

**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 150 words. The comment should be formal and give reasons to support your opinion on the debate topic.
2. If you go over 150 words, make sure it's only 10% over the required amount (165 words max). Try not to write fewer than 150 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 150 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*** (15-25 words) – *Don't forget about the genre's features (how a formal comment should be organized, etc.).*

***Paragraphs 2-4*** (100-120 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*** (15-25 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 some money is needed for having a comfortable living standard. (*INTRODUCTION*)

Studies show that increased wealth doesn't increase happiness, though media frequently depicts the opposite. The glorification of wealth is everywhere in our culture, but too much money can cause materialism. (*BULLET POINT 1*) However, a healthy amount of money is justifiable. The amount depends on a family's location and the number of children parents are raising. For a family of four living in a big city, more is required than for a village family growing crops, vegetables and fruits, or raising livestock, to save money. (*BULLET POINT 2*) I believe the super rich should be subjected to higher taxes, which is fair. One's tax burden should be proportional to one's income. (*BULLET POINT 3*)

The main advantage of wealth is buying anything. The main disadvantage is psychological – money can't buy happiness and too much money leads to overconsumption. A stable family life and love lead to more happiness than being surrounded by money. (*BULLET POINT 4/CONCLUSION*)

*Word Count: 161*

***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!