

FIRE SERVICES EXAMINATIONS BOARD

STUDY NOTE

EXAMINATION

LEADING FIREFIGHTERS EXAMINATION

PAPER

BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

SUBJECT

KEY SKILLS

ITEM

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

STUDY NOTE No.

1401

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY NOTE

This study note has been prepared as the basis of study in connection with the qualifying examinations for promotion.

Candidates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the information contained in the study note and understand how it should be applied:

The 'References' made at the end of the Study Note are included for information only and candidates will not be expected to study these as part of the bibliography.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

1. Introduction

Candidates will be required to demonstrate their ability to produce written material and read and respond to written materials in a manner that is appropriate to the level of written communication that is expected of a Leading Fire fighter in the course of normal day to day duties.

The examination may include the requirement to:

- (a) Write a report.
- (b) Write a letter or memorandum.
- (c) Write articles or outlines of talks.
- (d) Interpret and comprehend written material.
- (e) Process information.
- (f) Précis information.

The material you may be asked to prepare could be for different audiences:

- (a) People you know
- (b) People you don't know
- (c) Known people who are unfamiliar with the subject
- (d) Unknown people who are unfamiliar with the subject

The paper will consist of two compulsory questions:

- (a) One question will be asked which will expect candidates to produce written material (for example) writing a report, letter or memorandum, etc.

The key skills that you must demonstrate are:

- (i) include the right information;
- (ii) check that it can be read and makes sense;
- (iii) use correct spelling, punctuation and grammar;
- (iv) use a format which suits the reader and purpose; and
- (v) use a structure and style to help the reader identify the main points.

- (b) One question will be asked which will expect candidates to read and respond to written material, for example, an extract from a textbook in order to write a report, etc.

The key skills that you must demonstrate are:

- (i) select and read materials for a particular purpose;
- (ii) get the information you need;
- (iii) check your understanding of the subject; and
- (iv) summarise the information obtained.

Your answers will not be expected to be polished pieces of prose, but should be acceptable drafts for documents that could be used at work. For example, minor errors of spelling and punctuation are less likely to be penalised by the examiners than incorrect transmission of a date or name from the information provided.

You may be unfamiliar with the skills required for this part of the examination and if this is the case it will be difficult to pass the examination without practice.

The following notes are intended to assist candidates in their preparation for this paper by offering guidance on and exercises in the type of questions that are likely to be featured in an examination of this kind.

2. Grammar, Punctuation and Spelling

Poor grammar, punctuation and spelling will lose you marks in the examination. More importantly they can let you down if you work in an environment which requires you to produce your reports, proposals and ideas in written form because, as I suggested earlier, you can lose credibility as a result. That is one justification for giving them importance in the marking scheme; your decision to take this examination probably means that you are seeking promotion into, or further into, that kind of environment.

Practice will give you the chance to have your grammar, punctuation and spelling checked by someone else. Practice is important since good grammar, punctuation and spelling are as much the result of habit and observation as of direct learning.

(a) Grammar

A child learns to speak, and to speak intelligibly, without knowing what a verb or a noun is; grammar is something all speakers of the same language broadly share because, without it, it is difficult to communicate properly. The rules come later and they can be learnt. There are also some common mistakes, in spite of which we manage to get across to other people what we mean most of the time. The objective we set you, nevertheless, is to be as near perfect as you can.

For general guidance, if you get interested in the subject, the *Guide to English Usage*, by Sidney Greenbaum and Janet Whitcut, published by Longman, has full entries on grammar and on punctuation. *Grammar - A Student's Guide*, by James R Hurford, is published by Cambridge University Press. These books are written for English speakers; many other books on English usage and grammar are aimed at those learning English as a foreign language. These should be available from, or through, most good bookshops.

You may also find it useful to look at the *Communication Skills Guides* published by the Industrial Society on Letter Writing and on Report Writing, obtainable from the Industrial Society, National Sales Unit, Quadrant Court, 49 Calthorpe Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1TH (0121 454 6769).

Since this is not an English language text-book, just one or two examples of common mistakes will be given rather than to try and summarise English grammar.

'There is/'There are ...': whether you write 'is' or 'are' depends on what follows. If what follows is plural (ie. more than one) .. then it should be 'are'. So, 'there are many fires in the high summer'.

If what follows is singular (ie. only one) then it should be 'is' as in 'where there is smoke, there is fire'.

The same principle applies to 'there was'/'there were'. That is an example of the verb agreeing with the subject. Another common mistake in the same sort of area comes when the subject is 'You'. Many candidates write, 'You was ...'; they should, of course, write, 'You were'.

The apostrophe 's' (') is often misused. It is usually used to indicate ownership. 'That book belongs to John, it is John's book.' In that sentence, the (') came before the 's'.

Notice the difference in the following example; 'That common room is for teachers; it is the teachers' common room.'

Where the ownership is held by one person, the (') comes before the 's'; where it is held by more than one, the (') comes after the 's'. So you would write:

David's house;
Ken's argument;
the fire appliance's lights;
the Fire Service's priorities;
the flowers' beauty (if there is more than one flower);
the architects' office (if there is more than one architect).

The (') is also used to indicate that a letter or letters have been omitted. If, instead of 'I have said' you write 'I've said', the (') indicates that letters have disappeared.

Similarly, 'It is' is often shortened to 'It's'. This is another common error; where you want to indicate that something belongs to 'it', you do not need an ('). Thus, if you write about a dog burying the bone that belongs to it, you refer to the bone as 'its bone' without any ('). Many candidates put in an (') in that situation.

A few common errors have been given otherwise this would turn into a very different publication.

THE BEST ADVICE IS -

WHILST YOU ARE PREPARING FOR THIS EXAMINATION,
YOU SHOULD READ MORE AND READ CAREFULLY.

(b) Punctuation

Punctuation is a guide to reading and therefore to meaning. If you were reading a passage aloud, the punctuation would tell you how to manage your voice to communicate the sense to your listeners. If you see a **question mark (?)** at the end of the sentence, your voice would rise to make it sound like a question. If there was an **exclamation mark (!)**, you would use your voice to add some drama to your sentence.

A **full-stop (.)** finishes a sentence, reading it aloud you would have allowed your voice to sink and you would have paused afterwards. The next sentence would have started with a capital letter.

Each of the sentences in the paragraph you have just read began with a capital letter and ended with a full-stop. Longer and more complicated sentences have pauses in the middle and, for these, you need the **comma (,)**. The comma helps you to break up a sentence into groups of words to help your readers understand its meaning.

As an example:

'In an emergency the press can help by broadcasting appeals giving details of casualty telephone numbers and if necessary details of evacuation plans.'

