

COMMON OET WRITING MISTAKES PLUS CORRECTIONS

| ASSESSMENT CRITERION & MISTAKE | CORRECTION |
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| A Appropriateness of Language - MISTAKE | |
| 1 informal language | I <u>really</u> appreciate your ongoing management. I <u>greatly</u> appreciate... ("greatly" is more formal) <u>Thanks a lot</u> for seeing Mr Smith. <u>Thank you</u> for seeing..." |
| 2. I ordered some tests. | <u>Some tests were ordered.</u> (passive voice is more FORMAL than <u>active voice</u>) |
| 3. Mr. Smith is an alcoholic. | Mr. Smith's alcohol intake is above the recommended levels. OR Mr. Smith's alcohol intake is excessive. (The 2 nd one is better if you need to save words.) |
| 4. Mrs. Smith is fat. | Mrs. Smith's weight is significantly above her ideal weight range. OR Mrs. Smith is overweight. |
| 5. she / he in the 1 st sentence of a paragraph. | Write the patient's name or "the patient" because the first sentence in a paragraph is the most important sentence. |
| 6. NURSES – inadequate 1 st paragraph | The 1 st p/g should answer the questions who?, why?, what?, where? when? e.g. Mrs Smith was admitted two days ago for a hip replacement. She will be discharged tomorrow. |
| 7. too direct e.g. Mrs. Smith will be seen by a social worker. | Kindly arrange an appointment with a social worker. |
| B Comprehension of Stimulus - MISTAKE | CORRECTION |
| 1. | The main thing to remember in this criterion is to INCLUDE important information and EXCLUDE unimportant information. So, the question to ask yourself is: "What does the reader need to know in order to treat (or care for) this patient?" |

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| | For pharmacists “What does the customer need to know about this product in order to use it safely?”” |
| 2. you’ve included all the normal vital signs and test results. | Only include POSITIVE examination findings HOWEVER sometimes the reader will need to know NEG findings e.g. with an anorexic patient, the thyroid function tests are normal / neg so the reader will need to know this. |
| 3. misunderstanding of the case notes / task | E.g. the reader of the letter is a patient’s parents but you write to another health professional instead e.g. “The patient is 8 years old and he suffered a minor fracture...” The parents know this information. OR you write that a patient’s condition is caused by e.g anxiety which is the patient’s opinion but it is not stated on the case notes. |
| 4. | |
| C Grammar and Cohesion – MISTAKE | CORRECTION |
| 1. missing “a” or “an” or “the” | Write “a/an” in front of all COUNTABLE nouns the FIRST TIME you write them. The 2 nd time you mention them use “the” e.g. “Mrs. Smith underwent <u>an</u> operation yesterday. <u>The</u> operation was a success.” |
| 2. missing “the” | Write “the” OR “his” OR “her” in front of all body parts e.g. “Mr. Smith sustained fractures to the ribs.” “I sold Mr. Smith a medication for pain in the knee.” An exception is: “a fractured femur.” BUT “ a fracture of the femur” |
| 3. missing “the” | Write “the” when the noun is understood to be PARTICULAR by the reader e.g. “The fridge is not working.” <u>Everyone knows</u> that you are talking about your fridge in your house. E.g. “For the reasons above...”. The reader knows which reasons you are referring to. Also, “the pill”, everyone knows you are referring to the OCP. |
| 4. no “the” in front of a superlative e.g “Most effective medication was recommended.” | Always write “the” in front of a superlative e.g. ‘the most effective’, “the biggest”, “the smallest” |
| 5. unnecessary article used e.g. She complained of <u>a</u> blurred vision. | “vision”, in the example, is an UNCOUNTABLE noun like “advice”, “water” etc. so do not use an article. “She complained of blurred vision.” |
| 6. . unnecessary article used e.g. The patient presented with <u>the</u> symptoms | The FIRST time you mention most nouns they are still GENERAL e.g. “heart disease” or “advice” so no article is necessary but the SECOND time write “the/his heart disease is not responding...” or “the advice to give up |

