

SAMPLE UNIT

Successful Writing

PROFICIENCY

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Express Publishing

UNIT 2 Describing Places/Buildings

1 🗣️ You will hear a man talking to a travel agent about a city he finally decides to visit. Read the table then listen to the tape and tick the information mentioned. Finally, use the table to talk about the city described.

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| name: | Athens <input type="checkbox"/> Dublin <input type="checkbox"/> Edinburgh <input type="checkbox"/> |
| location: | Greece <input type="checkbox"/> Ireland <input type="checkbox"/> Scotland <input type="checkbox"/> |
| reason for visiting: | holiday <input type="checkbox"/> business <input type="checkbox"/> |
| sights: | castle <input type="checkbox"/> Royal Palace <input type="checkbox"/> St Patrick's Cathedral <input type="checkbox"/> |
| free-time activities: | pubs <input type="checkbox"/> museums <input type="checkbox"/> theatres <input type="checkbox"/> cinemas <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | cafés <input type="checkbox"/> parks <input type="checkbox"/> funfairs <input type="checkbox"/> bistros <input type="checkbox"/> |
| recommendation: | highly recommended <input type="checkbox"/> expensive <input type="checkbox"/> boring <input type="checkbox"/> |



A composition describing a place/building should consist of:

- an introduction** giving brief information about the name and location of the place/building and stating the reason for choosing to write about it (*e.g. What it is famous for, what makes it so special, etc.*)
- a main body** giving both general and specific details about the place/building usually moving from the general features to specific ones. **i)** when you describe a **place** you should give the overall impression by referring to landscape, buildings, landmarks, etc, and particular details (sights to see, places to go, things to do) **ii)** when you describe a **building** you should write about its surroundings (*e.g. situated in Oxford Street ...*), then give a detailed description of its exterior and interior; and,
- a conclusion** in which you express your feelings or opinion concerning the subject or give a recommendation.

- You may also be asked to **explain why** a particular place is important to you, popular, etc. Note that the number and length of paragraphs varies depending on the topic.
- Descriptions of places/buildings may be included in several other types of writing tasks, such as stories, assessment reports, articles, brochures, letters and magazine articles.

Points to Consider

- Descriptions of places/buildings may include: **factual information** such as age, size, colour, materials, etc (*e.g. The temple, with 10-metre tall marble columns, was built in 800 BC.*), details relating to the **senses** (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste) to suggest **mood** and **atmosphere** (*e.g. Visitors' footsteps on the worn stone floors echo through the cool, dark corridors, disturbing the tranquil silence.*), **opinions/impressions** of the place or building (*e.g. Tourists are fascinated by its air of mystery.*)
- Each aspect of the description should be presented in a separate paragraph beginning with a clear topic sentence.
- The use of descriptive vocabulary (*e.g. exquisite, exclusive, towering, etc*), a variety of linking words and structures as well as narrative techniques will make your writing more interesting.
- Present tenses are normally used when describing a place for a tourist brochure or a magazine article. Past tenses are normally used when describing a visit to a place/building. First and second conditionals (will/would) can be used when you describe your ideal city/house, etc. Note that when we give factual information about a place or building this is normally given using Present tenses. (*e.g. I flew to Madrid last Monday. Madrid is situated in the central point of the Iberian peninsula with a population of about 3,000,000.*)

Introduction

Paragraph 1

name/location/population of the place, reason for choosing the place

Main Body

Paragraphs 2 - 3

*general features and particular details
(place: surroundings, sights, facilities, free-time activities*

building: surroundings, detailed description of exterior/interior)

Paragraphs 4 - 5

explanation and example/justification

Conclusion

Final Paragraph

comments/feelings and/or a recommendation

2 Read the model below and fill in the plan on the right. Then, look at the highlighted adjective-noun combinations, close your books and try to remember as many of them as possible.

