
ISBN-10: 0939791579
[Amazon link]
Using the Press to Teach Writing

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Develop a contrastive essay using real material
Class Time: 30-45 minutes
Preparation Time: 10 minutes or less
Resources: Newspaper ads for vacation rentals; Equipment to reproduce the advertisements
Handout (see Appendix)

A balance can be achieved between control and creativity in order to allow students the freedom to express themselves without becoming lost in a maze of structures and vocabulary beyond their comprehension. This activity has controlled content but allows some freedom of expression and can be considered an attempt at communicating a meaningful message from the writer to the reader.

Procedure
Have students use the travel section of the newspaper (or other source) and choose four or more resorts that they would like to visit.

Sample Vacation Time Activities Handout
No. 1: The Falls Apts. Clean, beautiful efficiencies, near beach. All two br, a/c, pool. $250/week + utilities $50 dep.
No. 2: This month only! Sandy Hotel special! Only $25/day weekly rate (single). Tennis courts $15 each additional.
No. 3: Ritz Hotel. 2 mi from beach. All rooms $55/day. Stay M-F Sat and Sun Free. Pool, Tennis 4 star rest.
No. 4: The Waves on the Beach. $45/day single (ocean view slightly higher) Weekender special – stay Sat. Sun. Free.

Warm up and Prewriting
1. Which resort is definitely on the beach?
2. Does the Sandy Hotel have a restaurant?
3. How much would it cost for two people to spend a week at the Sandy Hotel?
4. How much would it cost to stay Monday through Sunday at the Ritz?
5. Is there a disadvantage to staying at the Ritz.
6. Can you tell from the advertisement what the double rate is at the Waves?
7. Which is better, a week at the Ritz including the weekend, or a week at the Fall Apartment?

Major Topic: Which resort would you choose and why? Compare and contrast the possible choices listing the advantages and disadvantages of each before coming to your own conclusion.

For my vacation, I would prefer to go to the ___________ and spend ____________ (days, weeks) since this resort.....

Caveats and Options
Students may do a similar exercise by writing from an outline (see sample on net page).
City by night

A: Expectations: (positive side)
   1. Comfortable limousine for transport
   2. Elegant dining room
   3. Expensive dinner
   4. First class show
   5. A famous band

B: What really happened (negative side)
   1. Old bus picked us up late
   2. Dining room dirty, too hot
   3. Dinner was stale chicken
   4. Show had no class
   5. Band was unknown, couldn't play

When we signed up for the City by Night Tour during our vacation, in Metro last year, we were expecting an exciting night on town and first rate entertainment. The ad promised a comfortable limousine. However, the promised limousine was an old noisy bus that arrived thirsty minutes late to take us to the City Lights Club for our evening.

   In conclusion, we paid $575 per person for an unpleasant experience that was worth only about $5.95.

Now using the models, write your own essay about an experience that you not expect.

• Students learn strategies for collecting and interpreting information and putting it together in a coherent whole. Other authentic language material can be accessed and adapted by an innovative teacher. Guide-books, available from auto clubs, advertisements and writings by regular English students all make good sources. These can be rephrased and shortened to fit a particular class. The main point in these examples is for the instructor to create a realistic purpose for the writers. (Dvorak, 1986)

• Teachers need to address both the surface-level language-related problems and the deeper areas of meaning in teaching the writing skill, without overloading the students with too many rules or allowing them to write extensive error-filled passages without any guidelines.
Using L1 Composition in an L2 Writing Class

Levels: High intermediate
Aims: Respond to writing without automatically focusing on error; Learn to look beyond surface characteristics of writing to evaluate and revise it
Class Time: Several 50-minute periods
Resources: Student survey form (see Appendix A); Interview assignment sheet (see Appendix B)
Questions for guided oral report (see Appendix C)

Although deflecting attention from error is difficult, one way to accomplish this is for teachers to spend time working with students’ L1 writing. Such an approach is relevant to the ESOL writing class because, in recent years, research has begun to demonstrate a deeper relationship between L1 and L2 writing than the relationship of interface presupposed by the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis. Little has been done, however, to apply these findings to problems of response to student writing in the classroom. This activity encourages students and teachers in these directions.

Procedure:
The Survey (Class Period1)
1. Students fill out anonymous survey forms to answer questions on their writing practices. The purpose is to get them to begin to think of themselves as writers in two languages. A sample survey form, with one student’s replies, is included in Appendix A. The responses shown are typical and reveal a difference in degree of confidence in the strength of L1 versus L2 written expression.

The interview (Homework Assignment and Class Period 2)
1. Have students look beyond themselves to the writing of others, with each student using the interview assignment sheet to interview two people, one who writes frequently in the student’s L1 and one who writes frequently in English (see Harris, 1984).
2. Have each student present and compare responses in the form of a 200-to 250-word summary.
3. In class, use reports of comments as a springboard for discussion of the writing process, including the procedures followed and the importance of revision.

The Composition (Homework Assignment)
1. Ask each student to write a composition in his or her L1 on an assignment topic. You will end up with a packet of compositions written in variety of languages.
2. Collect the compositions, then duplicate and distribute them to the class.

