3rd Year
English
Higher Level
Michael Ruaidhri Deasy

Functional Writing

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Ref: 3/eng/h/mrd/ Functional Writing
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Crash Courses Timetable

### 6th Year

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<td>Accounting</td>
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<td>9am - 3pm</td>
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<td>Biology</td>
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<td>Saturday 28th May</td>
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### 3rd Year

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<td>Science</td>
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H = Higher  O = Ordinary

Please note that all courses will take place at our Learning Centre at The Primary School in Oatlands, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.
1) Introduction to the Letter

The letter can appear in section 3 of paper 1. It is worth 30 marks, and you should spend roughly 30 minutes on it.

2) Key points on letters

Just like a speech, the most important element of a good letter is to identify your audience. Once you know who you’re speaking to, your style should change appropriately; you wouldn’t start a text to your friend with the words “Dear sir/madam” in the same way you wouldn’t start a job application letter with the words “Howiya, mate”

There are various topics that might be covered in formal letters:

- Complaints
- Job applications
- Invitations
- Enquiries
- Making bookings/Ordering goods
- Letters to the Editor

Informal letters can generally deal with anything, so the main way to identify one is by looking at the audience. We will deal with informal letters in another handout.

3) Guidelines When Writing A Formal Letter

Sometimes in Section 3, the examiner will tell you roughly how long your entry should be in words. Usually the number given is between 150 and 200. To write this out by hand would take, on average, less than 15 minutes. Answers, therefore, are expected to be short. This is very important to remember – especially in a formal letter. Below is a picture taken from a Past Paper where the examiner tells you what they are looking for:

Answer either Question 1 or Question 2.

You will be rewarded for:

- Well-structured answers
- Clarity of expression
- An appropriate tone
- Good grammar, spelling and punctuation.
Here are some general rules to follow when setting out to write a formal letter:

1) **KISS** – Keep it short and simple. A business letter is designed to convey all the information you need in as little time as possible. The more you spend on unimportant details, the more marks you will lose (Clarity of expression)

2) Ask yourself who you are writing to, what they need to know and what you want them to do, having read your letter. (An appropriate tone)

3) Just like in an essay, you should state the intention of the letter in the opening lines.

4) Watch your spelling and grammar. You have plenty of time to reread everything you write and in a business letter; you would seem very stupid to send a letter that hasn’t been proofread. Take the time you are given to eliminate any errors you can see. (Good grammar, spelling and punctuation)

5) **FOLLOW THE FORMAT!** You are throwing away marks if you don’t since the examiner has specifically asked for well-structured answers. Once you have the addresses and formalities out of the way, make sure you stick to the same rules of writing as before – keep it neat, clear and in a logical order (Well structured answer)

4) Format For A Formal Letter

- The address of the person you are writing to should be displayed on the left just beneath your address
- Your Address: Should be displayed in the top right corner

- The date should be displayed just below your address on the right
- Your greeting should be displayed on the left just beneath the date

- This is where you sign off; yours faithfully or yours sincerely

- This is where you sign and print your name

- This is the main body of your letter
Your address goes in the top right hand corner. Be sure to avoid abbreviations of your address (Fosters Ave. or Breffni Rd.) and of the date (16/09/13). Instead write these details in full:

- Fosters Avenue
- Breffni Road
- 16th September, 2013

The date should be placed one line below your address on the right hand side, with a space between it and the address.

On the left hand side, two or three lines below the start of your address, your write the recipients name in full (with title; Mr, Mrs, Prof, Dr etc) and address.

Leave a space below this, and below this space on the left hand side, write your greeting. If you know who you are writing to, address them using their name e.g. Dr. Mr Morpugo. If you don’t know their name, simply write Dear Sir/Madam.

Below this greeting, you can launch into your letter. Generally you should have a first line that states the purpose of the letter – what you want to get out of this correspondence.

Below that you will have two to three body paragraphs that explain why you want whatever it is you want, and why the recipient should help you.

After this you have your sign off. If you know the person you are addressing, you should end with “Yours sincerely” and if you don’t, end with “Yours faithfully”.

Beneath this you should sign your name, and then for clarity spell it in block capitals directly under your signature.

**NB: DO NOT WRITE YOUR REAL NAME OR ADDRESS IN YOUR ANSWER**

One last important note when writing a letter is to start on a new page, this just makes your answer look neater and keeps the examiner happy.
5) Sample Formal Letters

Sample letter of returning goods

65 Market Street
Val Haven,
Dublin

June 30, 2004

Customer Service
Cool Sports, LLC
8423 Green Terrace Road
Dublin

Dear Sir or Madam:

I have recently ordered a new pair of soccer cleats (item #6542951) from your website on June 21. I received the order on June 26. Unfortunately, when I opened it, I saw that the cleats were used. The cleats had dirt all over it and there was a small tear in front of the part where the left toe would go. My order number is AF26168156.

To resolve the problem, I would like you to credit my account for the amount charged for my cleats; I have already went out and bought a new pair of cleats at my local sporting goods store so sending another would result in me having two pairs of the same cleats.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I have been a satisfied customer of your company for many years and this is the first time I have encountered a problem. If you need to contact me, you can reach me at (555) 555-5555.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Ken Thomas

The ending of this letter is particularly good for including in letters. We’re all aware that letters aren’t an instant way of communicating with each other, so if a matter is urgent or important, it is worth including alternate ways of being contacted.

Also note the opening – it is addressed to the Customer Service department so the writer wouldn’t know who was going to read this, therefore the greeting is Dear Sir/Madam.
Sample letter of a job application

George Gilhooley  
XYZ Company  
87 Delaware Road  
Dublin

September 12th, 2013

Dear Mr. Gilhooley,

I am writing to apply for the programmer position advertised in the Times Union. As requested, I am enclosing a completed job application, my certification, my CV and three references.

The opportunity presented in this listing is very interesting, and I believe that my strong technical experience and education will make me a very competitive candidate for this position. The key strengths that I possess for success in this position include:

- I have successfully designed, developed, and supported live use applications
- I strive for continued excellence
- I provide exceptional contributions to customer service for all customers
With a B.Sc degree in Computer Programming, I have a full understanding of the full life cycle of a software development project. I also have experience in learning and excelling at new technologies as needed.

Please see my resume for additional information on my experience. I can be reached anytime via email at john.donaldson@emailexample.com or my cell phone, 909-555-5555.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I look forward to speaking with you about this employment opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

John Donaldson

This letter is from a professional, and so your experience will vary, be less detailed. However the clarity of the letter is still good and the way he presents the information is a perfect template for what we need.
Sample Letter seeking information

Tom McLoughlin
36 Orpen Rise
Stillorgan
Dublin

April 20, 2013

Mark Rogers
Registrar
University College Dublin
Belfield
Dublin

Dear Mark Rogers:

I am writing to request information about the University College Dublin Undergraduate program in Science. I am currently studying for my in Junior Cert at the Dublin School of Grinds, and will graduate with from Secondary Education in a few short years. I am interested in beginning my third level studies in UCD.

Please send me application materials, program information, and a schedule of courses. I'd also appreciate any information you can provide about:

• The department and program faculty
• Fellowship opportunities
• Assistantship opportunities
• Funding opportunities
• Grants and scholarships

Please send this information to me at the address listed above. If you have questions about my request, please contact me by phone at 085 1234567 or by email at tommcloughling@hotmail.com.

Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to receiving this information.

Yours Sincerely,

Tom McLoughlin

Again, the layout here is generally pretty straightforward, the ending is worth noting since you are asking for information to be sent to you, so it is important to say where you would like that information to be sent.
Sample Letter of Invitation

April 20, 2013
Dublin

Dear Mr. Duffy,

You are kindly invited to a gala dress ball celebrating the birthday of Mrs Sarah Smith. The ball will take place at the Crystal Hotel on Tuesday the 2nd of July. The dress code is formal.