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| indicating <u>the</u> heart disease. | smoking was not followed..." because the nouns then become PARTICULAR. (This differs from C3 above.) |
| 7. no joining word | Write "furthermore" or "in addition" or "moreover" etc as you are ADDING more, similar information. |
| 8. no joining word | Write "consequently" or "therefore" or "as a result" etc. as there is a result of an earlier action. |
| 9. no joining word | Write "however" etc. as there is some contrast / difference. |
| 10. no joining phrase to summarise the letter | Write "In view of the above..." OR "In light of the above..." OR "Given the above..." in the last paragraph as it brings the whole letter together and creates cohesion. |
| 11. SIMPLE PRESENT tense not used | Use simple present eg. NOT "She HAD a history of..." write "She HAS a history of..." |
| 12. SIMPLE PRESENT tense not used in the 1 st paragraph | "Thank you for seeing Mrs. Smith who presents with X." You must use simple present tense in this sentence as the presenting complaint is the reason you are referring the patient i.e. the last consultation is when the patient has X. Also, the last consultation is the date of the letter. |
| 13. PAST PERFECT not used | When you have <u>two pasts</u> use past perfect e.g. "Yesterday the patient reported the pain HAD worsened." "reported" was yesterday so use simple past. The worsened pain happened BEFORE the reporting of the pain so it's an EARLIER PAST so use past perfect. |
| 14. PRESENT PERFECT not used | Use present perfect tense when there is a connection between the PAST and the PRESENT. E.g. Mrs. Smith HAS HAD an uneventful recovery so she will be discharged today. |
| 15. SIMPLE PAST not used | Technically, simple past tense is also possible in the example above. However, you must use simple past tense in the following example. Mrs. Smith HAD a fall yesterday. The adverb "yesterday" places the fall in the <u>finished past</u> i.e. there's no connection with the present. |
| 16. number agreement | On examination, a rash and ankle oedema <u>were</u> noted As more than one sign/symptom were noted use "were". |
| 17. not a full sentence / note form e.g. Past history is unremarkable. | The patient's (OR Her) past history is unremarkable. In the "real world" you would write sentences in note form but in the OET be safe and include verbs, articles, prepositions etc. |
| 18. no "and" before the last item in a list | The patient reported headache, painful joints, nausea AND constipation. |
| 19. incorrect use | He has had hypertension FOR 10 years. (the period of |

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| “since” and “for” with present perfect | time.) He has had hypertension SINCE 1998. (the actual date.) |
| 20. Passive voice – past participle not used e.g. “He will be discharge today. | Use the past participle “He will be discharged today.” |
| 21. wrong preposition e.g. “He had a pain ON his left side.” | “He had a pain IN his left side.” Use “in” when referring to a rash/scar/lesion etc. ON the skin. Everything else is IN the body. |
| 22. wrong form of the word used e.g “The patient complaint of...” | e.g. “The patient complained of...” “complaint” is a NOUN i.e. a complaint “complained” is the past tense of the VERB to complain. NB loss is a NOUN and “lost” is the simple past or past participle of the VERB “to lose” e.g. “The patient’s weight loss was 5 kgs.” OR “The patient lost 5 kgs.” |
| 23. two independent clauses used e.g. “The patient presented with her mother. Her mother was concerned about...” | Make your sentences more advanced in terms of structure so join the two clauses to make a relative clause e.g. “The patient presented with her mother who was concerned about...” |
| 24. an incomplete sentence as you’ve used a dependent clause by itself. E.g. “Although she was in pain.” | Join the clause to an independent clause. “Although she was in pain she was able to perform her daily tasks.” |
| D Spelling and Punctuation - MISTAKE | CORRECTION |
| 1. U.S. and Australian spelling used | Use EITHER U.S. OR Australian spelling throughout the letter e.g “colour (Aust.), color (U.S.), diarrhoea (Aust.), diarrhea (U.S.) |
| 1. sever | severe |
| 2. no capital letters | Use capital letters with proper nouns e.g. names of people, places etc. also official names like Work Cover, the Health Department, the Pharmacy Guild etc. You DO NOT need to use capital letters with diseases/medical conditions. Use capital letters with <u>trade</u> names of medications e.g. “Panadol” BUT not with <u>generic</u> names e.g. “paracetamol” |
| 3. unnecessary use of capital letters | Don’t use capital letters with medical conditions, body parts or investigations BUT use capital letters with abbreviations e.g. LFT. |
| 4. no comma after | “On examination,...” “Two weeks later,...” use a |

