

Short writing task tips

Story writing

- Your story will work best if the action happens all in one go, in one location and with only a few characters.
- Don't write a long introduction. Plunge straight into the story – particularly if you are asked to continue the story from where it left off or to write from a particular character's viewpoint.
- Start with a small idea and develop it, rather than beginning with a huge idea for which you run out of time.
- Keep the story moving quickly to hold the reader's interest.
- Include dialogue and description that help the reader to imagine the events, setting and atmosphere.

Concise description

- Think about the potential readers for your piece and write in a style that is likely to make them want to read on.
- For example, if the piece of writing is for a website or magazine, don't waste words – make it snappy and lively. You don't need detail for this type of writing. Make sure all you write is relevant to the task.

Detailed description

- Where a full description is required, use your imagination to picture the scene.
- Use your senses – all of them! – to help your reader see and feel the scene as you do.
- Give the reader a strong sense of the person, place or thing that you are describing.

Instructions, persuasive writing and explanations

Before you start writing, identify the purpose of the piece of writing.

- *Instructions* need to be simple, correctly ordered and straightforward. Sometimes the separate points may be numbered.
- *Writing that aims to persuade or to influence* should avoid nagging or insulting the reader. Carefully worked-out arguments – clearly expressed and with separate points that are in a helpful order – can be very effective.
- *Explanation* must be clearly focused on exactly what it is that the reader needs to understand. Be sure that you understand what you are trying to explain. You cannot provide a clear explanation of something that you do not understand.

Discussion

- Show the reader that you understand the matter you are asked to discuss.
- Think clearly and express yourself as clearly and directly as you can.
- Strong opinions are not needed. Being able to see several sides to a question is a valuable skill.
- Simple sentences may work best in writing of this kind.

Conversation and dialogue

- Some of the **Short writing task** options ask you to write a conversation, develop or create one or more characters, or speak in the voice of a particular character. We don't all speak the same way. Try to show this in the things you give your characters to say and in the different words you can find for the word *said*.
- All conversation should be correctly set out and punctuated.