Proceedings will start with a display of fireworks at 8 pm while a program of events will be delivered to you upon arrival. A four course dinner will be served in the Montgomery hall at 9.00, whereby Mrs Smith will make her arrival and welcome each of you personally. Free parking will be available to guests at the front gate of the venue.

Please complete full details on the attached Rsvp and return to the address stated above by the 3rd of July. Unfortunately we are not in position to accept replies received after this date. On behalf of Ms Smith, I look forward to your attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. V. James
Dear Mr. Duffy,

I am writing to you on behalf of my school’s upcoming event, the Young Achiever Awards. Each year, the school recognizes the accomplishments of a young person in Ireland based on their contribution to society in general. We invite these impressive individuals to come to the school and participate in activities with students for the day.

We know of your expertise in computer science and hope that you will accept our invitation to present a half-day workshop for our students during the morning of July 15. I am sure you have a heavy schedule, but perhaps our early invitation will fit in your calendar.

We will meet in the main lobby of the school. You will be the only recipient of this award. We invite you to answer questions that afternoon, but we understand if that is not possible. Our students are eager to learn from you.

Given the nature of the event, we cannot offer you a payment but we hope the award you will be presented with will suffice. I think you will find your visit to our school, and the time you spend with our students, a stimulating experience.

It would be very helpful in formalising our plans if we could receive your response by January 1. We sincerely hope you will be able to join us on July 15.

Yours sincerely,

Tom McLoughlin

6) Past Paper Examples

The letter does not come up every year, but it is common enough. Below are the titles and years of when the letter did appear. A letter last appeared on the paper in 2011.
Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q2 2009

In Section One of this examination paper Michael Morpurgo writes about the elements that he considers important to produce a piece of writing. Write a letter to the author in which you recount a time when you feel you wrote particularly well and explain what you think contributed to the success. In your letter you may, if you wish, comment on the earlier passage by Morpurgo or seek his advice as a writer.

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q1 2006

A national newspaper has organised a ‘Person of the Year’ award. Write a letter to the editor nominating the person you think is most deserving of this award. You should explain why you think this person deserves the award.

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q2 2004

You feel strongly about Hugh Linehan’s article in Section 1 of this paper. Write a letter to the Editor of the newspaper in which you outline your views in response to the article.

First, let us look at the article itself.

Shhhhhhhhhhh!

Maybe it’s because I’m a spoiled snobbish elitist – and that’s not something I’m happy about – but I have to confess I’m finding it increasingly painful to go to the movies with the rest of you, the great paying public. It’s not because of the cinemas – standards of projection, sound, seating and ventilation have improved out of all recognition over the last ten years – but (and I am sorry to say this) your standards of behaviour seem to be disimproving all the time.

Kickers are a real source of irritation. The kicker problem is exacerbated by the design of modern cinema seats – a kicked seat reverberates right along the row, so that it can be nigh-well impossible to figure out where it’s coming from. In the 1970s, they called this Sensurround and people paid to experience it in movies such as Earthquake and Towering Inferno. Nowadays, you can have your own personal towering inferno as you reach boiling point after two hours of bone-shaking juddering.
Up until recently, the mobile phenomenon seemed to be spinning out of control. Cinemas were buzzing like beehives with the wretched things and some buffoons even had the cheek to strike up conversations on them during the film. There will always be buffoons, but a corner seems to have been turned in recent times. Thankfully, cinemas have now taken to putting reminders on the screen telling people to switch off their phones, and many appear to be doing so.

On an electronically related topic, by the way, what sort of benighted fool needs a watch that beeps on the hour, every hour?

I have some sympathy for those who feel nauseated by the smell of warm buttery popcorn which is so much a part of the multiplex experience, but it doesn’t bother me that much. If people want to eat wildly overpriced, grease-saturated cardboard, then that’s their business. At least popcorn has the virtue of being (almost) silent food – far better than the high-pitched crackle of the jumbo crisp packet or the extended kitchen-sink gurgle of the almost-drained Coke.

To my mind the real problem in cinemas these days is talkers. They’re everywhere and they come in a variety of species. One kind can’t help giving a blow-by-blow commentary on the movie. They’re bad enough, but there is worse. Top of the list come those who just utterly ignore the film in favour of their own chat. Western society has devised countless places where people can communicate with each other, but cafes, restaurants or street corners are just not good enough for these people – apparently not when they can have the added pleasure of spoiling other people’s enjoyment.

Then, there are those who think that any break in the dialogue has been inserted by the filmmaker expressly for them to start talking. The minute there is a pause of more than a couple of seconds they launch into conversation. This is not to forget the downright stupid, who spend most of the time asking questions: “Who’s she? What happened there?” By the time they’ve got an answer they’ve missed the next plot point, and the whole weary rigmarole starts all over again.

What is the reason for this plague? The general decline in politeness in society may have something to do with it, but it doesn’t fully explain the seemingly unstoppable desire to talk when the lights go down. We don’t want funereal silence; a good comedy, horror or action movie can be immeasurably improved by the communal experience of seeing it with an audience. People can shriek or laugh to their hearts’ content, and there is a real sense of a shared magical experience. After all, we’re all together in the cinema … in the dark. And you never know who is sitting next to you!

This page is great for rough work and getting an idea of your letter before you start the task. Write down your response to this question, and then let’s look at a different answer.

Your Address:  

_________________  

_________________  

_________________  

Date: ________________ 

Their Address:  

_________________  

_________________
Past Paper Question: Section 1, Q1 2001

You need a reference letter from your Principal to secure a summer job. Write the letter you would like him or her to supply you with. The address you use should not be that of your actual school nor should you use your own name.

Mr. Alan McAllister  
St. Joseph’s College  
Glenageary  
Dublin

May 18th, 2013

To Whom It May Concern

I am writing this letter as a reference for a student of this college, Mr. Ray Conway, upon his request. As he is looking for a summer job, I cannot tell you about any specific experience, but I can tell you what I know of Mr. Conway as a person.

He is undoubtedly one of the most active students in our school; he is a member of the student council, an accomplished athlete and a high achiever in almost all of his classes. I have had many dealing with him during his time in this school and all have been pleasant and efficient.

He is an outgoing kind of person and seems to thrive in teams, though never falls behind when working individually. There is very little he can’t turn his hand to and this skill is both admirable and impressive. Regardless of what line of work you may be considering for Mr. Conway, I can assure you that he will strive to achieve excellence in any field.
I am sure that you will be pleased with your decision, should you offer Mr. Conway a job, and I look forward to hearing Mr. Conway’s equally positive comments about you and your business.

Yours faithfully,

Alan McAllister
Principal of St. Joseph’s College

7) Introduction to the Informal Letter

The informal letter is exactly what it sounds like. A letter (with similarities to the formal letter) but written in a more relaxed style. Some elements (such as the format of address) are different in this type of letter. What is important, though, is that you understand the style you are writing in. As with writing reviews and articles in the school paper, you have to be aware of your audience.

8) Key Points On Informal Letters

Informal letters can generally deal with anything, so the main way to spot one is by looking at the audience. We are writing to someone we know, or we are writing in a friendly way because we want to achieve something. In this handout we will look at a number of past paper examples that range from writing letters to yourself to competition entries. In both cases, the tone of your letter should be warm and amiable (friendly) as you either like the person you are writing to, or want them to like you.

9) Guidelines When Writing An Informal Letter

The letter style works outside of the letter – specifically in competition entries. Here are some past paper questions that will we have sample answers for:

2011
1. Read the letter on Page 2 of Paper X written by the broadcaster, John Kelly, to his younger self. This letter is adapted from With Love from me … to me. A Letter to my Sixteen-Year-Old Self edited by Joseph Galliano.
Write a letter to your imaginary future son or daughter offering him or her advice on some significant milestones in his or her life. You might include such events as: first day at school, first disco, sitting the Junior Certificate examinations, etc.