The Oral Presentation (Class Period 3)
1. Have students present their composition to the class orally. Cultural show-and-tell is a familiar tradition in ESOL, and it is here extended to the writing class as students are given a set of questions to use as a guide (see next section) and asked to explain their compositions. The use of guided questions is important, because without them students may misunderstand what is wanted and simply try to translate their compositions literally into English. Because the focus of the exercise is the writing process, do not permit students to translate beyond and occasional phrase that a student author may be especially pleased with and particularly wish to share with the class. Instead have students tell about their compositions by paraphrasing and discussing.
2. After each oral presentation, give the rest of the class an opportunity to ask questions and offer suggestions. Although at the beginning students’ questions may respond exclusively to the content (Where are you from? Or Now that you’re studying here, do you still think that it is the best?), gradually they begin to ask about and comment on other aspects of the writing as well (Why is your third paragraph so long? Or I didn’t understand his composition; he could be more expressive about it.) You should model the role of peer evaluation and then use students’ comments to further draw their attention to various aspects of the writing process and to characteristics of good writing.

Appendix A: Sample Student Survey Form

1. Sample, unedited answers are filled in. What strong points does your writing have, in your opinion?
   - English writing: None
   - Native language writing: wide vocabulary, good knowledge of grammar, feeling of language

2. What weak points does your writing have, in your opinion?
   - English writing: small vocabulary, little knowledge of English grammar. Native language writing: Long way to get to the point.

3. Do you think you succeed in getting across everything you intend to say when you write?
   - English writing: not always
   - Native language writing: not always

4. Do you use a dictionary while you are writing?
   - English writing: Yes, very often
   - Native language writing: very seldom

5. Do you think about grammar when you write?
   - English writing: Yes
   - Native language writing: No

6. Do you take some brief notes before starting to write?
   - English writing: Sometimes I’m thinking brief notes
   - Native language writing: (same)

7. While you are writing, do you think about the reader who is going to be reading your writing?
   - English writing: always
   - Native language writing: (same)

Appendix B: Interview Assignment Sheet

Find someone who writes often in your L1, and interview the person about his or her writing. Here are some questions which you might ask:

Do you follow and steps when you write? If so, what are they?
Do you ever get stuck in the middle of a piece of writing? If so, what do you do?
After you finish a piece of writing, do you revise it?
In your opinion, what characteristics should be good writing have?
Write a paragraph in which you summarize the results of the interview.

Now find a native English speaker who writes often in English, and interview this person the same way, Again, write a paragraph in which you summarize the results.
Quotation: Academic Form

Levels: High intermediate+ Class Time: 30-45 min.
Aims: Explain, describe, or persuade
Resources: One magazine/ students work sheet (see Appendix)
This activity shows students how to incorporate another person’s ideas into the student’s paper.

Procedure:
1. Invite the students to find a topic of interest in one of the magazines. Explain that the students will be able to write a report (and/or give a speech on that topic).
2. Pass out the worksheet. Ask students to copy one key sentence from the magazine article onto the worksheet.
3. Write sample introduction sentences like the following on the chalkboard:
   4. James Smith believes:
   5. A recent article in Time magazine suggests:
   6. An important idea is discussed by Janet Jones in People magazine:
   Have students write a similar but appropriate introduction sentence on their worksheet. (If necessary, explain the use of the colon in this context.) Write sample conclusion sentences like the following on the chalkboard:
   - This idea is clearly mistaken.
   - Although Smith may be correct, other points of view should be considered.
   - Everyone should agree with this opinion.

Have students write their own sentence on the worksheet.
1. Ask students to fill in the blanks for the footnote section of the worksheet.
2. Ask the students to repeat the activity until they have enough quotes to make a good report. Then combine this activity with other drafting activities: that is, writing an introduction, writing a conclusion.

Caveats and Options:
Divide the students into groups of three or four. Ask them to compare one worksheet as a group.

Appendix: Academic Quotations Worksheet
Write the quoted introduction sentence on the line below:
Write the quoted sentence on the line below:
Write the conclusion sentence on the line below:
Write the name of (1) the author, (2) the title of the article, (3) the title of the magazine, (4) the date of the magazine, (5) the page number(s) in the blanks below.
(1) __________________ (2) “__________________”
(3) _______________ (4) _____________, (5) p. ______
Revision: Helping Students Revise With Process Feedback

Levels: High Intermediate
Aims: Develop revising and editing skills
Class Time: Varies
Resources: List of abbreviations and short forms used in the feedback, sometimes in students texts

Process feedback is a method of responding to textual and linguistic deficiencies in student writing. Common weaknesses in students essay are lack of substantiation, elliptical writing, egocentric structuring of information, and being too general or too specific at the wrong time. These weaknesses are particularly damaging in essays in which the student have to present and defend a position.

What students need to enable them to revise effectively is guidance of how to think and how to make decisions about meaning selection and language choice. Process feedback gives students such guidance.

Procedure:

1. To direct students’ thinking, be aware of what they can and cannot do. They generally cannot, for example, correct errors relating to the form and usage of idioms or rectify miscollocation. They can look up the dictionary meaning of a word and see the mismatch between in meaning and their own intended meaning. They can, if they have been taught a reader-centered approach to writing, anticipate the reader’s questions and objections.

2. When there are a host of errors and textual flaws in a student’s work, select the most serious to give process feedback on. Serious errors are those that result in misunderstanding or a message unsuitable for the situation. It is futile to write feedback comments on every error because there is a limit to how much students can learn at any on time, especially when what has to be learned is not a word list or set of rules but cognitive strategies springing from a reader-centered rhetorical-function approach to writing.