As it stands, that sentence is just about understandable but, with commas, it becomes much clearer:

'In an emergency, the press can help by broadcasting appeals, giving details of casualty telephone numbers and, if necessary, details of evacuation plans.'

Two other punctuation marks are the **colon (:)** and the **semi-colon (;)**. Look in the next section in this booklet, on 'Spelling'. There is a paragraph on words commonly mis-spelt which begins, '(i) Note the double letters:', the sign that follows is a colon (:). It is commonly used where you want to make a stop in order to introduce a list.

Each item in the list, until the last one, is followed by a semi-colon (;). Again, that is a common use of the semi-colon, to pause in a sentence, longer than you would with a comma, to give each item in the list due emphasis.

Finally, a reference to **quotation marks (' ')**. As the name suggests they are used mainly to introduce a quotation, either from a book, a speech, a conversation someone has had or a newspaper article etc., using exactly the words that were used in the book. They are also used when you want to refer to a title, say of a book or a poem; many of you will have seen 'Pride and Prejudice' on the television, and no doubt many of you watch 'London's Burning'.

Quotation marks are sometimes mis-used when candidates want to use an expression they think is a little unusual or 'slangy'; it is quite wrong to do that. If you want to use a slang word because you think it is the right word for your answer, then use it; if you are not sure, write something else.

(c) Spelling

Spelling in English is notoriously difficult. The habit of reading and practice in writing are ways of getting to grips with it. There are few easy rules of the 'i before e except after c' kind, eg 'receive', 'ceiling' but 'believe', 'retrieve'.

A number of words with a double letter tend to be mis-spelt with a single letter and others where the single letter gets doubled:

(i) Note the double letters:

accommodation;	immediate;
apparent;	necessary;
apparatus;	occasion;
appreciate;	occurrence;
approximately;	possess;
committee;	recommend;
equipped;	suggest.

(ii) Note the single letters:

amend;
apologise;
profession.

Special problems can occur with words that are clearly related but change their spelling in different conditions:

I proceed/the procedure;
written/writing.

Candidates sometimes mis-spell common words that sound the same but mean quite different things:

role/roll;	sight/site;
there/their;	weather/whether;
to/two/too;	were/where/wear.

There are words commonly used that just are wrongly spelt and the following words are examples:

acquire;	implement;
ascertain;	liaison;
aware;	personnel/personal;
benefit;	pursue;
competent;	representative;
endeavour;	resources;
familiar;	safety;
hydraulic;	separate.

'Emergency' is a word that crops up regularly for obvious reasons; if there is more than one, they are emergencies. Other words ending in 'y' also change eg 'party/parties', 'dummy/dummies' etc.

When nouns like 'smoke' and 'noise' are changed into adjectives, they lose their final 'e' and add a 'y' - 'smoky', 'noisy'. Other nouns ending in 'e' do the same.

When there is no more room, the place is 'full'; but when that word appears at the end of another word, it only has one 'l' - spoonful; careful; beautiful.

These are just a few errors but they are worth mentioning here because they are common.

GOOD PRACTICE IS TO CHECK THE SPELLING OR MEANING OF WORDS, GET A DICTIONARY AND USE IT!

There are many on the market at a wide range of prices - they always come in handy. Don't forget though, you will NOT be allowed to use the dictionary in the examination!

3. The Business Administration Paper

The Business Administration Paper is intended to assess how effectively you can communicate at work. It is not a test of your technical knowledge though it deals with fire service issues. It will test your ability to put over ideas and information and to do this in different types of situation, perhaps explaining a problem to a member of the public or giving an instruction to a junior colleague. You need to write clearly and in the style appropriate to the question, sometimes persuading, sometimes giving an order, sometimes describing an event to excite interest.

When you sit down to take the paper, you have 1 hour and 10 minutes in which to answer two questions. You must, therefore, use your time well. In the first few minutes, read the paper carefully and begin to think out your responses. The two questions that you must answer each carry the same number of marks and are of equal difficulty, so you have about **thirty minutes** in which to consider and write out each answer. Give yourself a few minutes at the end to read through and, if necessary, correct your script.

You must answer **both** questions.

IT IS VITAL THEREFORE TO READ EACH QUESTION VERY CAREFULLY BEFORE YOU BEGIN YOUR ANSWER.

If you make notes or develop some ideas at greater length before beginning your response, make sure that the examiners know what you want them to mark by crossing out your rough work.

Your answer will be hand-written. Many of us have access to a typewriter or a word processor but that is not permitted in an examination. Your handwriting may stand between you and success.

Examiners give marks for good handwriting so make sure that it is at least legible. You may be out of practice - after all, you know what you have written, but can others read it?

AS WITH HANDWRITING AND PRESENTATION GENERALLY, IF THE PAPER LOOKS WELL PRESENTED AND TIDY, IT WILL CREATE A GOOD IMPRESSION AND WILL BE A POINT IN YOUR FAVOUR.

The questions all relate to the Fire Service in some way. You are asked to write about what you know, though not at a deep technical level. Therefore, no other body of knowledge needs to be mastered for this paper.

You are required to put over a variety of ideas in writing so you will not be taken by surprise; what we are looking for is how you put across your ideas and knowledge in writing.

The following sections cover the different types of questions in the paper, give information on what the examiners are looking for and, using past examination questions, give worked answers. There are additional questions, from past papers, for you to use as exercises. In the Appendices, worked answers to these exercises are given.

DO NOT READ THEM BEFORE TRYING YOUR OWN ANSWERS SINCE YOU WILL FIND THAT INHIBITS YOU.

4. Précis or Summary Questions

One question on the paper may ask you to summarise a passage usually about the Fire Service or a related topic. You have to summarise a passage of 250-300 words to about 100-115 words. The actual numbers vary from year to year so you must read the question paper to know the number of words in which you are expected to summarise the passage.

If you write fewer than that number, you will be penalised since you have failed to meet a target, even more serious from your point of view, is that you will have found it all the more difficult to convey the main points from the passage.

If you write more than that number, you will also be penalised. This is reasonable, since the more you write, the easier it is to include the main points of the original.

YOU MUST AIM TO WRITE WITHIN THE NUMBER OF WORDS REQUIRED.

Incidentally the paper asks you to count the words and write the number down. This should not include the words in any heading.

(a) Why Include the Exercise?

It's a test of understanding, judgement, communication and writing skill.

The first step is to read, understand and recognise the main points of information or argument in the passage as a test of understanding and of judgement.

A summary of the original piece that conveys the main points of information or argument, so that it can be quickly understood .

Obviously, not everything in the original can be conveyed to that other person but the main points must be noted. This is again a matter of judgement. It is the kind of task that you might be given by a senior officer to enable him/her to pass on to Members of the Fire Service Committee or to colleagues the content of a new report on the service or some new regulations; it has, therefore, realism as an exercise.