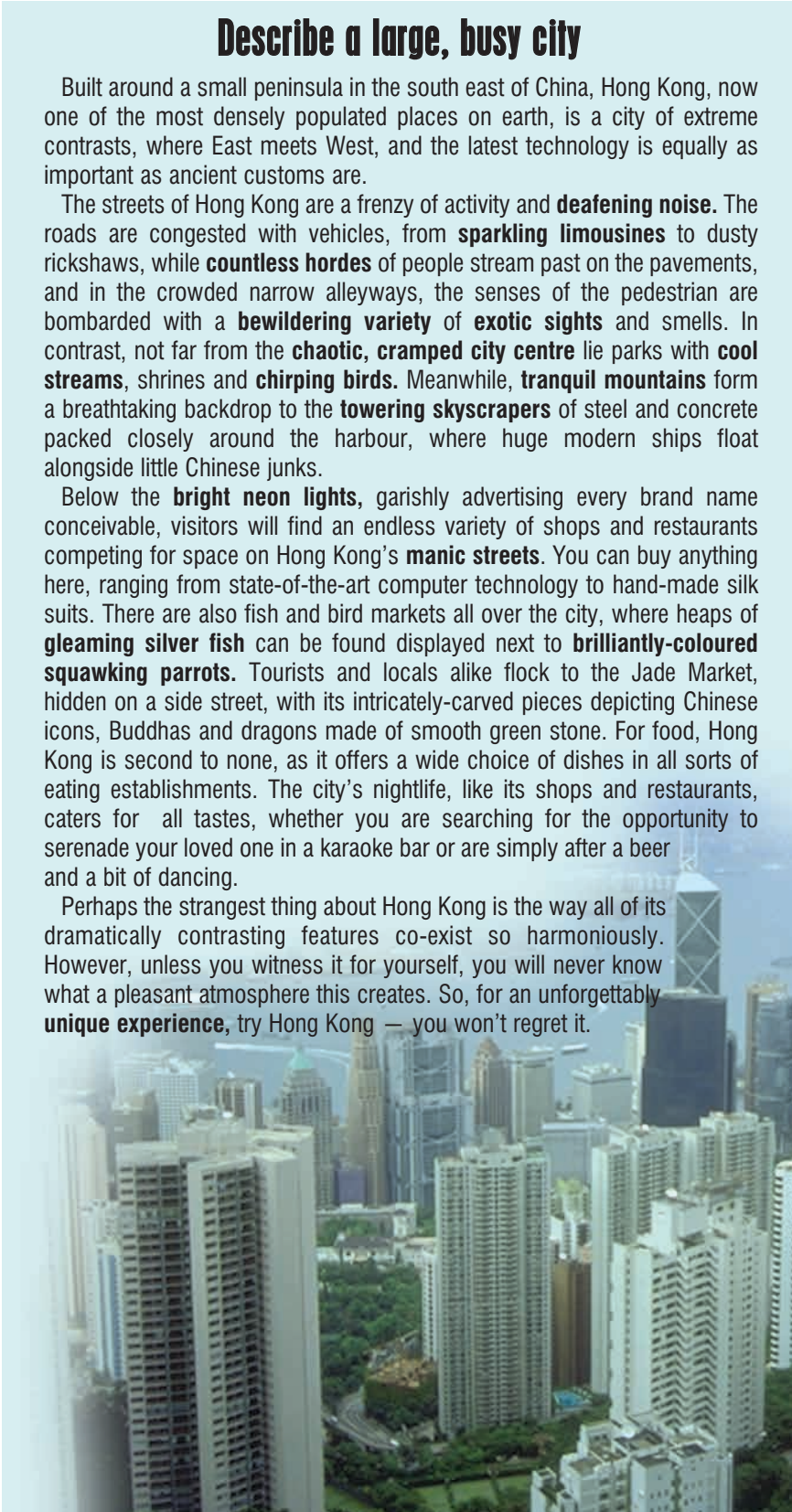
Describe a large, busy city

Built around a small peninsula in the south east of China, Hong Kong, now one of the most densely populated places on earth, is a city of extreme contrasts, where East meets West, and the latest technology is equally as important as ancient customs are.

The streets of Hong Kong are a frenzy of activity and **deafening noise**. The roads are congested with vehicles, from **sparkling limousines** to dusty rickshaws, while **countless hordes** of people stream past on the pavements, and in the crowded narrow alleyways, the senses of the pedestrian are bombarded with a **bewildering variety** of **exotic sights** and smells. In contrast, not far from the **chaotic, cramped city centre** lie parks with **cool streams**, shrines and **chirping birds**. Meanwhile, **tranquil mountains** form a breathtaking backdrop to the **towering skyscrapers** of steel and concrete packed closely around the harbour, where huge modern ships float alongside little Chinese junks.

Below the **bright neon lights**, garishly advertising every brand name conceivable, visitors will find an endless variety of shops and restaurants competing for space on Hong Kong's **manic streets**. You can buy anything here, ranging from state-of-the-art computer technology to hand-made silk suits. There are also fish and bird markets all over the city, where heaps of **gleaming silver fish** can be found displayed next to **brilliantly-coloured squawking parrots**. Tourists and locals alike flock to the Jade Market, hidden on a side street, with its intricately-carved pieces depicting Chinese icons, Buddhas and dragons made of smooth green stone. For food, Hong Kong is second to none, as it offers a wide choice of dishes in all sorts of eating establishments. The city's nightlife, like its shops and restaurants, caters for all tastes, whether you are searching for the opportunity to serenade your loved one in a karaoke bar or are simply after a beer and a bit of dancing.

Perhaps the strangest thing about Hong Kong is the way all of its dramatically contrasting features co-exist so harmoniously. However, unless you witness it for yourself, you will never know what a pleasant atmosphere this creates. So, for an unforgettably **unique experience**, try Hong Kong — you won't regret it.



- Introduction
location, population, reason
- Main Body
- general features
.....
.....
.....
- particular details
.....
.....
.....
- Conclusion
.....
.....
.....

Location Verbs and Prepositions

- There are a number of verbs used to describe the location and/or surroundings of a place. These may explain **position** (e.g. *the old house is situated next to/is surrounded by ..*); they may also give some suggestion of **movement** (e.g. *the road leads up to/winds past ...*) and/or **action** (e.g. *the statue towers above/stands at the top of ...*).
- These verbs are naturally used with **prepositions** and **prepositional/adverbial phrases** (e.g. *leads up to - winds past - stands at the top of , etc.*).

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3 Fill in the gaps with words from the list below: Use the words only once. *stretch out, is set in, winds through, nestles at, is perched on, curves around, sprawl out, is located in, slopes down to*

- 1 The small house, which the centre of town, is packed with antiques.
- 2 The narrow country lane the wooded valley.
- 3 The steep hillside the seashore.
- 4 The hotel the towering Welsh mountains.
- 5 The river the base of the mountain.
- 6 The plains in every direction.
- 7 The cabin precariously a cliff-top.
- 8 The suburbs into the countryside.
- 9 A tiny village the foot of the high mountain.

4 Read the following description. Fill in each of the gaps with a suitable preposition or adverb and circle each of the 'location' verbs.

Standing **1)** *at* the top of the old stone steps, you can see the variety of architectural styles **2)** the houses that line the main street. The steps lead **3)** to a small, open area just **4)** the corner **5)** the main street.

Facing you as you stand **6)** the bottom of the steps is a shop, which is **7)** a four-storey building that stands **8)** the corner of the street.

9) your right there are a few tables **10)** the pavement **11)** a small café which is housed **12)** a large, imposing building. A small balcony **13)** the first floor hangs **14)** the entrance to the café.

Further **15)** the street, **16)** the right hand side is a quaint two-storey building with gable windows built into the attic. The street disappears **17)** the distance as the wooded hillside rises **18)** the whole scene.