2010
2. A major music magazine is running a competition called TOP TALENT 2010. Using no more than 150 words readers are invited to nominate their favourite band or solo act for the competition, describing their talent, their achievements, what qualities make them TOP TALENT, etc. Write the 150 words you would use to nominate your favourite band or solo act.

2008
2. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) is running an international competition to send one student from Ireland on the next moon mission. You wish to enter the competition. The following are the competition entry requirements:
1. Entries should be between 170 and 200 words
2. You should outline
   • Your suitability for the mission
   • Why you wish to participate in the mission
Complete your competition entry.

2003

2. Imagine the girl in the picture is your pen pal. Write a letter telling her about a good book you have enjoyed recently.

There are a few things you need to get right in terms of format to maximise the number of marks you get. Here are the key points:

- Your address should be in the top right hand corner of the page (as with the formal letter)
- The date should be below your address (as with the formal letter)
- Your greeting should be relatively friendly. Don’t use “To whom it may concern” or “Sir/Madam”. You should say “Dear John/Jane”.
- Once you launch into your letter, use pleasant colloquial (chatty) language
- Overall structure of paragraphs isn’t hugely important, so long as your final paragraph has a fitting conclusion
- Finish with a nice signoff like “Looking forward to seeing you”, “Best wishes” or “Thinking of you” and then sign your first name at the bottom

Two absolute don’ts of informal letter writing are:

- Don’t include the address of the person you are writing to. If you do this, the examiner will think that you’re trying to write a formal letter and getting the style wrong
- Don’t use swear words. It is supposed to be chatty but it is never okay to curse in the exam.

Let’s start with the two past questions that fit the format exactly, as we have to be wary with competition entries.
Dear John,

There’s nothing you need less than words of wisdom from the likes of me. As you have long suspected, grown-ups rarely know what they are talking about. The problem of course is that adults are often obliged to give the impression that they do – parents have no choice and teachers get paid for it. So go easy on them. We’re all making it up as we go along.

I don’t like giving advice in any case and you’re not used to getting it, but I’ll chance this much even so. Never assume that adults know the score and don’t ever take it for granted that they know what’s best for you. The chances are they don’t. So you’ll just have to follow your own instincts. Be confident. Be strong. Be your own man and do your own thing. Learn French.

These are tricky times I know. You’re searching for clues and people keep hiding them from you. Some of these people mean well, but none of them have any real sense of who you are. I recommend that you read as many novels as you can. Read them twice and three times. That’s where the real info is. I could go on. And I often do.

Basically you’re on your own, pal. But you’re well able for it. Do your own thing and good luck.

John

JOHN KELLY
Write a letter to your imaginary future son or daughter offering him or her advice on some significant milestones in his or her life. You might include such events as: first day at school, first disco, sitting the Junior Certificate examinations, etc.

17 Kingston Drive
Ballinteer
Dublin 16

November 14th, 2013

Dear Mylo,

I don’t know when you will read this letter, where you’ll be living, what age you’ll be or even what your job is, so this letter may seem a little scattered. I’m going to give you some lessons that apply to your early years but, as you’ll hopefully see, will apply to much more throughout your life. So, let’s get started...

This is a letter to someone who doesn’t exist yet so you have to give yourself room.

Getting toilet trained is not easy – for you or me. It’s hard explaining something so seemingly simple to someone who’s never experienced it before but it’s necessary. Why do I bring this up? Because I want you to remember who taught you the basics when I tell my computer is on the fritz and I can’t get it to work.

There’s humour and a lot of informal language here – perfect for an informal letter.

The early years of school are more important than you think. It’s not all about Pól the worm and 2 + 2. The friends you make here will be with you for the rest of your life (if you’re as lucky as I’ve been). They’ll form a support group that will get you through anything life will throw at you down the line. So be there for them, just like they’ll be there for you.

This letter is longer than most so in the final paragraph we’ll have our third point and a conclusion.

Lastly, don’t forget your family. We will be here for you through thick and thin and there will be times when we will need you. Maybe we’ll ask you to stop saying “how long till we get there”, or maybe we’ll want you to say nice things about us when we’re gone – just never forget who taught you how to use the toilet.

This paragraph has two things to note: i) this is the most serious of paragraphs and ends with a joke. It’s nice to balance any serious points with a touch of humour and ii) I’ve linked the first and last paragraphs together which always looks good to the examiner.

You’re going to be just fine,

Rory

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 1, 2011
Imagine the girl in the picture is your pen pal. Write a letter telling her about a good book you have enjoyed recently.

Laughter House
Elm Street
Co. Tipperary

October 31th, 2013

Dear Sarah,

How have you been keeping? It’s been so long since we spoken! As we agreed, I’ve read a book you suggested and hopefully you read what I recommended.

This is just pleasantries and addressing the question.

I have to say that when you suggested reading the Hunger Games, I wasn’t that pushed. I’m glad you recommended it though as it turns out it was well worth the read – I’m already halfway through the second book! Everyone had been going crazy over this book and I thought it was because of the film but it seems the books stands on its own. It’s combination of page-turning twists and turns and a great style of writing meant I could hardly put it down. I have to look into other works by Suzanne Collins...

I’ve told her about the book I read and since she’s a pen pal this is a correspondence (question and reply) so I should close with a question or request.

How did you find Alice in Wonderland, or have you finished it yet? I loved comparing the similarities and differences of Lewis Carroll’s original with the films (the cartoon and the more recent live-action version). I don’t want to say too much in case you haven’t finished it, so I’ll leave it there.

We’ve said what we need to, so content is fine. Now we finish on format.

I look forward to hearing from you!

R.

Now that we’ve seen a conventional (standard) letter, let’s look at some competition entries.

NOTE: For this handout, these entries are written as letters because you are writing to someone. Since you don’t know the person, but you want them to like you the style is a mix of formal and informal language. The format could be either formal or informal – but we will use the informal format for the moment.

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 2, 2010
A major music magazine is running a competition called TOP TALENT 2010. Using no more than 150 words readers are invited to nominate their favourite band or solo act for the competition, describing their talent, their achievements, what qualities make them TOP TALENT, etc. Write the 150 words you would use to nominate your favourite band or solo act.

Dear Mr. Finn,

First let me begin by saying that I am a huge fan of NME magazine. As you are in charge of this competition, I would like to propose one of the most promising Irish bands this year, if not this decade – Other Creatures.

I came across this band during my time in school, having been in the same class as the drummer in first year. He brought me along to one of their first gigs in an small basement venue and I was blown away by their talent. From their small beginnings in that cellar, they have sky-rocketed. Only this year they have been picked up by a manager and will be supporting Little Green Cars during their Irish tour.

I've proposed the band and given their modest achievements. Now its time to validate them.

I’m sure many of the entries you receive will be big names, grammy winners or both but I feel like the spirit of this competition is to recognize up-and-coming talent – and Other Creatures has plenty of it. I can’t think of a band more deserving to be included in this prestigious list.

Thank you for taking the time to read this nomination,

Rory Crean

I used my full name as this person doesn’t know me but other than that the style is mostly informal.

11) Try it yourself

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 2, 2008
NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) is running an international competition to send one student from Ireland on the next moon mission. You wish to enter the competition. The following are the competition entry requirements:
1. Entries should be between 170 and 200 words
2. You should outline
   • Your suitability for the mission
   • Why you wish to participate in the mission
Complete your competition entry.

