



Occupational English Test
Writing sub-test
Test information

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General Information



Time Allocation

45 minutes in **total**.

5 minutes is allocated for **reading** time.

40 minutes is allocated for **writing** time.

Test format and procedure

The Writing sub-test is specific to each profession. You take this part of the OET using materials specifically for your profession – a nurse does the task for nursing, a dentist does the task for dentistry, and so on. In each test, there is one task set for each profession based on a typical workplace situation and the demands of the profession.

This sub-test requires candidates to write a letter (referral, transfer or advice) based on case notes which are provided. Sometimes, and particularly for some professions, a different type of letter is required (e.g., a letter of transfer or discharge, or a letter to advise or inform a patient, carer, or group).

Candidates are required to write approximately **180-200 words** in the body of the text.

The first five minutes of the test is allocated for reading time. During this time, you may study the task and notes but **may not write**, underline or make any notes.

For the remaining 40 minutes you may write your response to the task. You receive a printed answer booklet in which you must write your response (a sample answer booklet is included with these sample materials). This also has space for rough work. You may write in pen or pencil.

Assessment procedure

After you sit the OET Writing sub-test your sample of writing is assessed by **two** qualified and experienced English assessors who have been trained in OET assessment procedures. The assessment is based on the following 5 criteria:

- overall task fulfilment
- appropriateness of language
- comprehension of stimulus
- linguistic features (grammar and cohesion)
- presentation features (spelling, presentation, layout).

Every Writing sub-test script is assessed in Melbourne. **All scripts are double marked.**

The sample materials

The sample materials consist of:

- sample writing tasks for 12 health professions
- a sample response for each task

Using the materials

- Select the writing task appropriate for your profession.
- Allow enough time (40 minutes) to do the sample writing sub-test in one sitting. This will give you an indication of the requirements of the OET.
- Set a timer or alarm clock for 40 minutes or ask someone to act as a timer.
- On completion of the letter, check your work.
- Read the sample answer provided to establish if it contains additional points or information. Remember the sample letter is a **sample only**; there is more than just one correct way to express a letter.

Rationale

Although work is now mainly done on computer, most medical professionals continue to prepare letters as part of regular practice. The writing task, taken directly from the workplace context, requires the selection and organisation of relevant information and its presentation in a clear, accurate form that is appropriate for the intended reader.

Preparing such a letter with only limited time is a reality for practising professionals.

What Writing skills are tested?

Your letter is assessed against **five** criteria:

- **Overall task fulfilment** – including whether the response is of the required length
- **Appropriateness of language** – including the use of appropriate vocabulary and tone in the response, and whether it is organised appropriately
- **Comprehension of stimulus** – including whether the response shows you have understood the situation and provide relevant rather than unnecessary information to your reader
- **Control of linguistic features** (grammar and cohesion) – how effectively you communicate using the grammatical structures and cohesive devices of English
- **Control of presentation features** (spelling, punctuation and layout) – how these areas affect the message you want to communicate

How can I improve on each criterion?

Overall task fulfilment

Write enough so the assessors have a sufficient sample of your writing – the task requires approximately 180-200 words in the body of the letter

Don't write too much – you may need to select content carefully to keep to the required word count

Use your own words as much as possible – don't simply copy sections from the case notes

Avoid using a 'formulaic' response – if you include elements that do not fit the task, it indicates a lack of flexibility in your writing

Don't include information that the intended reader clearly knows already (e.g., if you are replying to a colleague who has referred a patient to you)

Appropriateness of language

Organise the information clearly – the sequence of information in the case notes may not be the most appropriate sequence of information for your letter

Highlight the main purpose of your letter at the start – this provides the context for the information you include

Be clear about the level of urgency for the communication

Always keep in mind the reason for writing – don't just summarise the case notes provided

Focus on important information and minimise incidental detail

If it will help, be explicit about the organisation of your letter: e.g., 'First I will outline the problems the patient has, then I will make some suggestions for his treatment.'

Consider using dates and other time references (e.g., three months later, last week, a year ago) to give a clear sequence of events where necessary

Remember that all professional letters are written in a relatively formal style

Avoid informal language, slang, colloquialisms and spoken idiom unless you are sure this is appropriate (e.g., use 'Thank you' rather than 'Thanks a lot')

Avoid SMS texting abbreviations in a formal letter (e.g., use 'you' not 'u')

Give the correct salutation: if you are told the recipient's name and title, use them

Show awareness of your audience by choosing appropriate words and phrases: if you are writing to another professional, you may use technical terms and, possibly, abbreviations; if you are writing to a parent or a group of lay people, use non-technical terms and explain carefully

Comprehension of stimulus

Demonstrate in your response that you have understood the case notes fully

Be clear what the most relevant issues for the reader are

Don't let the main issue become hidden by including too much supporting detail

Show clearly the connections between information in the case notes if these are made; however, do not add information that is not given in the notes (e.g., a suggested diagnosis), particularly if the reason for the letter is to get an expert opinion

Take relevant information from the case notes and transform it to fit the task set

