

# Principal Examiner's Report

January 2018

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills  
English Writing Level 1 (E103)

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# Principal Examiner Report: L1 Writing January 2018 Series

## Introduction

This paper worked well in testing Level 1 Writing Skills. The two tasks set were:

- Write an article to encourage people to join the new Saltsea Walking Club
- Write an email describing an Ideal Screen Evening.

This paper engaged candidates and the majority responded very successfully. Both tasks were accessible, with the source material offering support to weaker candidates, allowing them to work their way into a response. There were very few responses where no attempt had been made to answer the tasks.

## Task 1

In general the task engaged candidates well with some good attempts made to make it an interesting newsletter to read. There was a good level of discrimination with the better responses able to add in significant detail and develop ideas well. There were very few that did not engage with the text and task. It was a good task and in particular, candidates tended to do better in the sub-task about what you are most looking forward to and were able to demonstrate the best parts of the responses. There was a range of attempts at genre with the better responses producing a good newsletter style whilst others wrote a letter instead. There was some confusion for some candidates about what a walking club actually was and they thought it was a building where people met twice a month to talk about walking rather than a club.

The weaker responses were able to respond but tended to lift from the text and not develop any additional detail. Some learners were unfamiliar with the format for an article and used a letter format or an essay like structure eg. 'in this article I will use persuasive writing to . . .'. A small number included boxes with the word 'image' in. One learner drew a walking boot and another some mountains.

**Stronger responses** included some good examples of excellent genre writing with some well-written and descriptive responses that engaged the reader with lively and effective use of format, language and structure. Information was presented well and in a logical sequence with a good to excellent level of appropriate detail. Many were able to produce responses that used the text as a good starting point but did not sustain this throughout and lacked a good level of detail to push it into the higher bands.

Descriptive language enhanced responses to engage readers:

“jaw dropping scenery”

“nice smell of fresh air”

“an exciting club for those that are new to waking to the experienced walker”

“Want to exercise and have fun?”

“Who wouldn’t want to go camping?”

**Weaker responses** were disjointed and chaotic with incoherent sentences offering no detail and very weak spelling impacting clarity of meaning. A lack of structure and a misinterpreting of the task as well as second language interference for some meant that responses were only communicating information at a very basic level. Ideas were lifted from the text and added little or no additional detail to enhance the writing. A minority copied the list from the source text and nothing else. There were several issues that kept many responses in the lower bands such as very short answers of only a couple of sentences, not answering all the sub tasks and also use of incomplete sentences lacking structure and development. Many described in only very basic detail about walking in the coast and a minority didn’t refer to the source text at all but used their own ideas to write about health and fitness or the importance of a good diet for people to go for walks. Some wrote it as an advert to join the club but did not refer to the source text and used their own ideas.

## **SPG**

In general SPG was weaker than FCP for most of the responses. Punctuation was often limited even in good responses with lots of detail. In particular there was a lack of full stops, and capital letters for I. Spelling was often weak with many errors throughout the responses. This impacted on clarity of meaning at times and brought the marks into the lower band. Articles were missing in sentences and third person endings were used incorrectly, which affected the meaning. There was confusion for many with you/your/you’re and the use of they/there/they’re and their as well as verb/noun confusion with meet/meets. Common spelling errors were opportunity, benefits and coast.

## Task 2

This was a good task as all the candidates engaged with it and were able to produce responses. It allowed a good level of discrimination as there were less prompts in the question for the learner to 'lift'. The majority were able to give examples of what they wanted to do and why, although there was a large range of sequencing and communication skills across the bands in evidence.

**Stronger responses** were able to communicate some good ideas with clear introductions and well-structured answers. They were able to clearly say what they wanted to do and why and also give good examples and reasons for their choices. There was a good level of detail for many with some nice responses that gave good personal opinions and detail of how they would spend five hours. There were some excellent examples of detailed development with good use of vocabulary:

"intriguing"

"cliffhanger"

"masterpiece"

"greatest film ever made"

"if I had five precious hours..."

