English Level 1

Complete Study Guide

Everything you need to know — explained step by step

About the Level 1 English Exam

Total marks: 66 | **Reading:** 30 marks | **Writing:** 36 marks

Time: 2 hours

Section A — Reading: Two longer passages with 10-14 questions (1-3 marks each). Tests retrieval, inference, analysis, evaluation, and comparison.

Section B — Writing: Task 1 formal (21 marks: 7+7+7) + Task 2 informal/persuasive (15 marks: 5+5+5).

Pass mark: Approximately 60% overall.

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1. Inference & Implied Meaning

Inference means reading between the lines — understanding what a writer **implies** without stating it directly. At Level 1, you must go beyond what the text says and explain what it **suggests**.

How to Infer

Key Rule: Look at the writer's word choices, actions described, and context. Ask: 'What is the writer really saying here?'

Worked Example

Text: 'He glanced at his watch for the third time and tapped his foot.'
Inference: He is impatient or anxious about time. Repeated watch-checking and foot-tapping are physical signs of frustration.

Common Inference Signals

Signal	What It Suggests
"We regret to inform you"	Bad news (rejection, refusal)
"Modest improvement"	Very small improvement — downplaying it
"Shows potential"	Not yet good enough, but could improve
"Adequate for the price"	Just acceptable — nothing special
"I trust this will not arise again"	A warning disguised as polite language
"Restructuring exercise"	Euphemism for job losses

Tip: If a question says 'What does this suggest?' or 'What can you infer?' — don't just repeat what the text says. Explain what it *implies*.

Common Mistake: Don't over-infer. Stick to what the text supports. 'She smiled politely but said nothing' suggests disagreement — not anger.

Practice: 1. 'I would appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.' What is the tone? **Answer:** Polite but firm — a request with underlying urgency.
2. 'As per my previous email...' What does this suggest? **Answer:** They've already communicated this and are frustrated it was ignored.

2. Persuasive Language Techniques

At Level 1, you must **identify** persuasive techniques and **explain their effect**. It's not enough to name the technique — say *why* the writer uses it.

Key Techniques

Technique	What It Is	Example
Rhetorical question	Question not expecting an answer	"Are you going to let this pass?"
Rule of three	Three items for impact	"Faster, cheaper, better"
Emotive language	Words triggering emotions	"Every child deserves a warm bed"
Hyperbole	Deliberate exaggeration	"The greatest sale in history"
Statistics	Numbers for credibility	"9 out of 10 dentists recommend"
Testimonial	Real person's endorsement	"Here's what our customers say"
Repetition	Repeating words/phrases	"Buy now. Save now. Start now."
Metaphor	Comparison without like/as	"Education is the key to success"
Simile	Comparison using like/as	"Like a warm hug on a cold day"
Alliteration	Repeated starting sounds	"Big, bold, brilliant"
Direct address	Using "you"	"You deserve better"

Exam Pattern: Name the technique → Quote the example → Explain the effect on the reader.

Worked Example

Text: 'Offer ends Friday — only 50 left!'

Answer: Urgency (deadline) and scarcity ('only 50 left') create fear of missing out, pressuring the reader to buy quickly.

Common Mistake: Don't just name the technique. 'This is a rhetorical question' scores 1 mark at most. Explaining *why* and *how* it affects the reader gets full marks.

Practice: 1. 'Imagine waking up with nowhere to sleep.' Technique and effect? **Answer:** Direct address + emotive language — puts the reader in someone else's shoes, creating empathy.

2. 'Join the 2 million families who trust us.' Why the number? **Answer:** Social proof — large numbers suggest credibility and popularity.

3. Formal vs Informal Register

Register means the level of formality. At Level 1, choose the right register for the task and maintain it consistently.

When to Use Each Register

Formal: Complaint letters, reports, job applications, emails to unknown people, professional correspondence.
Informal: Texts to friends, personal blogs, social media, notes to family.

Formal Writing Features

Full sentences, no contractions ('do not' not 'don't'), no slang, professional vocabulary ('obtain' not 'get', 'children' not 'kids'), polite phrasing ('I would be grateful if you could...').

Letter Conventions

Opening	Closing	When
Dear Sir or Madam,	Yours faithfully,	Don't know their name
Dear Mr/Mrs/Ms [Name],	Yours sincerely,	Know their name

Formal vs Informal

Informal: 'I'm not happy with the service.'
Formal: 'I wish to express my dissatisfaction with the service I received.'

Common Mistake: Don't mix registers. 'I am writing to complain about the rubbish service' mixes formal ('I am writing') with slang ('rubbish').

Practice: 1. Rewrite formally: 'Can you sort this out ASAP?' **Answer:** 'I would be grateful if you could address this matter as soon as possible.'
2. What sign-off pairs with 'Dear Mrs Ahmed'? **Answer:** Yours sincerely (you know the name).

