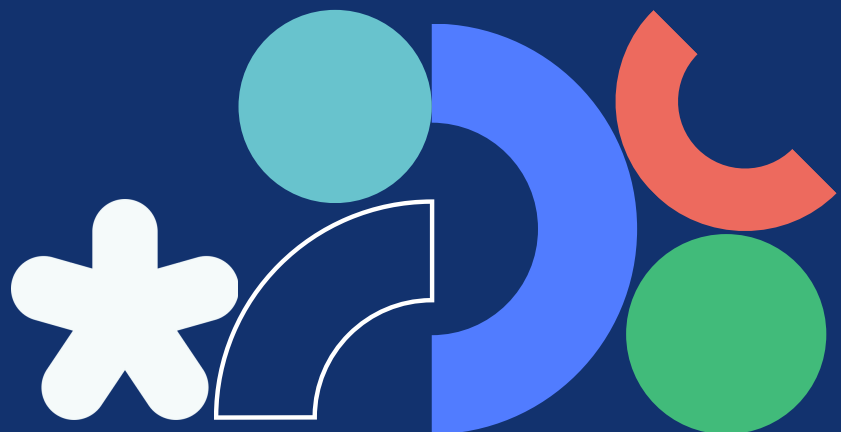




The OET Referral Letter Structure Map

Paragraph by paragraph: what to write, what to leave out

By Bailey, Head Teacher at [e2language.com](https://www.e2language.com)





How to Use This Map

This map pairs with the E2 OET YouTube video “How to Write a Strong OET Referral Letter.” Use it during your 5-minute reading time on test day or in practice. It’s an adaptable structure, not a script to memorise: for each paragraph, it tells you what belongs, what doesn’t, and the relevance prompt to ask before including any detail.



The 5-Paragraph Structure

Paragraph 1 — Introduction (1–2 sentences)

What goes here:

- Patient name, age, and one clinical phrase identifying them
- The action you're requesting (refer for assessment, investigation, or ongoing care)
- If urgent: the word "urgent" appears in this paragraph

What doesn't:

- Long history - that goes in paragraph 2
- Polite preamble ("I hope this letter finds you well" is not needed in clinical correspondence)

Relevance prompt: *Could a busy specialist read only this paragraph and know what's being asked of them? If no, rewrite it.*

Paragraph 2 — Relevant Medical History (3–4 sentences)

What goes here:

- Conditions that affect what this specialist will do
- Current medications relevant to the referral
- Family history, if it changes risk assessment

What doesn't:

- Conditions unrelated to the referral focus
- Old surgical history that doesn't affect current management
- Social history, unless clinically relevant

Relevance prompt: *Will this detail change what the specialist does? If no, leave it out.*



The 5-Paragraph Structure

Paragraph 3 — Current Presentation (3–5 sentences)

What goes here:

- Current symptoms: onset, duration, character
- Examination findings, if performed
- Recent investigations and their results
- Treatment already trialled and the response

What doesn't:

- Investigations the specialist will need to repeat
- Speculation about diagnosis (let the specialist decide)

Relevance prompt: *Does this paragraph give the specialist a clear clinical picture of the patient today?*

Paragraph 4 — Specific Request (2–4 sentences)

What goes here:

- Exactly what you want: assess, investigate, manage, follow up
- Specific procedures or investigations, if you've prepared the patient for them
- Timeframe if relevant (urgent, routine, within X weeks)

What doesn't:

- Vague phrases ("please assess and manage as necessary" is open-ended)
- Apologetic or deferential language

Relevance prompt: *If your specialist colleague were reading this on a Monday morning, could they put the patient on a clear care pathway by the end of this paragraph?*



The 5-Paragraph Structure

Paragraph 5 — Sign-off

What goes here:

- One short sentence offering further information
- “Yours sincerely” if you’ve named the recipient (“Dear Dr Smith”)
- “Yours faithfully” if you haven’t (“Dear Sir/Madam”)
- Your job title only - no name, no signature drawn in



Pre-Submission Checklist

☐

Word count

Body of letter is between 180 and 200 words

☐

Purpose

Reason for referral is clear in sentence one

☐

Relevance

Every detail in paragraphs 2 and 3 changes what the reader does

☐

Request

Paragraph 4 names a specific next step, not a vague ask

☐

Tone

Professional and concise - no deferential or apologetic phrasing

☐

Spelling

Checked the meaning-changing word list - advise/advice, severe/sever, compliant/complaint, etc.

☐

Sign-off

Yours sincerely or yours faithfully matched to whether the recipient is named



What's Next?

This map gives you the structure. The next step is writing under timed conditions and getting feedback on a real letter. E2's OET Writing Assessments give you band-by-band feedback aligned to the official assessment criteria, and our 1-on-1 tutorials let you walk through your most challenging letter type with an experienced OET teacher.

Ready to score a B? This resource is a starting point. To get personalised feedback on your own letters, real OET-style mock tests, and 1-on-1 tutorials with experienced OET teachers, head to [E2Language.com](https://www.E2Language.com) - trusted by over 3 million candidates across our English exam preparation.

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