"hilarious"

"brings imagination to life"

"timeless animations"

"chick flick"

"mind-blowing series"

"cinematography"

"...spine chilling horror movies with a nice latte and a warm blanket."

**Weaker responses** used poor e-mail format and a good number were confused about what "screening evening" meant and did not answer the question effectively. Some were less structured and tended to lift from the source text but not fit it in with their writing resulting in confused responses with limited sequencing. Some wrote about the plot lines of films, TV programmes or games but did not give reasons for their choices and why they wanted to see these or play the games. Others wrote about how they usually spend their evening rather than if you had five hours and this became a log of their daily routine. Some were confused about the task and thought they had been given a £50 voucher and could choose a package to watch and wrote asking if they could see or play certain things but not about why they wanted them. A minority thought it was an invitation to go to some kind of screening and some wrote inviting Pauline Kael to their house or saying what they wanted e.g. popcorn and sweets but nothing about their choice of viewing and reasons.

## **SPG**

Punctuation and spelling was weak for the majority with a lack of full stops and incorrect use of capital letters. There was also significant confusion in the use of choose/chosen/have chosen as well as the use of plurals. There was verb/adjective confusion so errors such as interesting and boring were used instead of interested in and bore. In general SPG brought the marks down.

### **Recommendations for Centres**

This is a Functional Skills test, so learners will only be rewarded for writing responses that are fit for purpose. When they come to the test they must read the question and stimulus text with great care to understand the purpose, before they start to write their response. Responses that are well written but of limited relevance to the task set will not receive a high mark for form, communication and purpose.

In preparation for this test, learners need to understand the purpose of different types of functional task (e.g. article and email) and should be given opportunities to practice writing in various formats, for different audiences and purposes. This experience will be of great help to them in tackling a future L1 Writing paper. Centres should also reinforce the fact that 40% of the marks are for spelling, punctuation and grammar. It is important to remind learners that they are allowed to use a dictionary and also that they should spend a few minutes checking through their work, after they have finished.

Finally, it is also recommended that centres tell candidates that they can plan their work on the exam paper. They will just need to rule through this if they don't want it to be marked.

## **Tips to Centres for Improving Learner Performance**

Although it was reassuring to see some very good responses and that centres have obviously been practicing writing letters and emails, centres/learners may benefit from addressing the following points:

### **DURING THE TEST**

1. Use a dictionary
2. Plan responses by using the bullets as sub headings; jot down ideas underneath each of these to avoid repetition of rubric and help structure the final response
3. When repeating words that are in the question, re-read the question to check spelling
4. Proof read afterwards to check spelling (especially the key words that are in the question paper) and that all bullets have been addressed

### **IN CENTRE**

1. Get candidates to improve time management by sitting mock tests using past papers
2. Get learners to read letters and emails to familiarise themselves with the different formats
3. Practice writing articles and internet contributions, focusing on audience and tone
4. Dedicate more time to assessing a candidate's control of English before entering them for the test

### **FCP**

1. Identifying the purpose and audience
2. Writing a good introduction that sets the scene
3. Making a statement: learners need to be encouraged to make a statement then develop and support the reasons for making the statement
4. Sequencing: how to use bullets in the question to aid development and sequencing of ideas
5. Organisation – an introduction, body text and conclusion for all letters

## **SPG**

1. Homophones: focus needed on the spelling of common homophones such as 'their' and 'there'
2. Capitals: correct use of capitalisation, especially names of people and 'I' not 'i'
3. Capitals: do not use in the middle of words or sentences
4. Punctuation: using full stops instead of commas to break up sentences and avoid 'run on' sentences
5. Punctuation: absolutely no comma splicing
6. Connectives: suggest alternatives to 'and'
7. Subject verb agreement: 'we were' not 'we was'
8. Practice needed with you/your/you're and they/there/they're and their



Pass mark for E103 in January 2018

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Maximum mark	<b>25</b>
Pass mark	<b>16</b>
UMS mark	<b>6</b>