Participles & Relative Clauses

Short sentences with the same subject may be joined with **participles** (-ing/-ed) or **relative pronouns** (who/which/whose).

The cottage stands at the top of a cliff. It faces out to sea.

*The cottage, **which stands at the top of a cliff, faces out to sea.***

*The cottage, **standing at the top of a cliff, faces out to sea.***

The farmhouse was built in 1850.

It is surrounded by fields.

*The farmhouse, **[which was] built in 1850, is surrounded by fields.***

The participial clause is often put at the beginning of the sentence:

Standing at the top of a cliff, the cottage faces out to sea.

Built in 1850, the farmhouse is surrounded by fields.

Note how the meaning of the sentence changes when two sentences with different subjects are joined with a participle.

① **Tourists walk through the streets.**

② **Noises and smells greet them.**

① ***Walking through the streets, @ noises and smells greet the tourists.***

This means that the noises and smells are walking! Instead, you must keep the same subject for both clauses, or use time words such as "while":

Walking through the streets, tourists are greeted by noises and smells.

While the tourists walk through the streets, noises and smells greet them.

5 Link the sentences below starting each sentence with the correct form of the word(s) in bold.

- 1 The castle **dominates** the skyline. It is built of local stone.
- 2 The museum **was opened** in 1939. It is visited by thousands of people every day.
- 3 The temple **is surrounded by** trees. It is difficult to see from a distance.
- 4 Greater London **covers** 610 square miles. It is the largest city in Britain.
- 5 The monument **was erected** in 1919. It is a memorial to those who died in World War I.

6 Correct the following sentences as in the example.

e.g. *Sinking behind the mountain, I watched the sun fill the sky with red.* (WRONG)
Sinking behind the mountain, the sun filled the sky with red. (CORRECT)
 OR *As I watched the sun sinking behind the mountain, it filled the sky with red.* (CORRECT)

- 1 Stretching into the distance, we were amazed by the length of the queue.
- 2 Squeezing your way onto the packed bus, the other passengers press even closer together to make room for you.
- 3 Shuffling towards the supermarket's busy tills, heavy baskets hang from the shoppers' tired arms.
- 4 Standing squashed among the screaming fans, the roar of the enormous crowd was deafening.

• Descriptions of places often include subjects such as a popular restaurant, a busy market, etc. In a description of this sort, you should describe both the place and the activity (people, cars, commotion, etc). You may describe details relating to the **senses** (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste) to suggest **mood** and **atmosphere** (e.g. *The bazaar is a riot of exotic smells, dazzling colours and a deafening babble of voices ...*).

• In order to describe a human scene you will need to use a variety of words and phrases relating to **crowds** (e.g. *busy, crowded, bustling, etc*) and **activity** (e.g. *customers queue up, passengers rush to the train, etc*).

7 Read the following descriptions, underline the phrases which refer to the senses and identify each sense. What tenses are used in each description? Why?

A The market buzzes with the sound of women's voices, while the smells of fresh fish, vegetables and spices fill the hot, humid air. Crowds of shoppers jostle each other as they squeeze past the displays of goods, voices grow louder as the people haggle over prices, and the clang of metal bowls and boxes rings through the market.



B A faint smell of crushed grass wafted up from the court as the hot sun beat down on the crowd watching the players. The silence was punctuated by the rhythmic sound of the tennis ball and the muted gasps of the spectators; then, suddenly, the crowd surged to their feet with a roar.



8 Identify the sense(s) referred to in each of the phrases below. Then look at the two photographs and decide which each phrase describes. Some phrases may apply to both photographs.

hot, golden sand *touch; sight - B*
 hum of laughter and voices
 clinking glasses
 colourful sails
 strong odour of fish
 mouth-watering plates of food
 cries of seagulls
 warm sun on white buildings
 splash of breaking waves
 salty water



9 Now read this description of photograph A and use the notes above with further details of your own to write a similar description of photograph B.

Approaching the central square, you could hear the hum of laughter and voices, along with the clinking of glasses from the outdoor cafés and restaurants. There was a friendly, relaxed atmosphere as the tourists enjoyed their midday meal. Busy waiters bustled to and fro carrying mouth-watering plates of food, against a picturesque background of bright sun shining on the white buildings.

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings


10 In the skeleton sentences below, the word underlined is the main verb of the sentence. Write each as a complete sentence as in the example.

e.g. *Stand / top / hill / massive fortress / dominate / city*

Standing at the top of the hill, the massive fortress dominates the city.

- 1 Palm trees / sway / gentle evening breeze / frame / sun / set / horizon.
- 2 Stand / top / cliffs / you can / hear / waves / crash / rocks below.
- 3 Line / cobbled street / be / row / terraced houses / design / John Wood.
- 4 Surround / mountains / all sides / city / look / as if / be in / enormous bowl.

- When describing a **monument**, you should include factual information (age, size, reason built, etc), a description of the surrounding area and comments/feelings. Do not include information about sights, facilities or activities.

11  You will hear part of a TV documentary describing Nelson's Column. Listen and complete the notes below. Then, looking at your notes, describe the monument.

Factual Information

- Built: 18..... - 18.....
- Size: the column stands metres high
- Reason: commemorate Nelson's at the Battle of Trafalgar

Surroundings

- the column stands at the centre of Trafalgar Square in the heart of
- the square is the site of a beautiful, the National and other impressive buildings
- at street level the column is flanked by four lions

Comments/Feelings

- the monument towers above the London as a reminder of grander days in Britain's when this once-great nation ruled the seas



12 Look at the brief description below. What is the topic of each paragraph? Circle the location verbs used in the description and underline the words/phrases used to express impression/opinion.

The construction of the monument on Mount Rushmore began in 1927 and finished in 1941. The memorial, which attracts over two million tourists every year, commemorates four former presidents of the USA and consists of four heads carved out of granite, each standing sixty feet high.

