

Tips for Getting Ready for Literacy Writing Exam at Home

Quill

Quill is an online reading and writing tool to help students practice their literacy skills at home. Create a free student account and have a play: <https://www.quill.org/>

Literacy Essentials Workbook

Kathryn Ryan is a teacher at Lincoln High School. She has co-authored several English workbooks that have been sold in New Zealand. Recently, Kathryn has worked in collaboration with Jenny Thomas and Diane White to produce a helpful tool to prepare students for the literacy reading and writing exams. This book is called 'Literacy Essentials' and you can order a copy for your young person to work on at home. It costs approximately \$15. <https://cengage.co.nz/product/title/literacy-essentials-workbook/isbn/9780170477581>

Accessing Past Exams

1. Go to: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/ncea/ncea-exams-and-portfolios/external/digital-exams/find-past-digital-exams/>
2. This is the information you need to have in the dropdown box:

Students can access all past digital external assessments, including those with copyright content, from their [student login](#) under 'Find past digital exams'.

OR

Select the subject and level below to access a past digital external assessment.

Select a subject

Select a level

3. Scroll down to this button and enter the exam page:
4. The login details are:

NSN: View2024

Verification Code: Tw3nty/24

5. There are two exams here (2022 and T2 2023) – you will need to scroll down quite a long way as the Literacy exams are below the Level 3 exams.
6. Press 'Start' to begin the exam.
7. When it asks for a start code it is: **0000**

Formal Writing

At least ONE of the two writing pieces in the literacy writing exam will be expected to be in a formal register. This means that you should be using formal language, structure and evidence. More often than not, you will be given a choice of prompts to write from. These could be images, written prompts, articles, opinions, statements, advertisements etc.

This document will take you through some steps to help you plan and write a formal response to a prompt. Formal writing requires careful planning and most importantly it must clearly address the topic.

Picking a topic

Many students find writing formally difficult because they choose the wrong topic to start with. Half the knack of having something to write about is in the choosing of the topic. Here are a few things to think about:

- Carefully read through the topics first.
- Note down those that you already know something about.
- Eliminate bad choices.
- Write a few notes about a couple of topics to get a 'feel' for what you know.
- THEN pick the topic that you are best prepared to answer.

Brainstorming

Once you have picked your topic, complete a brainstorm (preferably on paper). Write down everything you know about the chosen topic. Then separate that knowledge into two to three obvious parts. These will become the basis for your main points. It is important that you structure your formal writing into paragraphs. Think of it as a mini essay. You will introduce your idea, write one point in one paragraph, another in a second paragraph (maybe a third – but don't write too much; remember there is a suggested word count), and then conclude to summarise your points.

While you are brainstorming, keep referring to the prompt that you chose to write about. Use the key words from the prompt. If there are images, make notes about the images. This could be evidence you include in your writing.

Think about the intended audience and purpose of your writing. Who (imagine it is real) is going to read it? This will dictate how formally you need to write. If the task is asking for your opinion, make it clear what your opinion is. Write it down in your brainstorm. This will affect everything that you write.

Planning

Your planning should be quick! Just organise your brainstorming into a structure. Remember your main paragraph structure.

T – topic sentence

E – evidence

E – explanation

P – purpose/personal response

E – effect (on you, the reader, the wider world).

Spelling

Duz spelnk matr?

YES!

There are spelling patterns in English, despite all the irregularities. Here are some examples.

1. When a word ends in 'y', it usually changes to 'i' before adding any ending:

Story – stories

Pity – pitiful

Rely – reliable

Add an ending to these words:

Lady –

Army –

Glory –

Supply –

Pretty –

Fury –

2. Many words use the 'le' ending.

Add to these lists:

...ble	...ple	...tle
table impossible	apple example	battle cattle

However, there will always be exceptions:

sandal, scandal, hospital, pistol, pupil, cannibal, rebel

Some things you just have to learn.

3. Here is a list of words that are often spelt incorrectly. Write them correctly, then use a dictionary to see if you are right.

rythm:

parliment:

library:

principul:

beatiful:
anoyed:
morgage:
neccessary:
behavior:
disapoint:
dissapear:
brekfast:
feild:
belive:
occassion:
vegitable:
wisper:
colum:
asignment:
fulfill:

You can improve your spelling with regular practice. Spend some time learning these words (the correct versions). Write yourself a list of words to spell each week. Learn them by writing them down without looking and checking if they are correct. Test yourself at the end of the week.

Writing Task

For a novel that you have recently read, you are going to write a letter to the company that published the novel. You should explain to the publishing company that you have just read the novel and you would like to ask the author some questions so could the company please provide the author's contact details (address or email) so that you can get in contact with the author.

Your letter must include all of the following:

Address Subject by-line Greeting/Salutation Body Complimentary Close/Sign off

Writing Task

Write an email pretending you are emailing the local library to request information about the history of the local area for a research assignment that you are doing.

Your email must include all of the following:

- Email address of the person/organisation that you are sending the email to in the 'To' box.
- If the email is to go to anyone else, write their email address in the 'Cc' box.
- Type in the subject of your email in the 'Subject' box.
- When typing your actual message, you should still use a greeting, paragraphing and the correct signing off.
- The font and font size are up to you, but it should not be too big or too extreme. Font size 12 is a safe option.

Writing Task

Your task is to write a formal essay/paragraphs on the topic:

Wind energy is the way of the future.

To complete this task effectively you will need to visit the Meridian Energy website <https://www.meridianenergy.co.nz/power-stations/wind>. Here you will find links to information about how Meridian is developing wind energy in New Zealand. This should help you with the content of the essay/paragraphs.

Below is a collection of points that have been compiled to help you with your initial thinking and planning. You can use them to help you process the information from Meridian. Of course, you may like to widen your search while you are on the internet.

Feel free to argue whichever side of the issue you like.

Points:

Wind energy is now a well-proven technology.	Noise has been reduced significantly through design breakthroughs.	Striking, impressive features on the landscape.
Visually ugly.	Fast to build.	82% of those surveyed believed wind generation was the way of the future.
Unlikely to ever replace other forms of energy.	Reliability.	Environmentally responsible.
Noise created by the rotor blades.	Kyoto Protocol.	Bird mortality.

Accuracy

Students will need to have correct spelling and punctuation to pass the exam. This comes with practice. Students should be mindful of correct spelling and punctuation in EVERYTHING that they write.

A fun activity to help with this is Beat the Bot! Students can tell Chat GPT to write them something that has errors in it, and they can try to fix it. Then you can ask it for the answers to see if you got all of the errors! It is best to do this in steps. You can create a free account for Chat GPT. *Please note, we do not condone students using AI to help them with their schoolwork or assessments. This tool is to be used for practice only.*

Try to put these prompts into Chat GPT:

- Write me a paragraph of 25 to 50 words that has errors in capital letters for starts of sentences and proper nouns.
- Write me a paragraph of 25 to 50 words that has errors in full stops and put the wrong punctuation in.
- Write me a paragraph of 100 to 200 words that uses the incorrect versions of homophones.
- Write me a paragraph of 100 to 200 words that uses too many commas.
- Write me a paragraph of 200 to 250 words that uses too many repetitive words.
- Write me a paragraph of 100 to 250 words that uses apostrophes incorrectly.
- Write me a paragraph with 20 spelling errors for me to find.

Then ask for the answers!

The opportunities are endless. Try out your own prompts!

Resource List:

Building on Achievement in Year 9 English by Jenny Thomas and Diane White, 2007

Working Through 1.2 A Student-Centred Resource on Formal Writing for Level One by Jenny Thomas and Diane White, 2003