36 Barrack Street
Goresbridge
Co. Kilkenny
August 20th, 2013

________________________
Opening

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Suitability

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Why you want to do this

Closing
12) Introduction to the Review

It is not uncommon to have the examiner ask you to put yourself in the shoes of a journalist for a school magazine. When asked to write a review, or short article, we can assume it will be published in your school paper/magazine. In this handout we will be looking at reviews and the main types you will deal with:

- Book/Movie/CD reviews
- Event reviews
- Product reviews
- Service reviews
Articles can be more random and varied in their topics, but we will look at the styles that are appropriate to use for these sections in a later handout

13) Key points on reviews

The most important point about a review is that it is subjective. Whenever a new movie is released, a new restaurant is opened or a concert taking place, reviewers will write their opinions based on their experience whilst also supplying some cold hard facts. This is why when you look for a review, you might read two or three before seeing a film, to inform yourself as much as possible. People trust reviews from certain sources depending on their tastes – for example, Empire is a reputable film review magazine, IGN is a good game review website and the Michelin Guide is the top restaurant reviewing publication.

In a school magazine, people are looking for an opinion that is relevant and accessible to the students, so your style should generally be informal – as if talking to a school friend, whilst still having the key information that will help make or break the reader's decision.

14) Guidelines When Writing A Review

Structure
The most important details to include in most reviews are sometimes mentioned in the phrasing of the question itself, though not always. They are as follows:

- Introduction
- Description
- Evaluation
- Recommendation

Your introduction is what will capture the audiences attention, so it's important that it is well written and engaging. Make sure to set a dramatic scene to make what you are about to say seem more important.

Your description should contain a lot of the facts about whatever it is you are reviewing. If you were reviewing a product, then you might talk about the price, the size, the background information etc. this way you are contextualising the opinions that you will provide later in the review.

The evaluation is the main part of any review. This is when you take the details that you have mentioned and assess them. You can compare them to other products/events/movies from past and present and come to conclusions on whether or not they are an improvement. You should make at least three points in your evaluation. For example, in a review of an MP3 player, you might evaluate the design of the product, the memory size and the usability. In all three cases you can compare it to competing products on the market and say whether or not it is better, worse or the same as the other products.

By the end of your evaluation paragraph(s), it should be clear what your recommendation will be. Having said that, it is still important to have a conclusion that revises what you’ve already said for the examiner and your readers. In the recommendation paragraph you should sum up what you liked, what you didn't like and give your overall verdict. Depending on the style of the review, you may also give a score or rating that reflects your
recommendation e.g. a bad restaurant would get 2 out of 5 starts, but a gripping book might get 9 out of 10.

**Tone**
The tone of a review is crucial for showing the audience how you feel about something. Generally you will be writing in a school magazine so the style can be informal – as if you were speaking to your friends in the corridor. Beyond that, the tone needs to reflect the overall opinion of the view.

In general if you are giving a good review, you should have “positive hooks” that keep reminding the audience that this is a worthwhile product/movie/etc.

If you are writing a bad review, the same is true. Keep the tone of your review consistent!

**Sample Review of a mobile phone**

*This review is supposed to be from an official technology website. It is therefore a bit more professional than your normal review. It is vital that you know your audience!*

**Introduction:** Considering how successful Samsung has been since it launched the “Galaxy” line of mobile phones, it is understandable that there is a great deal of pressure on them to deliver once again. Thankfully, the Samsung Galaxy S3 comes with everything we’ve come to expect from a high end range of products and even throws in a few surprises to keep Samsung fans loyal, and Apple fans jealous.

**Description:** The phone comes with a 4 inch glass display, 32GB of memory and weights a little under 150g. The most important detail, however, is the price – with the entry level model coming in at just under 400 euro, and it’s worth every cent.

**Evaluation:** First of all, the phone looks great. It has a slick plastic finish that doesn’t feel cheap and the weight of the phone lends it a sturdiness you won’t find in cheaper products. Turn it over and you’ll see the breathtaking screen taking up most of the front side. The size of this display is one of the main attractions and it enhances almost every single function the phone provides: YouTube videos become more believable, navigating with Google Maps is a breeze and texting/typing feels cramped on any other phone once you’ve used the S3.

This is the first point of evaluation – the design of the phone/physical appearance. Next we’ll look at how it runs.

Once you turn on the phone, you’ll really start to experience what all the fuss is about. The operating system is Android 4.1.3 which is standard for the newest release of phones but with the memory and processing power of the S3, it runs so seamlessly it feels like completely new software. This phone runs fast, provided you don’t ask too much of it. While the phone does have the ability to run multiple apps at once, if you go over four or five, everything will start to suffer. The phone will slow down and once or twice I even had it crash.

Now we’re onto our second point, and this time we have a negative. It is often nice to put the criticism in the middle of the review to create a compliment sandwich: (good point – bad point – good point)
However, this phone is meant to be used like a swiss army knife, capable of many jobs but not when all the attachments are out at once. If you can recognize this and don’t try and run the phone under conditions suitable for a PC, you will find this product to be a perfect tool for getting you through your day.

*This is the final of the three evaluation points, ending on a good point. Now it’s time to make a recommendation.*

Ultimately, this phone improves on its predecessor in almost every way and is definitely a step in the right direction. The price tag may put some people off but all I can say is – you get what you pay for.

4.5 out 5

*The recommendation should have the final comments that sum up everything you’ve said so far and then give some score.*

15) Types of reviews

**Product Reviews:** With the example above, it should be clear what the examiner is looking for in a product review. The appropriate language with the right structure is all that is needed to score highly in this section.

**Movie/Book/CD/TV Reviews:** All of these types of reviews generally rely on how much you enjoyed whatever you’re reviewing. Some key points to include in these are:

- The main people involved (band members, authors, actors/directors)
- How they’ve influenced the finished product
- Overall style/theme
- Who its targeted at
- Value for money

Let’s take a look at a sample review. Make use of the wide margins to note what works and what doesn’t!

**Sample Review of The Avengers, taken from Empire Magazine**

*This review is from Empire which has a well-established fan base. The language will be more informal throughout – again this shows an awareness of audience.*

When trouble-making Asgardian reject Loki (Hiddleston) launches an attack on Earth, S. H. I. E. L. D. boss Nick Fury (Jackson) decides it’s time to call in the big guns, and gathers Captain America (Evans), Bruce Banner (Ruffalo), Thor (Hemsworth) and even Iron Man (Downey Jr.) together in one elite fighting team. Good luck with that...

*The review begins with a brief outline of the plot. Instantly a reader will know whether or not this is a film that will interest them and, as a result, whether or not this review will be of any use to them. This is why the introduction/description section is so important. Notice also the use of humour. The introduction should make the audience want to read more and a joke is a great way to entice them in.*

Four disparate main characters, all with specific personalities, abilities and back stories
that need to be wrangled into a cohesive fighting force. It’s a job that only Samuel L. Jackson’s Nick Fury, with the backing of S.H.I.E.L.D., is suited to, but it’s the one that Buffy creator Joss Whedon has taken on in bringing Marvel’s Avengers together at last. You don’t envy him the task at hand, but then, it’s not every day that a writer-director is handed what is essentially a massive comic franchise toy box and told to go have some fun. And fun is certainly had here.

It’s clear that this review is a good one, and it is often good to establish that early on. If the reader knows its good, they will want to know why, rather than wait to the end to hear your opinion.

For Whedon has taken the various threads of the Marvel universe and weaved an impressive tapestry filled with action, humour, charm and heart. There was always the danger that this could become The Tony Stark Hour (Featuring His Costumed Chums), but Whedon is canny enough to realise that he’s got a well-balanced cast, and everyone shoulders their respective portion of the storyline with ease. It’s not really surprising coming from the man who handled a large, charismatic set of characters in the undervalued Serenity, and it’s even more satisfying to see him pull off the same trick twice. Chris Evans’ Steve ‘Captain America’ Rogers is the conflicted hero, adrift in a world he doesn’t quite truly comprehend (though he understands it a lot better than he thinks). Chris Hemsworth’s Thor is still full of his Asgardian swagger, but even he manages to find a way to fit in with everyone else when truly called upon, while working out more of his sibling issues. Mark Ruffalo is a superb Bruce Banner, bringing a subtlety and sweetness to the role that counterpoints well with the rage-fuelled big, green roaring machine. When he does go ballistic, the motion-captured Hulk features great work from ILM, even if it’s not quite as revelatory a step forward from the creature in the 2008 film.

