

Writing a formal letter

WRITING TASK

- Consider the issue of access to buildings and within buildings for disabled people in your country. You decide to write a letter to an MEP who sits on the committee responsible for promoting the needs of disabled people in Europe, calling on them to coordinate a Europe – wide campaign to provide better access for disabled people.
- Begin your letter **Dear Sir / Madam** and finish **Yours faithfully x**
- *MEP (Member of the European Parliament)*

Before writing

- Decide who the audience is. (*a member of the European Parliament*)
- Decide what the topic is. (*promoting the needs of disabled people in Europe, accessibility problems*)
- Decide what the purpose of the letter is. (*to suggest that the committee should start a campaign to provide better access for disabled people*)

Introduction

- State the purpose of the letter
- Rephrase the topic

- *Dear Sir / Madam,*

I am writing to express my concern at the lack of provision for disabled people in terms of access both to and within buildings here in Greece. As a European citizen, I am inclined to believe that the European Parliament ought to cover for people in need.

Main body

- Organise your ideas in a single extensive paragraph (when there is only one topic question to address) or two shorter ones (when there are two separate questions).
- *In our case, the issue of accessibility for disabled people could be addressed in one paragraph and the issue of actions to be taken by the European Parliament in another.*

Main body – paragraph 1

- Brainstorm relevant ideas / reasons / examples / results regarding the essence of the problem
 - *Access to buildings (difficult because of steps)*
 - *Moving around within buildings (also difficult)*
- *Do not forget to start your paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence.*
- *The problem is twofold. In the first instance, many disabled people, particularly wheelchair users, find gaining access to buildings extremely difficult. This is because only very few buildings, such as public buildings, shops, cinemas or supermarkets, have ramps – the majority have steps. Secondly, once access has been gained to a building, very rarely are buildings constructed or adapted to assist disabled people to move round them. It is true that many buildings have elevators but often the buttons are at such a level that wheelchair users are prevented from reaching them.*

Paragraph 1 - analysis

- *The problem is twofold. In the first instance, many disabled people, particularly wheelchair users, find gaining access to buildings extremely difficult. This is because only very few buildings, such as public buildings, shops, cinemas or supermarkets, have ramps – the majority have steps. Secondly, once access has been gained to a building, very rarely are buildings constructed or adapted to assist disabled people to move round them. It is true that many buildings have elevators but often the buttons are at such a level that wheelchair users are prevented from reaching them.*
- Take a closer look at the first main paragraph to find
 - the topic sentence
 - the two arguments
 - Reasons
 - Results
 - Examples
 - Linking expressions

Main body – paragraph 2

- State clearly what action you would like to be taken – make such a request reasonable.
 - *Who is responsible for the problem?*
 - *What can the European Parliament do? A campaign to inform the public*
- Do not forget to start your paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence.
- *I am not sure exactly where responsibility for such matters lies, whether it is with the building developers, the government or somewhere else, but I feel one of the main problems is that the public are not fully aware of the needs of the disabled. It is for this reason I am writing to you, in the hope that the European Parliament could play a vital role in coordinating a Europe – wide campaign to provide access for disabled people. This could begin with informing members of the public about what is required and why.*

PARAGRAPH 2 - ANALYSIS

- *I am not sure exactly where responsibility for such matters lies, whether it is with the building developers, the government or somewhere else, but I feel one of the main problems is that the public are not fully aware of the needs of the disabled. It is for this reason I am writing to you, in the hope that the European Parliament could play a vital role in coordinating a Europe – wide campaign to provide access for disabled people. This could begin with informing members of the public about what is required and why.*
- Take a closer look at the second main paragraph to find
 - The topic sentence (including a clear opinion about the root of the problem)
 - A clear suggestion concerning the role of the European Parliament
 - The specific means of action, i.e. an informative campaign

conclusion

- Restate your opinion
- Choose the appropriate formal closing remarks.
- *To conclude, it is with great certainty in the commitment of the European Parliament to protecting human rights that I request for action to be taken on your behalf. Thank you for your time.*
Yours faithfully, X

After writing

- Check the letter generally for grammar, spelling, punctuation mistakes.
- Make sure you have adopted a formal style of writing which includes
 - Sophisticated vocabulary
 - Long, complex sentences (*e.g. I am not sure exactly where responsibility for such matters lies, whether it is with the building developers, the government or somewhere else, but I feel one of the main problems is that the public are not fully aware of the needs of the disabled.*)
 - Impersonal constructions
 - Linking words / phrases
 - Passive voice (*...once access has been gained to a building...*)
 - Inversion (*e.g. ...very rarely are buildings constructed or adapted to assist disabled people...*)
 - Non – contracted forms
 - No colloquial words

It's your turn... (background information)

- The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA, Υπηρεσία Διαφημιστικών Προτύπων) is an organisation that makes sure advertisements are legal, decent, honest and truthful before they are broadcast.
 - It conducts surveys of advertisements in the press, on posters, sales promotions or direct mailings to check for breaches of the Codes.
 - It keeps a watch on advertisements in areas which may cause concern (health products, slimming products, cigarettes).
 - It receives consumers' complaints.
 - It provides advertisers with advice on how to avoid the use of misleading or offensive advertisements.

It's your turn...

- You live in a country without any organisation like the ASA. Write a letter to a Member of Parliament, arguing for the setting up of one in your country. Outline what the role of such an organisation would be.
- Begin the letter **Dear Sir / Madam** and finish **Yours faithfully, XYZ**