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| an introductory clause | comma after these examples as they are introductory clauses attached to the front of the main sentence. A test to see if it is an introductory clause is to take it away and if the sentence still makes sense then it is not part of the main sentence so it needs a comma after it. |
| 5. advise / advice | “advise” is a verb: Rest was advised. “advice” is an uncountable noun: The customer was given some advice regarding pain relief.” (for pharmacists) |
| E General | CORRECTION |
| 1. minor social history is written in the body of the letter | Write it in the Re section e.g. <u>Re: Mrs. Joan Smith, 45 years old, married, two children.</u> The Re section is <u>not counted</u> so you save words. HOWEVER, if some social history is important e.g. if an emphysema patient is a smoker. The fact that he smokes should be written in the body of the letter. |
| 2. abbreviation | The use of abbreviations is a difficult issue. In general, you can use common abbreviations like BP, ECG etc. but abbreviations like “b.d”. should be expanded to “twice a day” IF you know the meaning. Luckily, there are less abbreviations in recent OET writing tasks. So, if there is an abbreviation and you don’t know its full meaning just copy the abbreviation. Another strategy is to write the word in full the 1 st time followed by the abbrev in brackets e.g. “congestive cardiac failure (CCF)” then each time after that write “CCF”. |
| 3. you have written the patient’s / customer’s <u>full name</u> in the 1 st sentence. | If you write the person’s full name in the Re: section you just need to write the person’s surname in the 1 st sentence. E.g. Re: Mr. John Smith, 46 years old, married. 1 st sentence: “I am writing to refer <u>Mr. Smith</u> who is suffering from...” |
| 4. Mr. John | In English you would rarely write or say Mr. John. Use Mr. Smith or John (if the patient / customer is under 18 years old). |
| 5. wrong title e.g. Mrs. Smith used for a single woman | Use <u>Mrs.</u> for married women, use <u>Miss</u> for single women and/or girls BUT you can use <u>Ms.</u> for EITHER a married woman OR a single woman. It is the choice of the woman concerned. |
| 6. overused expression e.g. My main concern is...” | The expression is not wrong but it is used by nearly every candidate. Write something different e.g. Please be aware that the patient requires...” Please note that...” |

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| 7. the exact words have been copied from the task / case notes | Try to use <u>synonyms</u> to show the examiners that you have a broad range of vocabulary BUT don't waste time thinking of synonyms. If you are running out of time use the same words. |
| 8. no date written | You must write a date on your letter / information sheet. Usually the date is the date of the last consultation / the day of discharge / when you spoke to the customer in your pharmacy. |
| 9. Uncommon usage e.g. "difficult sleeping" | It's much more common to write "The patient reported difficulty sleeping." |
| 10. Incorrect use of "ago" | "ago" is used to indicate the recent finished past e.g. (If today is Monday.) " <u>Two days ago</u> I went fishing." This means I went fishing on Saturday. (If today is 1 st May.) " <u>The patient presented on 1st of February and reported a headache two days ago.</u> " This means he/she had a headache on 29 April. Use <u>previously</u> or <u>earlier</u> instead of <u>ago</u> . |