

Teacher/Adult Lesson Plan: How to Write a Formal Letter: Unit 1, Lesson 5

Learning Objective: To edit a formal letter correcting spellings, punctuation and grammar.

Explain to students that they are going to learn how to edit a formal letter. Editing means 'making it right.' Explain that last lesson they worked on 'making it better' by redrafting. This lesson is about 'making it right' by correcting spellings, punctuation and grammar.

Age Group: 8-11 years old

Success Criteria: By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

- Use a dictionary to spell check their writing.
- Identify contractions and change them into formal language.
- Write complex sentences using commas correctly.
- Proofread and correct any other errors.

Materials Needed (See also Unit Overview):

1. Contractions worksheet
2. Formal Letter of Complaint No.4.
3. Scribeasy.com Picture Gallery
4. Dictionary
5. Highlighter pens

Lesson Procedure:

Task 1. Introduction (5 minutes)

Ask students if they know what contractions are. Explain that:

Contractions are made by doing three things:

1. Joining two words together: **I am** → **Iam**
2. Removing one or more middle letters that are next to each other: **Iam** → **Im**
3. Adding an apostrophe to show where the missing letter or letters were: **Im** → **I'm**

Explain to students that when we speak or write to our friends and family we use casual, informal language including contractions like **don't**, **I've** and **I'm**. These are short ways of saying things. However, when we speak or write to people in positions of authority or those we don't know, we need to be polite and formal, so instead of saying **don't**, we say **do not**; instead of saying **I've** we say **I have** and instead of saying **I'm** we say **I am**. In formal

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writing it is not appropriate to use contractions - we use the long form instead. A letter of complaint is a formal letter so the long form must be used.

Task 2. (15 minutes)

- Give the student the **Contractions** worksheet. Some words are contractions and some are in the long form. Ask them to fill in the gaps to complete the pairs.
- Now ask the student to change any contractions in their letter to the formal long form.

Task 3. (25 minutes)

Remind students that good writing uses a variety of sentence types; simple, compound and complex sentences. Have a quick look back at **Formal Letter of Complaint No.4.** and notice how most of the sentences are simple sentences which make it boring.

This part of the lesson focuses on complex sentences.

Tell students that complex sentences contain more than one idea. These ideas are expressed in clauses - different parts of a sentence. The main clause makes sense by itself - like a simple sentence. The subordinate clause does not make sense by itself alone - it just adds more detail. A subordinate clause needs the main clause to make sense.

Example: **The weather was chilly** (main clause), **even though it was July** (subordinate clause).

'The weather was chilly' could be a simple sentence because it makes sense all by itself but 'even though it was July,' makes no sense on its own. Adding the two parts together, makes a complex sentence with more detail. A comma is used to separate the main clause from the subordinate clause: **The weather was chilly, even though it was July.**

The subordinate clause may come first: **Even though it was July, the weather was chilly.**

The main clause is still: **The weather was chilly** because it is the only part of the sentence that makes sense on its own.

Sometimes a sentence has a subordinate clause in the middle, like this one:

The woman, who was very tired, fell asleep on the train.

Again, the main clause (in red) is the only part of the sentence that makes sense on its own. It is nonsense to say: 'who is very playful,' without the rest of the sentence to help it make sense.

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If the subordinate clause is in the middle of a sentence there needs to be a comma either side to separate the subordinate clause from the rest of the sentence.

- Get students to use **scribeasy** pictures to create two illustrated complex sentences, linked to the student's letter of complaint. Make sure the student's subordinate clause adds additional information to the main clause in each sentence. Remind them to use commas between clauses.
- Now direct the student back to editing their letter. Ask them to make sure they have included a variety of simple sentences, compound sentences and complex sentences to make the letter more interesting for the reader. They could add in the two new complex sentences they have just created.

Task 4. Review & Reflect (15 minutes)

If you are working one-to-one with a student, ask them to read their letter aloud. Point out spelling mistakes and ask the student to underline or highlight them in colour. Now direct the student to use a dictionary or a digital spell check tool to correct all mistakes.

If you are working with a group or class, ask students to swop letters with a partner. They should read the whole letter and underline or highlight spelling mistakes. Partners should then exchange letters and use a dictionary or a digital spell check tool to correct their own spelling mistakes.

To finish, ask students to think about and discuss the following questions:

Review & Reflect Questions

Have you corrected all the spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes?
Have you changed all contractions to the long form?
Have you used a variety of sentence types, including complex sentences?
What have you learnt in this unit of work?
What have you done well?
What could you do even better next time?

Unit 1 is complete!

Students' letters could be published by writing or typing them up 'in best' for a display or published on a digital platform like the school website. Having a real audience read students' writing gets young people to view themselves as true authors - which they are!