

Safe as Houses?

Every year many children aged five and under are killed because of accidents in the home, and large numbers need hospital treatment. How can you make your child, grandchild or any young visitor safer in your home?



In the kitchen

The main types of injury in the kitchen are burns and scalds, often caused by children pulling kettles full of boiling water over themselves or tipping up pans on the cooker. Other hazards include cups and teapots full of hot drinks, hot oven doors, and hot irons. Children can also be at risk from slippery kitchen floors and from household chemicals.

In the bathroom

Children can be scalded by bath water which is too hot, and they can also drown in the bath – even in only a few inches of water. Some children often like to investigate toilets, which can be unhygienic or even unsafe if some cleaning products have been used.

Slamming doors

When children are playing together it's very easy for hands or fingers to get caught in doors. Few of these injuries are serious but they're all very painful.

Falls down stairs

The under-twos are most at risk on the stairs because they try to crawl or walk up or down them before they're really ready to. Additional risks are caused by toys or other objects left on the stairs, loose carpet or poor lighting.

Falls from windows

As soon as a child is mobile, low windows, or windows with climbable objects in front of them, become a major hazard, especially on upper floors.

Fires and matches

Fire is the most common cause of accidental death in the home for children. Around half these deaths are thought to be due to children playing with matches.

Medicines and chemicals

Some houses may contain a selection of medicines and household chemicals which can be very dangerous if swallowed by small children.

Near the house

Children are also at risk near the house – particularly if they're unsupervised. Keep garages and sheds containing tools locked and take the same care with chemicals as you would in the house.

publication details ? used by ? 1995

Exercise 2

Try to answer the following question based on the text *Safe as Houses?*. Again, the question identifies your audience – a group of ten-year-olds. Take this into account as you plan your talk.

Question from? 1995?

There has been an increase in accidents involving young children at home.

Your teacher has given you a speaking assignment. It is to talk to a small class of ten-year-olds on the subject of keeping younger brothers and sisters safe at home. The talk is sub-titled 'How you can help'. She has given you the sheet 'Safe as Houses?' to start you off.

Write what you would say.

- You do not have to use all the material and you must not copy sentences from it.
- You might wish to include questions and comments from your ten-year-old audience.

Additional exercises

1 You have to make a speech to your class about an issue that you believe in passionately. Here are some possibilities:

- You are a vegetarian and you want everyone to stop eating meat.
- You want people to be more environmentally conscious.
- You don't see the point of school uniform and you want it abolished.

Whatever your chosen topic, write the speech you would make to your class.

2 An important group of visitors is coming to your school and you have been chosen to make the welcoming speech. Decide what you would say and write your speech.

3 Think yourself into the future. You have decided that you are going to try to get yourself elected to your country's national parliament. You have ideas about what should be done to benefit your country. Here are some possibilities:

- You believe that things would improve economically if there were better communications and you want to advocate a road-building programme.
- You believe that farmers should be encouraged more as they are the backbone of the country and are the only people who can provide food for the poor.
- You believe that the country should scale down its armed forces because they are costing far too much and the country should follow peaceful policies anyway.

You will almost certainly have some ideas of your own to use as well as, or instead of, any of these. Write the words of a speech which you would make to the people you want to vote for you.

■ Writing a dialogue or conversation

If you are asked to write a dialogue or conversation you might be given a clear indication of how to set it out, but sometimes the decision will be left to you. When you are left with a choice, there are three possibilities.

- 1 You could set it out as a **playscript** with the names of the speakers on the left-hand side of the page and the words that they speak on the right. This is the easiest method for any conversation. If you want to give a 'direction' about how the person speaks, put it very briefly in brackets after his/her name.

James (brightly) *It will be all right on the night.*

Esmerelda (discouragingly) *You always say that.*

- 2 You might write it out as a **conversation** using speech marks:

'It will be all right on the night,' he said brightly.

If you choose this style, you must put the words that are actually spoken inside speech marks. Remember as well that every time you shift from one speaker to another you must start a new line.

'It will be all right on the night,' he said brightly.

'You always say that,' responded Esmerelda discouragingly.

- 3 The third way you might deal with the task is to write it in what is called **reported speech**:

He commented that it would be all right on the night, but she responded discouragingly that he always said that.

