per bullet point, request and closing	4–5: choice, one per reason, the other option, conclusion
Must have	Every bullet point, one clear request, real details	One clear choice, two reasons with examples

Check before you submit

Task 1 email

- ☐ Greeting that suits the reader, and the purpose in the first sentence
- ☐ Every bullet point answered, each in its own paragraph
- ☐ Real details: a date, time, place, amount or name
- ☐ One clear request: what you want and by when
- ☐ The same tone from greeting to sign-off, then your name
- ☐ 150–200 words, checked for spelling (no spell checker)

Task 2 survey

- ☐ One option chosen in the first sentence; never “both” or “it depends”
- ☐ Two reasons, each with an example or a detail
- ☐ Why not the other option, in one or two sentences
- ☐ Reasons that fit the question: your life for “which do you prefer”, the people affected for “which is better”
- ☐ No greeting, sign-off or name: it is not a letter
- ☐ The task's sentences said in your own words, not copied

Practise both tasks with an AI score and a review of every sentence: celpass.com/writing-practice-course

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BOTH TASKS

Format mistakes that cost marks

The CELPass Writing review points each of these out after you answer.

A survey written as a letter	Leave out “Dear …”, the sign-off and your name in Task 2.
No greeting or no sign-off in the email	Start with “Dear …” or “Hi …”; end with a sign-off and your name.
One block of text	Leave a blank line between paragraphs: one per main point.
Sentences copied from the task	Eight words in a row from the prompt show nothing of your English. Rephrase.
No clear choice	Supporting both options, or “it depends”, lowers Task fulfilment.
No clear request	“I hope you can help” asks for nothing. Say what, and by when.
Too formal or too strong	Rare words in the wrong place, demands and over-the-top apologies sound unnatural.

Don't overdo it

A rewrite can go too far. Plain, precise and polite beats rare and dramatic.

Overdone	Why it fails	Better
I am utilizing this email to interrogate about the schedule.	Rare words used in the wrong place: you interrogate a suspect, not a schedule.	**I am writing to ask about the schedule.**
I demand that you replace it immediately or I will report you.	A demand or threat sounds aggressive, even in a complaint.	**I would like to request a replacement by the end of the week.**
I am deeply sorry and I will never be late for anything ever again.	An apology far bigger than the problem sounds insincere.	**I am sorry for arriving late, and I will leave earlier next time.**

Plain to polite

Change only the weak words, add a real detail and keep the tone that suits the reader. Three examples from each of the eight lists of the free Polite Email Sentences deck (52 sentences, with examples and tips: celpass.com/blog/celpip-writing-paraphrasing).

Plain	Better
OPENING AND PURPOSE	
I write to ask about…	**I am writing to ask about…**
I have a problem with…	**I am writing to let you know about a problem with…**
I want to tell you about…	**I would like to share some news about…**
ASKING FOR SOMETHING	
Give me more information.	**Could you please send me more details about…?**

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Plain	Better
I need your help.	**I would appreciate your help with…**
Fix it fast.	**Could you please arrange a repair by…?**
EXPLAINING A PROBLEM	
The thing is broken.	**The heater stopped working on Monday and has not come back on.**
The service was bad.	**I was disappointed with how my order was handled.**
It happens a lot.	**This has happened three times in the past two weeks.**
APOLOGIZING AND DECLINING	
Sorry I forgot.	**I am sorry for missing our meeting on Tuesday.**
I will never do it again.	**I will make sure this does not happen again.**
Sorry for the trouble.	**I apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.**
ARRANGING AND CHANGING PLANS	
Can we meet another day?	**Would it be possible to move our meeting to…?**
Tell me when you are free.	**Please let me know which time suits you best.**
Come to my party.	**We would love you to join us for…**
THANKING AND CLOSING	
Thank you for helping me.	**Thank you so much for your help with…**
Your gift was nice.	**The gift you sent was so thoughtful.**
Answer me soon.	**I look forward to hearing from you by…**
CHOOSING AND GIVING REASONS (TASK 2)	
I think option A is better.	**I would choose Option A, mainly because…**
Option B is good and option A is good too.	**Although Option B has its advantages, I believe Option A would serve… better.**
It is cheaper.	**It would cost residents less, since…**
CONTRASTING AND DISAGREEING POLITELY	
But there is a problem.	**However, there is one drawback to consider.**
Option B is bad.	**Option B, on the other hand, would only help…**
I don't agree.	**I respectfully disagree with this plan, because…**

