60 ESL Writing Prompts by CEFR Level (A1–C2), with What to Look For

Ten prompts for every CEFR level, from a first postcard at A1 to a summary essay at C2. Each one names the text type, gives a target length, and lists the language the task should pull out, so you know what to mark before the scripts come in.

A1 · 20–40 words

1. Write about your family. Who lives in your home? Give each person's name, age and one thing they like.

Description. Look for: has got / have got, he likes / she likes with the -s, the possessive 's (my brother's name).

2. Write a postcard to a friend from your holiday. Where are you? What is the weather like? What do you do every day?

Postcard. Look for: It's sunny / It's cold, there is / there are, an opening (Dear …) and a closing (Love, …).

3. Describe your bedroom. What is in it? What colour is it? What do you like about it?

Description. Look for: there is / there are, prepositions of place (on, under, next to), colour adjectives before the noun (a blue bed).

4. Write about your Saturday. What time do you get up? What do you do in the morning, the afternoon and the evening?

Daily routine. Look for: the present simple, at / in with times (at 8 o'clock, in the afternoon), first, then, after that.

5. Write a short profile of yourself for the class wall: your name, where you're from, your job or school, and two hobbies.

Personal profile. Look for: capital letters for names, countries and I, I'm from …, I like + noun or -ing (I like swimming).

6. Write a note to a classmate. You can't come to class tomorrow. Say why, and ask them to take notes for you.

Note. Look for: can't, because, a polite request with Can you …?, a short sign-off (Thanks! / See you).

7. Describe your favourite food. When do you eat it? Who makes it?

Description. Look for: frequency adverbs (always, sometimes, never) before the main verb, my mum makes / my dad cooks with the -s.

8. Write about your best friend. What do they look like? What do you do together?

Description. Look for: has got + hair or eyes (She's got long black hair), we + verb (We play football), and to join two ideas.

9. Write a shopping list for a class party, then two sentences about what you need and how much.

List and sentences. Look for: a / an, plurals, some, and quantities (two bottles of water, a bag of crisps).

10. Write a first message to a new pen friend. Introduce yourself and ask three questions.

Message. Look for: question word order (Where do you live? Do you have a pet?), do / does, a greeting and a sign-off.

A2 · 25–60 words

11. Your English friend wants to visit your town next month. Write an email: suggest two places to visit and say when is a good time to come.

Email. Look for: suggestions (You can …, Let's …, Why don't we …?), a reason with because, an opening and a closing line.

12. Write a story that begins: "When I opened the door, I couldn't believe my eyes."

Story. Look for: the past simple of regular and irregular verbs, then / suddenly / in the end, a clear ending.

13. Write a note to your neighbour. You're going away for the weekend: ask them to water your plants and tell them where the key is.

Note. Look for: going to for plans, Could you …?, prepositions of place for the key (under the mat, next to the door).

14. Write an email to a friend about a film you saw last weekend. Who was in it, what happened, and did you like it?

Email. Look for: the past simple, opinion adjectives (funny, boring, exciting), because and but.

15. You left your bag on the bus. Write a message to the bus company: describe the bag, say what was in it, and how they can contact you.

Message. Look for: the past simple, describing objects (a small blue bag with a black strap), contact details at the end.

16. Write about the best day out you had this year. Where did you go, who were you with, and what was the best part?

Personal recount. Look for: the past simple, The best part was …, and / but / so to join ideas.

17. Compare your town now with your town ten years ago.

Description. Look for: comparatives (bigger, more expensive, busier), there was / there were, used to as a stretch.

18. Write an invitation to your birthday party: when and where it is, what to bring, and how to reply.

Invitation. Look for: prepositions of time (on Saturday, at 7 pm), imperatives (Bring …, Text me …), Would you like to …?

19. Describe someone in your family you admire, and say why.

Description. Look for: personality adjectives (patient, generous, funny), because, the present simple for habits.

