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What are the main issues to consider when teaching writing?

Learning to write is hard no matter the language you are learning. Even in our first language communicating through written words is not something many people are keen on.

It is challenging because writing is a process that involves creativity, it requires planning and organization to accurately transmit your message, and it is usually a solitary task (people feel more confident working collaboratively). Up to this point, the only way to write effectively is with practice.

The following are some essentials when working with writing tasks with your groups:

Intervene in the process. Monitoring the whole process of writing gives you the chance to identify weak points and address them opportunely. Moreover, your intervention gives confidence to your students, walking them through the task makes your class feel supported.

Give preparation before each writing task.

Even in our mother tongue we need preparation, especially when it is the very first time we write a certain type of text (reports, essays, memos, articles, etc.). To fulfil the task, students need to get familiar with the text to write, they should know the structure, the register, the length, the organization of the information, the audience, everything they can learn about it. Bring some examples to analyse and compare in pairs or teams, they can even do some research beforehand and share their findings with the class.



Contextualise the task. *It is well known that when an activity lacks a purpose students find it boring and pointless. Contextualising the class is key to a meaningful and productive writing task. Always set a context and link it to the activity, a pre-activity like a video or reading can do the job.*



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Choose interesting topics. Students find it easier to write about topics they like, topics they are attracted by. Remember it is not only about contextualising the task with any topic; consider your group profile to select the most appropriate one. Once in a while, you can allow your students to choose the topic to write about.

Give continuous feedback. Writing is an on-going process which requires constant feedback. Letting your students know how they can improve in every single draft will result in a more decent final piece of writing. Using a correction code to show the mistakes of your students can facilitate the grading and reviewing process; while this, you can collect common errors and write them on the board for class correction.

Focus on content and communicative achievement. Perfect grammar is not everything in a piece of writing, it is more important to help our students to become more communicatively competent. Pay more attention to how well the task has been fulfilled and the appropriacy of writing for the task, including the correct register.

Promote self-evaluation. Give your students the chance to reflect on their work. This helps them become more aware of what and how they are learning, and be more independent and responsible for their own learning. For example, you can write some questions on the board as guidance like **"Did you include an introduction?"**, **"Did you check punctuation?"**, **"Does it have a title?"**, **"Does your text clearly convey the message you want?"** etc.