(b) How to Approach the Task

The written piece must be in proper English. You must not think that you can miss out words like 'the' or 'and' and use long lists of words instead of proper sentences. This may help to get down to the right number of words but it is not what is expected.

Candidates vary in their approach to the exercise and you will have to decide your own approach. Some seem to sit and think and then write down their version. Others jot down a few notes, showing what they think are the main ideas, and then write their summary, Others write a full account, count the words, do a bit of revision, and then rewrite their final answer.

There is no one right way, so you must decide how to go about the task. Practice will help you decide. Do not forget the limited time allowed for the question and don't forget to cross out your preliminary work.

YOUR ANSWER MUST SUMMARISE THE IDEAS AND/OR INFORMATION IN THE PASSAGE.

A few candidates feel they have to comment on the information and give their personal view or give the examiner the benefit of their own experience.
DO NOT!

5. Précis Examples, Worked Answers and Exercises

(a) Précis Example 1

The following extract from a Manual of Firemanship contains 313 words.

As a Leading Firefighter in the Brigade Training Department, you have been asked to summarise the essential points from the following extract for recruit firefighters study notes.

Prepare a précis of **between 100-115 words** covering all the salient features of the original text using properly constructed sentences and your own form of words.

During dry periods especially, it is unsafe to leave a fire for some time after it has been extinguished; damping down should therefore be thorough and a patrol should be maintained. The personnel forming this patrol should be reasonably fresh and should be equipped with adequate firefighting gear. Where possible dams should be left as strategic points with a central relay from a good water supply, which is capable of being switched to any point where fire may break out. Once the major fire is under control, a search for further outbreaks should be made, especially down-wind. This is often best done by personnel in pairs, one carrying a spade and the other buckets of water, who together can dig out and damp down dangerous spots.

When extinguishing the ground over which the fire has passed, a special note should be made of hollows and sunken road tracks as the wind in sweeping over the burning ground picks up small pieces of charcoal and deposits them in the hollows to varying depths, in the same way as snow is piled up in drifts. Outward appearance by day gives no evidence of fire, since charcoal burns without smoke, but charcoal may be found at red heat a little way below the surface. It is often only at night that it is possible to verify that all traces of fire have been extinguished. Even where the charcoal is allowed to burn out, there may a danger from a shift or increase of wind, which might disturb the drifts and result in glowing particles being picked up and carried to other parts of the forest.

Tree stumps and roots must also be carefully inspected for latent fire. When water is not available in quantities sufficient for damping down, it may be necessary to isolate the smaller areas of burning by digging an encircling trench.

Prepare the précis required stating the actual number of words used.

Worked Answer

In dry weather, extinguished fires cannot safely be left. They must be thoroughly damped down and a patrol of reasonably fresh firefighters maintained, with access to water for new outbreaks. These should be actively sought at this stage, by firefighters equipped to deal with them.

Low points in the ground where the wind may have deposited charcoal should be noted. Charcoal can burn beneath the surface and perhaps only at night can one tell that it has burnt out. If the wind reactivates the fire it may carry it elsewhere.

Latent fire found in tree stumps and roots can be isolated by digging trenches around them, particularly necessary if there is no access to water. (115 words)

(b) Précis Example 2

The following extract from a Manual of Firemanship contains 297 words.

As a Leading Firefighter in the Brigade Training Department, you have been asked to summarise the essential points of the extract for recruit firefighters study notes. Prepare a précis of **between 100-115 words** covering all the salient features of the original text using properly constructed sentences and your own form of words.

‘Apart from the fires which are caused by carelessness, the incidence of fires in the country varies greatly with the time of year. Thus forest, heath and grass fires are in general most prevalent either in the early Spring before the sap has fully risen, and when the winds are keen and drying, or during hot spells at the height of summer when the vegetation has been dried out by the heat. Crop fires only occur during a short period after the grain is ripe or nearly so and before it is cut. Perhaps the most vulnerable period is during the actual harvest operations. The making of silage from grass crops has lessened the number of haystacks, and consequently fires due to spontaneous combustion in such stacks are no longer as frequent as in the past. However, the new hazard of fires caused by spontaneous combustion of silage presents a much more difficult problem for the fireman.

The weather has its greatest effect, of course, upon the state of water supplies and also of the ground. Within a few days, water in streams and ponds may increase or decrease greatly, while a field which is inaccessible to a water tender one week, may be passable the next. The influence of rain upon firefighting itself should not be forgotten, for many large grass or heath fires are only finally extinguished by rain, and the officer who sees or is told that rain is probable should not fail to take that fact into account. It should, therefore, be one of the first tasks of an urban fireman stationed in a country area to understand how the countryside is affected by the changing seasons and the weather that they bring, and to relate this knowledge to his firefighting technique’.

Prepare the précis required stating the actual number of words used.

Worked Answer

Carelessness can cause fires at any time but otherwise their incidence varies seasonally. Dry early springs and hot summers bring most forest, heath and grass fires. Ripening crops are vulnerable, particularly during the harvest. Fewer haystacks mean fewer spontaneous fires in them, but the silage now made from grass crops bring the same danger but with more difficult problems.

The weather can quickly change the level of water in streams and ponds and also the state of the ground. Rain helps firefighters who must note its likelihood. Town firefighters stationed in the country must quickly learn how seasonal changes in the weather can affect their firefighting. (106 words)

(c) Précis Exercise 1

You will find the worked answers to these exercises in Appendix 1. Write your own versions before looking at them.

The following extract from *'Dealing with Disaster'*, describes the initial response to a disaster at a single site. As a Leading Firefighter in the Brigade Staff/Operations Department, you have been asked to prepare a précis of **between 100-115 words**, for inclusion in a Brigade publication. You are to state the number of words used at the end of your script.

The Response to a Disaster at a Single Site

'The scene immediately after disaster has struck is likely to be chaotic. Survivors may be helping each other and those who happen to be nearby may also be assisting. To bring some order to the chaos, it is important that the emergency services establish control over the immediate area and also build up arrangements for co-ordinating the contributions to the response. Experience has shown that an effective response depends on sound decisions being made and appropriate actions set in train at the outset.

It is generally accepted that the first member of the emergency services to arrive on the scene should not immediately become involved with rescue but should make a rapid assessment of the disaster and report to that service's control. Such information as is immediately available should be provided about the nature of the disaster and its location; the number of dead, injured and uninjured; hazards actual and potential; access to the site and possible rendezvous points and which emergency services have their own requirements; for example, in the case of the fire service, the number of pumps and appliances likely to be needed.

