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Introduction

This workbook is intended for those preparing to take language examinations at the end of their secondary education who already write English with some confidence and who need to take their writing skills to a higher level. To benefit from this workbook, users need to be willing to do some thinking and some work.

You will be able to improve your own writing skills by engaging in peer assessment of authentic examination writing tasks written by Maltese learners at the end of secondary education. By analysing the strong and weak points of these writing tasks, you will develop your self-assessment skills that are crucial for progress.

You will find 15 examination writing tasks each followed by a series of questions that will focus on those criteria that help make your writing successful and help you gain higher marks.

The following are the success criteria and a description of each:

Task achievement	Have you written what you were asked to write? For example, if you were asked to write a letter of complaint did you write a proper letter? Did you write formally? Did you describe your complaint clearly?
Organisation	Is your writing organised into paragraphs? Do the paragraphs follow each other in a way that makes sense?
Vocabulary	Is the vocabulary correct? Is the vocabulary varied? Have you avoided repeating the same vocabulary?
Spelling	Is the spelling correct?
Grammar	Is the grammar correct?
Sentence structure	Are the sentences written correctly? Is the sentence structure varied?
Punctuation	Is the punctuation correct? Have you used capital letters where necessary?

The first step in your preparation for writing is to remember the following basic point: whenever you are writing something, whether in Maltese, English or any other language, ask yourself:

WHAT are you writing? **Genre**

WHO are you writing to? **Audience**

WHY are you writing? **Purpose**

A companion book - Workbooks Answer Key - provides answers to this Workbook.

Doreen Spiteri B.Ed(Hons) MA (TESOL) (Lond) PhD (Lond)

Writing skills and examinations

Most language examination syllabi, whether MatSEC, State schools or international examinations, require candidates to demonstrate similar writing skills. Typical examples of types of writing found in most examination syllabi are:

letter / email
short story

report
article

biography
diary entry

dialogue
review

Clearly, these are general types and there is a variety within each. The sections below provide some guidelines on each text type.

A **letter** could serve different purposes. We write letters:

- to complain about something or a service
- to apologise
- to request information / explanation
- to give information / explanation
- to make suggestions
- to keep in touch with friends / family
- to apply for jobs / scholarships / sponsorship etc. etc.

Remember that a letter can be sent by email as an **attachment**. This means that you write a letter using the usual layout of a letter with a

view to either putting it in the post or sending it electronically – email. The e in email means just that – normal mail sent electronically. It is not unusual for people to send a letter by email and also send it by post if it is very important.

Emails and letters can range from an informal couple of paragraphs to a very formal job application. What makes the difference is your **audience**. Who will be reading your email / letter? How well do you know them?

A letter is an opportunity to show a wide range of writing skills – all dependent on the type of letter and audience.

A **report** could be about several topics, and it is always a formal piece of writing. A report could be about:

- a school trip abroad
- the sports facilities at a school or training centre
- the food in a school / youth club / hobby club cafeteria
- a visit to the school / youth club / hobby club by visitors from another country

- a school visit to a local site of interest
- the introduction of a longer lunchbreak and its effect on school life
- an event such as a concert, sports day, jeans day, exhibition, demonstration, competition, fund raising, etc. etc. organised by a school / youth club / hobby club etc. etc.

A report allows you to show your ability to write in a neutral, factual, formal way. You should use a title for a report and headings for the sections.

A **short story** could be about anything. It could range from a personal experience to fiction. You should be able to tell a story that is not too complicated as you must keep to the number of words expected and write a story that has a point to it.

A short story is an opportunity to show your ability to narrate, write imaginatively and capture the reader's interest.

An **article** could be about a variety of subjects but every article **is intended for publication somewhere**.

You should adjust your language depending on where you are told the article will be published. If

it is a student publication, then you can write in a semi-formal way. If it is for the general public, aim for a formal style. If it is to be published on the Internet, the same rules apply. A website for teenagers calls for semi-formal language;

a website that has a wider and older audience requires you to write quite formally.

The second point about writing an article has to do with the specific task you are given. If you are asked to write an article to **discuss** an issue, then you should present **more than one viewpoint** and write a **balanced** argument. Essentially this is a written debate where you are using your skill at reasoning, backed up by carefully selected evidence to make a case for and against an argument, or point out the advantages and disadvantages of a given context. Remember to

arrive at a conclusion.

If you are simply given a topic to write an article about, then you can consider that as an opportunity to express **your opinion** or **one point of view** about the issue. It is essentially an **opinion piece**.

An article allows you to show several writing skills, particularly the skill of engaging the readers and making them interested in what you have to say.

A **diary** entry could be:

- your own
- somebody else's – you are asked to take on another role (a student in another country / an explorer / a computer analyst in Silicon Valley / a trainee chef / a journalist etc.

Diary entries are often opportunities to show your ability to write imaginatively, describe and reflect on what happened using language that is similar to spoken language.

A **biography**

In a biography you write about someone's life and provide information about him or her. The information usually consists of the person's beginning, their personal life, their achievements and reasons for their fame.

A biography is an opportunity to show your ability to give factual information and also entertain the reader.

A **dialogue**

In a dialogue you record in writing what two people say. It is speech written down and spoken language, as in a conversation, tends to be informal.

A dialogue is an opportunity to show your ability to write down realistic, spoken English and give voice to characters through what they say.

A **review could be of a film / book / computer game / public performance / album music / video song / website** and consists of information about whatever you are reviewing, together with your **opinion** and **recommendation**.

It is not wise to attempt to write about something you have little knowledge about

because you might not have the necessary vocabulary for the review.

A review allows you to show your ability to write in a knowledgeable way about something using language mainly of description and explanation.

Formality

Reports Job applications Biography Letters to newspapers / companies / institutions Articles / opinion pieces	Articles Opinion pieces Reviews Biographies Blogs Letters / emails	Letters Emails Diary entries
<i>For a publication for the general public</i>	<i>For publications that adopt an informal, chatty style</i>	<i>To family, friends and people you know very well</i>
FORMAL	SEMI-FORMAL	INFORMAL

Formality has to do **mainly** with **choice of vocabulary**. Whether you write a quick email or a job application, your spelling, punctuation, paragraphing and grammar should be **accurate**.

01

UNIT one

You have just seen the advertisement below in a local newspaper. Write a letter to Culture Tours to apply for the post. Write between 320 and 350 words.

CULTURE TOURS

Bright and motivated people needed to act as tour guides for groups of foreign students. Applications from speakers of foreign languages are particularly welcome.

Write to us saying why you think you are suitable. Explain how you would go about making some local attractions interesting to a group of foreign teenagers.

Write to P.O. Box 11, Valletta

1A Understanding the task

Read the task above **carefully**.

1. What are you asked to write? _____
2. Do you need to emphasise anything in particular? _____
3. To whom will you be writing / who is your audience? _____
4. What level of formality of language should you use? _____

Now read the answer below.

113, St Joseph's Road
Mosta

P.O. Box 11,
Valletta

5 Wednesday, 4th February 2016

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing with reference to your advertisement on the newspaper of last Sunday to apply for the post of a tour guide for groups of foreign students.

*I have obtained advanced levels of Italian and Spanish ~~and~~ from Junior College and last summer I completed a private course in English language and obtained great results so I am very fluent in these