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WRITING TASK 1 · WRITING AN EMAIL · 27 MINUTES · 150–200 WORDS

The plan, step by step

1. **Plan: reader, register and three points (3 minutes).** Before typing, decide who the reader is and pick one register for the whole email: formal for a company, landlord or office; semi-formal for a manager or colleague; friendly for a friend or relative. Jot one or two details you will use for each bullet point.
   Formal: Dear Mr. Chen, / Dear Customer Service Team, *Semi-formal: Dear Sandra, / Hello Sandra,* *Informal: Hi Marco, / Hey Aisha,* *Formal: I would appreciate it if...* *Informal: Could you do me a favour and...*
2. **Greeting and purpose (about 25–35 words, 2 minutes).** Greet the reader, then say in one or two sentences why you are writing. A clear purpose sentence tells the rater immediately that you understood the situation.
   I am writing regarding... *I am writing to let you know that...* *I am contacting you about...* *I hope you are doing well. I wanted to tell you about...* *Thanks so much for your message about...*
3. **Paragraph for bullet point 1 (about 35–45 words, 5 minutes).** Answer the first bullet point fully, usually with the background: what happened, when and where. Specific details such as a date, an amount or a place make the email believable.
   On [date], I... *As you may know,...* *Last week, I noticed that...* *The problem started when...* *To give you some background,...*
4. **Paragraph for bullet point 2 (about 35–45 words, 5 minutes).** Cover the second point in its own paragraph, often the problem, its effect or your feelings about it. Explain one consequence so the reader understands why it matters.
   Unfortunately,... *As a result,...* *This has made it difficult for me to...* *I was disappointed to find that...* *What worries me most is that...*
5. **Paragraph for bullet point 3 (about 35–45 words, 5 minutes).** The third point is often a request or suggestion: make it specific and realistic, and add a fallback if it fits. In a friendly email, a suggestion can be softer and more personal.
   I would like you to... *Would it be possible to...?* *I would be grateful if you could...* *If that is not possible, I would accept...* *How about we... ?* *Why don't you...?*
6. **Closing line and sign-off (about 15–25 words, 2 minutes).** Close with a next step or a thank-you that matches your register, then a sign-off and your name. Keep the formal or friendly tone you chose at the start.
   Thank you for your attention to this matter. *I look forward to hearing from you.* *Please let me know if you need any further information.* *Formal: Sincerely, / Kind regards,* *Semi-formal: Best regards,* *Informal: Talk soon, / Take care,*
7. **Check (3–4 minutes).** Confirm all three bullet points are answered and the word counter is between 150 and 200. Then reread for spelling, missing articles and verb tenses, because there is no spell checker.
   Did I answer all three points? *Is the tone the same from greeting to sign-off?* *Is every verb in the right tense?*

Mistakes that cost marks

- Answering only two of the three points.

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- Using a casual tone with a manager or company.
- Writing under 150 words.

Sample answer (CLB 9–10)

You bought a coffee maker online two weeks ago. It stopped working. Write an email to the company's customer service department (150–200 words). In your email:

- describe what you bought and when
- explain the problem
- say what you would like the company to do

> Dear Customer Service Team,
>
> I am writing about a coffee maker I ordered from your website on March 2 (order number 48213). It is the Brewmaster 12-cup model in black, and it arrived on March 5.
>
> For the first ten days the machine worked well. However, since last Tuesday it has stopped heating the water. The power light comes on and the machine makes its usual noise, but the coffee comes out cold. I have followed the cleaning instructions in the manual and tried a different outlet, but nothing has changed.
>
> As the coffee maker is still well within your 30-day return period, I would like you to send me a replacement of the same model. If that model is out of stock, I would accept a full refund to my credit card instead. I would also appreciate a prepaid shipping label so that I can return the faulty machine.
>
> I have attached a copy of my receipt and a short video showing the problem. Please let me know which option you can offer.
>
> Thank you for your help.
>
> Sincerely,
>
> Priya Sharma