4. Spelling & Vocabulary

Level 1 expects accurate spelling of common and moderately complex words, plus understanding vocabulary in context.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Correct	Common Error	Memory Trick
accommodation	accomodation	Double c, double m
occurred	occured	Double c, double r
independent	independant	Ends in -ent, not -ant
professional	proffesional	One f, double s
recommend	reccommend	One c, double m
guarantee	guarentee	gua-ran-tee
maintenance	maintenence	maintain + ance
necessary	neccessary	1 collar, 2 socks

Confusing Word Pairs

Word	Meaning	Example
effect (noun)	The result	The effect was positive.
affect (verb)	To influence	This will affect everyone.
advice (noun)	The guidance given	I need your advice.
advise (verb)	To give guidance	I advise you to apply.
complement	To go well together	The colours complement each other.
compliment	To say something nice	She gave me a compliment.
through	From one side to the other	She walked through the room.
thorough	Complete and detailed	A thorough investigation.

Tip: If unsure of a spelling in the exam, use a simpler word you can spell correctly rather than guessing.

Practice: 1. 'The affect/effect of the policy was immediate.' Which? **Answer:** Effect (noun — the result).
2. What does 'viable' mean? **Answer:** Capable of working successfully.
3. What does 'subsequently' mean? **Answer:** After that / following on.

5. Sentence Structure & Grammar

At Level 1, write complete, varied sentences with correct grammar. Spot and avoid common errors.

Complete Sentences

A sentence needs: Subject (who/what) + Verb (action) + Complete thought.
'The bus arrived ten minutes late.' — subject (bus), verb (arrived), complete thought.

Fragments are incomplete: 'Because the bus was late.' Fix by joining: 'We were late because the bus was delayed.'

Common Errors

Error	Wrong	Correct
should of	I should of gone	I should have gone
Me and [name]	Me and Sarah went	Sarah and I went
its/it's	Its important / it's door	It's important / its door
there/their/they're	There going to they're house	They're going to their house
less/fewer	Less people came	Fewer people came
Comma splice	It rained, we stayed in.	It rained, so we stayed in.

Semicolons and Colons

Semicolon (;): Joins two related complete sentences. 'The meeting was productive; several decisions were made.'
Colon (:): Introduces a list or explanation. 'You need: a pen, notebook, and calculator.'

Using 'However'

Correct Punctuation

Between clauses: 'I wanted to go; however, it was too late.' (semicolon before, comma after)
Start of sentence: 'However, it was too late.' (comma after)

Common Mistake: Don't write: 'I wanted to go, however it was too late.' This is a comma splice.

Practice: 1. Fix: 'The report was submitted. Which was due on Friday.' **Answer:** 'The report was submitted, which was due on Friday.'
2. Fix: 'I should of went.' **Answer:** 'I should have gone.'

6. Paragraphing & Text Organisation

Good organisation is worth up to 7 marks in the formal writing task. Clear structure helps the reader follow your argument.

When to Start a New Paragraph

New paragraph when: You change **topic**, **time**, **speaker**, or **place**. Each paragraph develops one main idea.

PEE Paragraphs

Point, Example, Explanation

Point: Remote working reduces commuting costs.
Example: The average UK commuter spends over 1,500 a year on travel.
Explanation: Working from home even part of the week saves hundreds annually, improving financial wellbeing.

Connectives & Discourse Markers

Purpose	Connectives
Adding	Furthermore, Moreover, In addition, Additionally
Contrasting	However, Nevertheless, On the other hand, Conversely
Cause/effect	Therefore, As a result, Consequently
Sequencing	Firstly, Secondly, Finally, Subsequently
Exemplifying	For example, For instance, Such as

Formal Writing Structures

Complaint letter: Greeting → State problem → Evidence → State what you want → Sign-off
Report: Title → Introduction (purpose) → Findings (subheadings) → Recommendations → Conclusion

Tip: Use connectives at the start of paragraphs to show how ideas link. This demonstrates Level 1 organisation.

Practice: Choose the connective: 'The project was behind schedule. _____, the team worked overtime.'
Answer: Therefore (cause and effect).

7. Reading for Detail & Information

Many exam questions test whether you can find and apply specific information from policies, contracts, timetables, and labels.

Key Skills

Read precisely: Pay attention to conditions, exceptions, time limits, and requirements. Words like 'only,' 'must,' 'prior,' and 'subject to' are crucial.

Important Terms

Term	Meaning
Prior written consent	Written permission before acting
Subject to	Conditional on / depends on
Desirable (job ads)	Preferred but not required
COB	Close of Business (end of working day)
RSVP	Please respond (confirm attendance)
Year-on-year	Compared to same period last year
Direct Debit (DD)	Automatic regular bank payment

Applying a Policy

Policy: 'Sale items can be exchanged or returned for store credit only.'
Scenario: Tom wants a cash refund for a sale item.
Answer: No cash refund — sale items only qualify for exchange or store credit.

Tip: In scenario questions, quote the specific rule from the text that applies. Show you've matched the situation to the right part of the document.

Common Mistake: Don't skim. Words like 'except,' 'unless,' 'only,' and 'not including' can completely change the meaning.

Practice: 1. Medicine: 'Take 2 every 4-6 hours. Max 8 in 24 hours.' Took 2 at 8am. Earliest next dose? **Answer:** 12 noon (4 hours later).
2. 'Either party may terminate with 30 days' written notice.' What does this mean? **Answer:** Either side can end the agreement with 30 days' notice in writing.

