

**Writing Guide: ECL Language Exam  
Level B2 – Formal Comment to Online Debate**

***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 a **formal comment** of 200 words. The comment should be formal and give reasons to support your opinion on the debate topic.
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 comment in paragraphs that support your argument (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 comment, keep in mind all the graded features (grammar, written accuracy, spelling and paragraphing, vocabulary, style and cohesive devices, and communicative effectiveness).

***Sample Writing Task:***

*On an online forum, students are debating the advantages and disadvantages of being wealthy. Write a formal comment (around 200 words) about your opinion, including the following points:*

- *Is money necessary for happiness? Why/Why not? (BULLET POINT 1)*
- *How much money is required in your country for having a comfortable living standard? Explain. (BULLET POINT 2)*
- *Should the super rich pay higher taxes? Why/why not? (BULLET POINT 3)*
- *What are some pros and cons to being extremely wealthy? (BULLET POINT 4)*

*Wealth is/isn't... (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 a formal comment should be organized, etc.).*

***Paragraphs 2-4*** (100-150 words) – *Content related to the bullet points. Each bullet point can be a short paragraph. Keep your comment formal and related to the debate.*

***Paragraph 5*** (20-30 words) – *Sum up your overall opinion about the debate.*

***Sample Formal Comment (with reference to the bullet points):***

Wealth is not necessary for happiness, but a modest amount of money is needed for a comfortable living standard. (*INTRODUCTION*)

As a matter of fact, studies show that increased wealth doesn't necessarily lead to increased happiness, which seems unbelievable because mass media always depicts the opposite. The glorification of wealth is everywhere, but too much wealth leads to excessive materialism and always wanting more. (*BULLET POINT 1*)

Some healthy amount of money, however, is needed for a modest lifestyle. Furthermore, how much an individual needs depends on location and the number of children they have. Presumably, for a family of four living in a bigger city in Hungary more is required than for a family living in a small village. Villagers might grow crops, vegetables and fruits for the family or keep poultry and other domestic animals, decreasing the family budget. (*BULLET POINT 2*)

In terms of taxes, I'm in agreement with some wealthy individuals. They believe that the super rich should be subjected to higher taxes, which is fair and just. According to them one's tax burden should be proportional to one's income. (*BULLET POINT 3*)

The main advantage of being wealthy is always having access to anything one would like to buy. The main disadvantage is of a psychological nature – money can't buy happiness and too much money leads to overconsumption and materialism. Studies show that stable family life and being surround by love lead more happiness than being surrounded by money. (*BULLET POINT 4/CONCLUSION*)

*World Count: 231*

***Features of the composition to be scored:***

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

**Written Accuracy/Paragraphing/Punctuation/Spelling** – The comment is organized well with no spelling or punctuation mistakes.

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

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

**Communicative Effectiveness/Task Completion** – The comment 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 different 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!