

Learning to Write Correct English

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Writing is generally defined as the physical expression of one's thought. Writing, as a process is closely related to the mental thoughts and processes of a human being (imagination) through which one manipulates the external experiences. Thus writing and thinking are closely related to each other. Writing thereby helps in the improvement of thinking skills which is essential for generating new ideas and arguments. Writing skill helps in firm fixing of the learnt language items in the learners' mind by reinforcing the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that is taught through the other skills. As Francis Bacon said famously, "Reading makes a full man, conference a ready man and writing an exact man." Writing helps us to survive in an increasingly dynamic and complicated society as written language is nothing but communication. Writing depends upon the world's knowledge. A writer must have at his disposal necessary skill with which to prepare, organize and present his write-ups. A writer not only needs to be well informed but must also be creative. He must use words in a wise manner so as to catch the attention of the readers and to create an impact on their minds. In the contemporary age of information technology, writing skills have acquired newer dimensions which are of world standard and demand some extra expertise than the traditional writing. The different aspects of writing skill can be enlisted as under:

- **Syntax:-** It involves the correct use and building of sentence structure and choices, etc.
- **Content:-** It is related to the relevance, clarity, originality, and logical connection of the ideas to be presented.
- **Grammar:-** Grammatical rules pertaining to use of verbs, nouns, articles, adjectives and adverbs, etc should be correctly employed.
- **Mechanics:-** Due care should be taken of handwriting, spellings, punctuation, spacing, etc.
- **Objectivity:-** Subjectivity should be avoided at all costs.

- **Organization:-** Writing should have an attractive organization. It should be rhythmic, cohesive and logically connected. It should not be broken up or unorganized.
- **Economy:-** The write-up should neither be too long or too short. It should be written in simple and clear language with judicious use of vocabulary, idioms, tone, etc.
- **Reviewing:-** After finishing, a write-up should always be revised and evaluated by reading, examining, changing, and correcting the text.
- **Audience:-** While writing, a writer should keep the audience in mind. The write-up should seem relevant to those who are reading it or listening to it.
- **Purpose:-** A write-up should be purposeful, productive and generative. It cannot be vague and ambiguous. It should generate new ideas among the readers.

As we know, writing is essentially a means of communicating ideas and information. A teacher has to work actively to nurture and enhance the abilities of students so that they can express themselves effectively. It is imperative for the students to learn how to think critically and creatively. It is the teacher's responsibility to initiate this thought process. Renowned linguist and teaching expert, George Hillocks believes that learning grammar in isolation, that is, by using instructional work sheets or lessons specified to be focused on grammatical items does not improve student writing. On the contrast, Hillocks argues, it proves highly detrimental. For Hillocks, grammar only consists of punctuation, spelling, and usage. This grammar instruction needs to be addressed in the intermediate level of elementary education. The approach in such lessons or instructions does not have to be addressed in a formal designated time period. The grammatical structures of sentences and spelling should be addressed as the problems are presented in the context of their own work. Quite opposite to the view of George Hillock is the view of Rosemary Buck which lays out the importance of teaching grammar in isolation. For Rosemary, the teaching of grammar in isolation helps to develop high-order critical thinking skills through a gradual improvement in the thought processes and analytical abilities of the students. These, as mentioned earlier, Rosemary believes, are important for the development of 'good writing'. This type of method can be employed in the elementary classes. For any effective teaching of the writing skill, the teacher has to decide and select the exact vocabulary depending on its usefulness, validity and application for the learners. He has to maximize the learners' resources by making good use of their prior learning. He has to effectively make use of the

dictionary, word games and contextual clues for introducing and enhancing the vocabulary among the students.

The three phases of the process of writing are **Pre-writing, Writing and Editing**. Students also need to be made aware of the commonly used and very effective theory of writing—**CODER**. It is an acronym where:

- C stands for collection of ideas,
- O stands for ordering of collected ideas,
- D stands for drafting,
- E stands for editing,
- R stands for revision, review, or redrafting.

Collection of ideas belongs to the prewriting stage. For the collection of ideas there are some techniques, which commonly include Brainstorming and Clustering. In brainstorming, we write our topic on the top of a sheet of paper, in a word or in a phrase. We then list any information we have about that topic. Order is not important in brainstorming. It is like thinking aloud, except that we are recording our comments on paper. As we brainstorm we should not stop to delete, rearrange or rewrite anything, and we should not dwell on any a single idea. In brainstorming we don't care for pronunciation, syntax, spellings, etc. The result of brainstorming can be an odd combination of details, comments and opinions. Time allowed for brainstorming is 10-15 minutes. In clustering, we write the topic of concern in a phrase or sentence, in the middle of the sheet and write whatever comes to our mind regarding the topic, around it in clusters.

Organizing and Drafting are part of the writing phase. After collection, the ideas are ordered in a particular way, so we can get a rough and somewhat organized sketch of the collected ideas. In drafting, we fully organize the material as per introduction, body and conclusion. Order is important in drafting. We cannot write things haphazardly. A draft must be a well organized piece of writing.

Editing and Review belong to the editing phase. After the drafting is complete, the material is edited for any kind of mistakes or errors. These mistakes may include spelling mistakes, grammatical errors, errors of punctuation, etc. The collected material is then finally reviewed for a final look-up.

Some other techniques which help in the effective teaching of the skill of writing, particularly in the lower classes, are described as follows:

- **Overwriting:-** In the lower classes, the students can be asked to overwrite certain things which the teacher writes on their notebooks. English writing notebooks in which letters, words or sentences are written can be suggested.
- **Use of Chalkboard:-** The students copy down the material written by their teacher on the chalkboard.
- **Use of Flashcards:-** Words can be written on the flashcards and distributed among the students for them to write in similar terms.
- **Copying Lines from the Teacher:-** Teacher writes one line of his choice in the notebook and the students write a whole page based on this line.
- **Using the Substitution Table:-** Students can be asked to write more sentences with the help of the substitution table.

Lastly, in order to create a relaxed and conducive environment in the classroom for the students to learn to write effectively, a teacher needs to understand the diverse background and competence level of the students. He needs to help and support children's experiments with the new language. The writing programme has to be formulated around the child's need to convey something to an engaging audience because the primary motivation for writing comes from the need to communicate or convey an idea.