8. Comparing Texts

The exam always includes a comparison question (usually 3 marks). Compare **purpose**, **audience**, and **language/tone** across two texts.

Comparison Framework

For every comparison, cover:
1. **Purpose:** Why was each text written? (Inform, persuade, instruct, entertain?)
2. **Audience:** Who is it aimed at? (Public, employees, customers, parents?)
3. **Language/Tone:** How does it communicate? (Formal/informal, emotive/factual?)

Worked Example

Text A: Newspaper article (stats, expert quotes, accessible language).
Text B: Workplace policy (numbered sections, directive language, consequences).
Comparison: Text A aims to inform/warn the general public using accessible language with evidence. Text B regulates employee behaviour using formal, directive language with consequences. Both address online risks from different angles.

Useful Comparison Phrases

'While Text 1..., Text 2...' | 'In contrast to Text 1, Text 2...' | 'Both texts deal with... but differ in...' | 'Text 1 uses... whereas Text 2...'

Tip: Link language choices to purpose. Don't just say 'Text 1 is informal' — say *why*: 'Text 1 uses informal language because it's aimed at the general public and wants to be accessible.'

Common Mistake: Don't describe texts separately. You must *compare* them using linking words like 'whereas,' 'in contrast,' 'similarly.'

Practice: Compare an NHS leaflet and a diet product advert. Which is more reliable? **Answer:** NHS — trusted authority with no financial motive. The advert is selling something and may exaggerate.

9. Evaluating Arguments & Evidence

At Level 1, distinguish **fact from opinion**, assess **evidence quality**, and spot **logical weaknesses**.

Fact vs Opinion

Fact: Can be proven. 'London has a population of over 8 million.'
Opinion: A belief that cannot be proven. 'London is the best city in the world.'

Evaluating Evidence

Strong Evidence	Weak Evidence
Named source ('Oxford University found')	Vague ('experts say')
Specific statistics with dates	Generalisations ('everyone knows')
Large sample sizes	Small samples (50 people)
Multiple perspectives	One-sided (only quotes supporters)

Common Logical Flaws

Flaw	Meaning	Example
Generalisation	One case applied to all	"Everyone knows social media is bad"
Anecdotal	One story proving general claim	"Sarah lost 3 stone, so it works!"
Appeal to nature	Natural = safe	"100% natural, so completely safe"
Ad hominem	Attacking person not argument	"My opponent doesn't care"
Cherry-picking	Only favourable evidence	Quoting one stat, hiding negatives

Tip: When asked 'How convincing is this argument?' — you can say convincing OR not. What matters is using evidence from the text to support your assessment.

Practice: 1. 'My opponent wants to cut funding — clearly they don't care about children.' Flaw? **Answer:** Ad hominem — attacks the person not the policy reasons.
2. An article only quotes supporters of a new road. Problem? **Answer:** One-sided — a balanced argument needs opposing views.

10. Writing for Purpose & Audience

The writing section is worth **36 marks** — over half the exam. Your writing must match the **purpose** and **audience**.

Task 1: Formal Writing (21 marks)

Typical tasks: Complaint letters, reports, formal requests, proposals.
Marking: Content & purpose (7) + Organisation & format (7) + SPaG (7)

Content (7): Cover all bullet points. Use evidence from reading texts. Make purpose clear from the opening.
Organisation (7): Correct format (letter layout, report structure). Paragraphs with connectives. Clear beginning, middle, end.
SPaG (7): Accurate spelling, varied punctuation (commas, semicolons, colons), correct grammar, varied sentences.

Effective Formal Opening

Weak: 'I'm writing because I'm unhappy with your service.'
Strong: 'I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with the service I received on 14th March 2025 at your Manchester branch.'

Task 2: Informal/Persuasive Writing (15 marks)

Typical tasks: Blog posts, articles, emails to friends, social media, persuasive messages.
Marking: Content & purpose (5) + Organisation (5) + SPaG (5)

Content: Clear opinion or message. Use persuasive techniques. Give a title/headline for blogs/articles.
Organisation: Short paragraphs for impact. Clear structure even informally.
SPaG: Accurate even informally. Contractions are fine but spelling and grammar still matter.

Writing Checklist

Before Writing	While Writing	After Writing
Identify purpose and audience	Match register to task	All bullet points covered?
Plan your paragraphs	Use connectives	Spelling checked?
Note the word count	Vary sentence length	Punctuation correct?
Check bullet points	Use evidence from texts	Register consistent?

Tip: Aim for the middle of the word count (175 words Task 1, 125 words Task 2). Too short = not enough content. Too long = waffle.

Common Mistake: Don't spend all your time on reading. Budget ~50 minutes for reading and ~70 minutes for writing. Writing is worth more marks.

Practice: 1. Write a formal complaint opening about a faulty product. **Answer:** 'Dear Sir or Madam, I am writing to express my dissatisfaction with a product I purchased from your online store on 3rd April 2025.'
2. Write a persuasive headline about walking benefits. **Answer:** 'Step Your Way to Better Health'

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