Tip If you choose method 2 or method 3, try to use a wide range of words as alternatives to 'said', to make your writing more interesting (as in the above example). Here are some possibilities:

exclaimed	shouted	whispered	answered	retorted	suggested
replied	whined	muttered	questioned	laughed	queried
sneered	called				

Example of a script-writing task

In the example that follows you would be expected to take your information from the main article, the accompanying diagrams and, perhaps, the captions which relate to the diagrams. You would also be expected to use some ideas of your own.

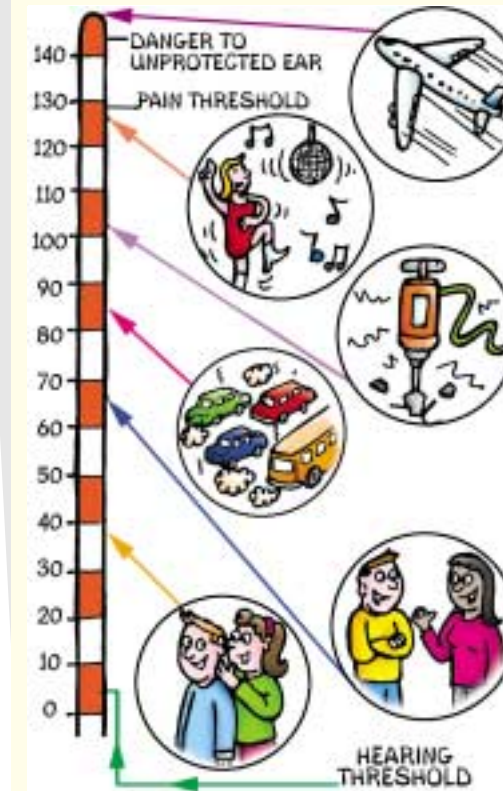
Once again, you are required to put yourself into a role and to write your answer as speech. However, the register (language and tone) you use for a conversation should be considerably different from that used for the formal speech we looked at on pages 62–65. It is also important that you select points from the material which would be suitable for each of the speakers in the conversation.

Question from? 1995?

Imagine that you are working in a research laboratory investigating the harmful effects of noise. You have some neighbours who are worried that their children enjoy playing music very loudly. They come to you for advice.

Write a script of your conversation. Write between 25 and 35 lines.

Noise



Excessive noise can have a serious effect on health, and is associated with stress and anxiety. Very loud noise causes physical damage to the delicate structures in the ear, and may result in deafness.

Noise is a form of pollution which can be merely irritating, or cause physical or emotional damage. For some people, the sound of music played very loudly is annoying, while others revel in it. Similarly, it may be enjoyable for some to drive a motor bike, while other people find the noise anti-social.

Long-term exposure to loud noise can bring about stress which has physical signs such as an increase in oxygen consumption and heart rate, possibly leading to effects on the heart and circulation. Tiredness, irritability and sleep disturbances may also occur.

The physical effects of noise on the ears can be serious. Prolonged, loud noise causes physical discomfort; it actually 'hurts the ears'. And if it is too loud or goes on for too long, it, at first, causes temporary hearing loss, then deafness, due to permanent damage to the delicate mechanism of the inner ear. Rock musicians performing in front of very powerful speakers frequently have permanent hearing damage.

If used at too high a volume, personal stereos can cause severe hearing loss. Although the speakers are so tiny that they can even be fitted inside the ear, the sound they produce is directed straight down the ear canal and can cause damage if the volume is turned up too high.



Don't underestimate the harmful effects of noise. It is the form of pollution which has the most immediate effect on people. It can cause severe stress.



From *The Environment and Health*, Brian Ward and *Wake Up to What You Can Do for the Environment*, DETR ? used by ? 1995

78 ■ APPLYING YOUR WRITING SKILLS

The stage directions are not directly relevant to the answer.

Although the opening speeches may be useful as scene-setting, they do not really contribute much to the answer as a whole.

Once the writer starts to deal with the relevant points about noise it becomes clear that he/she has understood the text and selected important points from it sensibly.

The candidate's expression reveals some limitations; the material is, in places, still very close to its original leaflet format ('Tiredness, irritability and lack of sleep can occur') and there is an overall sameness about the sentence structures which does not provide a convincing speech register.

