

Let's get blogging – L1 reading tasks

Name _____ Date _____

This blog was written four days after Boris Johnson's announcement that we should all work from home and reduce contact to a minimum.....

Feeding back in the corridor of uncertainty (20.3.20)

As I open the front door for the first time in two days an explosive sneeze ricochets around my road. Peering round the hedge I see it's the man who cleans the drains, talking to a neighbour.

On my way to the shops I wonder if it really is busier than normal for a Friday morning. I'm usually at work at this time, so can't say for certain. My local corner shop has a queue and everyone is over 70. A woman asks for eggs, but her husband tells her there are none.

Walking round the shop, there are gaps on the shelves and I can't get the brand of margarine I wanted. I am only buying one item, peculiarly priced at £1.09. As I reach the front of the queue, I scramble for the right change in my purse. I can only come up with a pound coin and a twenty pence piece.

The young, Indian guy serving me hands me eleven pence change and that's when I notice he is wearing disposable plastic gloves. As I gather my bag and put the change away, I notice another customer waiting outside the door. He doesn't come in until I've left the shop. Is he just being polite and allowing me to get out of the door, or is he social distancing?

Later, I drive to the pet store. I go upstairs to the first floor to stock up on dry cat food. When I imagine being ill with the virus I have a picture of lying in bed too sick to go to the shops, while my poor cat mews loudly because he is hungry.

As I scan the shelves, I hear another explosive sneeze from downstairs. Looking over the bannister I can see it's the sales assistant on the only till.

"Oh, bless you," calls her colleague. The assistant has no tissue and when I pay (contactless this time) she looks tired and is drinking a takeaway coffee.

I drench my hands in sanitizer before heading home. The car park is very full and people look worried. As I head out onto the road I am followed by another car. When I look in my rearview mirror I see that the driver behind me is wearing a mask....

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Name _____ Date _____



- Read the blog on page 1 and answer questions 1 to 6. Maximum marks = 7

1) Who sneezes in paragraph one?

_____ (L1.9, 1 mark)

2) In paragraph 3 the writer says: **I scramble for the right change in my purse.** Which of the following words could be used to replace the word scramble in this sentence?

a	fumble	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	check	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	grab	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L1.13, 1 mark)

3) Which language technique does the writer use in paragraph 4, to make the reader think about why the other customer waits outside the shop?

_____ (L1.12, 1 mark)

4) Read paragraph 5 again. In your own words explain why the writer has decided to buy cat food.

_____ (L1.9/11, 1 mark)

5) In the final paragraph of the blog the writer says “**I drench my hands in sanitizer**”. Look up **drench** in a dictionary and write the definition here:

_____ (L1.13, 1 mark)

6) Why do you think the writer drenches their hands in sanitizer after they leave the pet store? (Remember the answer is in the text.)

_____ (L1.9/11, 2 marks)

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On my way to the shops I wonder if it really is busier than normal for a Friday morning. I'm usually at work at this time, so can't say for certain. My local corner shop has a queue and everyone is over 70. A woman asks for eggs, but her husband tells her there are none.

Walking round the shop, there are gaps on the shelves and I can't get the brand of margarine I wanted. I am only buying one item, peculiarly priced at £1.09. As I reach the front of the queue, I scramble for the right change in my purse. I can only come up with a pound coin and a twenty pence piece.

The young, Indian guy serving me hands me eleven pence change and that's when I notice he is wearing disposable plastic gloves. As I gather my bag and put the change away I notice another customer waiting outside the door. He doesn't come in until I've left the shop. Is he just being polite and allowing me to get out of the door, or is he social distancing?

Later, I drive to the pet store. I go upstairs to the first floor to stock up on dry cat food. When I imagine being ill with the virus I have a picture of lying in bed feeling utterly drained while my cat mews pitifully because he is hungry. Evolution has honed the frequency of a hungry cat's cry to match that of a newborn baby. A sound that truly pierces the ears.

As I scan the shelves, I hear another explosive sneeze from downstairs. Looking over the bannister I can see it's the sales assistant on the only till.

"Oh, bless you," calls her colleague. There is no evidence of a tissue and when I pay (contactless this time) she looks bleary eyed and is drinking a takeaway coffee.

I drench my hands in sanitizer before heading home. The car park is very full and people look preoccupied. As I head out onto the road I am followed by another car. When I look in my rearview mirror I see that the driver behind me is wearing a mask...