If the stimulus material includes questions that require an answer in your response, be explicit about this – don't 'hide' the relevant information in a general summary of the notes provided

Don't simply try to include every piece of information from the case notes in your letter in the same order it is presented in the case notes

Control of linguistic features (grammar and cohesion)

Show that you can use language accurately and flexibly in your writing

Make sure you demonstrate a range of language structures – use complex sentences as well as simple ones

Split a long sentence into two or three sentences if you feel you are losing control of it

Review areas of grammar to ensure you convey your intended meaning accurately: particular areas to focus on might include

- articles – a/an, the (e.g., 'She had an operation.', 'on the internet')
- countable and uncountable nouns (e.g., some evidence, an opinion, an asthma)
- verb forms used to indicate past time and the relationship between events in the past and now (past simple, present perfect, past perfect)
- adverbs that give time references (e.g., 'two months previously' is different from 'two months ago')
- prepositions following other words (e.g., 'Thank you very much to see for seeing E', 'sensitivity of to pressure', 'my examination on of the patient', 'diagnosed with cancer')
- passive forms (e.g., 'The patient should advised to relax', 'He involved in an accident.' for 'He was involved in an accident.')

Use connecting words and phrases ('connectives') to link ideas together clearly (e.g., however, therefore, subsequently)

Create a mental checklist of problems that you have with grammar and go through this when you review your response towards the end of the test: particular areas to focus on might include

- number agreement, e.g. 'The test result shows that E', 'There is no evidence E', 'He lives E', 'one of the side effects'
- complete sentences, i.e., the main clause includes 'subject and verb', e.g., 'On examination showed that E' should be 'Examination showed that E' or 'On examination it was found that E'
- gender agreement, e.g. 'Mr Jones and her daughter'
- tense agreement, e.g., 'Examination on 15 May 2006 revealed she is overweight.' [creating confusion over whether she is still overweight at the time of writing]

Control of presentation features (spelling, punctuation and layout)

Take care with the placement of commas and full stops

Make sure there are enough – separating ideas into sentences

Make sure there are not too many – keeping elements of the text meaningfully connected together

Leave a blank line between paragraphs to show clearly the overall structure of the letter

Don't write on every other line – this does not assist the reader particularly

Check for spelling mistakes and for spelling consistency through your writing (e.g., with a patient's name)

Remember that many of the words you write are also in the case notes – check that the spelling you use is the same

Be consistent in your spelling: alternative spelling conventions (e.g., American or British English) are acceptable as long as your use is consistent

Don't use symbols as abbreviations in formal letters

Avoid creating any negative impact on your reader through the presentation of the letter

Use a clear layout to avoid any miscommunication

Make sure poor handwriting does not confuse the reader over spelling and meaning

Write legibly so the assessor can grade your response fairly using the set criteria

How is the Writing sub-test assessed?

The Writing sub-test is scored by two experienced assessors who receive ongoing training, monitoring, and feedback on their performance after each administration of the test.

Assessors give a score from 1 to 6 for each of the five criteria listed above using a detailed set of level descriptors to guide their decisions. A score of 6 is the highest for each criterion. The five criteria are equally weighted in the scoring and analysis process.

Each candidate's script is graded by two assessors independently. Neither assessor knows the scores the other assessor gives or the scores awarded to the candidate for other sub-tests.

The two separate sets of raw scores for each candidate's script are analysed for the whole group of candidates taking the sub-test at the same administration. A multi-faceted Rasch analysis of the data is done using FACETS software (Linacre 1989). This analysis takes account of patterns of assessor behaviour and compensates for assessors whose scores are consistently lenient or severe.

After the initial analysis, any scripts which have mis-fitting scores (i.e., which do not fit the pattern expected for the analysis) are re-scored by a third assessor (again without any knowledge of the previous scores given) and the statistical analysis is repeated.

The final score for each candidate's script is therefore not a simple mean average of the two (or three) assessors' raw scores. Instead, it is a 'fair score', compensating for particular assessors' severity or leniency.

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
ASSESSOR NO.	
ASSESSOR NO.	



Occupational English Test

WRITING SUB-TEST

Answer Booklet

READING TIME:	5 MINUTES
WRITING TIME:	40 MINUTES

You may answer this sub-test in pen or pencil.

Please print in BLOCK LETTERS

Candidate number - -

Family name _____

Other name(s) _____

Profession _____

City _____

Date of test _____

Candidate's signature _____

YOU MUST NOT REMOVE OET MATERIAL FROM THE TEST ROOM.

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WRITING SUB-TEST

Time allowed: 5 minutes' reading time
40 minutes' writing time

Instructions

Complete the cover page with your details before you start the test.

READING TIME (5 MINUTES)

You may study the writing task and notes but may not write, use a highlighter or make any notes.

WRITING TIME (40 MINUTES)

Use blank pages in the answer booklet for rough work. Do not remove or destroy any part of the answer booklet.

Please write clearly in pen or pencil. Cross out anything you do not want the examiner to consider.

Space for notes and draft copy

Use the reverse of this sheet if you need more space.