At the scene, it is vital that the emergency services establish control and co-ordination arrangements at the earliest stage. Each service needs to establish its own control arrangements, but continuing liaison between the various controls throughout that response phase is essential. The underlying principle is that the police assume the role of overall co-ordination, thus enabling the other services to concentrate on their specific tasks'. (251 words)

(d) Précis Exercise 2

You are a Leading Firefighter in the Brigade Training Department and have been asked to prepare a summary of an extract from the Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for inclusion in a report to the Fire and Public Protection Committee.

The summary should consist of about 110-120 words and cover all the salient features of the original text using properly constructed sentences and your own form of words.

'Training in the fire service continues to receive a high priority. It is important that modern day firefighters should be fully trained to meet the various demands which are placed upon them, not only because of the complexity of many of the tasks they face, but also because firefighters are frequently responding to an emergency situation. Instant decision taking is often required and these decisions can and do have a direct impact upon the safety of colleagues and the public. In these emergency situations, there is, of course, no time to reflect on the approach to be taken. To cope with this, the firefighter must be trained to know what to do instantly.

In the changing world in which brigades must live it will always be necessary to ensure that training is keeping pace with modern needs and is continuing to improve the firefighter's expertise. Two issues in particular, for which 1987 has been a year of development, will bring a significant impact for the future. Firstly, the Joint Training Committee has been developing guidance to brigades formally to introduce a 30 minute period of fitness training into the daily routine of operational duties. Such fitness training is already undertaken in some brigades but it is important that it should now spread nationwide. Secondly, the Fire Service College has been developing and piloting systems to allow students to be assessed at the end of some of the mainstream courses and for a report to be prepared, following this assessment, which will be copied to both students and to their Chief Officers. This is an important step forward for both the College and its students: it will allow each to determine, for the courses involved, the degree to which they have met their objectives'. (293 words)

Prepare the summary required.

6. Memoranda

Other questions ask you to write memoranda, which may incorporate reports or articles.

The point of this question is to ask you to write as an officer to another officer. You have to communicate to someone else and like most written communications and most lectures, the memorandum has to have a beginning, a middle and an end. A memorandum will normally begin by saying why you are writing, go on to set out the main message, and end by expressing the hope or the expectation that the message has been received/understood and that it will be acted upon/agreed, whatever is appropriate to the particular situation. There can be no set formula but, in reading the worked answers and then in writing your own, bear the general framework in mind.

(a) Whose memorandum is it?

The question requires you to write a memorandum. It may require you to write on behalf of a senior officer to another even more senior officer. It may be a memorandum drafted on behalf of a Station Officer to the Divisional Commander. You may have to write a draft memorandum on behalf of the Divisional Commander to all the Station Officers in the Division.

In other words you may not be writing a memorandum for you to sign in your own name, but a draft for someone else to sign. The style of writing must fit the person who is to sign it.

Sometimes you will be expected to incorporate information or ideas in the answer based on your own views, experience or knowledge.

On other occasions, the information that is needed to write the answer may be included in the question paper. You must therefore read the question carefully.

WHAT THE EXAMINERS ARE LOOKING FOR IS HOW YOU USE THAT INFORMATION.

The objective of the question is not to test your knowledge in the same way as other papers. We want to see whether you can **communicate** common experience or knowledge in **good English**, in the way that the person on whose behalf you are writing, would write, and in a way that is **understandable** to the people to whom it is addressed. So if the exercise requires you to write on behalf of your Station Commander, try to write as you think that officer would write; keep in your mind at the same time the people to whom he is writing.

(b) What is it about?

The style must also suit the message you are asked to get across. A memorandum conveying an order, however politely expressed, is likely to be different in style from one which is making a request or seeking to persuade and both would be different from one that is making a report.

You must, therefore, know what you are setting out to achieve. So read the question carefully, think about the points you want to make and how you can best make them.

(c) How to set about it?

Whether you write a rough draft, write a few notes or plunge in and write out your answer straight away depends on you. Practice will help you to decide the test method. Remember that time is limited and writing out a full rough draft is time-consuming. On the whole, rough notes identifying the main points you wish to make and the order in which you wish to make them will take less time and prove as helpful to most candidates.

REMEMBER TO CROSS OUT YOUR ROUGH WORK SO THAT THE EXAMINERS WILL BE SURE WHAT YOU WANT THEM TO MARK.

Memoranda required in the paper will normally be internal, ie they will be written by one member of the Fire Service to another. Technical language, if needed in the answer, is appropriate because you can assume it will be understood. In this important respect the exercise is different from many letter writing exercises discussed later in this publication where you will have to avoid jargon.

The memorandum question will often give a guide to the number of words you should write. That number is a guide and you will not be penalised for exceeding the number or where you fall short. You will lose marks if you fail to make all the points that the memorandum requires you to make, or if your memorandum is too long for its purpose.

SO TAKE NOTE OF THE NUMBER - IT IS MEANT TO HELP YOU.

(d) Layout

You need to know what a memorandum looks like and they do vary in practice from one authority to another. There will be standard memorandum stationery in each brigade and it will vary from brigade to brigade. However they will all have the following basic elements:

Name of the Brigade

The rank and sometimes the name of the person sending the memorandum

The rank and sometimes the name of the person(s) to whom it is being sent

Date on which it is sent

Reference

The subject, followed by the text of the memorandum

Signature at the end, normally repeating the rank of the person signing it.

When you look at the following worked answers, you will find these elements present, though not necessarily in the same order.

7. Memorandum Examples, Worked Answers and Exercises

The following questions are from past papers which required candidates to write memos. Examples of a worked answer and commentary on the approach adopted in preparing the answer are followed by exercises.

(a) Memorandum Example 1

On this occasion, the memorandum has to convey a message that reflects the Divisional Commander's displeasure as well as enough information of what he has observed to inform the station officers just what he is displeased about. All the information needed for the answer is there in the question; indeed, there is more than enough information. Your memorandum has to reflect the mood of the Divisional Commander and, in addition, you have to choose how much to include in the answer.

Question

You are a Leading Firefighter in a Divisional Headquarters and have received the following handwritten note from your Divisional Commander about a memorandum which he wants drafted to all stations in the Division.

'I've attended several make-ups in the past fortnight and I have to say that there are a couple of serious points that I'm most unhappy about.

Firstly, fireground radios. I'm frankly appalled at some of the things I hear coming over the radio. All this 'Joe' and 'Bill' stuff has got to stop, it's too informal. These are not telephones they're using.

Secondly, fireground catering is not working properly. There is a proper way to set up feeding at fires. I don't expect to see little groups of our personnel taking refreshments all round the fireground. Our system is to have one proper rest area and that's where people eat.'

Prepare a memorandum to all stations for the Divisional Commander's signature which will convey the Divisional Commander's views in a clear and concise manner.

(Your memorandum should be about 220 words in length.)