3. Consider what the students writer must do to arrive at the desired improvement. Mentally work out the thinking procedures, step by step, leading to a successful revision. For example:
   - What is wrong: Failure to elucidate a generally worded idea as in “There should be a more defined dress code in order to eliminate misunderstanding…”
   - Desired improvement: Writer should make clear what is meant by “more defined.”
   - Thinking procedures: Recognize that the reader “R” will have a problem understanding “more defined”. Identify what detail R d\needs by predicting R’s questions: What do you mean by “more defined”? Defined in what way? Generate ideas for detail. Select the most appropriate.
   - Process feedback: Imagine you’re the R who has to act on this report. What info must you have to be able to produce a “more defined code”? Jot down R’s questions. Think up details. Choose the most helpful for the R.

4. Encourage students to develop self-evaluation capabilities by directing them to look for errors of the same feedback comments to guide them in rectifying those errors.

5. After returning the marked essays, allocate time for a conference at which students can ask for help understanding the feedback and rewriting the assignment or a part of it. The feedback comment may include a direction to a student to ask a certain question. If time and resources allow, conferencing should be conducted in small groups or individually.
Appendix: Excerpts from Student Report With Teacher’s Process Feedback

Introduction
The implementation of a dress code for students at N. University has created misunderstanding between enforcement officers and undergraduates. As a result, the students’ union has requested the Research Service Committee to produce a report on the cause of misunderstanding. The report will give a comprehensive account of the reasons and causes. It will also (facilitate the discussion session) which will be held by Students’ Union Council on 21 July 199...

... (Methodology and Findings sections follow.)

Discussion...
Our [observers noted] that 34% of the students who [wrote] Bermuda that are’ considered too short are not enter the library, but 23% who [wrote] Bermudas that are’ above knee length are’ allowed to enter the library. *This shows that enforcement officers are not uniform in their judgments on the length of Bermudas. This further suggest that (different perceptions is the cause of misunderstanding.)

Conclusion
The main cause of misunderstanding over the dress code lies in the lack of specification about what is the acceptable length of Bermudas. This authority concerned might have to construct (a more defined dress code) in order to eliminate the misunderstanding.

---

Teacher’s feedback
Imagine you’re a secondary R. Will you get a complete picture of the situation from this paragraph? Ask R’s qns about how people know there is misunderstanding. (Note: The terms secondary reader, primary readers are repeatedly used in writing lessons in this class.)

Jot down ideas to answer the qn: “What do I want to say?” Think about the report’s findings/conclusion and the 21st July session. Look up the word “facilitate” to see if it says what wish in to mean.

The words in [ ] tell R that you are talking about past event. But “are” says you are not talking about the past. Think of the effect of the contradiction on the R. find out how to change the verb to say “past”.

(a) In sentence * you state an interpretation. In this sentence you state the conclusion of an argument that is not there. Think about how * leads to the conclusion.
(b) Predict the R questions - What R must told so he/she accepts yr conclusion.
(c) Use these qns to work out the supporting argument? If you are not sure what a supporting argument is, ask me.
(d) Use (a), (b) and (c) above to evaluate the other parts of your discussion. Have you got supporting arguments to convince R yr interpretation is acceptable?
(e) Imagine you’re R who has to act on this report. What info must you have to be to produce a “more defined code”? Jot down R’s qns. Think up details. Choose the most helpful for the R.
Revising Checklists for Writing Stories

Levels: Beginning+
Aims: Evaluate a piece of writing
Detect strengths and weakness in a story while composing it.
Class Time: 2-3 hours
Resources: Revising checklist (see Appendix)
Several interesting stories
Copies of several student drafts

When students write a story, they often need help organizing it effectively. The checklist here helps the writer in the process of reading reflecting, discovering, and improving the draft in order to get the massage across clearly and appropriately.

Procedure
1. Select some items from the revising checklist as teaching objectives.
2. Brainstorm with students as to what makes a story effective. For example, having an interesting beginning and ending holds the readers' attention. Note students' ideas on the board.
3. Have students read several interesting stories. Discuss with them how the stories are organized and what makes them effective.
4. Have students form small groups and brainstorm what topics they can write about. Some examples might be dreams, ghost stories, or fictionalized accounts of real events.
5. Invite students to draft their stories in class or at home. Remind students to focus on content and not to worry about accuracy.
6. Tailor the revising checklist and adding items students have suggested during previous activities. Select one or two students draft for discussing the meaning of items on the revising checklist. Duplicate the selected student drafts and the revising checklist as handout.
7. Distribute the handouts to every student. Explain the items and points of the checklist.
8. Ask small groups of students to share their opinions on the duplicated student drafts for about 5 minutes.
9. Demonstrate how to be a reader and how to give useful feedback.
10. Have small groups peer read drafts and use the checklist to give feedback.
11. Have students rewrite their drafts based on the classmates' feedback.

Caveats and Options:
1. Vary the items of your checklist according to your students’ abilities and your teaching objectives.
2. Begin with just one or two items for focused revising.
Peer Response Groups

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Revise
Class Time: 30-45 minutes in class (and 30-45 minutes at home)
Resources: Photocopies of rough draft; Peer response sheets

The current popularity of peer response groups is related to a shift in emphasis on written products to an emphasis on process in the teaching of composition. The process approach views prewriting, composing, and revising as overlapping and interconnecting stages. Peer response groups allow students to function as audience and respond to other students writing, thus enabling students to use each others’ comments while revising their drafts. In using peer response groups, it is important to remember that one’s writing is an extension of oneself. Students should not be overly critical of other students’ writing. It is the responsibility of the teacher to structure peer response groups so that students know exactly what they are expected to do and to create a positive environment in which students encourage each other.

Procedure:

1. Explain the rationale for using peer response groups: that is, for students to read and respond to each others’ writing so that students can see their writing through the eyes of the readers can use the readers’ comments to revise their drafts.

