

Situational Writing Tips

Most NA-Level students choose to focus on the Continuous Writing section, leaving their Situational Writing to fall behind as they take their English Paper 1. Candidates often reason that since the Continuous Writing section has a longer word count (between 250 and 400 words) compared to that for the Situational Writing section of (between 180 and 250 words), they feel the urgency to spend more time on Continuous Writing.

Regardless, **both sections are each worth 30 marks**. Because of this, students should make sure they do not downplay their Situation Writing. In fact, Situation Writing is arguably easier to score, for the following reasons:

- The question is more structured and you have plenty of guidelines to follow.
- In effect, this means that you are actually directed towards the answer.
- There are clues about how to choose your points and emphasise them.
- There are directions for you to know what tone to write in.

Read and fully understand the first two or three paragraphs.

One common mistake that many students make is going straight for the bullet points. In the process, they tend to ignore the first few paragraphs of the Situational Writing question. This is definitely not smart as these paragraphs provide crucial information to the Task Requirements.

For one, these paragraphs make known the PAC (Purpose, Audience, Context – in case you have forgotten). There are also often keywords concealed within this section of text.

Let us illustrate the above points using the sample below:

You should look at the website on page 3 carefully and plan your answer before beginning to write.

You are planning a holiday to Australia during the school holidays. Your uncle, who resides in Perth, has provided you with a tourism website as shown on page 3 to help you with your planning. Since you have not met your cousins for the past three years, you would very much like your uncle and his family to link up with you during the trip too.

Write a letter to your uncle, informing him of your holiday plans. You

must include the following details:

- how you will travel to your holiday destination
- which two states you are visiting and why
- where to link up with your cousin's family
- one activity you plan to do with your cousin

Write your letter in clear, accurate English. You should also write in an enthusiastic and friendly tone to encourage your cousin to join you on this exciting trip.

You may add any other details that might be of interest.

If a student dives straight into the bullet points, he or she will definitely not score well, since vital important needed will have been ignored by not reading the preceding paragraphs.

Consider:

Purpose: “you would very much like your uncle and his family to link up with you during the trip”

Audience: “Write a letter to your uncle”

Context: “You are planning a holiday to Australia during the school holidays”

Additional help: “a tourism website as shown on page 3 to help you with your planning”

If you had only read the bullet points,

must include the following details:

- how you will travel to your holiday destination
- which two states you are visiting and why
- where to link up with your cousin’s family
- one activity you plan to do with your cousin

you would assume you would be writing the letter to your cousin, wouldn’t you?

Seeing as to how all the information is given and you do not have to make up original content or plot, or worry about forming cohesive arguments and/or counterarguments, it will benefit you greatly to take greater care in fully understanding the Situation Writing question. Doing so will help you finish this segment quickly (and scoring well), before you start your Continuous Writing.