And, of course, there is ol’ Shellhead. Robert Downey Jr.’s trademark dry wit and easy magnetism is on full display, and there’s a real joy to Stark’s comic undercutting of the more OTT elements. Witness him describing Thor as “Shakespeare In The Park” or “Point Break”. Still, when the stakes are raised and the emotions run a little deeper, even he steps up and delivers. The leads are handed some cracking interplay, bolstered by set-pieces that combine both the comedy and the drama. It’s long been a Whedon hallmark to spice up the danger with laughs, and the actors clearly had a blast getting to grips with his script.

The review now moves from one point of evaluation (the director of the film) to some of the smaller characters. This is important in giving a well-rounded review. If you focus on one aspect then you aren’t painting a full picture for your readers.

The S. H. I. E. L. D. agents are largely treated well, too. Jackson’s Fury gets to do more than show up, look tough and talk about the initiative. While he may not be as much a part of the big battles as the fab four, he’s still very much a kick-ass mofo, even in the face of a truly dangerous threat. Scarlett Johansson’s Black Widow is the beneficiary of Whedon’s love for tough, smart female characters, resulting in a much more nuanced take on the character than we’ve seen before. In particular, her conflicted, deep friendship with Jeremy Renner’s Hawkeye is put to serious test, especially since he’s part of a darker plotline.

There’s a clear sense of who the audience is. The writer knows that this is not groundbreaking literature and so can speak with an informal tone. This gives the review a conversational feel and will keep the audience engaged as they will feel personally
involved.

It's a smaller piece of the overall puzzle, but there's more than enough to be worthy of Renner's talents. The Marvel movies' secret weapon, Clark Gregg's Agent Phil Coulson ("Phil? His first name is 'Agent,'" cracks Stark) steals many of the scenes he's in, whether it's hero-worshipping Steve Rogers or providing his usual cool, calm, collected reaction to the sort of peril that would reduce most mortal men to blubbering wrecks. In fact, if anyone from the assembled ranks could complain about being short-changed, it's probably only Cobie Smulders' Maria Hill, who largely fills the role Sigourney Weaver's Gwen DeMarco complains about in Galaxy Quest. Translation: lots of time carrying out Nick Fury's orders. But then, even she gets a moment to shine early on during a frenetic car chase.

Moments that feel as though they might be clichéd are upended with grace and style, either through dialogue or action. Witness a captive Loki's (Tom Hiddleston) glimpse into the dark heart of Black Widow, full of apparent perception and old wound-opening menace, which suddenly turns into something quite different. It's a fine flourish and one that Whedon uses sparingly so it never loses its impact, except for one crucial beat where he gives in to one of his more infamous impulses. The various plotlines stitch together nearly seamlessly, adding layers to our heroes' interactions and finally hinting at much deeper, darker depths to S.H.I.E.L.D., ones that even Fury isn't as comfortable with as he might first appear. If what we've been shown in the various origin films (and Iron Man 2) so far is the tip of the iceberg, this is much more of a glance under the water. And it opens the doorway to plenty of potential conflicts in the future.

With Earth's Mightiest Heroes™ gathered, they needed a good villain to fight, and Loki certainly fills that void. He's even more devious and devilish than his introduction in Thor and Hiddleston thoroughly owns the role, imbuing it with pure, malicious delight. Not only does he get one or two distinctly Whedonesque lines, he also provides one of the film's biggest comic moments during an unfortunate run in with The Hulk.

If there's a complaint about the Big Evil Plan, it's that a) the alien army our favourite evil demi-god has allied himself with are very throwaway, bland types who serve as little more than intergalactic cannon-fodder. Yes, they're from the Marvel universe (we won't name them, but they're not who has been rumoured), but they display very little in the way of unique abilities. And b) the whole thing hinges on a mundane version of the old MacGuffin narrative trick.

This might not match the pyrotechnic power or CG clout of, say, the Transformers films. Yet there is something much more valuable — real human interaction and more of a brain on display. Whedon opens up the canvas and offers something that, with so many characters in play, feels epic and yet never loses sight of the real reason we've come to enjoy this particular dysfunctional super-family forced to play nicely together for the first time. In a few brief moments, the pace seems to sag, and the exposition needle pushes a little into the red zone once or twice, but even that is usually wrapped up with swift aplomb. Total newcomers won't be completely lost, but this really is one for the fans. There's probably no way any movie could quite live up to the expectations put upon this long-awaited Marvel mash-up, but Avengers Assemble gets very, very close to pulling off the trick. Assuming someone else tackles the next team-up, whoever catches the Cosmic Cube next has big shoes to fill.
Even if what you're reviewing is good, it's important to have a negative point. This gives the review balance and shows the reader that there is more to consider than what you have written.

The Avengers have been assembled and, for the most part, they fit together superbly. A joyous blend of heroism and humour that raises the stakes even as it maintains a firm grip on what makes the individual heroes tick.

Lastly, we finish on our recommendation to the reader. Ideally this will have a take home message that, if someone were in a hurry, they could read instead of the whole review and get the gist of what you were trying to say.

Event Reviews: Event reviews have a few similarities and differences to film/tv/books etc. because it is partly about how much you enjoyed the event, but you also have to consider that it is live. This fact should make up a large part of your review. Because the event is live, you need to comment on:

- The planning that goes into i – was the event organised, safe and enjoyable for the audience
- How your live performance may be different to another one the next night – how did the weather affect the atmosphere, how many people were at this event, were there technical difficulties at a concert
- The event itself – this is similar to the film and book reviews. Did you enjoy it and if so, why?

One great trick used for event reviews is the 5 Ws:
1) What is the name of the event
2) Where is it being held
3) When does it take place
4) Why (for charity/awareness etc.)
5) Who was involved

This information should all be in the description section of your answer.

NOTE: The description section of an event will be longer than the evaluation section. This is because you want people to learn more about the event as it won't have a trailer like a film does. You should include a personal response, though it won’t be as long as in other sections.

16) Past Paper Examples

Between reviews, reports and short articles, the exam will often ask you to imagine you are a journalist for a school newspaper. Below are the past paper review questions:

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q2 2011

Write a review of one of the following for your school magazine: a mobile phone, an MP3 player, a games console or an electronic reader. Your answer should include an introduction, description, evaluation and recommendation.
Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q1 2004

*Write a review for a young peoples’ magazine of any book, film, computer game or concert you have recently experienced. Your answer should include an introduction, description, evaluation and recommendation.*

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q3 2001

*Write a review for your local newspaper of your favourite CD or tape.*

17) Try it yourself

Review Topic: Electronic Reader (2011)

Introduction

_____________________________________________________________________________

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_____________________________________________________________________________

Description:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Evaluation:
Recommendation
Review Topic: Book/Film/CD (2004/2001)

Introduction

Description:

Evaluation:
Recommendation


Introduction
18) Introduction to Reports

Reports are considered to be the most concise way of passing on information. They are a collection of facts, arranged in a clear way. Generally a report is asked for when there is:

- A problem that needs investigating
- An event that needs documenting
- Statistics and data that needs explaining

Because the subject of a report can change so much from year to year, there is no perfect formula for a report – we will have to look at individual samples, but there are some core points that are consistent in each report.

19) Key points on reports

As always in the Functional Writing section of the exam, you are pretending to be someone and therefore who you are, and you your audience is hugely important. If your report is going into a school magazine then you should follow some of the same tricks as used in the review (grab their attention, then give the key information and then support your points). If you are writing a report for your school principal, then there should be little in the way of expression. You should only include the necessary information.
In all cases you should keep the report as formal as possible. Even when writing in the magazine/school paper, a report is itself a formal piece of writing.