Situated in the Black Hills of South Dakota, the memorial stands out from the mountainside which rises high above the surrounding farmland, and can be clearly seen from a far distance.

To Americans, the spectacle of these massive heads is a powerful reminder of their country's historic glories and achievements, while foreign tourists are struck by the strange sight of these dignified faces lending a human form to the bare mountain scenery.



13 Using the text in Ex. 12 as a model and your notes from Ex. 11, write a description of Nelson's Column, in about 200 words.

14 🎧 You will hear two friends talking about a particular place. Read the questions, then listen to the cassette and answer them. Looking at your answers, talk about the place, then write a description of it.

- 1 What place are they talking about?
- 2 Where is it?
- 3 How old is it?
- 4 What is it built of?
- 5 How many rooms are there?
- 6 How does he feel about the place?



CHARACTERISTICS OF FORMAL AND INFORMAL STYLE

Descriptions of places can be written in a formal or informal style depending on whom they are addressed to and how the writer wants to present the description. For example, a description of a place you visited in a letter to a friend of yours would be informal, whereas a description of a place issued by the Tourist Authority in order to promote the place would be written in a formal style.

Formal style is characterised by an impersonal non-emotional way of expressing your ideas, frequent use of the passive, non-colloquial English and complex sentences. Short forms are acceptable only in quotes.

Informal style is characterised by a personal, emotional and chatty way of expressing your ideas and use of colloquial English (idiomatic expressions), idioms and short forms.

Compare the examples: – *The cottage, once inhabited by a famous poet, was built atop a steep, rocky hillside overlooking an idyllic landscape of lush fields divided by ancient dry stone walls.* (formal) – *My dad's cottage is out of this world as it's right on the top of a hill and looks down on gorgeous green fields which are split up by old dry stone walls.* (informal)

15 Which of the following extracts is a formal description and which is an informal one? Why? Where has each extract been taken from?

Corfé Castle

The medieval castle of Corfé is perched high on a hill overlooking the small community below. The ruins stand as a reminder of the English Civil Wars when the castle was dismantled by Parliamentary forces in 1646. Today, visitors are attracted by the opportunity to marvel at the splendours of a bygone age, and leave behind, for a moment, the cares of the modern world.



Stonehenge

I have to admit I was a bit disappointed when I realised Stonehenge isn't like it looks in the pictures. I mean, you imagine it being sort of lonely and isolated, but actually there are tourists everywhere. We couldn't go right up to it either because it's surrounded by a fence. Even so, it was pretty impressive. How those ancient people moved such huge stones is anybody's guess, but they certainly made an amazing structure! I felt tiny standing there.

Expressing Impressions & Reactions

- You can express **positive** impressions of a place by:
 - a using a variety of **adjectives** such as:
awe-inspiring, breathtaking, delightful, elaborate, eye-catching, exquisite, majestic, outstanding, overwhelming, picturesque, quaint, spellbinding, superb, tranquil, etc
 - e.g. *The castle, standing at the top of the mountain overlooking the city, is **awe-inspiring**.*
 - b using a variety of **present or past participles** from such verbs as:
amaze, astonish, astound, impress, inspire, overwhelm, refresh, stimulate, etc
 - e.g. *I **was/felt astounded** at how **beautiful** Florida is in winter.
... the **astounding** image of children pulling rickshaws.*
 - c using a variety of **nouns** in expressions such as:
to my amazement/astonishment/delight/surprise/etc
 - e.g. ***To my delight**, the place had kept its character.*
- You can express **negative** impressions of a place by:
 - a using a variety of **adjectives** such as:
barren, bleak, derelict, dilapidated, disreputable, inhospitable, neglected, squalid, etc
 - e.g. *The building was in a **dilapidated** state.*
 - b using a variety of **present or past participles** from such verbs as:
depress, disappoint, dismay, terrify, shock, etc
 - e.g. *... the **disappointing** view of the unsightly housing.*
 - c using a variety of **nouns** in expressions such as:
to my disappointment/surprise/etc
 - e.g. ***To my disappointment**, the once-tranquil village had turned into a crowded tourist resort.*

16 Choose the most appropriate word from those given in brackets, and put it into the correct form to fill in the gaps in the following sentences.

e.g. *Rio is a thrilling place to visit, with its riotous colours and raucous noise.
(thrill/relax/refresh)*

- 1 To the _____ of most visitors, the caves in the area cannot be visited, as they have been declared unsafe. (disappoint/delight/impress)
- 2 Several old, traditional houses have been converted into quaint pensions which tourists find _____. (horror/delight/depress)
- 3 Visitors are _____ during the trip up the steep mountain path, but the view makes it worthwhile. (puzzle/terrify/offend)
- 4 It is _____ to see how quickly the area where I grew up is being spoiled. (shock/excite/inspire)
- 5 The enormous ancient structures strike people as _____, since even using modern equipment they would be difficult to construct. (amuse/dismay/amaze)

17 Read the brief descriptions below, and replace each of the underlined words or phrases with the most suitable word from the list given.

Description A

abandoned, bleak, cramped, miserable, run-down

The row of (1) empty houses along the bank of a stagnant canal present a (2) sad picture. When lived in, they were (3) too small, filthy and in need of paint. Now they are (4) old and broken, their windows boarded over and fences sagging. The landscape in which they stand is (5) empty and ugly; behind the canal and ruined houses stretch flat fields with no trees or grass.

Description B

astounded, enormous, exquisite, imposing, tranquil

Visitors to the cathedral are usually (6) surprised at the (7) impressive elegance of its size and proportions. The (8) very big stained-glass windows with their (9) wonderful centuries-old pictures flood the interior with soft light and colour, creating a (10) peaceful, quiet atmosphere.

