Letter

Formal or informal, application or complaint: write letters that sound right for the reader.

Plantilla para escribir una carta (formal o informal) en los exámenes Cambridge: estructura, frases y modelo.

1 Where will you write it?

En qué examen aparece

A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
A2 Key	B1 Preliminary	B2 First	C1 Advanced	C2 Proficiency
Not in this exam	Not in this exam	140–190	220–260	280–320
		Part 2 · option (letter or email)	Part 2 · option (letter or email)	Part 2 · option (formal or informal)

At B1 Preliminary you write an email, not a letter — see our Email template.

2 Know your reader

Lector, registro y objetivo

WHO READS IT?
An editor, a manager, a company, a school… or a friend.

REGISTER
Usually formal: no contractions, polite and indirect. Informal only for friends.

YOUR GOAL
Apply, complain, give information or make a request — and get a reply.

3 Structure

Estructura párrafo a párrafo

Greeting Saludo	Dear Sir or Madam, · Dear Mr Smith,	
Reason Párrafo 1	Why you're writing, in one or two sentences.	**25** words
Main point Párrafo 2	Details, experience, reasons or the problem.	**60** words
Second point Párrafo 3	More details, a request or what you want to happen.	**60** words
Closing Cierre	Final request + Yours faithfully / Yours sincerely,	**25** words

Word guide based on a B2 First letter (140–190 words). Adjust for your level.

4 Plan your time

Cómo repartir el tiempo

2–3 min	5 min	25–30 min	5 min
Read	**Plan**	**Write**	**Check**
Underline every point.	Paragraphs + key phrases.	Follow your plan.	Use the checklist.

One task at B2–C2 ≈ 40–45 minutes. B1 Preliminary ≈ 20 minutes per task: same four steps, shorter.

5 Useful language

Frases útiles por nivel

Function	B1 B2 Good	C1 C2 Even better
Reason for writing Motivo	I am writing to apply for... · I am writing about...	I am writing with regard to... · I wish to draw your attention to...
Experience Experiencia	I have worked as... · I have experience of...	I have gained considerable experience in... · I would be well suited to...
Complaining Quejarse	I was disappointed with... · The problem was...	I must express my dissatisfaction with... · This was far from...
Requesting Pedir	Could you please...? · I would like to know...	I would be grateful if you could... · I would appreciate it if...
Sign-off Despedida	Yours faithfully, (Dear Sir/Madam)	Yours sincerely, (Dear Mr Smith)

6 What the examiner checks

Los 4 criterios de corrección

Content
Contenido
Cover every point in the task and give enough detail for the reader to act.

Communicative Achievement
Registro y efecto
Keep the same formal register from start to finish: no contractions.

Organisation
Organización
One purpose per paragraph. Use formal linkers: Furthermore, However.

Language
Lengua
Use polite structures: I would be grateful if...; passive where useful.

B1 Preliminary to C2 Proficiency writing is marked on these four criteria, each out of 5.

7 Spanish speakers' traps

Errores típicos

✗ ~~Dear Sirs:~~
✓ **Dear Sir or Madam,**
comma, not colon

✗ ~~I'm writing to complain.~~
✓ **I am writing to complain.**
no contractions

✗ ~~I want that you send me...~~
✓ **I would be grateful if you could send me...**
polite request

✗ ~~Yours faithfully, (to Mr Smith)~~
✓ **Yours sincerely,**
named person = **sincerely**

✗ ~~I am interested to apply...~~
✓ **I am interested in applying...**
interested **in** + -ing

✗ ~~Waiting for your answer.~~
✓ **I look forward to hearing from you.**
full sentence

8 Level up a sentence

Sube de nivel

B1	The hotel room was dirty and I was not happy.	Simple, but too direct for a formal letter.
B2	I was disappointed **to find that** the room **had not been cleaned**.	Formal adjective + passive.
C1	I must **express my dissatisfaction with** the standard of cleanliness in the room.	Formal noun phrase.
C2	The state of the room **fell considerably short of** the standards your website leads guests to expect.	Sophisticated, controlled criticism.

9 Model answer

Respuesta modelo · B2 First

172 words

Task: A summer camp in Ireland is looking for English-speaking assistants. Write a letter of application explaining why you would be suitable.

Dear Sir or Madam,

1 I am writing to apply for the position of assistant at your summer camp, which I saw advertised on your website.

2 I am a 21-year-old student of Primary Education in Murcia, and I have experience of working with children. Last summer, I helped to organise sports and craft activities at a local day camp, which I really enjoyed. I am patient, energetic and good at solving problems, and I am used to working as part of a team.

3 As for my English, I passed the B2 First exam last year and I can communicate confidently. Furthermore, I can play the guitar, so I could lead music sessions in the evenings. I also have a first-aid certificate, which I believe would be useful at a camp.

4 I would be grateful if you could tell me the exact dates of the camp and whether accommodation is provided. I am available from 1 July until the end of August. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,
Marta García

1 Reason for writing in the first line.
2 Relevant experience + personal qualities.
3 Extra skills with a formal linker.
4 Polite request + formal sign-off.

10 Before you hand it in

Revisa antes de entregar

- [ ] Greeting and sign-off match (faithfully / sincerely).
- [ ] The purpose is clear in the first paragraph.
- [ ] Formal linkers: Furthermore, However, As for…
- [ ] Paragraphs with one idea each.
- [ ] No contractions anywhere.
- [ ] Every point in the task is covered.
- [ ] At least one polite request (I would be grateful…).
- [ ] I checked the word count.

11 Now you try

Ahora te toca a ti

B2 An international film festival in your city needs volunteers. Write a letter of application explaining why you would be a good volunteer.

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