2. Discuss guidelines explaining how students are expected to interact with each other. These guidelines can include the following:
   - For the reader:
     • Read the drafts carefully (be a good reader)
     • Re-read the drafts, fill out peer response sheets, and write down your reactions as you read
     • In class, while discussing each others’ drafts, don’t quarrel with other readers’ reactions
     • Be prepared-your group depends on you to contribute.
     • If you want comments about a particular part of your draft, ask
     • Be attentive and listen carefully to the readers’ comments
     • Don’t argue, reject, or justify
     • Remember that comments from your group members are suggestions and that it’s your draft-you make the final decisions about how to write it.

3. Arrange or let students arrange themselves in groups of two, three, or four.

4. Ask students to bring in and exchange photocopies of their drafts (one copy for each group member and one for the teacher).

5. Distribute peer response sheets (teacher-generated questions to which students respond). The content of the questions varies according to the level of the class and the purpose of the writing assignment. Sample questions include:
   • What do you think is the focus of this draft?
   • What evidence does the writer give to support the focus?
   • What do you like best about this draft?
   • What does this draft mean to you? What did you get out of it?

6. Using a former student’s first draft, work through the peer response sheet together as a class to help students understand how to respond.
7. Ask students to respond in writing to each others’ drafts and to complete the peer response sheets either in class or at home.

8. Ask students to meet in their groups to discuss each others’ drafts, elaborating on their written comments. It seems to work best if, for example, Students A, A, and C all discuss D’s draft before switching to C’s draft.

9. Explain that when students finish discussing all the drafts, they should return the peer response sheets and the photocopies with written comments on them to the writers.

10. Return your photocopies with comments on them to the writers.

11. Ask students to use these oral and written responses from students and teacher to rewrite their drafts.

**Caveats and Options:**

1. An important and complex issue related to peer response groups the correction of grammar errors, ESL students frequently miscorrect other students’ grammar; therefore, it makes sense that they should be discouraged from correcting grammar. You can do it.

2. Peer response groups also provide a forum for speaking English in an authentic communicative situation.

3. An unsupportive social climate in peer response groups can lead to defensiveness and withdrawal (Gere, 1987). It is absolutely essential that students not be overly critical of others’ drafts and learns to praise the writing of other students.
Giving and Getting Feedback

Leve
Aims: Revise a piece of writing; Share writing with others
Class Time: 1+ hours
Resources: Draft of essay; Copy of response guide (see Appendix)

This activity helps students become more critical readers of their own writing. It also helps them become more confident in supporting the choices they've made in their drafts and gives them an additional source of feedback on their writing.

Procedure:

1. After students have finished a draft, divide them into pairs and have them read each other's paper. (This step could be done as homework).
2. Give students a copy of the response guide.
3. Have students answer the questions on the guide.
4. Have students talk about their responses with their partner. (They should discuss their answers after each question, but they can wait until they have finishes answering all the questions.)
5. Each team of students meets with the teacher to discuss the comments on the response guides, asking the students to explain their choices. The teacher then gives some suggestions.
6. Students then make any desirable changes in their draft.

Appendix: Response Guide

Give specific answers to the questions below. Answer each question completely. If a question has more than one part, answer every part. General yes/no answers will not be much help to the writer.

1. Carefully read the introduction. What is the writer's main idea? Has the writer captured the attention of the reader? How did he do it? According to the introduction, what topics will be covered in the paper? In what order will they be presented? Finally, has the writer left out any information that needs to be included in the introduction? What suggestions can you make?
2. Look at the body of the essay. Does each paragraph contain a main idea statement? List those that do not.
3. Is the information presented in a logical manner? What change would you suggest?
4. Look at the conclusion. What is its purpose? Is it effective? Can you suggest a different type?
5. Look at the transitions from the introduction to the body and the body to the conclusion. Do they seem logical? Can you suggest an improvement?
6. Look at the transitions between paragraphs in the body. Do they make sense? (Are they easy to follow?) If not, list them below. How can they be changed?
7. Look at the vocabulary in the paper. If there are words that are unfamiliar to you, circle them on the draft and discuss them.
8. Does the paper contain a variety of sentence structure? If not, can you suggest some changes that could be made?
9. What are the areas of the paper that need the most improvement?
10. What are the strengths of the paper?
Peerless Peer Review

Levels: Advanced

Aims: Revision

Resources: Guidelines in the form of a worksheet (see Appendix)

The purpose of peer review as a tool for revision is to further the students ability to internalize

guidelines for writing and to give them suggestions for improving their essays and reactions to

the essay from their peers. Peer review can also help students internalize guidelines.

Procedure:

1. Prepare a worksheet with questions pertaining to the essays being written with ample room

   below each question for the student to answer it. Prepare two copies for each student. Don’t write

   any questions that can be answered with yes or no only.

2. On the day that the rough draft of the essay is due, collect all typewritten, double-spaced essays

   at the beginning of class.

3. Put students into heterogenous groups of three to five students and distribute worksheets to

   everyone.

4. Distribute the essays you just collected, one to each student. Do not give any group an essay that

   belongs to someone in that group.

5. Instruct students that this essay is a rough draft and will not be graduated therefore, it is going to

   be helpful for everyone if the questions on the worksheet are answered honestly and

   constructively. Constructive honest answers will help the student whose paper is being critique

   to improve her paper. Instruct them also that their critique will be handed in with the final draft

   of the essay. This seems to make students feel accountable (You can grade the critique sheet at

   that time if you want to.)

6. At the end of class they give the critique sheet(s) back to the write and rough draft or final

   version to you (if you are collecting rough drafts for teacher feedback- if not, the writer would get

   the essay back along with the critique sheet(s) to begin revising, using her peers’ suggestions and

   reactions.

