

Learning objective: To write in the first person in a letter format. (informal) and to use description.

This job will take a few sessions – you will need to plan, write and edit.

Read the short extract from Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone which describes Harry's arrival at Hogwarts' School. You can also watch an extract from the film.

Think about the reasons JK Rowling chooses a train to transport the children, followed by a flotilla of small boats. Why do you think she does this?

Why do you think she sets the arrival at night? Why is it more dramatic to show Hogwarts at night rather than in daylight? I think it makes the school building more mysterious as it is hidden in shadows and more magical as it is lit up and sparkling in the darkness. The children are over-awed and you sense that they will never forget their first glimpse of this amazing building which will be their home.

Whenever you do something new, for the first time, you can have mixed feelings about it. You might be a bit anxious but also excited; happy about aspects but also secretly dreading some things. This is very natural and lots of people feel this way.

Your job this week is to imagine you made a similar journey to school and to write a letter home the day after your arrival to reassure your parent or carer that you arrived safely.

You can describe your journey, your first glimpse of your new school, the people you meet and your arrival. (Don't go any further.) **Try to include mixed feelings of excitement and a bit of worry but try to leave your parent or carer feeling you are OK and looking forward to the next few weeks.**

Your tone will be informal as you are writing to someone you know well.

Plan your ideas by answering these questions:

Imagine you were on the train and going to a new school for the first time. It could be Hogwarts or a building from your own imagination. What did you do on the train on the way? Eat sweets like Harry and Ron or look out the window?

Did you know when to get off the train or were you worried you might miss your stop?

Did you make friends with anyone or were you alone and a bit worried?

When you arrived at the station, how did you get from the station to the school? Did you travel alone or with a group?

Did you make your own way there or does someone come to meet you? Who? Were they friendly and kind or a bit aloof (standoffish) and unfriendly?

When you saw the school for the first time, were you impressed? Why? Think of what it might have looked like and how you could describe it.

How to organise your letter

When you plan your letter you need to organise the paragraphs with an opening and then paragraphs with information about your journey and your arrival.

You will need to set it out something like this:

Address of the school, Where it is, Post code Date
Dear,
Well, here I am, lying on my new bed, next to the window, looking out to sea. It is after lunch (jelly and ice cream for pudding!) and I have a few minutes to myself so I thought I would write to you and tell you that I arrived on time yesterday and all is well. In fact, I can't wait to tell you all about it! (this is an example opening – you don't have to use this)
Paragraph 1 – the journey (include really good description: the staton, the train , the people – expanded noun phrases* ¹ , similes* ² , metaphor* ³)
Paragraph 2 – the arrival (include really good description – expanded noun phrases* ¹ , similes* ² , metaphor* ³)
Paragraph 3 - an ending to say everything is Ok , when you will write again and what you are off to go and do next
With love from
Your name

*¹ For example expanded noun phrase – the rattily old train, the huge oak door....

*² Simile – as tall as a tree, it wobbled like a gigantic tower of melting jelly

*³ Metaphor – the school crouched on the mountain side as if ready to spring off into the sea below

The train coughed and gurgled and wheezed its way up the track, gasping as it lurched around a bend.

When you have written your first draft, remember to edit your work; purple pen time! (You can use any colour!)

Read it aloud and listen to how it sounds. Check for sense.

Check your learning objective – is your tone right? Past tense and first person?

Check for punctuation. !? "" () - ? , ; ;

Check for spellings: think of the root of the word and any prefixes or suffixes; is there a pattern here?

Check to see if you can improve sentence or word choice.

Have you used different sentences throughout?

Simple/compound/complex (use commas to help you join clauses together)

Command/statement/question

Read your letter to someone and see if they can tell you **what works well**. Ask them for a suggestion that starts, "Your writing would be even better if...."