Let's get blogging – L2 reading tasks

Name _____ Date _____



- Read the blog on page 1 and answer questions 1 to 8. Maximum marks = 10

1) Looking at paragraph one, which two words does the writer use which suggest that the sneeze may be dangerous?

_____ (L2.14/17, 2 marks)

2) In paragraph 3 the writer says: **I scrabble for the right change in my purse.** Which of the following words could be used to replace the word scrabble in this sentence?

a	fumble	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	check	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	grab	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L2.15/17, 1 mark)

3) Which language technique does the writer use in paragraph 4, to make the reader think about why the other customer waits outside the shop?

_____ (L2.14, 1 mark)

4) In paragraph 5 the writer says: **Evolution has honed the frequency of a hungry cat's cry to match that of a newborn baby.** Which of the following words could be used to replace the word honed in this sentence?

a	sharpened	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	found a home for	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	refined	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L2.15/17, 1 mark)

5) In the final paragraph of the blog the writer says **"I drench my hands in sanitizer"**. Look up **drench** in a dictionary and write the definition here:

_____ (L2.15, 1 mark)

Let's get blogging – L2 reading tasks

Name _____ Date _____



- 6) Why do you think the writer drenches their hands in sanitizer after they leave the pet store? (Remember the answer is in the text.)

(L2.13, 1 mark)

- 7) Which of the following describes the mood and tone created in the text?

a	Serious and informative	<input type="checkbox"/>
b	Lighthearted and entertaining	<input type="checkbox"/>
c	Humorous but thoughtful	<input type="checkbox"/>

Tick (✓) the correct answer. (L2.19, 1 mark)

- 8) The heading for this blog is:

Feeding back in the corridor of uncertainty

- The corridor of uncertainty is an area in the game of cricket. It is a target area for the bowler because if he bowls into it, the batsman will have difficulty deciding whether to try to hit the ball or not.

Explain in your own words why the writer has chosen this idiom as the title of the blog.

(L2.17, 2 marks)

Let's get blogging – writing task

Name _____ Date _____

How to write a blog

- A blog is basically a diary entry that you write online for other people to read.
- Here is an extract from a blog written about last year's holidays:

Hey all,

Well, what a holiday! I had lots of good ideas about catching up with things at home, but the hot weather meant that some days it was just too hot to do anything.

The kids were fine and spent whole days splashing about in the paddling pool, only getting out when they heard the ice cream van!

Step by step writing a blog about lockdown

Step 1:

Plan what you are going to write using a spidergram or a list. Think about why you are writing. Do you want to inform your reader, or persuade them or entertain them?

Step 2:

Who is your blog audience? Are you writing it for a general audience or a more specific group? Often it helps to focus on a specific audience. When you write about your experiences in lockdown are you focusing on food and shopping – which would interest a wide range of people? Perhaps you are a young person stuck in the house and missing your friends? Are you writing as a parent struggling with home schooling, or as someone who is enjoying a new hobby at home during lockdown?

Step 3:

Use your plan to write your blog by writing a few sentences about each of your ideas. You can be informal and it may help to imagine you are chatting to a friend. Your blog will be more interesting if you include your personal experiences.

Step 4:

Check your writing and try to correct mistakes in your spelling and punctuation. Look out for missing words. Try reading your blog out loud. (This may also help you to check that it all makes sense.)

Let's get blogging – writing task

Name _____ Date _____



Writing task

You are at home with your family due to Covid 19.

You have decided to write an **online blog** about your personal experiences.

Think about the following:

- How Covid 19 has affected your everyday life and routines.
- The effect that Covid 19 has had on members of your family.
- Any positive things that have happened since lockdown.
- The things that you find difficult and how you are coping with them.

In writing your blog you can give your personal views and opinions, but remember that a blog is meant to be read by other people. The current crisis is a serious topic but you should focus on your personal experiences rather than politics.

Imagine you are chatting to a good friend. You can use informal language, but you still need to use correct grammar and proper sentences.

Suggested word count: **200-250 words** (Level 1), **250-300 words** (Level 2).

Maximum marks = 21. You will be assessed on:

- clear and concise written work that is fit for purpose and audience
- using paragraphs and a range of sentence structures to organise your work
- correctly using a range of punctuation, e.g. capital letters, commas and apostrophes
- accurate spelling and grammar that supports clear meaning.