You should also avoid the personal pronoun, "I". A report is supposed to be a page of facts and if you say what you saw then the report might seem tainted, biased or subjective.

The best report is one with a clear format. Sometimes you can write down headings in your reports e.g. Introduction, Information, Findings, Recommendations. Other reports should have this format but may not be suitable to have the actual headings. So you long as you plan your report like any other written assignment, your layout should be clear and the information you have provided should speak for itself.

Lastly, though this is true for every part of your exam, mechanics counts for a lot here. As with the formal letter, your audience needs to respect you in order to listen to you – so a spelling mistake will undermine all the hard work you’ve put in up to that point.

20) Guidelines When Writing An Investigative Review

An investigative review is one where there is a problem that needs to be addressed, or there is data that needs to be looked into. There have been two examples of this in that past papers:

2008

1. You are a member of your school’s Student Council. As there are now students from a range of different nationalities attending the school, your Principal has asked the Council to come up with some suggestions to help your school to develop as an intercultural community.
   Write a report to be submitted by the Student Council to the Principal outlining your ideas.

2002

2. The Transition Year class in your school carried out a survey of how the students in third year spent an average of ten euro pocket money per week. Based on the figures supplied below write a report on this survey for your school magazine.
Pocket Money Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food/soft drinks</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure goods and services</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal goods</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before we go through sample answers to these questions though, let’s look at what format we should use for this type of report.

The start of any report should deal with the who’s and why’s. Who asked you to write this report, and for what reason. This will become the **Terms of Reference**.

At the start of any formal report, you should begin by saying who asked for the report and why. This will help clarify in your own mind who your audience is and how you should proceed.

Once you have your Terms of Reference completed you can begin to plan the rest of your report. This will obviously vary depending on the topic that is being covered by the question, but you can expect to include a note on:

- **Procedure**: How you went about getting information that is used in the report
- **Findings**: The cold hard facts, the answers obtained from your investigation. As with the review, these are just objective hooks that you will come back to later
- **Conclusions**: This is where you start to draw out answers from your information
- **Recommendations**: When you take the answers your report has yielded and make a plan to go on with. The recommendation stage is often the most important as the point of a report is to come up with a solution.

**NOTE**: YOUR RECOMMENDATION SECTION IS THE SAME AS YOUR CONCLUSION SECTION SO IT SHOULD CONTAIN SOME KEY INFO THAT HAS ALREADY BEEN MENTIONED IN YOUR REPORT.
Now that we have a format, let’s look at a Past Paper example

1. You are a member of your school’s Student Council. As there are now students from a range of different nationalities attending the school, your Principal has asked the Council to come up with some suggestions to help your school to develop as an intercultural community.
Write a report to be submitted by the Student Council to the Principal outlining your ideas.

Terms of Reference:

The Principal of St. Helen’s College has commissioned this report in order to identify areas where the school has a lacking in intercultural involvement and, consequently what improvements can be made to help embrace an international community.

Here is a sample Terms of Reference – it tells you everything you need to know: who asked for the report, what will the report do and what are the ultimate goals of the report.

Procedure:

In order to understand the current situation, we interview 10 students from each year asking their opinions on the intercultural community of the school. We then asked a core group of international students the same questions and compared our results.
Just like in a science experiment, we are explaining what we did in a clear and simple way. Avoid any technical jargon as this only confuses things. You want another school to be able to reproduce the same experiment just by reading your report.

Findings:

1. To the question “Do you think there is a divide between Irish and international students”, 17% of Irish students said yes, while 57% of the international core group said yes.
2. To the question “Have you been paired off with an international student in a class exercise” 67% of Irish students said they hadn’t and only 10% of international students said they had.
3. To the question “Do you think the school should host after school events promoting different cultures?” 89% of Irish students said yes, and 92% of international students said yes.

Here are our 3 findings. These results are completely made up to make the report look more official – the only reason I came up with these numbers/questions is because I knew that my recommendations would be to have more class mixing and after school events. Now that I have these findings, I have to come to a conclusion.

Conclusions:

1. The majority of Irish students appear to be unaware that there is a divide between them and their international schoolmates.
2. There appears to be a lack of emphasis on mixing Irish students with international students in the classroom. This is a key area where the divide can be reduced or bridged.
3. All students seem in favour of having events that will allow them to share their culture and background in order to further reduce this gap.

There is nothing groundbreaking in these conclusions, they’re just stating the obvious facts of the findings. Now to make recommendations to the Principal and council.

Recommendations:

Having looked at the information gathered for this report, the following recommendations seem most relevant:

1. Demonstrate to the teachers the importance of encouraging mixing of students in class as this is a chance for students to communicate with those outside of their normal group.
2. To facilitate after school events in the school hall, either on a fortnightly basis or on important dates of various cultures.

These recommendations seem fairly obvious, but the point of a report is to be painfully clear! Now the sign off.
The 2002 Pocket Money report question was actually intended as a magazine report, but for the sake of practice, let’s imagine it was another school council report. See where you can use the same language and/or format.

2. The Transition Year class in your school carried out a survey of how the students in third year spent an average of ten euro pocket money per week. Based on the figures supplied below write a report on this survey for your school magazine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
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</tr>
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<td>Personal goods</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terms of Reference:
The Principal of St. Helen’s College has commissioned this report in order to identify areas where students are spending their €10 pocket money and, consequently what advice can be given to improve their attitude toward spending.

Here is a sample Terms of Reference – it tells you everything you need to know: who asked for the report, what will the report do and what are the ultimate goals of the report.

Procedure:

In order to understand the current situation, we interviewed 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls) from each year asking how they spent their pocket money. We then compared the results for our findings.

Just like in a science experiment, we are explaining what we did in a clear and simple way. Avoid any technical jargon as this only confuses things. You want another school to be able to reproduce the same experiment just by reading your report.

Findings:

1. It was found that in the area of food, drinks and services, the boy respondents spent nearly twice as much the girls.
2. In the area of clothing and personal goods, girls were found to spend roughly twice what the boys spent.
3. Both boys and girls spent the same amount of transport.

Here are findings that were given to us. This means that we have to rewrite the table slightly differently, and have to come up with recommendations based on THEIR findings. Now that I have these findings, I have to come to a conclusion.

Conclusions:

1. Boys were found to spend the major share of their money on day to day items that have little lasting value.
2. The girls spending showed that they were concerned about their image and their presentation.
3. The students encountered no difference with transport spending as this is universal to all students.

There is nothing groundbreaking in these conclusions, they’re just stating the obvious facts of the findings. Now to make recommendations to the Principal and council.

Recommendations:

Having looked at the information gathered for this report, the following recommendations seem most relevant:
1. Suggest that boys consider cutting down on the snacks and drinks in order to improve their diet and reduce on spendings.
2. Suggest that girls considering spending only on personal goods OR clothing, but not both. Again, this is in order to reduce on spendings.
3. Advise all students to consider putting off purchases and saving pocket money to buy something more substantial and lasting.

These recommendations seem fairly obvious, but the point of a report is to be painfully clear! Now the sign off

Report compiled by the student council, edited by [Fake Name]

[Fake Name’s Signature]

21) Guidelines to writing eyewitness reports

Eyewitness reports are those where you were at an event and saw something happen. You may be asked to write a report on an accident in school, or report on a sports event in a magazine.

Though the accident report and a newspaper report might sound very different, they are actually quite similar because the newspaper report is more formal than any other article type.

There are a few differences that we will look at between an eyewitness report and an investigative report.

You’ll have to make up an event to report on so the more fake details you can think of at the start, the more detailed your answer will appear. Make sure to write down any details you can and place them in the order they happened. This means that your answer will just be fleshing out a few simple words.