Now replace each of the ten words you have just used with its synonym from the following list.

astounded, bare, crowded, deserted, depressing, dilapidated, magnificent, massive, serene, superb



Useful Language: Explaining Impressions

- Paris **makes an immediate/enduring/lasting impression on** all who visit it, since it is such a glamorous city.
What strikes/impresses/delights visitors about the resort most **is** its unique surroundings.
The most noticeable/outstanding feature of the palace **is** its golden dome.
 A huge statue of a lion **is the first thing one notices** upon entering the temple.
One cannot help but be impressed/moved/struck by the natural beauty of the region.
Without doubt, the most impressive thing about San Francisco **is** the Golden Gate Bridge.
The thing which makes the strongest/most enduring impression is the hospitality of the locals.
 I **was immediately struck by** the staggering number of huge skyscrapers.
One particularly marvels/wonders at the variety of attractions offered.
- **The first thing one notices about** the house is its overgrown garden.
The reason that the area is so depressing **is that** there are so many derelict buildings.
 The filthy, congested streets **confirmed my initial impression** that it was an unpleasant city.
 Undoubtedly, **the thing/feature that will disappoint** any visitor **is** the lack of facilities.

18 Rewrite the sentences using the words in bold without changing the meaning.

- 1 When visiting Paris, one particularly marvels at the incredible architecture of the Pompidou Centre.
help
*e.g. When visiting Paris, one **cannot help but marvel** at the incredible ...*
- 2 What impressed me most about the entire building was the lavishly-decorated reception hall.
strongest
- 3 The first thing that one notices about the city is that there are so many well-preserved medieval buildings.
noticeable
- 4 Undoubtedly the thing that will impress you most about Sydney is the amazing Opera House.
doubt
- 5 What strikes visitors to Mykonos most is the perfect combination of glamour and tradition.
immediate

19 Read the extract below and replace the underlined words and phrases with phrases from the following list.

- *take a particular delight in*
- *the thing which makes the strongest impression*
- *here one has the leisure to appreciate*
- *few visitors can fail to be charmed by*
- *to sum up*
- *furthermore, one cannot help but wonder at*
- *gives the impression of being*
- *hustle and bustle*
- *combines the spirit of a community with a well-deserved respect for nature*
- *paid them the compliment of*

Describe a place in the countryside and explain why it is worth visiting.

Concerning Littlewood village itself, (1) what you notice is the hospitality of the locals. (2) Everyone enjoys the welcoming smiles and the genuine interest that the villagers show in anyone who has (3) bothered visiting their small community. It is as if they (4) really like sharing their charming village with outsiders.

(5) Also, anyone would like the natural beauty of the region. Sheltered from the outside world by the hills which surround it, the village (6) seems untouched by the technological age and the (7) noisy hurry of modern towns. (8) You can enjoy the late afternoon sun glistening on the river or shining through the autumn leaves, and realise that this is a very special place.

(9) So, Littlewood (10) is a place with nice people and scenery. For anyone who wants to escape from the pressures of modern life for a while, it is well worth a visit.

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

20 Read the following description. Then, using the notes below, rewrite it in a formal style. Start like this. *Toronto is a truly impressive city ...*

Toronto is a really great city! There are so many places for you to see and things to do that you'll hardly have time to rest while you're there.

One of the things that will immediately impress you is the architecture of the buildings. It's definitely a sightseer's paradise. You can go up the CN Tower, which is one of the tallest buildings in the world, and you can have a wonderful dinner in the revolving restaurant at the top of the Tower. What a view! You'll be able to see the whole of Toronto. You can also visit the Casa Loma, which is just like a fairy-tale castle. A millionaire built it at the beginning of the century. The Skydome is another place that you'll find amazing. It's an ultra modern sports stadium that has a roof that opens and closes, so matches or concerts don't have to be called off when it rains or snows!



- NOTES:
- impressive city
 - an ideal place for those ...
 - impressive architecture
 - one place especially worth visiting ...
 - visitors can enjoy dining ...
 - spectacular view of ...
 - resembling a castle
 - built at the turn of the century
 - retractable roof
 - events are held all year round

- Certain techniques can be used to make your description more vivid. You can start or end your description by:
 - using your senses to describe the weather, surroundings, etc
 - using direct speech
 - asking a rhetorical question (a question which doesn't need an answer)
 - creating mystery, suspense or anticipation
 - addressing the reader directly
 - describing people's feelings about or reactions to the place, building or monument
 - using a quotation (e.g. As Ernest Hemingway once said, "Paris is a movable feast.")

21 Read the following paragraphs and identify the narrative techniques which have been used in each one.

1 "Yes, it's been empty for years," the man said as we stood outside the old one-room schoolhouse. Some of my earliest memories are associated with that place, and it seemed a shame that the big room no longer rang with the voices of happy children.

2 I shivered in the chill, damp air as I entered the old one-room schoolhouse. It smelt of mildew and dust, and I could see stains on the walls where the rain had come through the roof. This abandoned place had once been the scene of lively lessons for twenty children, including myself.

3 Standing outside the door of the abandoned one-room schoolhouse, I heard a strange noise coming from inside. I knew it had been empty for years but I seemed to hear the sound of children's voices. Holding my breath, I pushed the door open.

4 How many people have had the opportunity to be educated in an old one-room country schoolhouse? When I went back to visit my old school, which is now no longer used, I suddenly realised how lucky I had been, and what an influence the place and its surroundings had had on my life.

5 Everyone who went to the old one-room school in my village feels the same way about it. They all remember the time they spent there as the best years of their lives, and I believe the place itself had an influence on this feeling.

6 You may have attended a big, inner-city school with a library, labs, a gymnasium and all the facilities considered necessary for a good education. In that case, you cannot imagine what it is like to go to a tiny one-room school surrounded by green, rolling countryside.

