

Exercise 1: Writing letters

- A) Look at the following business letter and comment on the writing style of the text (think formality, tone, structure, etc.). Do you consider this a well-written letter? Why/why not?**

Dear Ms. Herzog:

Thank you for your letter of December 20, which notifies me that *Sporting Life* will resume my subscription after stopping it in error when I had received the July issue. Since I missed at least five months' issues because of the magazine's error, I expected my subscription to be extended for five months after it would have lapsed—that is, through June of this year. Instead, you tell me that the magazine will send me the back issues that it failed to send and that the January issue (which I have not received) will complete my current subscription.

I have no interest in receiving the back issues of *Sporting Life*, because the magazine is not useful or interesting unless it is current. Since *Sporting Life* erred in stopping my subscription prematurely, I still expect it to make up the difference on the other end of my subscription.

Unless I hear otherwise from you, I will count on your extending my subscription at least through June. If *Sporting Life* cannot compensate for its error in this way, I will cancel my subscription and request a refund.

Sincerely,

Janet M. Marley

- B) Make any changes you deem necessary to the letter.**

WRITING (BUSINESS) LETTERS

- In the USA – more direct and straightforward – efficiency valued (get to the point!)
- **the way you write is crucial** – a wordy letter with grammatical errors and poor structure may cause the addressee to refuse your request for two reasons:
 - o a) the reader has difficulties understanding what you are trying to say
 - o b) you present yourself poorly
- **General guidelines:**
 - o State your purpose right at the start
 - o Be straightforward, clear, concise, objective, and courteous
 - o Observe conventions of grammar and usage, which make your writing clear and impress your reader with your care
 - o If the kind of letter/email you write has a clear format, do not deviate from the standard format
 - o Use proper salutation! (find the specific person or use a job title if you cannot find one)

Working with Text – Paragraphs and Structure

- Structure in a text is important. A well-structured text (or speech) is more understandable and more persuasive than a text with poor structure
- Important parts:
 - Introduction
 - Thesis
 - Main body
 - Conclusion
 - Topic sentence
 - Explanation of the topic sentence
 - The problem
 - Further discussion of the problem
 - Concluding sentence
- When comparing or contrasting, the following structures are often employed:
 - A) The block method
 - B) The point-by-point method

- Some common structures of research papers in general academia:

Structure A	Structure B	Structure C
- Supporting argument 1 Evidence and explanation against	- Supporting argument 1 Evidence and explanation for	- Supporting argument 1 Evidence and explanation against
- Supporting argument 2 Evidence and explanation for	- Supporting argument 2 Evidence and explanation against	- Supporting arguments 2 and 3 Evidence and explanation for
- Evaluation in favor of supporting argument 2	- Supporting argument 3 Evidence and explanation against	- Evaluation in favor of supporting arguments 2 and 3
	- Evaluation in favor of supporting argument 1	

2) Look at the following outline of a body paragraph. Work in groups and discuss whether you agree with the way the arguments, evidence, and explanation are synthesized or combined in the outline. Give reasons and examples

- Support argument 1 – giving vouchers to encourage people to buy healthy food
- Evidence and explanation against – financial approach: incentive / what is to stop people selling vouchers for less money? / buy more healthy foods / short-term solution / wasteful initiative
- Supporting argument 2 – encouraging engagement with local people through groups and community action
- Evidence and explanation for – group action to improve conditions / individuals follow / people with different experts / responsibility for own actions / growing own food / long-term behavior change
- Evaluation in favor of 2 – long-term behavior change

3) Read the introduction and body paragraph 1 of an essay. Answer the questions below.

Introduction

The world we live in is suffering from the consequences of our lifestyles, which are becoming essentially more selfish. This phenomenon is not restricted to any one country or region of the world. For the purposes of this essay, lifestyle is defined as the way in which a person or a community, or group of people, lives and works, and includes not just diet and exercise, but also living conditions, general consumption, financial and social behavior; in fact, every action that is involved in an individual's life. A considerable amount of research has been done into persuading people to adapt their lives and lead more responsible lifestyles and there is a wealth of literature as to strategies to engage communities to do so. This essay argues that the most effective way to involve people in making decisions about their lives is not through financial inducement or penalties, but through strategies that engage not just individuals but also communities and families in taking responsibility for their actions.

Body paragraph 1

A recent government initiative in the UK suggests giving individuals £50 vouchers to buy healthy goods at participating outlets. This is perhaps a waste of public money. Harrison (2010, p. 025) claims that this is not an effective use of public funds, as it is open to abuse. For example, supposing people want cash rather than vouchers. The vouchers can be sold for less than their full value. Further, if the value of eating healthily is not understood, then giving out vouchers is hardly likely to have any lasting effect. Johnson (2001, pp. 126-7) criticizes such schemes for their focus on short-termism and not dealing with the issue. Perhaps, as Gonzalez and Parker (2003, p.074) propose, a better option would be community involvement, not just individual involvement. If the people around an individual or group like a family or community take action to improve their conditions, an individual is then more likely to follow, as Cooper (2007, p.204) points out. Let us imagine people in a community are invited to a local meeting with various experts on changing behavior. They can be shown how to take responsibility for their own behavior, through perhaps growing their own healthy food communally with children and adults being involved. With proper encouragement and support, this strategy is much more likely to lead to long-term behavior change than the distribution of vouchers.

- 1) Identify the thesis statement in the introduction.
- 2) Is the writer arguing for or against financial incentives?
- 3) Does the thesis statement present the writer's stance regarding the overall argument clearly and effectively? Give evidence.
- 4) Identify the approaches the writer uses in their argument in body paragraph 1. Match them to the list in exercise 1.
- 5) Identify and describe in your own words the evidence and explanation for each approach.

4) Evaluate the introduction and body paragraph 1 of the essay above using the questions below.

- 1) Does the writer state their main argument and summarize the different ideas well?
- 2) Is the statement of the overall argument clear? Give evidence.
- 3) How clear are the supporting arguments in body paragraph 1? Give evidence.
- 4) How is the main argument linked with the thesis statement?
- 5) Do you agree with the writer's main argument? Are you persuaded by the argument? Give reasons.