Worked Answer

Zedshire County Fire Service

To: All Station Officers, East Division

From: Divisional Commander

Date: 4 January 1995

Ref: DC/

Subject: Fireground Management

I have attended a number of fires in the last fortnight and have had the opportunity to observe the way in which firefighters have conducted themselves on the fireground. There are two matters that I wish to raise with you on which I take a serious view and need to be dealt with.

Firstly, with regard to use of fireground radios, these radios are a vital communication tool and must be used properly. The informal use of first names was quite unacceptable. Radios are a means of communicating information in difficult situations and not for informal conversation.

Secondly, I was not impressed by the organisation of fireground catering. I saw little groups of firefighters standing around eating and drinking cups of tea all over the fireground. The system we observe in this Brigade is one refreshment area; it is not acceptable that personnel eat elsewhere.

Recent experience shows that standards in these two matters have slipped and your support is required to put them right. They are important for discipline and the reasons for them relate to safety and effectiveness on the fireground. Please ensure that this message gets across to all personnel, who take charge at firegrounds, and that it is reinforced in training.

Divisional Commander

(b) Memoranda Example 2

The need here is for clear detailed directions in a fact finding operation. At the same time you need to explain why the survey is needed.

Question

The Divisional Commander has noted a marked increase in vehicle mileage as a result of specific activities in the Division.

In order to determine whether improved planning and co-ordination could make more effective use of vehicles and time, he has asked the Divisional Staff Officer to conduct a six month survey covering all stations to establish the precise mileage used on these activities.

As a Leading Firefighter at Divisional Headquarters, you have been given a weekly return form designed for the purpose of the survey together with the following handwritten instructions.

Draft a suitable memorandum to all Station Commanders from the Divisional Commander:

- (a) explaining the reasons for the survey;
- (b) explaining that the return is to be sent to the Divisional Staff Officer on Monday of each week covering the preceding seven day period; and
- (c) emphasising how the form is to be completed.

'A' DIVISION
WEEKLY RETURN OF VEHICLE MILEAGE
STATION MONTH OF

TYPE OF VEHICLE	MILEAGE				
	FP DUTIES	1 (i) (d) INSPECTIONS	HYDRANT INSPECTIONS	OPERATIONAL DUTIES	NON-OPERATIONAL DUTIES

(i) ENTER THE MILEAGE USED BY EACH VEHICLE IN THE APPROPRIATE COLUMN.
(ii) ON THE REVERSE OF THE RETURN GIVE DETAILS OF THE TYPES OF JOURNEYS UNDERTAKEN UNDER 'NON-OPERATIONAL DUTIES'.

Prepare the draft memorandum.

Worked Answer

Tarcester Fire Service

To: All Station Officers, West Division
From: Divisional Commander, West Division
Date: 29 March 1991
Ref: DC/
Subject: Vehicle Usage

There has been a marked increase in the level of mileage within this division. It appears that, in addition to the general run of operational and non-operational duties, there has been an increase in the mileage due to Fire Safety duties, and Section 1(i)(d) and Hydrant inspections. I am therefore instituting a weekly survey of mileage undertaken under the five headings shown in the attached form.

The completed form must be returned to the Divisional Staff Officer each Monday in respect of the previous seven days. The mileage undertaken by each vehicle must be entered into the appropriate column. The left hand column must show the type of vehicle involved and details of the journeys undertaken under 'non-operational' duties must be entered on the reverse of the form.

Any extra costs as a result of this increase erode our budget for other items. I am therefore determined to establish why the increase has occurred. I shall use the results to see whether it would be possible to improve our planning and co-ordination and thus make more effective use of our vehicles and indeed our time. You are, therefore, to ensure that the form is returned promptly and regularly.

Divisional Commander

(c) Memorandum Exercise 1

You will find the worked answers to these exercises in Appendix 1. Write your own versions before looking at them.

Here your task is plain. You must convey the displeasure felt by the Divisional Officer. Then you must give detailed instructions to all station officers, drawing the information needed from the question itself.

Question

You are a Leading Firefighter in 'Operations' at Divisional Headquarters and have just received the following note from a senior supervisory officer:

Leading Firefighter

I have just completed a series of station visits and, amongst other things, we have a problem with fire station signs, entrance halls and public reception generally.

I found station signs and name boards broken, rusty signs, signs with graffiti or no signs at all. Some front doors have enquiries signs, some have none, some stations have side doors but you have to climb over a pile of dustbins to find them! Worse still, I found some running call phones with no instructions. Once inside some stations, the entrance halls are tatty and cluttered with stores, deliveries or equipment for repair.

Stations should give attention to the public, to station identity and handling enquiries. After all, the public are our customers and we ought to think more about how we deal with them.

Will you please draft a memorandum to all Station Commanders telling them that action should be taken before their next formal inspection. Without quoting the examples I have used, explain the important areas that need to be addressed, and why!

S Garner
Divisional Officer

Prepare a memo to all stations for your senior officer's signature as requested.

(Your memorandum should be about 200 words in length.)

(d) Memorandum Exercise 2

This memorandum is a contribution to the work of a group that includes members from outside the Brigade. It must therefore be fully understandable and interesting to a non-service audience; jargon should be avoided.

Question

Your brigade is currently co-operating with the Building Design Department of a local Polytechnic and providing information drawn from operational experiences about the difficulties posed for firefighters in certain types of building.

As a Leading Firefighter you have been asked to write a description of an incident in a **domestic dwelling** in which a building design feature has caused particular firefighting problems.

Submit your text in the form of a memorandum of about 250 words to your Station Commander.

8. Letters

Other questions may require you to write a letter.

This question requires you to write in your own capacity, or on behalf of a more senior officer, to a member of the public or to a group of people who are not members of, or connected with, the Fire Service. This has consequences for the language you use which is discussed below.

A letter must have a beginning, a middle and an end. If the letter is a reply to a previous letter, your draft must refer to that earlier letter and to its date; it would be good manners to thank the correspondent for it. In one way or another you must explain why you are writing. More detail on the main part of the letter and ending a letter is shown in the last two paragraphs of the next section on 'Writing a letter'. There can be no set formula but bear this framework in mind as you read the worked answers and as you prepare your own.

REMEMBER - A LETTER MUST HAVE A BEGINNING, A MIDDLE AND AN END.

(a) Writing a letter

In writing your answer to this part of the paper, you have to think about whose letter it is and who is going to sign it. It may be you, in your own person, or you may be writing for a more senior officer to sign. It should make a difference to the kind of letter that you write.

Who is the letter for? What kind of impression does the person who will sign it want to make? The question will probably make it clear what you are trying to achieve and you must be influenced by these indications.

If the letter is a reply to a previous letter, your draft must refer to that earlier letter and to its date; it would be good manners to thank the correspondent for it.