Appendix: Sample Worksheet

1. What style does the writer use to introduce the paper?

2. What is the thesis statement?

3. Where is the thesis located? Does the thesis state the position of the writer?

4. What is the writer arguing for or against?

5. What support (reasons) does the writer give for the thesis? Name three reasons the writer gives

   to support the thesis.

6. Does the writer use examples or quotations to support the thesis? Name three examples or

   quotations the writer uses.

7. How does the writer conclude the essay?

8. Did the writer convince you of her or his position? How?

9. Name three things you liked about this essay.

10. Give three suggestions for improving the essay.
Correction Symbols: Developing Editing Skills

Levels: Any
Aims: Proofread and edit
Class Time: 30+ minutes
Resources:
Correction symbols handout Students’ written work

Many writing teachers spend a great deal of time correcting errors that their students could correct themselves with proper proofreading. Teachers can implement a system of feedback early in a writing course, through the use of correction, symbols to help students become aware of the types of errors they make. After repeated experiences correcting these errors identified by the teacher, students incorporate the identification and correction of similar errors into their proofreading and editing. Over time, students integrate proofreading into their writing habits without teacher intervention. The result is more accurate, responsible work on the part of students, allowing the teacher to focus on aspects of students’ writing that students are less able to improve on their own during proofreading and subsequent revision.

Procedure:

1. Devise a set of correction symbols that you feel comfortable with and create a handout that lists them all. See the example below:

2. Collect writing samples from all students early in a writing course. Provide feedback on the writing samples by using your set of correction symbols to identify errors you think your students can correct on their own.

3. Create a training session worksheet that will introduce students to the set of correction symbols that will be used throughout the course. Select faulty sentences from students’ own written work that allow you to incorporate as many correction symbols as possible onto their worksheet; try to include at least one sentence from each of your students on the worksheet. Using students’ own sentences is a useful tactic because students will be able to identify their own sentence and will realize that these are real mistakes rather than textbook mistakes. Worksheet entries might look like these examples:

4. Introduce students to the use of correction symbols for writing improvement. First, distribute the handout with all the correction symbols and remind students that they will refer to it throughout the school year. Go over the symbols, one at a time, with example sentences on the chalkboard. Use straightforward, simple examples so that students can focus on the symbol and its uses rather than be distracted by complicated vocabulary and complex language structures. For example, to introduce the symbol for incorrect word order, you might use a simple example like the one below:

   It’s a building large.

   To introduce the symbol for correct word family but incorrect word form, you might want to provide students with numerous examples:

   He spoke quick.

   She go to the library to do her homework yesterday.

   The people are fighting for their free.

   Once students have been introduced to all the symbols, distribute the training session worksheet and have students work on it individually. Circulate students can correct the faulty sentences while making use of the symbols.
5. Return work that has been edited with correction symbols. Have them edit their work, using the symbols to guide their decisions. The rewrites can be done in class or at home.

6. Collect students’ edited written work and evaluate their effectiveness in using the symbols to improve their writing.

7. Throughout the course, use these correction symbols to help students learn to identify their most common nonnegotiable errors during editing stages in the writing process. Later in the course, after students begin to see patterns in their written work, encourage them to look at their most frequent errors when proofreading their work on their own.
Using Outlines to Revise

Levels: Advanced
Aims: Explain or persuade
Class Time: 45-50 minutes
Resources: Copies of a sample expository or persuasive essay; Complete draft of an expository or persuasive essay

In the process of composing an expository or persuasive essay, ESL students often have difficulty shaping their ideas and materials into a coherent, logical pattern and also in detecting structural deficiencies while revising. These two areas of difficulty can be best addressed when students having completed a draft, help each other in peer response group.

Procedure
If the students have learned how to make a formal outline in completed sentences, start with Step 2; if they haven’t, start with Step 1.

1. Hand out copies of a sample essay by a student from another class and demonstrate how to make a formal outline for it.

2. Organize the students into groups of three or four, taking care to mix students of different writing proficiency levels and different nationalities.

3. Have the students pass their draft to their right, read it, and write a formal outline. When the outlining is done, they should pass his draft on but keep the outline. Repeat this step until every student gets his or her own draft back.

4. Have the students make an outline for their own draft. At this point, when they have read two or three other students’ drafts and made possibilities presented in those other students’ drafts. So they may more readily see the weaknesses in their own draft. In making an outline for it, they have an opportunity to see what has been accomplished in the draft and what could be done to give it more coherent and logical structure.

5. Now let the students have the outlines the other students have made for their draft. They should compare all these outlines with their own and with their draft. They’ll be happy seeing their expository or persuasive aims recognized by their peers. But they have to think hard when they find differences between their own perceptions on the draft and their peers’. They may feel that some of their peers have misunderstood them. They should be encouraged to discuss with the peers what they think is misconstrued. Very often those are instances of writer’s intentions unfulfilled: While studying the outlines and discussing them, student writers can find areas for improvement through authority’s instructions.

6. Ask the students to write down their thoughts about how to revise the draft. When this is done, have students revise the draft at home with particular attention to improving its overall structure.
Examination Writing: Writing Under Examination Conditions

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Interact successfully with an exam topic to produce an acceptable product
Class Time: 30-45 minutes
Resources: Appropriate exam topics (see Appendix) Overhead projector (OHP)

In an exam situation, writers are left on their own, with only the title as a prop. Following the development of process writing skills, they need training in the process of interacting with a title in order to be able to produce a product acceptable to the examiners. They will not be able to draft and redraft their work and will have to work to a tight schedule. They need, however, to adopt a controlled, organized approach to the task, rather than setting off at breakneck speed. They also need to allow themselves some time to proofread their work.