More on this task, with sample answers at two levels: celpass.com/celpip/writing/task-1-writing-an-email

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WRITING TASK 2 · RESPONDING TO SURVEY QUESTIONS · 26 MINUTES · 150–200 WORDS

The plan, step by step

1. **Plan: choose and list reasons (3–4 minutes).** Read both options and choose the one you can support with more reasons, not necessarily your personal favourite. Note two or three reasons, each with an example or result, and one point you can concede about the other option.
   Which option has more concrete examples? *Who benefits, and how?*
   What is the one weakness of the other option?
2. **Introduction with a clear choice (about 20–30 words, 2 minutes).** State your choice in the first sentence, naming the option so the rater cannot miss it. You can add a short preview of your main reasons.
   I believe Option A is the better choice because... *In my opinion, the town should choose Option B.*
   I would strongly prefer Option A, mainly for two reasons. *Of the two options, I support...*
   If I had to choose, I would pick Option B.
3. **Reason 1 with an example (about 40–50 words, 5 minutes).** Give your strongest reason first, then support it with a specific example, a result or a short personal experience. Explaining why it matters earns more than adding another reason.
   First and most importantly,... *The main reason is that...* *For example,...* *In my own experience,...*
   This would mean that...
4. **Reason 2 with an example (about 40–50 words, 5 minutes).** Add a second reason that is truly different from the first, for example cost or time if the first was about people. Develop it the same way: claim, example, result.
   Another advantage is that... *In addition,...* *Second,...* *On top of that,...* *As a result,...*
5. **Acknowledge the other option (about 25–35 words, 3 minutes).** Briefly admit one strength of the option you did not choose, then explain why your choice is still better. This shows balanced thinking without changing your position.
   I understand that Option B would... *Admittedly,...; however,...* *While Option A has some benefits,...*
   Some people may argue that...; nevertheless,... *Although..., I still think...*
6. **Conclusion (about 20–30 words, 2 minutes).** Restate your choice in fresh words and sum up your reasons in one sentence. Do not add a new reason here.
   For these reasons, I believe... *Overall,... is the better investment for...*
   In short, Option A would benefit more people. *That is why I strongly support...*
7. **Check (3–4 minutes).** Make sure you chose only one option and never switch sides, and that the word counter shows 150–200. Then reread for spelling and grammar, since there is no spell checker.
   Is my choice clear in the first sentence? *Does each reason have an example?*
   Did I stay with the same option throughout?

Mistakes that cost marks

- Supporting both options without choosing one.
- Listing reasons without explaining them.

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Sample answer (CLB 9)

Your town has money to improve one public space. Which should it choose? Explain your choice in 150–200 words.

- Option A: build a new playground and splash pad in the central park
- Option B: renovate the public library and extend its opening hours

> I believe the town should choose Option B and renovate the public library.
>
> First, a library serves every age group. Children use it for story time, students need quiet places to study, and seniors rely on it for books, newspapers and free internet access. A playground, while valuable, mainly benefits young families during the warmer months.
>
> Second, longer opening hours would make a real difference to working residents. At the moment our library closes at six, so many adults can only visit on Saturdays. If it stayed open until nine on weeknights, people could attend classes, borrow materials or use the computers after work.
>
> Finally, a modern library supports the local economy. Newcomers can attend job search workshops and English conversation groups there, and small business owners can use the meeting rooms and printing services.
>
> I understand that families would enjoy a new splash pad, and it would make the park more attractive in summer. However, the library would be used all year round by far more people, so I think it is the better investment for our town.

More on this task, with sample answers at two levels: celpass.com/celpip/writing/task-2-responding-to-survey-questions

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