

Writing - Part 2: An informal letter Giving News

Tips: When giving news in a letter/e-mail for something you experience, use lively language and narrative techniques to make it more vivid. Idioms can also help you do this.

Tip: Check the prepositions of time when you finish a letter giving news.

A. Use the suitable narrative linking words/phrases from the box to fill in the blanks of a letter extract below. There might be more than one options.

Narrative Linking words/phrases

In the beginning (At first),
as a result (consequently),
although (even though/even if),
soon, immediately (at once), after a while (sometime later),
then (next/after that),
finally (in the end/eventually),
suddenly (all of a sudden/out of the blue)

"..... (1), I felt the ground shaking, the building collapsing and I (2) found myself among the rubble, unable to move. (3), I fainted and when I came round, it was pitch dark and there was a deafening silence, which sent chills down my spine. Can you imagine that?

..... (4), when all my hopes had faded, I heard voices approaching me. "It's the rescue team looking for survivors," I thought. (5), I started shouting for help at the top of my voice and (6), I was safe and sound.

"Thank God, I was saved."

Tip: The narrative linking words/phrases play an important role in understanding the sequence of the events.

Tip: Use a variety of adjectives and don't use or repeat very simple adjectives such as: "nice", "very nice", "good", "bad". Instead of these you can use:
- pleasant/perfect/beautiful **weather**
- a pleasant/an interesting/an enjoyable/a horrifying **experience**
- an awkward/an embarrassing/a difficult **situation**

Prepositions of Time

In

- in the morning/afternoon/evening
- in spring/summer/autumn/winter
- in 2014, 1832
- in the twenty first century

At

- at dawn/noon/night
- at Christmas/Easter
- at the weekend

Also

- during the day
- till/until morning, etc.

On

- on 4th March
- on Saturday/that day
- on a cold morning/evening
- on Christmas Eve/Day

B. Fill in the blanks with the suitable prepositions.

"..... (1) Christmas Eve, sudden snowfalls turned the whole country into a winter wonderland. The temperature dropped below freezing point (2) the night and (3) dawn, snow started falling again, covering the surrounding mountains and villages. (4) the morning, packs of hungry wolves appeared from the mountains in search of food. "Believe me, it was wonderful but scary too!"

C. Read your task

Write a letter to a friend to tell him/her about a natural disaster you experienced last weekend, how you felt and what you did.

Write between 150 and 200 words.

D. Answer the questions.

1. What style of letter will you write?
2. How many paragraphs can you usually divide such a letter into?
3. What will your letter be about? Where will you send it?
4. Will you use descriptive and vivid language and idiomatic expressions so as to sound as natural as you can?

B. Read the model letter.

A model Letter Giving News

Dear Paul,
Hi! How're things? Hope you're well. It was great to hear you had a wonderful skiing weekend in the mountains. As for me? I had a terrible experience as I was driving to a nearby resort late in the evening.

Well, things went wrong right from the beginning when howling winds made the debris fly all over and flashes of lightning ripped the dark sky from time to time. It soon started to rain heavily and then that rain turned into a fierce hailstorm. I could hear the hailstones falling on my car with force and I didn't know what to do. Oh God! It was so nightmarish!

You know what? The hailstones finally smashed the rear window of my car completely. I was so scared that I decided to stop my car and run into the nearest cafe for cover. As a result, I had an awful fall. Fortunately I didn't break any leg or arm but I had bad bumps on my head. It was really one of my worst weekends ever.

Anyway, I'm feeling better now, safe and sound. But I'll always remember what I went through that night.

Write back soon.

Yours,
Tom

How to plan an informal letter giving news

F. Look at the plan below, read the notes carefully and find them in the model. Then underline and number them.

Paragraphs	Points
Introduction Paragraph 1 Mention the reason for writing	- a terrible experience (giving news)
Main Body Paragraphs 2 & 3 Write about that experience. Details about it and how you felt.	- howling winds - terrible hailstorm - hailstones falling on my car - car window smashed - stopped car - ran for cover - got soaked to the skin, bumps on my head - worst weekend
Closing Paragraph 4 Use suitable set phrases	- I'm feeling better now. - Write back soon.

F. Read the set phrases below before you write your letter giving news.

Set Phrases

Addressing the recipient

Dear (+ friend's/relative's name)

Don't write: Dear friend/cousin...

Set Phrases to open your letter

- How're you doing/keeping? Lovely to hear from...
- Thanks for your letter. How are things?
- Sorry, it's taken me so long to write.
- Sorry I haven't written for ages. Anyway, I was so very sad to hear about your... wonderful news...
- Just thought I'd drop you a line.

