ncfe.

ten exam tips for english writing.

1. Many candidates lose relatively easy marks by incorrectly formatting their answers. Along with correct paragraphing, appropriate introductions and conclusions, we expect to see:

- o **Letters** – two addresses, a date and correct open and close
- o **Reports** – heading, subheadings/bullets where appropriate
- o **Articles** – heading, subheadings/bullets where appropriate
- o **Emails** – addressee, subject header

2. The source documents are there to help candidates with context and additional information. Lifting chunks of these passages word for word will not gain marks.

3. Allow sufficient time for proofreading and editing your work. A significant proportion of marks are awarded for spelling, punctuation and grammar.

4. For candidates sitting online writing tests it's vital to ensure that candidates have been given the opportunity to write, review and proofread on screen as these are very different skills to doing so on paper – especially punctuation where capital letters and the personal pronoun will not be autocorrected.

5. Do not write in block capital letters. Candidates using capital letters for an entire answer will not gain any of the marks available for punctuation.

6. Answer both questions. It is impossible to pass this test unless candidates answer both questions, and in sufficient detail.

7. Answer the question set. A common error for some more able candidates is to provide a well-written response in terms of structure and spelling, punctuation and grammar, but that has little relevance to the task set. Candidates must read the question with care to ensure they are providing a functional response.

8. Provide a sufficient response. Most candidates write responses of a suitable length, which enables markers to accurately assess their skills across the range of marking categories. However, some write very short responses. Whilst there is no mention of a specific word count in the Functional Skills English standards, candidates should aim to write between 250 and 300 words per response. Markers need to be able to establish confidence in candidates' writing skills and are instructed to penalise very short pieces, typically fewer than 100 words at level 1 and 150 words at level 2.

9. Some questions require candidates to identify language features which may include bias, persuasion, humour, alliteration. Centres should make sure that their candidates are fully aware of the terms used before they sit these papers. Many candidates are leaving these sorts of questions blank – indicating that they don't understand the question.

10. Tone/Register – candidates must refer to the task and adopt and appropriate tone. Many of those candidates failing to achieve a pass are adopting an inappropriate tone – either too formal or too informal.