20. Write a short review of a café or restaurant you know: the food, the prices and the service.

Mini-review. Look for: an opinion plus a reason, too / enough (too expensive, not big enough), I recommend …

B1 · about 100 words

21. An English-speaking friend is coming to stay with you. Write an email: where they will sleep, what they should bring, and what you'll do together.

Email. Look for: future forms (will, going to, present continuous for arrangements), should for advice, one paragraph per point.

22. Article for a class magazine: "A place I love to go". Describe it and explain why it matters to you.

Article. Look for: a title, an opening that speaks to the reader, descriptive adjectives, a closing sentence that rounds it off.

23. Write a story that ends with: "…and that was the last time I trusted a map."

Story. Look for: the past continuous for background and the past simple for events, time linkers (while, as soon as), an ending that matches the last line.

24. A friend wants to improve their English but has very little free time. Write them an email with your advice.

Email. Look for: advice structures (You should …, Why don't you …?, If I were you …), so that for purpose.

25. Write about a time something went wrong on a trip, and how you solved it.

Recount. Look for: the past perfect for the earlier event (I had left my passport at the hotel), sequencing, a short reflection at the end.

26. Article: "Is it better to live in a city or in the countryside?" Give your opinion and two reasons.

Article. Look for: comparatives, opinion phrases (In my opinion, I think that), On the one hand … on the other hand.

27. Write a review of a book, series or video game for the class website. Would you recommend it?

Review. Look for: the present simple to describe the plot, -ed / -ing adjectives (bored / boring), a clear recommendation.

28. Email your teacher: you missed an important lesson because you were ill. Apologise, explain, and ask what you need to catch up on.

Semi-formal email. Look for: register (Dear Ms …, I'm sorry I missed …), polite requests (Could you let me know …?), a suitable sign-off.

29. Write about a goal you have for next year and what you'll do to reach it.

Personal essay. Look for: hope to / plan to / going to, the first conditional (If I practise every day, I'll …).

30. A friend is buying their first laptop. Write a message comparing two options and recommending one.

Message. Look for: comparatives and superlatives, both / neither, I'd recommend + -ing or You should get …

B2 · 140–190 words

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31. Essay: "Students should be allowed to use AI tools for homework." Write about (1) learning, (2) fairness, and (3) an idea of your own.

Essay. Look for: a clear position, one paragraph per point, contrast linkers (however, although, whereas), a conclusion that doesn't just repeat the introduction.

32. Article: "The best advice I've ever been given." Who gave it, in what situation, and how did it change things?

Article. Look for: an engaging opening, narrative tenses, reported speech (She told me to …), a reflective close.

33. Report for your manager or head teacher on the canteen or café: what works, what doesn't, and two recommendations.

Report. Look for: headings, impersonal language (Most people said …, It was felt that …), I would suggest + -ing.

34. Review: a place to eat that's good for a group of students on a tight budget.

Review. Look for: a range of descriptive vocabulary, praise balanced with criticism, a recommendation aimed at the reader.

35. Letter of application: a summer job as an English-speaking tour guide in your town.

Formal letter. Look for: formal register throughout, the present perfect for experience, skills linked to what the job needs.

36. Story beginning: "Maria knew she had to decide before the train left."

Story. Look for: narrative tenses including the past perfect, correctly punctuated direct speech, tension that builds.

37. Essay: "Working from home is better for employees than working in an office." Write about (1) productivity, (2) social life, and (3) an idea of your own.

Essay. Look for: hedging (tends to, may, in many cases), concession (While it is true that …), a balanced conclusion.

38. A friend can't choose between two university courses. Write them an email with honest advice.

Informal email. Look for: the second conditional (If I were you …), informal phrasal verbs, weighing pros and cons.

39. Article: "Is social media making us more or less connected?"

Article. Look for: rhetorical questions, examples to support each claim, a strong final line.

40. You ordered something online and it arrived late and damaged. Write to the company and say what you want them to do.

Formal email. Look for: the passive (The parcel was delivered …), formal complaint phrases, one specific requested action.