Hope you're well. Brilliant news, I'm pleased / I'm sorry to hear what wonderful news about...

Set phrases for closing paragraph

- Well, that's all for now. / Well, time to close
- Anyway, I'd better finish off here. / All for now
- Keep in touch, I'll talk to you soon.
- Write back soon, I always look forward to your letters.
- See you soon. Write when you have time, will you?
- I'd better go now

Signing off

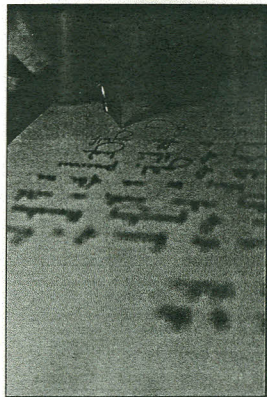
- Yours, Lots of love, All my love
- Best wishes, / Love, / Take care, All the best
- (+ your name) Give my regards to...

You will never guess what happened to me...
The best thing to do is...
My advice would be to...
As you probably remember, I've always wanted to...

Your Task

G. Write a letter to an English speaking penfriend to tell him/her about a natural disaster you experienced on your last holiday, how you felt and what you did.

Write between 150 and 200 words.



- 1 Read the letters quickly. What illness or injury do Emily and Julie each have?

Dear Rob

How are you? What have you been up to? Sorry I haven't written to you for ages, but I've been really busy recently with end-of-term exams. You know what it's like! I've also been rehearsing for the Christmas show, which starts next week.

Guess what! I'm in hospital! Don't panic, I'm not seriously ill. I fell over when I was playing tennis and broke my arm. Anyway, I'm only in for a day or two. Luckily my injury won't stop me singing in the show.

The family are all fine. Mum's been working really hard. She doesn't get home till late. Dad's bought a new car – well, I say 'new', but actually it's about ten years old. Chris has got a new computer and spends most of the time playing computer games.

That's all for now. I'd better go.

Loads of love

Emily



- 2 Answer the questions.

- 1 What has Emily been doing at school?
- 2 Why doesn't Emily's mum get home until late?
- 3 What have her dad and her brother bought?
- 4 What have Dave and Sally been doing?
- 5 What does Susie think of Graham, in Julie's opinion?
- 6 Where does Graham go to school now?

- 3 Write *a* next to the phrases for beginning a letter and *b* next to the phrases for signalling the end of a letter.

Phrases for informal letters

- 1 Sorry I haven't written for ages.
- 2 That's all my news for now.
- 3 It was great to hear from you.
- 4 Must dash – Mum's calling me for dinner.
- 5 I'd better finish here as I'm running out of space.
- 6 Thanks for your letter.
- 7 I'd better stop here. It's getting late.
- 8 That's all for now. I'd better go now.
- 9 How are you?

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- 4 Find the phrases (1–7) in the letters. Then match the phrases with the functions (a–g).

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 Enough of all that. | 5 What have you been up to? |
| 2 Why don't we ... ? | 6 Do + verb (e.g. Do write) |
| 3 Guess what! | 7 She sends her love. |
| 4 Loads of love | |

- a introducing surprising news
- b making a suggestion
- c asking for news of the other person
- d ending the letter
- e changing the subject
- f making a strong request
- g sending greetings from someone else

- 5 Make notes for an informal letter to a friend who has moved away from your town. Follow the plan below.

Paragraph 1: Start with an appropriate phrase. Apologise for not writing sooner.

Paragraph 2: Give news about yourself.

Paragraph 3: Give news about your friends and/or family.

Paragraph 4: Ask questions about your friend.

Writing tip

In informal letters, we usually use everyday language. We normally use short forms instead of long forms.

- 6 Read the writing tip. Then write a letter of 120–150 words using your notes from exercise 5. Use phrases from exercises 3 and 4.

Dear Graham

Thanks for your letter. I got it last week and it really made me laugh! I'm off school today with a temperature and an upset stomach. I've been sick three times, but I'm feeling a bit better now.

Enough of all that. I bumped into Sally and Dave last weekend. Guess what! They've been going out together since the Halloween party in October. They seem really keen on each other. Susie is fine too. She sends her love. (I think she still fancies you!) We all miss you!

I guess you've started at your new school in London now. How is it? Have you made loads of new friends? Don't forget about your old ones!!! So many questions! Do write again and send me your news.

love

Julie

P.S. Why don't we get together in London one weekend? I can easily get the train down.