Procedure:
1. Write an exam title (of the type students will face) on the board, or project it on an OHP. Ask students to work together in pairs or small groups on the following framework:
   • What am I being asked to do? How many parts are there to the question?
   • Which language structures/functions do I need to include? –for example, past tenses for past narratives, functions for giving advice etc.
   • What fictitious elements do I have to invent?
   • Which vocabulary items do from my current lexicon might I include?
   • Who is the covert addressee? That is, what is the appropriate register?
   • What formal features do I need to include? For example, addressee for letters, paragraphs
   • What criteria are being used to assess me? For example, accuracy/ fluency, communicative ability, length (you should provide this information).
2. Give feedback and then have students write the task together, either partly or wholly in class. Finished products can be put up on this wall for general reading and discussion. With the right atmosphere, students can even assess each other’s work according to the exam guidelines (some exam boards publish past compositions with grades awarded; these are useful in setting standards).
3. As students become familiar with the activity, they can start working on their own, with a time limit–around 10% of the exam time available can be spent on this frame working stage. A similar proportion of time should be spent proofreading.
4. Finally, mock exam questions can be tackled with the whole process of frameworking, writing and proofreading being done in class.

Appendix: Sample Framework:
Title: You have recently discovered the address of a friend whom you haven’t seen for 5 years. Write a letter telling him/her about the change in your life and suggesting a meeting.
See step 1 in Procedure

1. Informal letter: describing changes, suggesting
2. Introduction: Greeting, reason for writing
3. 2nd Paragraph: My news-changes. Ask about his news?
5. Present Perfect (recently) + Continuous “been doing.” Past Simple (date).
6. Suggestions: “What about...ing?” “Why don’t we...”
7. Invitations: “Would you like to...?”
8. Opening/Closing: “Dear.../Looking forward to bearing from you...Best wishes.”
9. The friend: a friend from university. Changes: started new job in bank, moved to a new flat. The
   meeting: dinner at my new flat.
10. Came across your address, get in touch, exciting job, cozy flat.
11. Friend-informal-“Hi!” “How’re things”...
12. Only my address. Three paragraphs.
13. Communicate message with awareness of audience and reasonable degree of accuracy, for
   example, errors do not interfere with meaning (Depends on the criteria of the exam board).
Writing Answers to Essay Questions

Levels: Intermediate+
Aims: Write acceptable answers to essay questions
Class Time: 20-30 minutes
Resources: Colored markers

Knowing how to write answers to essay questions can be a culturally specific skill. In Western academia, this is one of the most common ways to show one’s mastery of material. To be successful, students need to understand what constitutes well and poorly written essay answers.

Procedure:
1. Have students write essay answers to questions about a reading passage and hand them in. To mark their answers, use a set of colored markers and a color-coded system to highlight the strong and weak points of each student’s work. Each color signifies something different, for example:
2. Green= good point, good paraphrase, important detail, good summary
3. Yellow= paraphrase problem
4. Blue=superfluous information
5. Pink=not clearly expressed, not natural English
6. Before returning the students’ work the next day, write on the board the names of students who had well-written answers to the respective essay questions.
7. After returning their work, encourage students to read each others’ answers (particularly those listed on the board as having been good ones) and to compare the strong and weak points of their own with those of others.

Caveats and Options
By referring to the colored markings on their papers, students can focus on the strengths and weaknesses of their own and others’ answers in a manner that is visually and conceptually clear to students, as well as efficient for both teacher and students.
Even without the color-coded system, asking students to share and compare their work can be of value, especially for students who have not done well on an assignment. However, with the coded highlighting, they can more readily identify what to focus on. Perhaps the greatest benefit is that having been spared the teacher’s lecture on the shortcomings of their own answers, they have the opportunity to analyze for themselves the quality of their own and others’ work. This can culminate in an opportunity to enhance their awareness and their own analytical skills of good analytical capabilities should provide them with a firmer base for their next attempt at writing essay answers.
Portfolios: Curricular Design and Assessment

Levels: Any
Aims: Understand a variety of writing genres
       Reflect upon own writing processes
Class Time: Over time, during a school year, a semester, or entire enrolment in an institution
Resources: Notebook with dividers

What are portfolios? They are collections, representing students’ writing or their interaction with an academic or cultural context. The entries in portfolios are selected as representative of the goals of the class of program curriculum. In most classes, the teacher selects some entries; the students select others. Entries are collected over time so that students and faculty can assess their own growth and changes. Each entry in the portfolio requires a written reflection, on the part of the students, thus enhancing the development of metacognitive awareness of their writing processes. In most situations, portfolios are graded before they are entered into the portfolio. The entire portfolio, with its four or five entries, reflections upon the entries and the introduction to the reader, can be scored, through discussion and consensus, by teacher and curriculum designers.