Plan your work here (see page 6 for help):

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Marking grid: Level 1 writing

L1.19	L1.20	L1.21	L1.22	L1.23	L1.24	L1.25
3	3	3	12			
Detailed marking guidance on page 12-13 (skillsworkshop contributors only).						

Marking grid: Level 2 writing

L2.20	L2.21	L2.22	L2.23	L2.24	L2.25	L2.26	L2.27	L2.28
3	3	3	12					
Detailed marking guidance on page 12-13 (skillsworkshop contributors only).								

Teaching notes

I created this resource to try to engage my learners during lockdown. There are two reading tasks based on the same text, which I adapted for Level 1 learners by using more basic vocabulary. The reading task can be followed by the writing-a-blog task (I have included a step by step sheet to help with this task).

These resources assume a basic knowledge of what a blog is and should not be used as a first-time introduction to blogging. To my knowledge writing a blog has only come up once in a Functional Skills writing exam, but many of the elements of writing a blog cross over into writing an article or a speech. It also gives learners the opportunity to reflect on and write about their own experiences at this critical time and could even be said to have a role akin to journaling in promoting mental health. The writing task could be adapted for use once lockdown is over.

REFORMED FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH

Purpose and learning aims of Functional Skills English (all levels and all components)¹

Functional Skills English specifications enable students to develop confidence and fluency in, and a positive attitude towards, English. They should be able to demonstrate their competence by using English in real-world situations as well as demonstrating a sound grasp of basic English knowledge and skills. They need to provide assessment of students' underpinning knowledge (i.e. spelling) as well as their ability to apply this in different contexts.

Entry Levels: a qualification to demonstrate the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English and provide the basis for further study at Levels 1 and 2. Students should, with some direction and guidance, be able to apply these (Entry Level) English functional skills to informal and some formal contexts, in familiar situations.

Levels 1 and 2: a qualification for work, study and life. Achievement of the qualification demonstrates the ability at an appropriate level to read, write, speak, listen and communicate in English, and apply these skills effectively to a range of purposes in the workplace and other real-life situations. Students should be able to communicate with confidence, effectiveness and an increasing level of independence, in a range of formal and informal contexts.

Functional English – Speaking, Listening and Communicating (SL&C)

'Speaking, listening and communicating' within Functional Skills English qualifications is non-written communication, normally conducted face-to-face, and can also include 'virtual' communication methods such as telephone or spoken web-based technologies. The terms 'speaking, listening and communicating' are intended to be interpreted in a broad, inclusive way and are not intended to create any unnecessary barriers to students with speech or hearing impairment.

Learning aims for speaking, listening and communicating

E1, 2 & 3 Listen, understand and respond to verbal communication in a range of familiar contexts. Acquire an understanding of everyday words and their uses and effects, and apply this understanding in different contexts. **L1-2** Listen, understand and make relevant contributions to discussions with others in a range of contexts. Apply their understanding of language to adapt delivery and content to suit audience and purpose.

Functional English - Reading

'Reading' within Functional Skills English qualifications is defined as the independent understanding of written language in specific contexts. Can be demonstrated through the use of texts on screen or on paper.

Learning aims for reading

E1, 2 & 3. Acquire an understanding of everyday words and their uses and effects, and apply this understanding in different contexts. Read with accuracy straightforward texts encountered in everyday life and work, and develop confidence to read more widely. **L1-2** Read a range of different text types confidently and fluently, applying their knowledge and understanding of texts to their own writing.

Functional English - Writing

'Writing' within Functional English qualifications is defined as the independent construction of written language to communicate in specific contexts. Text can be written on paper or electronically.

Learning aims for writing

E1,2 & 3. Write straightforward texts and documents with clarity and effectiveness, and demonstrate a sound grasp of spelling, punctuation and grammar. **L1-2** (i) Write texts of varying complexity, with accuracy, effectiveness, and correct spelling, punctuation and grammar (ii) Understand the situations when, and audiences for which, planning, drafting and using formal language are important, and when they are less important.

¹ Subject content functional skills: English. DfE (Feb 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/functional-skills-subject-content-english>

Pages 11-14 of this resource (**answer sheet, marking guidance for writing task and detailed curriculum mapping**) are only available to skillsworkshop contributors. If you are a contributor, or would like to become one, please contact Maggie using the site contact link. Thank you 😊.