

How to move up at least one level in your English



WRITING

Why can't I improve my level?

If you are writing at Level 4 it is likely that you can make sense when you write - you get by with your writing in school. You may even show really good ideas. But you are probably unsure of where sentences should start and end, or you just don't care. Your sentences do not show much variety and you are not likely to use paragraphs properly. You possibly do not write an opening to your writing tasks that introduces the subject to your reader, or give an ending which leaves the reader clear about what you have said. Your spelling is reasonable – but you do make errors occasionally on words that are quite common. You either write too little to cover the topic that has been set or you write too much and you aren't really in control – you just tag on extra bits as they come to mind. You may use lots of 'and's and 'then's to join ideas together. Like when talking, you tend to repeat words or use words that are not very interesting or accurate.

So what can you do about it?

To move from Level 4 to Level 5 you need to:

- Show you know where sentences start and stop,
- Use more types of sentence (complex as well as simple and compound),
- Use paragraphs properly,
- Use linking words or phrases (connectives) between paragraphs,

To move from Level 5 to 6, you also have to:

- Show you can really do full stops (especially not putting in commas where there should be full stops).
- Have an opening and closing paragraph and organise the others well to help the readers.

To move from 6 to 7, your examiner will also need to be able to spot:

- A range of sentences (including subordinate clauses, lively noun phrases etc) that are interesting and suitable for the task you are writing about and the style you should be writing in.
- Links between ideas and paragraphs that are clear and help the writing flow.

So ...

For most pupils, the key areas to sharpen up for the writing tasks in the Test are:

- ✓ **Paragraphs**
- ✓ **Linking words and phrases (connectives)**
- ✓ **Sentences – punctuation and variety**

Now ... is that all?

Not quite. There are one or two other things the markers have complained about in the last two or three years:

- **Poor use of commas**
- **Openings were fine – but many pupils forgot to do an ending paragraph**
- **Speech punctuation (using inverted commas) was poor**
- **Use of the apostrophe was poor**
- **Although you are not marked down for incorrect spelling of very difficult words – common words and words that are spelt as you would expect could have been better.**

IMPROVING GRADES IN WRITING**SUMMARY****DON'T FORGET**

- To sound like you are writing, not chatting**
- full stops and capital letter**
- paragraphs**
- the opening and ending**

THEN DO ALL OF THE FOLLOWING

- ✓ **Read the question and decide exactly what it wants**
- ✓ **Plan before you start**
- ✓ **Write for your audience (he, she, it or they are told you in the question)**
- ✓ **Use the form (letter, speech, brochure, newspaper report etc)**
- ✓ **Write with purpose (to argue, persuade, inform, describe etc)**
- ✓ **Put in full stops**
- ✓ **Put in paragraphs**
- ✓ **Show you can use other punctuation (commas and speech marks especially)**
- ✓ **Time it – keep your eye on the clock. Five minutes to check over.**
- ✓ **Check over by saying it aloud to yourself.**
- ✓ **Change vague words to more precise ones, change boring words to more interesting ones, add words to make it more accurate. Try to check and improve your spelling.**

How good is my writing?	I can do this	I forget to do this	I will learn to do this	I don't know what this means
Use different ways of thinking about how to spell a word. For example, splitting the word into parts; using spelling rules and using what you know about how other words are spelt.				
Use paragraphs to guide the reader and organise ideas.				
Always use capitals and full stops.				
Use commas to expand sentences. For example, "Michael Jordan received five Most Valuable Player awards," "Michael Jordan, the best basketball player in the world, received five Most Valuable Player awards."				
Plan the structure of a piece of writing, including the conclusion or end.				
Use linking words (conjuncts) in essays and non-writing to link ideas and paragraphs. For example, however, furthermore, although...				
Use " " to show that a character said exactly what they have given (direct speech).				
Use a new line and a space when a new character starts speaking just after someone else.				
Use an apostrophe ' to show something belongs to someone.				
Use an apostrophe ' to show that letters are missing.				
Use past or present tense when it is appropriate.				
Use short or long sentences when appropriate.				

CHECK YOUR LEVEL

	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6 & above
Sentence punctuation	A number of missing full stops and capital letters	Although there are missing full-stops – usually I've put a comma or something else	Only an occasional error in sentence punctuation	No errors except when I'm trying very complicated sentences..
Sentence variety	A number of my sentences start with the same word. I use lots of 'ands'. They are all about the same length.	A bit of variety in length. Not very interesting sentences, though. I couldn't say why I decided to use this sort of sentence or that sort.	More variety. Writing is becoming interesting for the reader. It does not sound like chat. I'm using sentences for purpose.	A lot of variety. Some starting with subordinate clauses; using commas to add clauses in mid-sentence etc. My sentences are like the sentences that you find in the type of writing that I am imitating
Paragraphing	I don't have any or I have them after every sentence	I use paragraphs when changing main ideas - time, place, activity, topic.	I have an opening paragraph and an ending paragraph. In non-fiction writing my paragraphs start with a sentence which tells what the rest of the paragraph is about.	Opening, ending paragraphs are clear. There is a helpful order of paragraphs in between. For explanations or opinions etc. the reader can follow my main ideas by simply reading the first sentence of each paragraph. The rest of each paragraph develops what is said there.
	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Paragraph Linking words and phrases (sometimes called 'connectives')	I don't know what a link word is, let alone a connective.	I'm starting to link but I'm pretty boring and say things like 'My next point is ...'	Usually linked with words such as: <i>Firstly, Following this point, On the other hand</i>	I link backwards and forwards. I use different linking words and phrases.
Words	Chat and slang	I'm vague – I use easy words	More precise. My only repeated words are when I want to emphasise a point	I use a range of words which will force the reader to think and be interested in the way I say things.

Planning and getting started	I don't plan. I never know what I'm going to say next. I start, Then I see what happens	I find it difficult to plan. When I do, my essay never seems to follow the plan	I outline plan and write some key words. I picture what I'm going to say	I enjoy planning. I also jot down bits on the plan while I'm writing the essay and new ideas come to me.
Needing to speed up	I spend a lot of time trying to get started	Not enough detail in my writing	I write enough (5 paragraphs in the long essay, 3 paragraphs in the short essay) – but it gives me aching fingers	Partly because I plan well, I usually don't have to rush. My focus is being as accurate as I can be.
Needing to slow down	I always seem to finish before the rest	Quite a few mistakes – especially careless expression	I spend some of my time looking over what I have written and altering it. Would be better to have done it first time	I never have to slow down. I suppose my planning shows me how much time I should spend on each part
Checking over and spotting mistakes and improvements	Checking over is almost impossible.	I check over but don't spot many mistakes. I find it boring.	I read aloud in my head. I look out for errors I know I usually make. I also add words and change others	I say goodbye to my paper wishing I had more than the five minutes to look over it. Writing can always be better. I always make several improvements
Reading the question	You don't write differently for different people or purposes do you?	I write for the purpose. I sometimes write one view when I am supposed to discuss. I tend to say what happened to me when I'm asked to explain	I look at the question to see audience, purpose and form. I'm not quite good enough yet with my words or sentences to sound convincing. But anyone who reads me can see that I am trying	I highlight parts of the question to make sure I don't get this wrong I enjoy writing in different ways, just like some people like imitating others.

What do I need to do more work on? (Tick the ones you need to improve on)

- a. **Sentence punctuation**
- b. **Sentence variety**
- c. **Paragraphing**
- d. **Paragraph connectives**
- e. **Improving writing style**
- f. **Other punctuation**
- g. **Speed (slow down speed up)**
- h. **My ability to check over my work.**