You have to report as the first person. The reason this report is important is because it is based on how you saw things as someone who was there. It is therefore important to say it as you saw it with precise, concise language.

Keep it as factual and brief as an investigative report.

Let’s take a look at an eyewitness past paper question. Keep in mind that any newspaper article should present information in the following order

1. The 5 W’s (Who, What, When, Where and Why)
2. The important details
3. General Information
4. Background Information
2010

1. Imagine you are a journalist with your school magazine. Write a report of a recent sports event involving your school team. Try to capture the atmosphere of the event for your readers.

On May 5th, on the pitches of St. Laurence’s College, St. Helen’s College Junior Cup Team walked out to play in the final game of the competition to determine who would bring home the cup this year.

There’s our first paragraph. It has the 5 W’s but it also creates intrigue and drama for the audience because it hasn’t told you a lot, but enough to keep you interested.

Before the game, there was the coin-toss, which Laurence’s Captain Michael Walsh won, and so chose the shaded half of the pitch for first 35 minutes of the game. From the very first kick by outhalf Ray Thompson, the Helen’s audience made their presence known. With over half of the stands full with the red and green Helen’s colours, it was clear that the team felt supported in every way.

The crowds again made their presence very clear in the 31st minute when Ray Thompson broke through a gap by the left wing and stormed the last 20 metres to score the opening try of the game (a try he then converted)

Here I am giving the important details (a major score change of the match, but with a focus on the atmosphere of the game via the audience)

Coming into the second half of the game, the Helen’s crowd were in high spirits and the atmosphere of the pitch was one of anticipation and excitement. Two drop goals from Laurence’s outhalf, David Harris, brought the game back to a point’s difference. The tension of the game peaked when there was silence as Harris lined up a penalty kick. He struck it wide and it was quickly reclaimed by Helen’s fullback, Ryan James who kicked it up to winger James Heaney who came along the left side to score the second try of the day and put St. Helen’s well out of St. Laurence’s reach

Here again is important details with a focus on the crowd. Having finished the report of the event itself, we can now look at background info.

This is the 7th time that St. Helen’s has faced St. Laurence’s in the Junior Cup Final and only the 3rd time that St. Helen’s have come out on top. Following the match, the principal, Andrew McKinley, said that he was “immensely proud of their [St. Helen’s JCT] achievement”.

Because this is where a signoff might go, we have to remember that this is a newspaper article. Therefore, instead of signing off, we make it clear that the article is intended. The best way to do this is to have a small amount of background info and then end on a quote.
Now let's look at that same pocket money report, only this time, let's write the report as it was originally asked, as a school paper report.

2. The Transition Year class in your school carried out a survey of how the students in third year spent an average of ten euro pocket money per week. Based on the figures supplied below write a report on this survey for your school magazine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food/soft drinks</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure goods and services</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal goods</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The school gazette has learned of survey commissioned by the Principal of St. Helen’s College. The aim of the survey was to identify areas where students spent their pocket money. The goal was to then offer advice to improve the students’ spending habits.

This is almost exactly like a terms of reference, the only difference is it has a small amount of newspaper language and there is no heading!

In carrying out the survey, members of the student council interviewed 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls) from each year asking how they spent their pocket money.
Again, this is the same as the procedure, just written slightly differently. We now lead into the findings which are again written, rather than bullet-pointed.

It was found that in the area of food, drinks and services, the boy respondents spent nearly twice as much the girls. In the area of clothing and personal goods, girls were found to spend roughly twice what the boys spent. Both boys and girls spent the same amount of transport.

The words are the exact same as the previous question. Because the report is a formal news article it can keep the same brief and precise language of the official report. If you want, you can leave out the conclusions and skip straight to what the recommendation of the survey was.

Having looked at the information gathered for this report, the following recommendations were made by the student council:

They suggested that boys consider cutting down on the snacks and drinks in order to improve their diet and reduce on spendings, and that girls should consider spending only on personal goods OR clothing, but not both. Again, this was in order to reduce on spendings.

When asked about the survey, Principal Andrew McKinley had this to say “I just want to advised all students to consider putting off purchases and saving pocket money to buy something more substantial and lasting.”

Here are the recommendations are the exact same. This answer was particularly easy because it was all the same information as the previous version of the answer. However, if the examiner asks you a question like this, you will have to make up the event/report. Because we had the report already written, writing an article was easy.

THIS SHOWS THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING AN ANSWER
22) Try it yourself

You have witnessed a schoolmate being bullied and attacked by another student from an older year. You have been asked to submit a report to your Principal based on the events you saw.

(HINT: This should have the matter of fact tone of the sports report without any atmosphere. This is a formal report so everything in it should be the bare details!)

5 W's:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

Findings/Events:

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________________
As an eyewitness, what is important is what you saw. It is not up to you to make recommendations here.

23) Introduction to Flyers, Brochures, Blurbs and Instructions

Often in the Functional Writing section, the goal of the exercise is to get across information, and usually, in a convincing and persuasive manner.

- A flyer is a sheet of paper that is advertising an event or product. It is a single sheet so it has to have a lot of information in a small amount of space.
• A brochure is a larger document – it is most commonly a folded up piece of paper with plenty of pictures.
• A blurb is found at the back of books, DVDs, games etc. the purpose of the blurb is to sum up the plot/point of the product and enticing customers without giving too much away.
• Instructions/Guidelines vary from question to question but they are generally a numbered list of dos and don’ts on a certain topic.

24) Guidelines when writing flyers and brochures

In the case of the brochure and flyer, the aim is to sell an event/product to the reader. This means that you need to rely on some persuasive techniques whilst keeping the message short and simple. Here are a few rules to keep you on task:

• KISS (Keep it short and simple)
• Use the 5 W’s to make sure all the basic info is covered
• Sometimes you will be given images that will go with your text. Reference these in your answer if you can
• Use sub-headings. This will help keep your information brief and clear
• Keep the tone of the brochure/flyer informal. You are trying to befriend the reader by using words like “you” and “yours”, so they will attend your event.

In the example on the previous page, the information is broken down into sections. Each picture relates to a key point of information, which then spawns a little extra information. For example, at the bottom of the centre page there is an image of a river. The paragraph below then talks about the river itself but expands onto other topics like fishing and wildlife spotting.

Let’s get into some Past Paper examples:
Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 1, 2005

1. Look at the collection of coastal images that appear on Page 1 of Paper X. These images appear on the cover of a brochure about the area. Write a text for the brochure promoting the area as a tourist destination.

Let’s start with the top right photograph as our starting point and move clockwise.

Shady Pebble beach is a beautiful coastal spot, located just south of the seaside village, Courtown Co. Wexford. Secluded and quiet, this spot is the perfect place for you to get away and relax!

Again, we start by saying where we are. Next we sell it as a relaxing place. Note the use of “you” here to try and draw the reader in.

Explore the nature of the area and see places you’ll see nowhere else on our boat tours. Shady Pebble beach is home to some unique flora in the area, which you can learn about in the nationally preserved forests along the coast.

All of this information is made up, but it seems convincing and makes the place appealing. Next picture is the house.

One of the main attractions of Shady Pebble Beach is the accommodation. A comfortable, stylish and luxurious beach house that will only add to your relaxation and enjoyment. Watch the sun slip into the sea in the evening time from your bedroom overlooking the horizon.

Next is the canoes.
If tours don’t sound like your thing, take control of your trip and rent a bike/canoe and go explore. You can see what you want to see on your own time whilst still experiencing all the wonders of the beach.

*Now we wrap it up with a closing slogan and some further information details.*

Shady Pebble Beach is a getaway gem you simply can’t miss! Call now and get yourself a discount when you quote the code SPB123.