Most public services try to respond positively where they can to a request, a proposal or even to a complaint. Sometimes however it is not possible to be positive, perhaps the request simply cannot be met or the proposal accepted and on some occasions the complaint will not be seen to be justified. In this case the person responding to the letter will normally seek to explain carefully why this is so and the letter, though not positive, will at least be friendly in tone.

For this reason, letters to an individual member of the public would not normally begin with the formal 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' but with the correspondent's name, 'Dear Mr Black', 'Dear Mrs Farnsworth'; the convention is that if the letter begins like that, it will end 'Yours sincerely'.

The formal 'Dear Sir' or 'Dear Madam' salutation requires 'Yours faithfully' at the end of the letter.

The letter will need to be rounded off in an appropriate way. You may wish to express the hope that the explanation you have given will be understood and accepted by the correspondent, or that the information is what the correspondent needed - the range is wide and will depend on the content of the letter.

The bulk of the letter will marshal the main points you wish to make in response to the original. You must do this in accordance with the question's requirements. If the question asks you to turn down a request, you must do so politely, in a friendly way if you can, and you must explain why the request cannot be met; you may want to express the hope that the original correspondent will understand why the disappointing reply has to be sent. What you should not do is say 'Yes, of course you can have it!'

(b) Whose letter is it?

The letter has to be written for a specific officer to sign. You must therefore put yourself in the place of that person and write as he or she would do.

You may find the information you need in the question and you will need to draw it out accurately. Careful reading of the question is therefore essential.

Sometimes the question may invite you to draw on your own experience within the Service for the content of the letter. You must choose material relevant to the question, and of course, still write with the person who is to sign the letter in mind.

Your answer must be designed to achieve the intended result and to give the impression of the Service that the senior officer, for whose signature the letter is intended, would want to give.

(c) Who is the letter to?

When you are asked to draft a letter, it will generally be addressed to someone outside the Service. The letter must therefore bear in mind not only who is to sign it but also the person to whom it is addressed.

The letter may be intended to persuade or to respond to a complaint or a request or something else. Complaints must always be dealt with seriously even if you feel that they are unfair. Saying 'yes' to a request is always easier than saying 'no', so that if the question asks you to turn down a request, you will need to take particular care with the answer. Whatever the purpose, it will normally be important to give a positive image of the Service. You need to work out what impression you want to create and then write appropriately.

Where the letter is addressed to someone who is unlikely to be familiar with the technical language of the Service, you must avoid jargon and technical terms. Abbreviations like 'BA apparatus' are well understood in the Service but would mean nothing to most people outside it. When you refer to a building which is on your station ground, most people outside the Service would understand you to mean that it was on the same site as the fire station.

(d) Layout

As with memoranda, each brigade has stationery with a standard layout and there will be differences between them. Nevertheless they will have a number of features in common.

The letter will be headed with the name of the Authority and of the Service, (in the case of letters in this paper, the Fire Service) the heading will incorporate the address from which the letter is being sent.

The name and address of the person to whom the letter is being sent will appear next in most letters nowadays, with the date on which the letter is sent. Above or below the name and address there will commonly be a reference which will identify the sender.

After the salutation, (Dear Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/etc), there will be an indication of the subject of the letter and, at the end, below the point at which the signature is to appear, the office held by the person signing the letter will be indicated.

The order in which these elements appear will vary but all should be present. Look for them in each of the worked examples.

(e) How to set about the answer

Your own experience in preparing for the paper will tell you whether the best course for you is to write a rough draft, a few notes or go straight into the final version; candidates vary widely in their approach. But do remember that writing out a full rough draft is time-consuming and there is limited time for the whole paper; a perfect answer to one question will be of little help if as a result the other two have to be rushed.

There is much to be said for writing out a few rough notes, since this will help you to marshal your thoughts, identify the main points you wish to make and the order in which they can most effectively be set out. Again, remember to cross out your rough work so that examiners will be sure what you wish them to mark.

As with the memorandum questions, the letter questions will often give a guide to the number of words you should write. That number is a guide and you will not be penalised for exceeding the number nor where you fall short. You will lose marks if you fail to make all the points that the question requires you to make or if your letter is too long for its purpose; **so do take note of the number - it is meant to help you.**

What follows are a number of questions from past papers, some with worked answers, some designed as exercises for which worked answers can be found in Appendix 1.

DON'T FORGET, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS NO ONE RIGHT ANSWER AND YOU CAN PRACTICE BY PREPARING YOUR OWN RESPONSE TO EACH OF THE QUESTIONS.

9. Letter Examples, Worked Answers and Exercises

What follows are some questions from past papers which required candidates to write letters. Examples providing a worked answer and a commentary on the approach adopted in preparing the answer and followed by exercises.

(a) Letter Example 1

The Chief Officer has to respond to a complaint. You may think that Mr Cobbett is being unreasonable but it would do the brigade no good to bluntly say just that. So your task is to respond reasonably to the complaint.

At the same time the Chief Officer is obviously intending to support Sub-Officer Holloway. The question makes that clear, so it would be a mistake to write, as some candidates did in fact, to say that strong disciplinary action was to be taken against him.

A balance has to be struck.

Question

Dear Sir

I am writing to protest, in the strongest possible terms, about the behaviour of one of your officers.

This concerns an incident on 1 August when the brigade had apparently been called to attend a fire in Docks Lane. From my office nearby, I could clearly see a danger of the fire reaching a warehouse owned by me.

Taking with me several of my employees, I set out in my van towards the threatened warehouse so that we could remove the contents to safety. Upon leaving our car park however, I found that lane blocked by two fire appliances with a third further up the lane, closer to the fire.

I asked that my van be allowed to pass but when I was told by your Sub-Officer Holloway that this was not possible, I and my men alighted from the van to proceed on foot. Unbelievably, Holloway refused to allow even this.

By what right does the fire brigade assume sovereignty over our highways? I relay this question to you in the hope of receiving a courteous response. Alas, when I put this question to Sub-Officer Holloway, it generated nothing but a stream of abuse and it is that above all about which I must protest.

You will note that I do so in a civilised manner. I am deeply disturbed to discover that such civility does not extend to fire service training.

Yours faithfully

W Cobbett

Other points:

Mr Cobbett's general description of the fire and the Brigade's response to it are about correct. For a while it appeared that his warehouse and contents were threatened and on that basis, a refusal to let members of the public place themselves in jeopardy seems sensible. It may be more difficult to answer his complaint of abusive behaviour.

Such behaviour cannot be tolerated under any circumstances by the Brigade but Sub-Officer Holloway has denied he was abusive. According to him, Mr Cobbett was persistent and obstructive to the point of distracting the firefighters from their work. Cobbett left only when Holloway was forced to employ what he describes as 'an unambiguous turn of phrase'.

