

Teaching writing



Preparing to write

Writing is something that has to be taught, even in your first language. You can't just tell students to write an essay, they need preparation and more preparation before they write...

- At the first stage of preparing to write an essay or a story, give learners the essay title and pieces of scrap paper. They have three minutes to work alone, writing one idea on each piece of paper, before comparing in small groups.
- Each group can then present their three best ideas to the class. This means that everyone has many ideas to choose from before they start writing and nobody can say 'I can't think of anything to write.'

Writing for fun

We can give students short, fun activities to get them writing. This is a group writing activity called 'Parents never say...'

- Ask students what rules their parents set at home. Write some examples on the board, for example 'Come home before nine o'clock.' 'Do your homework.'
- Ask what parents never say; for example, 'Please don't tidy your room,' 'Use the telephone a lot,' 'Stay up very late.'
- In groups the students write eight sentences that parents never say.
- Give a time limit of ten minutes. Tell the students that there will be a vote on the best set of rules.
- Each group sticks up the group's rules on the board/wall.
- The class read all the different sets of rules and vote on which is best (not their own!).

Correcting students' writing

- We can use a correction code to show students where they have made mistakes, for example:

Sp = spelling mistake
WW = wrong word
WO = wrong word order
T = wrong tense
Pr = wrong preposition
Pu = wrong punctuation
/ = missing word.

Then students can correct their own writing.

- We can collect common errors from students' written work and write them on the board for class correction.
- Students can correct each other, rather than the teacher. For example, each learner quickly writes a short text on his or her favourite sportsperson (or actor or singer, etc). Then everyone passes their writing to the next student and corrects that text. This rotation continues until the corrected texts are returned to the writers.

Once upon a time...

