

O LEVEL ENGLISH

Functional Writing Success Guide

Master APFK - Develop Ideas - Improve Language

Watch the two free video lessons, then use this workbook to practise the same method yourself.



Lecture 1: APFK Method



Lecture 2: Develop &
Organise

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FREE MASTERCLASS WORKBOOK

Functional Writing Is Not Just a Writing Test

Many students see the topic and immediately begin writing. Stronger students pause first. They identify who they are writing to, why they are writing, what format is required and what the task actually asks them to accomplish.

Your Goal

By the end of this free masterclass, you should be able to analyse a Functional Writing task, select useful ideas from source material, develop those ideas instead of copying them, organise a convincing response and use language appropriate for your audience.

How to use this workbook

- 1 Watch Lecture 1: APFK Method.
- 2 Complete the APFK quick-practice activity.
- 3 Watch Lecture 2: Develop Ideas, Improve Language & Score Higher Marks.
- 4 Complete the full Digital Tutor writing challenge.
- 5 Compare your response with the model and use the self-check before rewriting.

This workbook contains original practice material created for The Digital Tutor. It does not reproduce Cambridge examination questions.

Analyse Before You Write

A - Audience

Who will read this? A principal, students, parents, a newspaper audience or someone else? Your audience affects tone, vocabulary and level of formality.

P - Purpose

Why are you writing? To persuade, inform, recommend, evaluate, argue or explain? Your response must actually accomplish the purpose.

F - Format

What are you writing? A speech, article, report, letter or email? Format affects conventions, openings, closings and how directly you address the reader.

K - Key Instructions

Underline every job hidden in the task. If the task says evaluate both views and recommend, you have two jobs, not one.

The APFK habit prevents one of the most expensive mistakes in Functional Writing: producing a fluent response that does not fully answer the task.

Try APFK Yourself

Practice Task

Your school is considering allowing students to use smartphones during lunch break. You have been asked to speak to the school council about the proposal. Consider the arguments presented and explain what you think the school should do.

Audience:

Purpose:

Format:

Key instructions:

Suggested analysis

APFK	Answer
Audience	School council / school decision-makers
Purpose	Evaluate the proposal and persuade/recommend
Format	Speech
Key Instructions	Consider the arguments and recommend what the school should do

Do Not Copy. Develop.

Source material gives you raw material. It does not give you a finished response.

Source point

Phones allow students to contact their families.

Weak response

Phones allow students to contact their families.

Developed response

Allowing limited phone access could be particularly useful for students whose transport arrangements change after school, because they could communicate with parents without disrupting lessons.

Use DOC after APFK

Step	What to do
D - Develop	Ask: Why? So what? What could happen? Can I give a relevant example?
O - Organise	Build a deliberate sequence: opening position -> strongest point -> second point -> counterargument -> evaluation -> recommendation.
C - Check	Check content, language, accuracy and format before you finish.

Remember

A strong response does not merely repeat ideas. It turns ideas into reasoning.

Should Students Be Allowed to Use Smartphones During Lunch?

Text A

TEXT A - A CONTROLLED-USE POLICY

Students already carry smartphones because families use them for communication, transport arrangements and emergencies. Completely banning phones during the school day can create unnecessary problems, especially for students who stay after school for clubs or tuition. Lunch break is also one of the few times students can check important messages without interrupting lessons.

Phones can be useful during breaks in other ways. Students may check homework instructions, photograph a notice, use a dictionary or arrange group work. A short period of responsible use could help students learn self-control instead of teaching them that technology must simply be removed whenever it becomes distracting. Schools expect young people to become responsible adults; limited freedom gives them a chance to practise making sensible choices.

A controlled policy could also reduce arguments between staff and students. If students know exactly when and where phones may be used, teachers can focus on genuine misuse rather than minor breaches.

However, permission should not mean unlimited use. Phones should remain silent during lessons and assemblies, and taking photographs or recording other people without permission should be prohibited. Students who misuse their phones could temporarily lose the privilege. A clear policy would be more realistic than a ban that many students try to avoid anyway.

A Different View

Text B

TEXT B - KEEP THE BREAK GENUINELY SOCIAL

A school break should give students a change from screens, not another opportunity to stare at them. Teachers regularly see groups sitting together while each person scrolls separately. Face-to-face conversation, movement and simple rest are valuable parts of the school day, especially when students already spend many hours online at home.