One of the most positive features of this answer is the way in which it manipulates the material for its own purposes. For example, the writer takes the opportunity to mention a personal stereo in order to include a further range of points.

Key

■ Spelling/punctuation errors

Example of a candidate's response

There is a knock at the door Mark gets up from his chair placing some paper work on the table. On answering the door he finds it is Jason and Carole from next door, a middle age couple with concerned looks on their faces.)

Mark (opening the door) Hello again, how are you both?

Jason Very well thanks, and you?

Mark (opening the door a little wider) Work, work, work, that's all it seems to be these days. Would you like to come in?

Carole We don't really want to bother you, if you are busy. We can come back another time. We have just got a couple of question to ask you, a bit silly really. (looking slightly embarrassed and going red)

Mark No, come in what's on your mind

(Jason and Carole come into the hall and hold each others hand)

Jason I remembered from the last time we spoke that you were investigating the harmful effects of noise. We just wanted some advise that's all. (looking at Carole)

Mark I will see what I can do for you. Whats the problem.

Jason It's the children really, they play their music far to loud and we are worried about the effects. Its driving us crazy.

Mark Well long term exposure to noise can bring about stress, which we have found can bring about physical signs. Tiredness, irritability and lack of sleep can occur. Are they showing any of these signs?

Carole (Looking at Jason) No not that I'm aware of.

Mark How loud do they play it?

Jason Much louder than they need to, anyone would think they are deaf.

Mark Physical effects on the ear are serious to. If it goes on to loud for to long, it can cause temporary hearing loss and then deafness due to perminant damage to the inner ear.

Carole That's it, no more loud music. We will get them a personel stereo.

Mark I'm afraid thats the worst thing to do, they can cause servere hearing loss, the sound goes directly into the ear canal and causes damage. The best thing is to get them to turn in right down, to a level where everyone is happy. Noise is a polution, which can cause everyone damage.

Jason Well thanks for that. We know what to do now, no more loud music, it was driving us mad any way.

(With a smile on their faces they turned and left.)

There are basic errors of spelling ('aware', 'temporary').

This writer has a good understanding of the task and writes a convincing conversation. However, there is some unnecessary padding and some lack of development of ideas. This answer scores a grade B but no higher because of the weaknesses listed.

Writing a dialogue or conversation ■ 79

Practise writing a dialogue or conversation

Just occasionally, especially in Part 2 of Paper 2, you may be asked to write a dialogue or conversation. Use the following exercises to help you practise writing these in a script format.

Exercise 1

The following article was printed in *The New Straits Times*.

Imagine you are Mohamad Muzri Mat Sari and you are talking with a group of your friends about the day you fell off the pipe and broke your arm.

Write a page to a page and a half of the dialogue.

Dangerous balancing act to get to and return from school

By C. Navaratnam

STUDENTS living in Kampung Pasir and Taman Datuk Mansor off Jalan Rasah, Seremban, do a balancing act – one which could prove fatal – on their way to school daily.

They have become adept at carrying their bags while balancing themselves to cross a 50-metre pipe about 5m over the Sungai Linggi.

The alternative is to walk two kilometres to school.

Some 60 students of Sekolah Menengah Jalan Loop are forced to use the pipe daily as this is the only way of crossing the river.

On rainy days, when they have to hold an

umbrella and balance their bag at the same time, students do a risky 'horse ride' on the pipe which is embarrassing for the girls.

To date, a housewife has died after falling into the river. A student has broken an arm in a similar accident.

Residents have made several appeals to State Assemblymen and Members of Parliament for a bridge across the river.

Now, they can only pray that their children make it safely across the river every time they go to and return from school.

'Yes, promises were made several times especially before the elections but nothing has been done until today. We are really disappointed,' said K. Pannir Selvam, 37, whose son uses the pipe daily.

'I think the authorities will only act when a child falls into the river. I am praying that my son will return home safely from school daily.'

Housewife Tang Chow Har, 40, recalled the day when her best friend fell while crossing the river about 15 years ago. Her body was later found 2km away.

'Her death was a big blow to me,' she said.

Tang said she is prepared to collect funds if the authorities are willing to build a bridge across the river.