Subsequently, Sub-Officer Holloway was able to get on with extinguishing the fire and therefore saving Cobbett's warehouse and contents. Your response must diplomatically remind Mr Cobbett of this satisfactory outcome and suggest that it places in perspective the disagreement between the priorities of two pressurised individuals.

Prepare the draft letter requested.

W Cobbett Esq
Enterprises
Dockside Lane
Stackpool

Stackshire County Fire Service
Fire Service Headquarters
Stackpool

My Ref:CO/

10 August 1995

Dear Mr Cobbett

Fire in Dockside Lane - 1.8.95

Thank you for your letter of 3 August 1995.

I have looked into the matters raised in your letter and am able to respond to them. In broad terms much of your view of the events of that difficult evening is accepted. Plainly your warehouse and its contents were in danger and you wished to take direct action to protect them. Sub-Officer Holloway, on the other hand, had a duty in that dangerous situation to stop members of the public from placing themselves in danger. It was his clear view that, had you and your men gone closer to the scene of the fire, you would have been in grave jeopardy. I share that view and he was, I believe, right to stop you proceeding further.

I recognise that your view of the situation was different and I understand why that should be so. Nevertheless, Sub-Officer Holloway had his own task and priorities, and the fact is that you and he both persisted in your views.

You complain that he was abusive. That is something which I cannot tolerate in any circumstances; I have therefore put the point to him strongly but he cannot accept it. In a situation where he was trying to direct his full attention to dealing with the fire, you persisted in trying to get through to your warehouse and were in danger of distracting the firefighters from their work. In the circumstances he used what he terms an 'unambiguous turn of phrase' to get his point across.

Sub-Officer Holloway was then able to turn his full attention to putting out the fire and indeed your warehouse and its contents were saved. We must all be glad that that was the outcome. Both you and Sub-Officer Holloway were under immense pressure that evening and it was no doubt difficult to keep matters in perspective. The very satisfactory result of the firefighting must help us all to see events in a new light and I hope you can agree that this is the important point.

Yours sincerely

Chief Officer

(b) Letter Example 2

An opportunity to influence people's choices - so it must be in language that they will understand. Note too that the question requires you to put the letter in the framework of a memorandum to your supervisory officer.

Question

You are a watch related Leading Firefighter, who has recently attended a house fire where the provision of single point smoke detectors was considered to have given an early warning of fire, and may have saved the lives of the occupants. Having discussed the incident with your Station Commander, Station Officer A Jones, he asks you to:

Prepare a draft letter to the editor of the local parish magazine referring to recent events and highlighting FOUR relevant benefits of fitting such devices.

The letter should be of approximately 200 words.

The Editor
Bromston Parish Magazine

Bromston Fire Station
Bromston Green
Bromston

My Ref: SO/
18 January 1995

Dear Sir

Smoke Detectors Save Lives

You reported the fire in Dold Street last Friday.

Fire broke out in the living room on the ground floor of a two storey house at 2 o'clock in the morning. The occupier was awakened by the smoke detector and was able to rouse the whole family and lead them to safety before calling the Fire Brigade. We were able to deal with the blaze quickly.

Had the family not installed the fire alarm, your headlines would have told a tragic story. As it was, the story had a happy ending.

Smoke detectors are readily available, cheap and easy to fit. They give early warning and save lives. This extra time can be vital - literally the difference between life and death. They allow you to call the Fire Brigade quickly so that damage may be limited, they are easy to maintain, just once a month check the battery by pressing the test button, and once a year clean them and replace the battery. They require very little maintenance, but they will give you peace of mind to know that you and your family can sleep safely.

So don't hesitate. Let others learn from this family - they know that fire alarms are a good thing. Put one in now.

Yours faithfully

Station Officer A Jones

(c) Letter Exercise 1

You will find the worked answers to these exercises in Appendix 1. Write your own versions before looking at them.

Persuasion and diplomacy are required. Even though the Brigade normally visits schools during the Christmas term, headteachers don't have to agree that they do so. An element of 'selling' is in order, therefore, as indeed the Senior Fire Safety Officer seems to realise. A worked response to this exercise is in the Appendix, but try your own before looking at it.

Question

You are a Leading Firefighter attached to the Community Fire Safety Section within Brigade Headquarters. You are assigned the task of planning and arranging the usual visits to primary schools in the Christmas term.

The visits are to be conducted by two members of the section, who have on this occasion, the use of a 'Welephant suit'.

You are required to draft a general circular letter suitable to be sent to all Headteachers. The letter should remind the Headteacher of the benefits of the Community Fire Safety programme in advance of your telephoning to arrange a date for the visit.

Your draft letter should be of approximately 200 words and suitable for signature by the Senior Fire Safety Officer.

(d) Letter Exercise 2

Here you have been tasked with drafting a letter for your Divisional Officer to sign. You are told this letter must turn down a request. You need to combine 'NO' with diplomacy.

You also have to propose a way of providing help.

There is a worked answer to this question in Appendix 1 for you to compare with yours.

Question

You are a Leading Firefighter in the staff department at Brigade HQ and have been handed a letter from a well known local charity which reads as follows:

From DAVID-AID

1 October 1995

Dear Mr Smith

I am writing to confirm that, following the success of this year's event, we will be holding DAVID-AID again next summer. I would therefore like to ask if the concert can again be held on your Brigade sports field.

The format will be as before with a centre stage for performers, portable toilets and a marquee serving food and drink. We have also arranged for a celebrity guest to arrive by helicopter during the performance.

I hope that our planning does not appear presumptuous in advance of your agreement to our request but, in the absence of alternative sites, I am confident that we can rely on the community spirit for which the Fire Brigade is renowned and has always shown in the past.

I look forward to your early response.

Yours sincerely

Jason Harrison
(Fund Raising Secretary)

DAVID-AID is a charity started locally by the parents of David, a handicapped boy who was sent, at great cost, to a hospital in America for their highly specialised treatment. The operation was so successful that the parents started a fund for children with similar problems to make the same expensive journey. Their most successful fund raising event was DAVID-AID which was held on your Brigade's sports field. The Brigade's generosity was much applauded in a local newspaper, partly owned by David's father.

What DAVID-AID seem to have forgotten but your Divisional Officer remembers very well is that the event went on all night, became extremely rowdy and caused many complaints from local residents. In addition, a rival local newspaper carried the headline 'Fire Brigade Sponsors Rowdies Party'. The point was not lost on your Chief Officer who instructed that 'in future the sports field is to be used only for sports purposes'.

Your Divisional Officer has asked you to compose a diplomatic letter refusing DAVID-AID the use of the sports field without losing sight of the charity's laudable aims (and media interests) explaining the difficulties but offering some sort of practical assistance with the forthcoming event which he has asked you to determine.

