

Cambridge English

Checklist to improve your writing – Level C1

When writing any text it is useful to have a **checklist** to refer to so you can improve your written English. The same checklist may also be useful to look at if you are checking a classmate's work. It can be used for any piece of writing that you do, as well as exam practice. This checklist is useful for English learners who have a C1 level of English and it relates to the **Cambridge English C1 Assessment Scale**, which our examiners use when they assess writing.

To assess a piece of writing, examiners consider these four things, called *subscales*:

- **Content** –how well the task has been completed; for example, has all the important information been included in the piece of writing?
- **Communicative Achievement** –how appropriate the writing is in terms of genre; for example, what sort of text do you have to produce – a letter, a report, a review, an essay? Does the text communicate the ideas appropriately and effectively to the target reader?
- **Organisation** –the way the text is organised; for example, are the ideas presented coherently and are they connected through the text across sentences and paragraphs?
- **Language** –vocabulary and grammar; for example, is there a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures and how accurately are they used?

Look at the list below and try and match the examples of performance to the correct subscale.

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| 1. <i>Selecting the correct format and style for specific tasks.</i> | a. <i>Organisation</i> |
| 2. <i>Presenting the information using a coherent structure.</i> | b. <i>Communicative Achievement</i> |
| 3. <i>Controlling a range of grammatical structures.</i> | c. <i>Content</i> |
| 4. <i>Using a range of cohesive devices to connect ideas.</i> | d. <i>Language</i> |
| 5. <i>Showing awareness of the function of the text.</i> | e. <i>Organisation</i> |
| 6. <i>Presenting different aspects of a topic to inform the reader.</i> | f. <i>Content</i> |
| 7. <i>Demonstrating use of a wide range of vocabulary.</i> | g. <i>Communicative Achievement</i> |
| 8. <i>Fulfilling the purpose of the task.</i> | h. <i>Language</i> |

Here are some questions from the checklist and some explanations about why these questions are important. Match the question with the correct explanation.

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| 1. <i>What relationship do you have with the reader?</i> | a. <i>Texts can be constructed in different ways, depending on the topic and the reader's needs.</i> |
| 2. <i>What effect do you want to have on the reader?</i> | b. <i>When writing to someone in a senior position you may need to moderate your language.</i> |
| 3. <i>Have you presented a balanced view of the topic?</i> | c. <i>Constructing varying sentence patterns can show control and sophistication in your writing.</i> |
| 4. <i>Is functional language used to the best effect?</i> | d. <i>How the reader will respond to your text should be one of the main purposes for writing.</i> |
| 5. <i>What is the most effective structure for your text?</i> | e. <i>If you are complaining, to ensure a positive reaction from the reader, a polite tone is best.</i> |
| 6. <i>Is there a variety of sentence structures?</i> | f. <i>If you are asked to discuss a topic, your text needs to focus on the different aspects equally.</i> |

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Checklist for writing C1

When you are producing a piece of writing, there are some questions that are useful to ask yourself when you are writing. These will help you edit and revise your work as you write. These questions are also useful if you are checking a classmate's work and can help you check and improve any text to make it more appropriate in terms of:

- Content
- Communicative Achievement
- Organisation
- Language

- **Have you developed the topic and provided details about all aspects of the task?**
 - What do you need to include and how can you develop the topic?
 - What is the purpose of the text and what does the reader need to know?
 - Can the topic be approached from a different perspective?

- **What is the purpose of the task and have you achieved the desired outcome from your text?**
 - What is the purpose of the task and what effect do you want to have on the reader?
 - Do you need to persuade, agree, argue, suggest, apologise, infer, compare ... ?
 - Does the reader need to know your personal opinion as well as the facts?
 - What is the relationship between you and the reader and does this make a difference?

- **Have you organised the information appropriately for the task?**
 - What is the most effective structure for your text? A linear or a comparative sequence?
 - Does each paragraph focus on one aspect of the task and have a clear structure?
 - Is your text balanced? Have you given equal weight to the issues under discussion?
 - Are the cohesive devices used appropriate to specify how the ideas are connected?

- **Have you demonstrated control of a range of language?**
 - Have you used grammar structures correctly?
 - Can you use more specific words or structures to express your ideas?
 - Have you used functional language to persuade, agree or compare to the best effect?
 - Have you correctly used any common phrases which are appropriate to the task?
 - Is there any repetition of phrases, expressions or words which can be paraphrased?
 - Is there a variety of sentence structures showing control over a range of grammar?