Contact: Shady Pebble Tourist Information at 01-416 7889  
e-mail: shadypebblebeach@tourism.ie  
Website: spbtourism.ie  
Address: Tourist Office, Main St., Shady Pebble Beach, Co. Wexford

**Past Paper Question: Section 3, Q2, 2012**

2. Look at the images on Page 3 of Paper X that accompanies this examination paper. These images appear in the prospectus for Kildeasy Secondary School. Using the images as a starting point, write a piece, suitable for publication in the school’s prospectus, representing a student’s experience of the school.
This answer will have the structure of a brochure, where each section will be based off an image, but we have to focus on the “student experience” side of the question. It must have some amount of personal experience.

Kildeasy Secondary School is located just off the Lower Kildeasy Road and is the home to some of the most accomplished young students I know.
The first picture is of the school, so we say where it is and then throw in the personal touch. Next picture (moving clockwise) is the teacher.

The students are friendly and welcoming but what’s more is that so is the staff. Teachers in Kildeasy are some of the most approachable people in their profession. They are always willing to lend me a hand and always pushing me to go that little bit further.

Again, the language is similar to a brochure as you are trying to entice students in. You say how good the teachers are and then bring it back to the question by saying how they dealt with you. The next three photos are of music, arts and hanging out.

The student body here is large and diverse. Whatever your interests may be, Kildeasy has catered for it. It was because of the school that I decided to learn how to play the oboe and now I am a senior member of the school orchestra. Kildeasy nurtures talent and initiative.

Again, we are just complimenting the school and tying it in with our own experience. The next photos are of school facilities and sports, so let’s combine them.

Kildeasy Secondary School also has some of the best facilities of any school in the county. A new science and computer lab as well as an astro turf pitch to accommodate for the many sports played here. The school makes me feel like what I’m doing matters and celebrates my achievements with me.

Lastly let’s move on to the close – a combination of a persuasive tagline and our own experience.

You won’t find a more suitable place to spend your early years of learning. I know I wouldn’t change a thing!

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 1, 2013

1. You are helping to organise a talent show in your school to raise funds for a local charity. Write the text for a flyer, to be distributed to the students in your school, explaining how the event will be run and encouraging them to participate in the talent show. Your flyer should also explain why the charity that you have chosen is a good cause to support.
A flyer uses some of the same techniques as a brochure but it is usually only one page so you have to get all the information down in a small amount of space. You should start with a large, eye-catching title.

Kildeasy Secondary School’s Annual Talent Show
In aid of St. Brendan’s Society

Lunch times can get so boring! So why not change your boring routine and spend your lunch time with us this Friday for the annual talent show.

Where: The school hall
When: 1 PM, Friday November 17th
Why: To help the good cause of St. Brendan’s Society

The title lets everyone know what it is, the subtitle then is keeping us on top of the question. Then we launch into the details (The 5 W’s). So, now to really sell it.

The show will have talented students of all years doing what they do best, whatever that is! There’s a broad range of abilities to be seen and you’ll only catch it once, this Friday!

Admission: €2 at the door, and all proceeds go to St. Brendan’s Society

A flyer is usually for an event, and the event usually costs something to see, so make sure to include admission. We also need to explain why St. Brendan’s is a good choice.

St. Brendan’s Society is working towards providing young, disadvantaged students to afford day to day school supplies. The society believes in the youth and the future and we are happy to host this talent show in order to help them!

This last bit of information doesn’t have anything to do with the details of event itself so we put it in at the end.

25) Guidelines when writing blurbs

A blurb needs to be short and sweet. It should tell you about the product without giving anything away. A golden rule is that a blurb for a film should never tell you anything that happens after the first 30 minutes. The same is true for a book, or TV series. It should give you the premise, and nothing more.

You want the reader to be interested so you must be persuasive. Compliment the story, the actors, the characters whilst explaining the plot.
REMEMBER: Sometimes a blurb can be most effective when things are left to the imagination. A curious reader is more likely to buy the book/film if they want to know what happens.

Example 1: Blurb for the book version of The Woman in Black

Susan Hill's remarkable *Woman In Black* comes as close as our era can provide. Set on the obligatory English moor, on an isolated causeway, the story has as its hero Arthur Kipps, an up-and-coming young solicitor who has come north from London to attend the funeral and settle the affairs of Mrs. Alice Drablow of Eel Marsh House. The routine formalities he anticipates give way to a tumble of events and secrets more sinister and terrifying than any nightmare.

Example 2: Blurb for the film version of The Woman in Black

Still haunted by his wife's death giving birth to their only son, Arthur Kipps is a troubled man. His son paints pictures of his mother up in heaven and draws his dad with an upside down smiley. Struggling with debt and an unsympathetic boss Arthur is sent to tidy up the paperwork of a recently deceased client in a remote town lacking in hospitality. Shunned by the townsfolk, Arthur decides to stay at the dead woman's house and quickly discovers he's not alone...

Example 3: Blurb for the play version of The Woman in Black

A man seeks the help of an actor to recreate a traumatic event in an effort to exorcise his past; and in doing so, awakes something that was best left alone.

Though each of the blurbs are different, they all inspire intrigue and curiosity in the reader. We are now interested to learn more about the plot and so we are more likely to see the film/play or buy the book.

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 2, 2006

2. Most books and DVDs have a short blurb on the outside of the back cover. Typically this is a brief text which describes and praises the plot, characterisation, acting, etc. Write such a blurb for any book or DVD of your choice.

Blurb for a DVD:

__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
26) Guidelines when writing instructions

Instructions are very straightforward. As always, the goal here is to keep it concise and clear. Anyone should be able to read your instructions and know what to do. Here are a few tips to keep your comments clear:

- Keep your sentences short, using bulleted or numbered list is a good way of doing this
- Instructions are like orders, you don’t need to be polite. Start with a verb like: “Plug the socket into the wall” or “Wash hands before returning to your workstation”
Say “if” to show that something may or may not happen e.g. “If the red light does not flash, plug out the television from the socket”

Say “when” to show that something should happen e.g. “When the screen comes on, follow the onscreen commands”.

Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 1, 2007

1. Look at the material adapted from the Irish Cancer Society’s Sun Smart campaign that appears on Page 2 of Paper X. Write a set of instructions – one instruction for each picture – designed to help people enjoy the summer sun safely.
(Make sure to put the number of each picture beside the instruction associated with it.)

1. **Stay in the shade!** You can enjoy the heat of the day without exposing yourself to the sun’s harmful rays all the time. Take breaks in the shade when you can.
2. **Cover up!** If you’re going to be out and about a lot then cover yourself with light clothing. Collared t-shirts will help protect your sensitive shoulders and neck.
3. **Keep your hat on!** Your face is very sensitive and very sore when burned. As with the t-shirt, it’s important to keep a hat on.
4. **Apply plenty of sun protection!** You can’t cover your whole body in clothes on a hot day, so cover any exposed skin with a sun cream that suits your skin tone.
5. **Mind your eyes!** Your eyes are sensitive to the sun’s rays as well. Keep the shades on to keep your eyes safe and don’t stare directly at the sun.
6. **Take an afternoon break!** The sun is at its most damaging between 11 AM and 3 PM, use this time to go inside and do other things with you day.

*Every instruction starts with a verb. Each point is numbered and each instruction is made up of short, clear instructions.*

**Past Paper Question: Section 3, Question 2, 2007**

2. Write a list of safety guidelines to be displayed on a poster EITHER in your school’s Science Lab OR in the Woodwork, Metalwork or Home Economics room.

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__________________________________________________________________
Michael Ruaidhrí Deasy is the Head English teacher at The Dublin School of Grinds. He has been an advisor to some of Ireland’s leading textbook publishers regarding the new English Syllabus and has worked for the State Examination Commission.

In most recent results, 36% of Michael Ruaidhrí’s students achieved an A1. Nationwide, this figure was just 4%. This can be explained by his ability to teach English as a scientific formula that every student can follow, eliminating the air of mystery and sometimes confusion around the subject and its marking scheme.