

Writing Guide: ECL Language Exam Level B2 – Article

Writing Tips:

1. Make sure you understand the task and the genre of writing (e.g. essay, email, etc.). In the sample task below, you're writing an **article** of 200 words. The article should be informative and factual. It can also have your personal opinion.
2. If you go over 200 words, make sure it's only 10% over the required amount (220 words max). Try not to write fewer than 200 words.
3. Organize your article in short, clear paragraphs with information (e.g. introductory paragraph, paragraphs to cover the bullet points, and concluding paragraph). You don't have to keep the bullet points in the order they appear.
4. Do not forget to separate the paragraphs (e.g. indent or one-line space). Don't just write one paragraph that isn't organized into cohesive units.
5. Make sure your handwriting is as clear as possible so the exam graders can read your composition.
6. When writing your article, keep in mind all the graded features (grammar, written accuracy, spelling and paragraphing, vocabulary, style and cohesive devices, and communicative effectiveness).

Sample Writing Task:

A local magazine, All for One, invites short articles on the educational system of your country and the fields needing improvement. You decide to write an article (around 200 words) in which you include the following:

- *What are pre-schooling options in your country (age limits, public and private daycare)? (BULLET POINT 1)*
- *What schools do you have in your country? (e.g. primary schools, etc.) (BULLET POINT 2)*
- *How satisfied are parents/students with school quality? (BULLET POINT 3)*
- *What are other specific issues (targeted by parents/students) that need improvement? (BULLET POINT 4)*

I am _____ (Writing Starter)

During a live exam, you do not have to make a draft. But you should plan what to write about and how to cover the bullet points. (Your use of English will be scored, not what background knowledge you have.)

Paragraph 1 (20-30 words) – *Don't forget about the genre's features (how an article should be organized, etc.). Introduce the main points on the topic.*

Paragraphs 2-4 (100-150 words) – *Content related to the bullet points. Each bullet point can be a short paragraph. Try using facts about the school you know if possible.*

Paragraph 5 (20-30 words) – *A quick overview of the main points. Try to get your readers to think more about the topic.*

Sample Article (with reference to the bullet points):

Hungarian Schools (*articles usually have titles, so give one if you can think of a good title*)

I'm a Hungarian college student. There are many areas that need improvement in Hungarian schools. (*INTRODUCTION*)

There are nurseries and pre-schools maintained by the Hungarian government. It's not always easy to get a kid enrolled in pre-school because they're overcrowded. The other option is to hire a baby-sitter or find a daycare. But they're expensive and Hungarians can't afford it. I think the government should provide free childcare. (*BULLET POINT 1*)

Primary and secondary education is tuition-free, but the cost of raising children has increased by 40%. Parents spend a lot on books, stationery, uniforms, and programs. Universities have additional costs such as accommodation, meals, travel and books. Private colleges cost more – 500,000 HUF per year. Many students depend on themselves instead of the family budget, and work part-time jobs or get student loans. They graduate with debt. (*BULLET POINT 2*)

Parents and students complain about the quality of public schools, saying the curriculum is too rigid with facts and standardized tests, and worrying about unhealthy meals and safety issues. This is why parents move their children to more expensive private schools. (*BULLET POINTS 3 and 4*)

These are the key issues: increasing costs of schooling, decreasing quality of education, meals and safety. So if you live in Hungary, could you put up with these problems with schools, or would you get on the front lines to fight for quality reform? (*CONCLUSION*)

Word Count: 218

Features of the composition to be scored:

Formal Accuracy/Grammar – The article has clear and complex grammatical structures required at this level with no mistakes.

Written Accuracy/Paragraphing/Punctuation/Spelling – The article is organized into several clear paragraphs with no spelling or punctuation mistakes.

Vocabulary/Range of Word Choice – The article is filled with a wide range of vocabulary that is well-chosen, relevant, and precise.

Style/Genre – The article is organized in a clear, coherent, and cohesive way, meeting the requirements for the writing genre (article).

Communicative Effectiveness/Task Completion – The article has adequate elaboration on all the bullet points. Task is well completed.

Conclusion: If you follow this guide above, you will perform well on the ECL writing section of the exam. Keep in mind that there are some genres of writing that you will be asked to complete on this language exam. You may find samples for all the possible genres. Good luck and happy studies!