C1 · 220–260 words

41. Essay: your class has discussed ways to cut traffic in city centres: congestion charges, better public transport, car-free zones. Discuss two of them and say which would work better, and why.

Essay. Look for: evaluating rather than listing, cleft sentences (What matters most is …), a justified final judgement.

42. Proposal to your college or company director: a mentoring scheme for new students or staff.

Proposal. Look for: headings, a persuasive but formal tone, would for proposed outcomes, benefits tied to a real problem.

43. Review, for a culture website, of a documentary that changed how you think about an issue.

Review. Look for: evaluative vocabulary beyond good and bad, the effect on the viewer, a recommendation qualified for a specific audience.

44. Report for the town council on how young people use public spaces, with recommendations.

Report. Look for: summarising findings in words (the majority, a significant minority), impersonal passives, recommendations in order of priority.

45. Letter to the editor replying to an article that claims learning languages is pointless now that translation apps exist.

Formal letter. Look for: reference to the original argument, concession then rebuttal, inversion for emphasis (Not only …, but …).

46. Essay: "Museums should return artefacts to their countries of origin." Discuss ownership and public access.

Essay. Look for: a nuanced position, formal linkers (Nevertheless, Consequently), avoiding sweeping generalisations.

47. Reference for a friend or colleague applying to volunteer abroad.

Reference. Look for: character described with evidence, a formal but warm register, a clear endorsement at the end.

48. Proposal: a "digital detox" week at your school or workplace. What would it involve, and how would you measure success?

Proposal. Look for: conditionals for hypothetical outcomes, a concrete plan, likely objections answered.

49. Article: "The skill nobody taught me at school."

Article. Look for: a personal angle that widens into a general point, varied sentence length, idiomatic but controlled language.

50. Essay: "A four-day working week should become standard." Discuss wellbeing and the economic impact.

Essay. Look for: cause-and-effect language, hedging, a conclusion that weighs both sides before taking one.

C2 · 240–320 words

51. Essay, 240–280 words: give students two short opinion texts (about 100 words each) on whether tourism helps or harms historic cities. Summarise and evaluate both views, then add their own.

Summary essay. Look for: paraphrase rather than lifted phrases, the two texts brought together rather than summarised one by one, the writer's own view clearly separate from the sources'.

52. Article, 280–320 words: "Why we romanticise the past."

Article. Look for: sophisticated cohesion, irony or understatement used on purpose, a memorable close.

53. Review, 280–320 words, of a widely praised book you found disappointing.

Review. Look for: precise critical vocabulary, the consensus acknowledged before it's challenged, a controlled tone.

54. Report, 280–320 words, for an international organisation on how remote work has changed a city's neighbourhoods.

Report. Look for: complex noun phrases, precise claims without invented statistics, recommendations ranked by how feasible they are.

55. Letter, 280–320 words, to a university admissions panel arguing that a gap year should count as education.

Formal letter. Look for: a persuasive structure, advanced modality (there is a case for, it could be argued), a consistent register.

56. Essay, 240–280 words: two short texts on whether children should learn to code at primary school. Summarise and evaluate both, then give your own view.

Summary essay. Look for: a concise summary, evaluative language (persuasive, overstated, unconvincing), a reasoned personal view.

57. Article, 280–320 words: "In praise of boredom."

Article. Look for: a counter-intuitive argument developed across paragraphs, a wide range of idiom, rhetorical devices used sparingly.

58. Review, 280–320 words, for a literary magazine, comparing a film adaptation with the book it is based on.

Comparative review. Look for: comparison beyond "better than" (falls short of, does justice to), well-chosen examples from both.

59. Report, 280–320 words: should your organisation replace printed textbooks with digital resources?

Report. Look for: balanced evidence, the language of costs and benefits, a clear recommendation with its caveats.

60. Letter, 280–320 words, to a newspaper replying to the claim that "a C2 learner no longer needs a teacher."

Letter. Look for: a sustained argument, irony kept within the register, precise lexis.