Allowing phones only at lunch may also be harder to control than it sounds. A message checked at 12:30 can become a game played at 12:45 and a disagreement carried into the next lesson. Cameras create additional concerns. Even when recording is against the rules, an embarrassing photograph can be taken and shared in seconds. This can create conflict or anxiety.

There is also a practical issue. Staff would have to decide whether a student was sending an important message, watching a harmless video or doing something prohibited. A rule that creates constant disputes may consume more time than it saves.

Families who need to contact students urgently can use the school office. Students who need devices for a particular learning activity can be given permission by a teacher.

Schools should not reject technology, but they do have a responsibility to create spaces where students can concentrate and interact without it. A phone-free break is not a punishment; it may be one of the few periods in the day when students are encouraged to disconnect.

Write the Speech

Digital Tutor Original Practice Task

Your school council is considering whether students should be allowed to use smartphones during lunch break.

You have been asked to give a speech to the school council.

Using the ideas in both texts, write your speech in which you:

- evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of allowing smartphones during lunch;
- explain what rules, if any, would be necessary;
- recommend what the school should decide.

Develop the ideas you use rather than simply repeating the texts.

APFK planning

Prompt	Your notes
Audience	
Purpose	
Format	
Key instructions	

Argument planning grid

Argument	Source idea	My development
Communication	Families need contact	
Responsibility	Students learn self-control	
Social interaction	Break from screens	
Privacy	Photos / recording	
Enforcement	Difficult to monitor	

One Strong Way to Answer

Model speech

Good morning members of the school council,

Should students be allowed to use smartphones during lunch? I believe the answer should be yes - but only under a clear, controlled policy.

A total ban sounds simple, but it ignores how students actually use phones. Many families depend on them for transport arrangements, after-school activities and important messages. Phones can also help students check homework instructions, organise group work or use a dictionary. More importantly, learning to use technology responsibly is a skill. We do not teach responsibility by removing every choice.

However, supporters of a ban raise serious concerns. A lunch break can easily become another hour of scrolling, and students need time to talk, move and rest. There are also privacy risks. One photograph taken without permission can be shared almost instantly. If phones are allowed, these concerns must be taken seriously.

For that reason, I recommend limited use rather than unlimited freedom. Students could use phones only in designated areas during lunch. Recording other people without permission should be prohibited. Phones should remain away during lessons, assemblies and other school activities unless a teacher authorises their use. Anyone who repeatedly breaks these rules could lose the privilege for a set period.

This approach would protect students without pretending smartphones do not exist. It would also give teachers clearer rules to enforce. A responsible school should prepare students for the world they live in, while setting sensible boundaries.

So the real choice is not between "phones everywhere" and "phones nowhere." We can choose a balanced policy that combines freedom with responsibility.

Thank you.

Learn From the Model

Area	What the response does
Audience	Addresses a school council appropriately.
Purpose	Evaluates both positions and makes a clear recommendation.
Development	Explains why ideas matter instead of merely repeating them.
Evaluation	Acknowledges opposing arguments and responds to them.
Organisation	Position -> benefits -> concerns -> solution -> judgement.
Register	Formal enough for the audience without sounding unnatural.

Student self-check

- Did I identify my audience?
- Did I understand my purpose?
- Did I use the correct format?
- Did I complete every instruction?
- Did I use ideas from the source material selectively?
- Did I develop rather than copy?
- Did I evaluate where required?
- Is my response logically organised?
- Is my tone appropriate?
- Did I vary my sentence structures?
- Did I check spelling and punctuation?
- Did I make my final position clear?

Check Your Understanding

1. What does A in APFK stand for?

A. Argument B. Audience C. Accuracy D. Analysis

2. Which response develops an idea most effectively?

A. School clubs are useful.

B. School clubs are very useful and good.

C. School clubs can help students build confidence because they provide opportunities to collaborate outside normal lessons.

D. Clubs should exist.

3. What is the principal purpose of register?

A. Making every sentence formal B. Matching language to context and audience C. Using difficult vocabulary D. Increasing word count

4. If a task says "evaluate both views and recommend", how many jobs are present?

A. One B. Two C. Three D. None

5. What should come first?

A. Writing the introduction B. Choosing impressive vocabulary C. APFK analysis D. Counting words

Answers

1. B 2. C 3. B 4. B 5. C

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