Procedure:
1. First, and foremost, make decisions about the goals for the students and the writing program. These will determine portfolio entries and assessment measures.
2. Then, make decisions about the part that the portfolios will play in the students’ placement or final assessment. Will the assessment of portfolios at the end of the term be the principle tool? Will portfolios represent X% of the final grade?
3. Make decisions about portfolio entries. How many will there be? What types of writing will be selected for the portfolio entries?
4. Make decisions about when and how is included in the portfolio be graded when it is originally turned in to the teacher? (Reflections are not graded, for the most part.)
5. Make decisions about the nature of the reflections based upon each entry. For example, if the students are permitted to select a “wild card” (i.e., any writing of their choice). They might be asked to answer the following questions on their reflection: Why did you choose this piece of writing? Why is it important to you? What does it tell us about you as a reader or writer? Are there other writings that you also considered including?
6. Make decisions about the introduction to the portfolio. When will it be written? What form will it take?
7. Finally there are decisions about evaluation. Will portfolios be evaluated by a single teacher? Should group evaluation take place? If so, how should portfolios be scored?
Using the Portfolio Approach

Levels: Low Intermediate+
Aims: Revise and refine texts
Class Time: Varies
Resources: Paper; Self-evaluation sheets

In developing a finished portfolio, students learn how to use the process approach and develop confidence in their ability to improve their writing. The portfolio method allows you to teach students individually how to revise and to evaluate their own work. The finished portfolio can be evaluated for a variety of purpose—student evaluation, program evaluation developing a work-sample portfolio, and establishing reference materials for the students.

Procedure:
For Business Documents
1. After initial discussion and problem-solving activities for each exercise have students write each document and submit it for evaluation.
2. As a self-evaluation tool, ask students to complete a checklist appropriate for the particular document. A checklist for a routine request might include these questions:
   • Is the message direct—does it begin with a request for information or assistance?
   • Is the document format appropriate for the type of message?
   • Are the items enumerated in a vertical listing?
3. Evaluate and/or discuss the document with the student.
4. Have the student revise the document as often as necessary with conferences scheduled appropriately (for a long or complicated document, more than one discussion may be necessary).
5. Ask students to prepare a semipermanent folder with an appropriate title page so that the finished portfolio can be graded as a whole and can then be used by the student (possibly with one last revising session) as a sample of communication skills during a job interview and also as a desk reference. To be the most useful, the portfolio should contain a variety of types of documents.
6. To determine grades, assign a total number of points for the entire portfolio, determine the number of points per page, and deduct half the points for a page that is not usable.

For Course or Program Evaluation:
1. Have students prepare a rough draft for each of the pieces to be included (a good portfolio might include four pieces—perhaps a piece of personal writing, a research project, an argumentative essay, and a summary/analysis from a content class.)
2. Throughout the process of writing each assignment, schedule conferences to discuss purpose, ideas, form, organization, and structure with the student. In this way, you can serve as coach and educator rather than as judge or task master.
3. Have the student revise each document until it represents the student’s ability.
4. Allow the student to select the pieces to be included in the portfolio.
5. Evaluate the portfolio appropriately for your purpose. For example, a pass/fail grade could be assigned if the purpose was simply to determine the competency of a student to handle the work at the next level; a point system could be used if class standings or grades needed to be determined.
Stories and Narratives

Composing a Narrative
Levels: Beginning
Aims: Compose a narrative
Pieces to report past actions
Class Time: 1/2 hours
Resources: Set of detailed pictures or drawings showing a progressive action without an ending

This activity asks beginning-level students to use known structure and vocabulary to describe a series of events. This will provide the basic for narrating a real sequence of events after observation.

Procedure:
1. Review the difference between the simple present continuous with students.
2. Give each student a serious of pictures showing a related sequence of events. Ask students to identify known and unknown vocabulary in each picture as one student records vocabulary for each picture on the board.
3. Ask students to write one sentence about each picture in the sequence. Tell them to leave four to five lines blank after each of their sentences.
4. When students have finished, ask them to exchange papers with another student, read the sentences their partner has written, and help their partner to correct any mistakes in grammar, syntax or spelling.
5. Ask students to keep their papers and write an additional sentence for each picture in the sequence, under the original author’s sentences. Explain to the students that this sentence is to provide more details and description or to depict another action happening in the picture.
6. When students have finished, ask them to take the new sentences they have written and repeat Steps 4 and 5 with a new partner.
7. This process is best repeated three times, However, if the pictures are particularly rich in detail, continue until you notice students begin having trouble thinking about what to write. (Students usually have an easy time writing details or actions that partners have “missed.” So if it is getting difficult for them, move on to Step 8.
8. After the final sentence corrections are made, ask students to return their papers to the author of the first sentence. The original author can now edit her short story by rearranging the sentences as she likes. Ask students to write a draft of the entire story and read it alterations focusing on clarity and organization.
9. Ask students to complete the story with an unexpected or surprising ending. This activity can be a good homework assignment or, if is done in class, it can give the teacher an opportunity to work with individual students needing assistance.
10. Give 10 minutes of class time for students to check the ending of the story with other students for corrections and editing suggestions. Ask students to write the final draft at home.
11. A nice way to end this activity is to ask for volunteers to read the story aloud. Students rarely feel anxious about presenting this work to the class as it has been a joint effort. Put all stories on public display for class members to read during breaks.
Building a Story

Levels: beginning+
Aims: Write a descriptive short
Class Time: 30 minutes-1 hour
Resources: List of vocabulary words; The first sentence of a story

This activity gives students practice using new vocabulary in context while at the same time allowing them an opportunity to compose original sentences. It also gives the teacher some quality one-on-one time with the students. This activity can be used with any size class.

Procedure
The following instructions assume that learners are sitting in a circle.
1. Write the first sentence of a story on the board. For example:
   
   One day _____ was walking down the street when he/she saw a wallet on the sidewalk. He/she picked it up, opened it, and found it contained $10,000!
   
   Ask the students to copy this onto a piece of paper, inserting their own name in the blank, and choosing the appropriate pronouns.

