**Teaching Writing**

Seven Activities for Improving Accuracy

**Wall editing activities** – At the beginning of class, post a few sentences on the walls of the classroom (normal sized font). Each sentence should contain an error or two that you have already covered in your class. Have students work in pairs to correct the errors. When they are finished, have them sit down, leaving the papers behind. Then elicit the corrections, correcting the same sentences on the board. By requiring them to remember their corrections, students will develop the ability to spot the errors in the future with greater ease.

**Running dictation** – Post the sentences of a story around the room (6-10 work best). Students work in pairs; one is a “reader,” one is a “writer.” One student reads the sentences, remembers the exact wording and spelling, and reports to the other student who is sitting in their chair. Halfway through the activity, have the reader and writer switch roles. The first team to have all sentences recorded correctly wins.

**Mad libs –** Have your students practice word forms and review word order by filling in content words in a paragraph. By noting the kind of word needed in each blank, students can fill in words without reading the paragraph first. Groups can help each other to check the forms of the words. Ask questions like, “What kind of word do you find after the adjectives?” Have them read the paragraphs to each other and vote on the funniest one.

**Prewriting of content sentences that use new grammar** – Have students write sentences that use the grammar you have just taught in order to get them started on paragraph writing. Give them a prompt that focuses them on the meaning that elicits the grammar; not just the repetition of the form. For example, if you are teaching past tense forms, get them to write about the things they did last night. For beginning or intermediate students, have students first generate key verbs and write them on the board. After they write sentences about these activities, have them expand the sentences into a paragraph by providing details.

**Editing student-generated sentences** – After students write paragraphs or essays in your class, select sentences from their work and compile them in a list. Make sure that the only errors included in the sentences involve grammar they have already learned. Have them work in pairs to revise the sentences, then feedback to the class.

**Something to remember** – Give your students something fun and engaging to remember at the end of your class, and include accuracy work in the game. A spelling bee… Irregular past tense jeopardy.… Games should be brief and should involve as many students at the same time as possible.

**Focus on the positive** – Have your students write a list of “Things I Already Know and Will Always Do Correctly,” and have them add to it throughout the term. For example, “Put a period at the end of each sentence.” Students can make a list of things that they are confidant they can do. At the end of the list, have them write, “When I have checked these things, I am ready to turn in my work.” This is a great way to help students focus on eliminating their persistent errors.

**Teaching Writing**

Seven activities for improving writing fluency

**Daily writing** – Students learn to write fluently by writing in motivating, confidence building contexts. Assign a topic at the beginning of class each day, and have your students write for 15 minutes. Make comments on the content only, in order to show you are interested in what they are telling you. Possible prompts for beginners: My Family… My Favorite Foods… The Best Day… A Good Memory…

**Journals or blogs** – Give students low-stress writing activities that get them in the habit of writing on a daily or weekly basis outside of class. Possible prompts: What country would you most like to visit? Who is the best teacher you have ever had? Who is your best friend? …or tell them to write about their day each day. Blogs are normally public; journals are private. For students who are more anxious about their writing, journals tend to work better than blogs. Tell students to write “0” in the top corner of the journal entry if it is too private to share, so that they can feel free to write personal information in the journal and still complete the assignment.

**Letter writing** – Have students write letters to other students in the class or to you. If students younger learners are writing to each other, put all of the names in a hat and assign the people they will write to the first time. If they are writing to you, you can have them write about how their writing has improved while looking at their portfolios; then have them write about what they still need to work on.

**Collaborative stories with starters** – Start several stories around the room with interesting sentences like “It was a dark and stormy night.…” Have each student write one sentence to continue the story; after contributing, students pass the story to the next student. At the end, students can read the stories aloud.

**Silent conversations** – Have students engage in silent conversations in class by writing questions and answers to each other. Pairings matter for this activity; make sure that you put students together with their friends so that they stay engaged and supportive.

**Prewriting** – Before having students write longer essays, have them generate ideas through brainstorming key words, writing paragraphs to explain particular ideas, or free writing on the topic.

**Paragraph scaffolding** – Beginning writers need extra scaffolding to start writing at the paragraph or essay level. Provide sample paragraphs with missing information that model the sentences of the paragraph. Have your students fill in their own personal information through phrase or sentence writing.

**Teaching Writing**

Six activities for developing extended writing

**Story or essay frames** – Frames help students to brainstorm and structure their longer work at the same time. This also helps them to focus the content of their essay appropriately before they do a lot of writing, which reduces rewriting. Make sure that the frames are age appropriate for your student group, and engaging for the topic. Once students have a plan for their essay, direct students to expand their plan into paragraphs or the full essay, depending on the ability of your students.

**Paragraph or sentence ordering** – Cut a model essay into its constituent paragraphs. Have groups of students first order the paragraphs correctly, then discuss why this order is correct. Use this to help them to attend to key transition words. The same can be done with the sentences of a paragraph.

**Providing sample essays** – If you know what you want your students to produce, give them a clear model so that they can be in on the secret.

**Generating rubrics as a class** – Once you have provided students with a model essay, have them generate reasons why the essay is good. The criteria they generate can be used to create a rubric as a class. This way, students feel like they are a part of the process, and you can be sure that they fully understand the rubric that you use to score the assignment.

**Portfolios –** Students find it amazing to see how much they have developed as writers over the course of several weeks. Have students keep their written work in a binder throughout the term. Multiple draft essays are particularly helpful in demonstrating student progress.

**Process writing**

Prewriting – story or essay frames, outlining, etc. Make sure you give students feedback at this stage, so that you can handle big organizational issues early.

First draft – focus on content. Does everything make sense? Where does the student need to rephrase or add detail so that you understand their thoughts? Only correct grammar at this stage if it interferes with communication.

Second draft – focus on persistent grammatical errors. What persistent grammatical issues can the student focus on in order to make a real change in their grammatical competency? Correct or note the first couple of errors, then have the student correct the rest of the errors of that type independently.

Final draft – it is extremely valuable for students to work on a piece of writing and get it to the stage where both of you can be proud of their result. Focus on the positive on this draft. What did they accomplish?