7 Shakespeare's description of "the whining schoolboy ... creeping like a snail to school" certainly does not apply to me in my schooldays. I attended a one-room country school and, as I remember it, going there was always a pleasure. I think this was partly due to the beauty and quaintness of the place itself.

22 Write possible beginnings and endings for a composition entitled "The city I admire most."

- 23** Read the models and give the paragraph plan. Which of the models involves narration? How do these two models differ (paragraphs, tenses, style etc)? Where would you find these pieces of writing?

Model A

Describe a visit to a famous capital city you particularly enjoyed

I spent last weekend with my friend Leo in the Hungarian capital, Budapest. Leo was anxious for me to join him for the St. Stephen's Day celebrations and I was only too glad to oblige.

After arriving at Ferihegy Airport, Leo took me on a whirlwind tour of the city so I could get my bearings. The sixteen mile journey from the airport to the city centre took us through Pest, the area situated to the east of the Danube River. We sped through streets of stunning Baroque architecture and past museums which I couldn't wait to visit. After crossing the river, via the Szecheny Chain Bridge, we entered Buda, which was officially joined together with Pest in 1873 to form the modern-day capital. I was delighted with the fantastic view of Buda Castle and the Citadel, sat atop the three hills which line the banks of the river. After I had been introduced to Leo's family, we went to explore the city together. We paused to admire Buda's cobbled streets and Gothic architecture, and visited some museums before we went back home and enjoyed a typical Hungarian meal Leo's mother had carefully prepared for us.

The next day, I had the chance to explore Budapest more thoroughly. After a brief visit to the excellent Museum of Fine Art, I went to see the animals at Budapest Zoo before sampling some more delicious Hungarian cuisine for lunch at a lovely little restaurant. In the afternoon, I went back to Buda where I was amazed to discover that the castle houses not only the National Gallery, but also the National Library and Castle Museum too. That evening, however, was certainly the highlight of my trip. After a short nap, I returned once more to Buda Castle with Leo, where we watched the extravagant fireworks display held to celebrate St. Stephen's Day.

I spent an interesting couple of days in Budapest and managed to soak up a lot of Hungarian culture and history thanks to Leo and his captivating stories. Although I only spent a short time there, I feel I left Budapest with a vivid insight into Hungarian life.



Model B

Describe a famous capital city

Budapest, the Hungarian capital, is situated on the glorious Danube River in western Hungary. Before amalgamation in 1873, the site was home to two separate towns, Buda and Pest, located on either side of the river. The city's fascinating variety of architectural styles brings its long and turbulent history alive for the visitor, and because of this it is a fabulous location for a trip into the past.

Once you have arrived in the city centre from nearby Ferihegy Airport, take a tour round the entire city so you can find your bearings and get a taste of this fantastic city's atmosphere. Buda, which can be reached by means of the cheap and efficient underground train or the Szecheny Chain Bridge, is the oldest part of the city. First settled in the Middle Ages, its cobbled streets and Gothic houses are dominated by the recently-restored Buda Castle and the Citadel on their imposing hilltop sites. The castle is definitely worth visiting, as it houses the National Library, the Castle Museum and the National Gallery. Across the river, in Pest, you will find stunning examples of Baroque architecture and a number of fascinating museums. Impossible to miss is the Millennium Monument, a striking colonnade displaying statues of Hungarian kings and leaders, along with a huge statue of the archangel Gabriel surmounting a 188-foot-high central column.

But Budapest is not just a place to look at. There are excellent shopping facilities, a fascinating zoo, and plenty of theatres and concert halls offering fine performances. You can end your day by having a delicious meal in one of the many traditional restaurants and, if you are lucky enough to be in Budapest on St. Stephen's Day, you can witness the stunning firework display which is held on the Citadel.

All in all, Budapest is a delightful city which embodies centuries of the Eastern European past. Its fascination is partly due to the Hungarians' resourcefulness, a quality necessary to ensure the survival of a city which has had to be rebuilt so many times. Budapest is well worth a visit at any time of the year.

Interpreting the topic

- Various composition tasks ask you to describe a place, building or monument; however this description may be only **one part of the composition**. Composition tasks often ask you to describe a place, building or monument and to **explain** why you have chosen it, why it is important, etc.

In order to complete such a composition task successfully, you should interpret the instructions carefully and choose the aspects which are most relevant to the particular question.

e.g. "Describe a place you have recently visited and explain why you would like to visit the place again in the future."

In answering this question, you should describe the place using narrative style. Past tenses are required. You should also give reasons why you would like to visit the place again, supporting them with justifications.

- Certain questions may ask you to **compare and contrast** two different places, buildings or monuments. Alternatively, you could be asked to describe the ways in which a place has changed over a period of time.

e.g. "Describe two places you have been to on holiday which were very different from each other. Say which you liked better, giving reasons for your choice."

This composition task requires a brief description of the two places, then a comparison of them using suitable linking words and expressions in order to explain the reason why you liked one more than the other.

- Remember to start each paragraph with a topic sentence which summarises what the paragraph is about.

- 25** Read the model below and give the paragraph plan. Then underline the topic sentences. What tenses have been used? Why? Finally look at the highlighted adjective-noun combinations, then close your books and try to remember as many as possible.

Describe a town or city you have visited and explain why you found it particularly impressive

Situated on two rivers near the Yorkshire Moors, York is a fascinating and **memorable place** to explore. My first visit there was organised while I was in my last year at school. Since it was a history trip, York seemed to be the best choice as it is such a **well-preserved city** which has been of **historical importance** for nearly two thousand years.

Surrounded by high, medieval stone walls, the old part of the town is like a journey back in time. As you wander through the maze of **busy, narrow streets**, you cannot fail to be struck by the quaintness of the **irregular, half-timbered houses**. Rising above these and dominating the skyline are **brehtaking examples** of medieval and Gothic architecture.

Of the many things York has to offer, there are several which stand out in my mind. York Minster, in particular, with its intricate stonework and **stained-glass windows**, is an **awe-inspiring sight**. There are museums of all kinds, including a railway museum and Jorvik Viking Centre, where visitors can learn more about the individual periods of the city's rich history. Finally, the many tea-rooms, coffee-shops and restaurants, each with its own brand of charm, are ideal places to

relax for a while and take in the atmosphere.

One thing that makes York unique among English towns is the care with which it has been preserved. There are few cities where such attention has been paid to detail in an attempt to preserve

the authenticity of the many historic buildings. Medieval and Gothic structures have been painstakingly restored and the present residents seem to share a sense of pride in the splendour of their surroundings.

York is also notable for the fact that it has managed to incorporate modern life into such a **historic setting**. Shops and offices offer a full range of goods and services while still maintaining the charm and dignity of a bygone age. All the usual twentieth century requirements are catered for in an atmosphere reminiscent of a time when the pace of life was much slower.

The combination of ancient and modern held such a fascination for me during that first visit that I have been back many times since, each time discovering something new.



- 24** Read the following topics and underline the key words. Which tenses should you use? What information will you include in each paragraph?

- 1 Describe the centre of your town or city during the Christmas season.
- 2 Describe a restaurant in your neighbourhood which you would highly recommend, giving reasons why it is worth going to.
- 3 Describe a popular park in the area you live in as it is on a pleasant Sunday morning.
- 4 Describe a place of historical significance, explaining why it is important.
- 5 Describe a visit to a famous place and explain why it is so well-known.
- 6 Describe how you think your town will have changed in fifty years' time, giving reasons why you think these changes will have occurred.
- 7 Describe a new shop in your town which you feel will be successful, giving reasons for your opinion.

Making comparisons

To compare places or buildings you can use:

- **(just/nearly) as ... (positive degree) ... as** e.g. *In those days the main streets were **just as congested as** they are today.*
- **the same as** e.g. *The cottage was **the same as** it had been fifty years before.*
- **(relatively/considerably) less ... (positive degree) ... than** e.g. *The new buildings are **considerably less ornate than** the old ones.*
- **(much/far/considerably) more + adjective/adverb + than** e.g. *The northern area is **more picturesque than** the eastern area.*
- **(by far) the most + adjective** e.g. *Hill Manor is **by far the most elegant** hotel in the region.*
- **comparative + and + comparative** e.g. *The streets are becoming **dirtier and dirtier**.*
- **the comparative ..., the + comparative** e.g. *The **further south** you travel, **the warmer** it becomes.*

Useful Language

To show similarity: it looks (very much) like/(very similar to), it has the same/similar/ identical ..., it resembles ..., the places are alike/similar ..., both ... and, neither ... nor

e.g. ***Both Nice and Cannes are cosmopolitan resorts.***

To show contrast: it is unlike ... in that, it differs from ..., they differ in that ..., they are different as/because ..., the (main) difference between ... and ... is ..., compared to ..., not only ... but also, although, even though, though, despite, in spite of, whereas, while, but, however, on the other hand, on the contrary, as opposed to, in contrast (with), however, yet, but, even so, still, nevertheless.

e.g. ***Compared to Paris, Rome is much warmer during summertime.***

26 Rewrite the following sentences without changing the meaning.

e.g. *The castle was renovated and is now much more impressive than any other in the region.*

After being renovated, the castle is now by far the most impressive one/castle in the region.



- 1 Some of the archaeological sites are fascinating, whereas the museums are rather uninteresting.
The museums are not nearly
- 2 The shopping centre in Harries Road has many more shops than the one in Bridge Street.
The shopping centre in Bridge Street hasn't got
- 3 As the population of the city grew the number of schools and hospitals being built increased.
As the population of the city grew, so
- 4 The Anderson Sports Centre has better equipment than the Pollock Centre.
The Pollock Centre is not
- 5 The layout of our old flat was very impractical in comparison to the layout of the new flat.
The layout of our new flat is far
- 6 As the traffic in the city increases, the city centre becomes more congested.
The more traffic there is,

27 Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets without changing the meaning.

- 1 Both Blackpool and Brighton have a promenade on the sea front. (alike)
- 2 The new government buildings are very different from the old ones as they are modern and lavish. (compared to)
- 3 The house I grew up in looked almost the same as all the others in the street. (similar)
- 4 In the winter the resort is deserted, whereas in the summer it is swarming with tourists. (in contrast)
- 5 The two areas differ in that one is residential and the other is industrial. (difference)
- 6 The new school is very much like the old one both in design and size. (resembles)
- 7 Mario's restaurant is small and crowded, yet it is more popular than the others with the locals. (Despite)

Unit 2 Describing Places/Buildings

28 Read the model and underline the phrases showing comparison/contrast, then match the paragraphs with the paragraph descriptions. How does this paragraph plan differ from the one shown on p. 18?

- | | |
|--|--|
| a change 1 and result | d change 2 and result |
| b comments/feelings | e name of street and when writer lived there |
| c description of street as it used to be | f description of street as it is now |

Describe the street you used to live in when you were young and how it has changed, explaining how you feel about those changes

1 I lived on Rose Street until I was eleven, when my father got a better job and we could afford to move to a nicer part of town. Nevertheless, I still felt attached to my old home until I returned there ten years later, only to be astounded by the way it had changed.

2 Rose Street, as I remembered it, was a warm, neighbourly place. Although some of the ageing blocks of flats were in need of renovation, they were clearly in a much better state of repair than those in other parts of the town. It was also a considerably safer place to live, with relatively little crime compared to other areas. There were only a few shops in our street; a busy launderette next door, a small corner shop run by a jolly man called Mr Braithwaite and a greengrocer's.