2. After everyone has copied the sentence, ask them to pass their paper to the person on their right.

3. Write your first vocabulary word on the board. Explain to the students they must now write a second sentence on their neighbour’s paper that
   - Uses the vocabulary word you have written on the board.
   - Follows the first sentence in meaning
   - Contains an action verb (e.g., run, eat, swim, sleep, go. Words such as feel, hope, want, are not action verbs. This rule helps ensure more interesting story.)

4. While the students are writing the second sentence, walk around the room offering suggestions or making corrections. It may take where from 2 to 5 minutes for students to compose a sentence depending on their level.

5. When everyone has finished a sentence, papers should be passed to the person on the right again, and Step3 and 4 should be repeated but with a new vocabulary word.

6. Depending on the speed and skill of the students, you may want to have them write somewhere between 5 and 10 sentences.

7. When you come to the last sentence, be sure to tell the students it is the final one, so they can put some kind of conclusion on the story.

8. Collect all the papers and read out some kind of conclusion on the story class, you may wish to read just a few stories out loud and post the rest on the walls for a few days.) You and your students will be amazed at their humour and creativity. In addition, all the students get to hear a story about themselves.

9. After reading the stories, hand them back to the original writers.
Retelling a Story From Different Perspectives

Levels: High Intermediate+
Aims: Practice descriptive writing and telling a story
Class Time: 40 minutes
Resources: Short newspaper accounts of interesting events, with enough copies for each member of the class

This activity helps develop students’ creative writing about a real event. Students will describe the event from different points of view based on roles they choose. For example, if a news story is about a traffic accident, students will write about it from the point of view of the driver, a police officer, a pedestrian, and the passengers. If the story is about a burglary, the students will write from the viewpoint of the homeowner, and eyewitness and the detective. This serves as the starting point and may move on to the writing in different styles.

Procedure:

1. Hand out a copy of a suitable newspaper story to each student. Ask them to read it silently. When appropriate, give the students the relevant background to the incident and explain vocabulary as necessary.

2. Explain the task to the students: They have to write an account on the story from the perspective of one of the persons involved. Different students in the class will choose different perspectives. Ask students to suggest who might be on the board. Ask students to select one of the roles and begin to think of their own story version.

3. Brainstorm with the class on what the reactions might be of each of the people involved in the incident. Elicit as many ideas and suggestions as possible.

4. Now ask students to start writing about the event from the point of view of the role they have chosen, and to make rough notes on the type of information they will include in the story. Move around and give suggestions as needed.

5. Ask students to write the first draft of the story. Arrange the students into different groups according to the role they play. For example, all the drivers will form one group if too big, form further subgroups). Within each group, exchange and compare the drafts terms of the information included and the clarity of the event.

6. Have students individually revise their drafts. Give feedback when needed.

7. (optional) Invite some of the students to read their stories aloud.

8. Have students exchange papers with another group and read a story written by someone from a different perspective (e.g., student taking the role of the driver in a traffic accident will read the story written by another student taking the role of the police officer).

9. Ask the students to compare the different, what information is included in one but not the other, and whether this makes the story more effective. Pay special attention to the use of the tense and connectives.
What Happened Next?

Levels: High intermediate+
Aims: Write a set of short stories on a given theme; Focus on sentence-level structure, vocabulary, and editing
Class Time: 1 hour
Resources: Lined paper and pens; List of vocabulary items

This example uses Christmas as a theme. It could just as easily be New Year’s, Valentine’s Day, spring, fairy tales, or some other theme.

1. (Done before the writing activity, even the day before.) The students read poem T’was the Night Before Christmas, by Clement Moore or some other seasonal poem or story. Then they discuss how they celebrate Christmas, or how they see others celebrate the holiday. Next they generate a list of words used in association with this topic. Words may include: Santa, star, presents, tree, carol, snow, North Pole, and more.

2. Ask students for examples of opening lines to a story with a Christmas (or winter) theme. Then ask them to write the opening line for such a story, using, if they chose, vocabulary from the list they generated previously. Circulate, helping and giving suggestions when asked.

3. Have students then pass the paper to their neighbour to the right (assuming they are sitting in a circle). The next student reads the opening and under it writes the next line of the story. The students should be reminded to continue the story, watching for tenses, names, vocabulary used, and other details. They can also be encouraged to write longer sentences (both in content and complexity), and to be as wild and imaginative as possible.

4. When the second sentence is completed, the students fold back the first (opening) sentence so that only the second sentence can be read and pass the story on to the right. Then the procedure is continued with students only able to read the line just above in the story before writing the next line.

5. As you circulate, facilitate the writing. If there is a bottleneck (somebody being too creative), papers could be redistributed to those students who already finished their turn. When 10 (or more) lines have been written, tell the students that the next line will be the conclusion and to finish up the story.

6. Have students unfold the stories and read them. Then, with a partner, they correct the stories (tense, agreement, prepositions and other things) in order to make the story flow smoothly. Favourite stories could then be read aloud, or rewritten and posted on the wall. They also make a good souvenir of the class because everyone contributed to the stories.

Caveats and Options

1. You should be quite active in facilitating the movement of papers and providing assistance, encouragement, and examples when needed.

2. This could be done with a grammar focus. For example, you could provide a conjunctive adverb (e.g. therefore, nonetheless, however,) for the students to use correctly with each fold of the paper (extremely challenging).

3. This activity could be done without folding the paper over. However, one of the bonuses of this activity is that it is fast paced and interactive. It will slow down before continuing the story.

4. If the class has more than 15 students, two groups may be preferable, and Steps 1 and 6 of the procedure could be done on different days.