Michigan ECCE Letter Writing

Useful phrases for writing a letter of advice

Introduction

In the Michigan ECCE examination, candidates have to produce one piece of writing in thirty minutes, using a prompt (a short piece of writing which describes a situation or problem) which is given on the examination paper. The prompt is usually one or two paragraphs and is written in fairly easy English so that all candidates can understand it without much difficulty. Candidates read this prompt and then the two writing topics which follow it. One is a letter, often to a newspaper or magazine column, offering advice or giving an opinion, and the other is an essay, in which the candidate must express his or her ideas about the situation or problem described in the prompt. The candidate must choose one of the topics to write.

Both sorts of writing exercise (letter and essay) must follow a particular development, and the use of clear paragraphs is essential. Candidates must be sure about what ideas they are going to include in their writing before they start writing and how they are going to lay their ideas out. Candidates must also use examples to support their ideas.

It is an excellent idea to learn and use particular phrases which can be included in the writing exercise, such as how to offer advice to somebody, how to express an understanding of a problem, how to offer a personal opinion about a situation, and so on. Below is a list of such phrases which students should find useful when writing a letter offering advice on how to solve a problem in the Michigan ECCE examination. It is good practice to use phrases like these in your writing. However, it is equally important to avoid errors (grammatical, spelling, expressional) in the information you write between the phrases!

Useful phrases

A) Expressing understanding of another person’s problem

**Basic idea: “I understand that your problem is serious”**
Yours is quite clearly a grave/serious/worrying problem.
The problem you are facing is obviously a grave/serious/worrying one.
This is the sort of problem which would worry/concern anyone facing it.
A problem of this nature can cause great concern/deep concern/a great deal of worry/concern.
It is quite clear to me that this problem is serious/worrying.

**Basic idea: “I have had a problem like this myself”**
In the past I have had to deal with a similar problem.
I too have encountered a similar problem/a problem of this sort/of this nature.
This is a problem I myself have had to deal with in the past.
The problem you face is one I myself have encountered before/in the past.
I have also had to face a problem similar to the one in question.

**Basic idea: “I think I can help you solve this problem”**
I believe I can offer you a practical/feasible solution to the problem you face/are facing/have encountered.
I feel that the advice I can suggest will be of use (to you) in solving this problem/dealing with this problem.
I am confident that my own experience can help you get over this problem.
B) Explanation of the problem

**Basic idea:** “This is a problem because…”
The reason why this is a problem is that…
The reason why this problem occurs lies in the fact that…
This problem occurs as/because…
People see this as a problem because…
The basis of this problem is that…
This problem crops up because…
Individuals find themselves faced with this problem because…

**Basic idea:** “When we know this problem exists, it is easier to solve it”.
Recognition of the existence of this problem makes it easier to solve it.
If we recognize the problem, we are in a better position to solve it.
This problem is more easily solved when we acknowledge its existence.
It is (only) when we see that there is a problem that we can really start to solve it.
A solution to this problem is only possible/feasible when we have recognized that the problem exists.

**Basic idea:** “Many people face this problem/a problem like this.”
This is a problem common to many people’s experience.
Many face problems such as this.
Such problems crop up for many of us.
Problems such as this occur during many people’s lives.
You are not alone in facing this problem, as it affects many individuals/people.

C) How to solve the problem

**Basic idea:** “The first thing you can do to solve this problem is to…”
Initially, you should…/you need to…/you have to…/you would be advised to…/it would be advisable for you to…/my advice to you would be to… […] to solve this problem/to resolve this problem/to get over this problem.
Alternative expressions for “Initially,” : In the first instance, To begin with, To start with, Firstly, First of all, Before (doing) anything else, Your first step (should be to…)

**Basic idea:** “Next you should…”
Following this, you should…/you would be well-advised to…/my advice would be to…/why don’t you…?/it is recommended that you should…
Alternative expressions for “Following this,” : Subsequently, Subsequent to this/that, Once this has been done/achieved, Afterwards, The next step is…, Secondly,

**Basic idea:** “I advise this because…”
This is advisable because…
You would be advised/well-advised to do this because…
I recommend that you do this because…
You would be wise to do this because…
There is wisdom in this advice because…
My advice is such because…
Such is my advice because…

**Basic idea:** “If this doesn’t work, you should…”
Should this fail to work, you should…
Should this not bring the desired results, you should…
If this is not successful, you should…
Should this not be successful, you should…
Failing this, you should…
If this doesn’t not help, you should…
If this doesn’t help to resolve/solve the problem, you should…

Basic idea: “If you do this, the result will be that…”
The result of such an action/move will be that…
Such an action/move will result in (+noun/gerund)
Doing this will mean that…
By doing this you will…
By taking such measures you will…
This will mean that you will…
This will lead to (+ noun/gerund)

Basic idea: “If they don’t understand you, explain to them that…”
If they fail to get the message, explain to them that…
If they fail to understand you, try explaining that…
If what you say is not understood, how about explaining that…?
If you fail to make them understand, why don’t you explain that…?
Should they not understand what you mean, you could explain that…
They may not understand you, so you should then explain to them that…

Basic idea: “If your parents realise how you feel, they will…”
If your parents come to understand how you feel (on this matter), they will…
In realising how you feel (on this matter), your parents will…
Once they realise your position/your feelings (on this matter), your parents will…
As soon as they comprehend how you feel (on this point/subject/matter), your parents will…
Comprehension of how you feel (on this matter) will make your parents (+ bare infinitive)…
If you make your feelings (on this matter) known to your parents, they will…

D) Concluding your advice

Basic idea: “I hope this advice helps you.”
I sincerely hope that this advice will be of help to you.
It is my sincere hope that you will find this advice useful/of good use (to you).
Hopefully this is advice which will be of assistance to you (in solving this problem).
It is to be hoped that what I have advised will assist/aid you (in finding a solution to this problem).
This advice will, I hope, be of help to you (in solving this problem).

Basic idea: “If you follow this advice, you will solve the problem.”
By following this advice, you will find a solution to your problem.
This advice, if followed, will surely solve the problem.
I feel sure that if you take this advice, the problem will disappear/go away.
You can be (almost) sure that if you take this advice you will solve the problem.
Solving this problem should be simple if you follow the advice I have given.

Basic idea: “Please let me know how things go.”
I would be very interested to learn/hear how this advice helps.
I look forward to hearing that you have resolved the problem.
Please keep me/us informed about how things/the situation develop(s).
I would be eager/keen to know/learn what happens.