3 Today, however, the street has changed beyond recognition. Most of the old buildings have been torn down and replaced by newer, more spacious constructions, each one fitted with security cameras. Unlike before, there are no children playing in the streets – a sign that the crime rate is higher and that people are more cautious. In addition, there are now shops on the ground floor of nearly every block, which makes the street seem like one in the town centre.

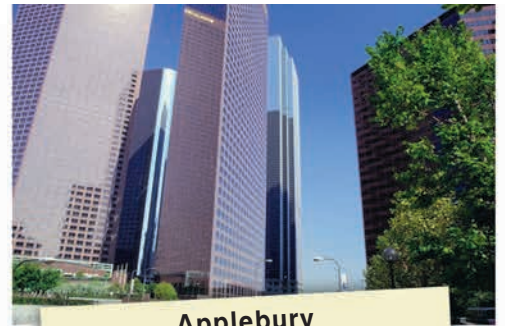
4 What I liked most about Rose Street before the changes was that there seemed to be much more community spirit. A friendly chat or a piece of advice was never far away, and I am sure people felt closer then than they do now. The sense of belonging and the fact that everyone knew each other helped ensure that daily life was relatively peaceful and secure.

5 Nowadays, because people are more and more isolated, the heart of the community appears to have gone. It must be said, however, that the living conditions and the general appearance of the area have improved greatly. Not only is the architecture much more pleasing to the eye, but the streets and public areas are considerably better maintained than they used to be.

6 Still, I have mixed feelings about these changes. I believe that Rose Street was a better place to live ten years ago, since a sense of security and community is much more important than appearance or convenience. I would love to see Rose Street again as it used to be.

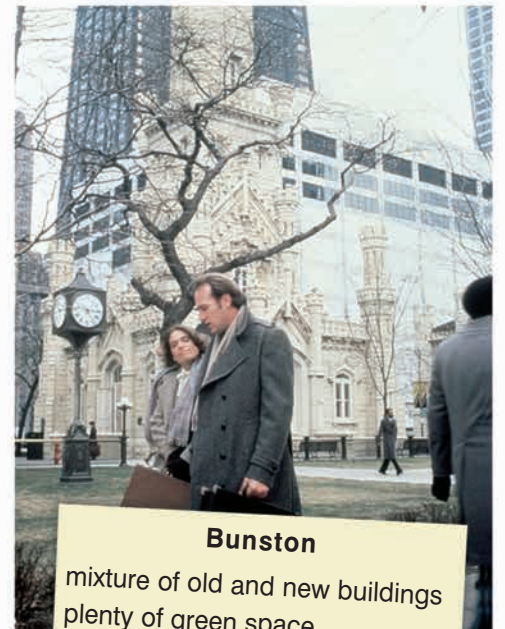
29 Look at the notes below, then, using words/phrases from the tables on p. 29 compare and contrast the two towns.

e.g. Town A is full of modern buildings whereas Town B is a mixture of old and new buildings.



Applebury

full of modern buildings
plenty of green space
large population
limited educational facilities
wide range of shops
many wealthy people
many things to see and do



Bunston

mixture of old and new buildings
plenty of green space
small population
good educational facilities
wide range of shops
a few wealthy people
many things to see and do

- 30** Read the model and correct the highlighted words. Write **S** for spelling, **WO** for word order, **G** for grammar, or **WW** for wrong word then give the paragraph plan. What tenses have been used? Why?



Describe an area of the town you live in which you believe will change in the near future and explain in what ways it will become different

Allenby, one of the most run-down areas of town, is located to the south of the town centre, close to the canal. It used to be occupied by the cotton industry, but the mills were closed down many years **before** and most of Allenby has lain derelict since then. ago **G**

The general impression of the place is one of neglect and emptiness: broken glass, a **little** stray cats, rubbish blown by the wind. Most of the stone buildings have turned almost black over the years, giving them a sombre, and in some cases, quite **forbidding** appearance. This is especially the case at night when the streets are **unlighted** and deserted.

The structures that most catch the eye are the big old mills and warehouses. These towering shapes are punctuated regularly with row upon row of **high** windows. Being **such** huge, they would have dwarfed the hundreds who once worked inside, but now they are empty and not even the old machinery **remain**. The nearby houses, in contrast, are tiny dilapidated terraces, all **the same more or less**.

Recently, however, the town council has released plans to clean up Allenby, following the successful development of similar areas in cities such as London and Liverpool. The mills and warehouses **will transformed** into airy open-plan apartments and galleries, while bar and restaurant owners will be encouraged to invest in the terraced houses along the canal. This transformation will undoubtedly draw an up-market crowd, as **more and much** people seem to be showing an interest in the **areas** distinctive architectural and industrial past.

In the addition to this, the council has also promised to revamp the canal and **it's** tow-path in an attempt to help Allenby shed its reputation for being a magnet for dangerous and shady characters. As a result, the area is bound to attract business and Allenby will be able to develop a cleaner, safer and **all together** more appealing image.

If the example of London's riverfront properties are anything to go by, the redevelopment of Allenby will certainly revitalise the area and ultimately enhance the image of the town as a whole.

DISCUSS & WRITE

- 31** Look at the following composition task instructions and answer the questions below.

a) *Describe a well-known landmark in your country and explain why it is famous.*

- 1 What are the key words?
- 2 Which landmark in your country would you choose to describe?
- 3 What particular features of this landmark would you choose to describe?
- 4 What reasons can you think of that make the landmark famous?
- 5 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this task be?

b) *Describe two areas of the town or city you live in which are very different from each other, and explain why they are so different.*

- 1 What are the key words?
- 2 Which two areas of your town would you choose to describe?
- 3 What elements would you include in order to show how these two areas differ?
- 4 What words would you use to compare/contrast these two areas?
- 5 What would a suitable paragraph plan for this task be?

- 32** Choose ONE of the composition tasks above, and write a complete paragraph plan with notes. Then write the composition in 300 to 400 words.