Prepare the draft letter requested, for the signature of your Divisional Officer.

10. Appendix 1

(a) Précis worked answers

Précis Exercise 1

Survivors in a disaster help each other, without taking overall control. The result is chaos. The emergency services bring control and co-ordinate appropriate responses. Effective responses depend on good early decisions, actions and on co-ordination.

The first service to arrive must rapidly assess needs, without immediately getting involved. They will send information about the incident to central control, giving details on location, access, the scale of casualties and any hazards, and an estimate of the response needed.

Overall control at the scene is normally in the hands of the Police but liaison between the Services is essential. Each Service must have its own control and get on with its specific duties. (112 words)

Précis Exercise 2

Because firefighters face complex tasks, frequent emergencies, and a variety of demands, training is important and a high priority. Emergencies create dangers for colleagues and the public and firefighters must react immediately.

Firefighting skills must be improved by training to respond to changes in the firefighting environment. Two changes in 1987 will be important. Guidance from the Joint Training Committee would extend a daily 30 minute fitness training period to all Brigades. Secondly, the Fire Service College is piloting a new assessment system for students on mainstream courses. Reports on assessment will go to students and their chief officers and will allow students and the College to assess the effectiveness of courses. (112 words)

(b) Memorandum – Worked Answers

Memorandum Exercise 1

Blankshire Fire Service

To: All Station Commanders, Swanston Division
From: S Garner, Divisional Officer
Date: 14 July 1995
Ref: DO/
Subject: General Appearance of Stations

I have recently completed visits to a number of stations. I have seen on too many occasions that stations are presenting an unacceptable face to the public. The public can expect to see signs indicating the name of the station; they need to be able to use the running call telephones outside them; they need to be able to find the entrance they are supposed to use; and they need to have confidence in the Brigade's readiness to respond effectively to emergencies in their homes and in their neighbourhood.

On my visits I have to tell you that only too frequently it was difficult or impossible to identify the name of the station or even, in some cases, to establish easily the way in; running call telephones had no instructions beside them and the general external appearance of the station would not have inspired confidence.

Nor was it only the external appearance that fell below the standard that I expected to see. The standard of tidiness inside the entrance hall was poor, the space was cluttered and in a poor state of decoration.

I have to ask you to have a good look at your own station in the light of these comments. The public pay for our services. The Station is the local face of the Brigade and we will be judged by the public according to what they see. The identity of the Station needs to be clear; signs and instructions for the public's benefit must be in place, and the Station needs to look smart inside and out.

I was disappointed in much of what I saw and will expect to see a great improvement when the next formal inspection is made.

S Garner, Divisional Officer

Memorandum Exercise 2

Bramshire County Fire Service

To: Station Officer Morris
From: Sub-Officer King
Ref: SO/
Date: 15 May 1995
Subject: Building Design

As required, I submit the following for a description of an incident illustrating a design problem in a domestic dwelling; I understand that the description may be of use to the Building Design department of Bramston Polytechnic.

A fire recently occurred in a modern 3 bedroom semi-detached house. The staircase led from the open plan lounge to the first floor landing, all of the bedrooms opened off from this landing. The bedrooms were occupied by the owner and his wife, their two children and his elderly mother.

The fire was started by a cigarette end igniting a quantity of paper and quickly spread to the settee and the remainder of the furniture in the lounge.

The owner was awakened by the domestic fire alarm, and on checking the landing saw that it was full of smoke. He assisted his wife through the bedroom window and then crossed the smoke-logged landing to his children's room, where he lowered them to the garden below. He then attempted to go to assist his mother, but by this time the heat and smoke on the landing made it untenable, and he was forced to escape from the window in his children's room. His mother was subsequently rescued by a Fire Brigade crew wearing breathing apparatus.

The lack of separation between the lounge and the rest of the property allowed a rapid spread of fire and jeopardised the escape of the occupants.

It is, therefore, suggested that the Building Design department should consider the various options which could be incorporated in the design of these modern dwellings to reduce both the spread of fire and to increase the chances of escape.

Sub-Officer King

Letter Exercise 1

All Headteachers of Primary Schools
Wexshire

Wexshire County Fire Service
County Headquarters
Newborough

My Ref: SFFO/

10 September 1995

Dear Headteacher

Fire Safety

In the Christmas term, it has been the custom for representatives of this Service to visit all primary schools in Wexshire to talk to the children about fire safety. I believe that these visits have been welcomed by headteachers and by children and I look forward to your co-operation this term in arranging another visit to your school. I am writing to you and all your colleagues in primary schools in the County, as I start to plan and arrange this term's visits.

This term, the visits will be carried out by pairs of firefighters and we have been lucky enough to be able to provide a 'Welephant suit' for them to use. Welephants are a mascot like creature, half fireman, half elephant, and children usually find the sight of firefighters dressed in the Welephant disguise amusing. It sustains their interest and helps the firefighters get over the message about the dangers of fire and the importance of fire safety.

As head of the Community Fire Safety Section, I know that headteachers are very aware of the dangers of fire. Terrible injuries and loss of life and property can take place as a result of fire and no-one is too young to begin learning about the dangers. I shall be telephoning you within the next few days to arrange a date for the visit and I hope that we can look forward again to your co-operation in this campaign.

Yours sincerely

Senior Fire Safety Officer

Letter Exercise 2

Jason Harrison Esq
15 Watson Lane
Swan Drive
Ribton

Lowlands Fire Brigade
Joint Fire Authority
Fire Service Headquarters
Ribton

My Ref:DO/

9 October 1995

Dear Mr Harrison

David-Aid - Proposed Fund-Raising Event

Thank you for your letter of 1 October 1995. I see that you are planning well ahead for next year's fund-raising event.

The Brigade was pleased to be able to help with this year's successful concert and to know that the money was being raised for such a worthy cause. Although not seeing the event in public relations terms, the Brigade was gratified to see the favourable publicity given to its gesture, particularly in your own newspaper.

However, you will remember that there were a number of problems on the day. The concert carried on well beyond the time we had expected it to finish, indeed right through the night, and there were many complaints about noise from our neighbours. The Brigade sets great store by good relations with the public and the complaints, coupled with the unfavourable coverage of the event in the other local newspaper, were very unhelpful.

Unfortunately, instructions have been given that the field shall be used only for sports purposes in future. I cannot therefore agree to the request in your letter and realise that this will be seen as a disappointing response. However, we would like to find some other way of helping with the planned concert, and would like to suggest that a Fire Safety Unit should attend.

No doubt you will let me know whether this will be an acceptable offer and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Divisional Officer

References

Key Skills Booklet Level 3, Published by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications