

Teaching Tips for the London Test of English – Writing 1

Task instructions

At all levels the marking criteria for LTE writing tasks are

- effective communication
- grammatical accuracy and range
- lexical accuracy and range
- task completion

It is common for students to concentrate on the grammatical and lexical elements, and to neglect communication and task completion, and so to lose marks in the exam. To avoid doing this, candidates need to read task instructions carefully so that they know exactly what is required of them.

Activity *Focusing on instructions*

1) Show your students a sample writing task, based on LTE past papers. For example:

Write an article about a large town or a city that you know well. You must include all the following points:

- Describe the city (size, geographical location, etc.)
- Describe something you like about this city
- Describe a memorable experience you have had in this city
- Say why you would or would not recommend this city to tourists

2) Get the students to decide what are the key words and phrases in the instructions (e.g. 'article', 'large town or city', 'must include all' ...) and highlight or underline them.

3) Give the students a list of statements about the writing task. Here is an example:

- You have to write a short travel guide.**
- It is not necessary to discuss bad features of the town or city.**
- You should not include your personal feelings.**
- You should write in a very formal academic style.**
- Your article should be helpful for readers who are considering spending a holiday in the city.**

4) Put the students in pairs, and get them to decide together which statements are true, and which are false (In the example, b. and e. are true, and a., c. and d. are false).

5) To reinforce the importance of task completion and effective communication, give your students frequent brief writing tasks in which they must incorporate a number of specified items. For example:

- a thank you letter, mentioning specific items that you want the students to say thank you for
- a narrative, telling a story depicted in a series of pictures
- a job application, demonstrating how the applicant's qualities and experience fit a list of job requirements

Marking

When marking students' written work, look beyond the grammar, vocabulary and spelling, to what the students mean to convey. Make a comment that shows you are interested in what she or he communicates to you and, where appropriate, in their opinion.