Short guide 4: Building writing skills

What are you doing already?

Every time you give your learners feedback about their writing, get them to write something down or take notes, you are helping your learners to write. In your programme writing might include:

- *Answering questions.*
- *Writing instructions or descriptions.*
- *Writing essays.*
- *Writing letters and emails.*

Below are some useful questions when you're thinking about writing.

Why: Learners need to know why they are writing. They can:
- Analyse the questions or instructions.
- Underline or highlight key words
- Break down questions/instructions into shorter ones.

Who: Learners need to think about who the writing is for. This will help them decide how to write and what to include. For example, with builder's diaries, they can be used for a future employer so they need to have all the details on how to build a house and look good; Learners' notes need all the details, but presentation isn't so important.

What: When learners know why they are writing and who they are writing for, they need to think about 'what':
- Brainstorm
- Organise ideas into groups
- Look at good examples for: ideas, key words etc

How: Once learners have their ideas they need to think about how they will organize it:
- Do they need heading, paragraphs or bullet points?
- Templates, diagrams, frameworks and questions can help learners organize their writing.

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Below are some ideas you can use:
- Before your learners start writing
- While they are writing what they need to
- After they have finished the piece of writing

Before:

What are you doing before learners write?

- Brainstorm
- Pair discussion
- Questions
- Topic pictures

During:

What are you doing to develop writing?

- Ordering text
- Analysing examples
- Organising ideas
- Pair writing
- Group writing

After:

What are you doing after writing practice?

- Editing errors
- Individual writing
- Checking for content
- Peer review
- Re-drafting
- Extend their writing

Some examples:

Key Ideas: Learners need to be able to write so people can understand what they have written. Below are some ideas you could use to further support your learners. Remember, a good piece of writing can take lots of editing and re-writing and writing is a process that can involve lots of steps.

5 minute writing

Ask your learners to think about something they know.
Say to them:

1. *Write for 5 minutes.*
2. *Don't stop writing in that time.*
3. *Don't check for any errors or fix them.*
4. *Don't show your writing to anyone.*
5. *At the end, count up how many words you wrote and tell me.*

Then, time your learners so they write for 5 minutes and ask how many words they wrote; this gets them writing, without worrying if what they are writing is right or wrong. You can do this regularly as it only takes 5 minutes.
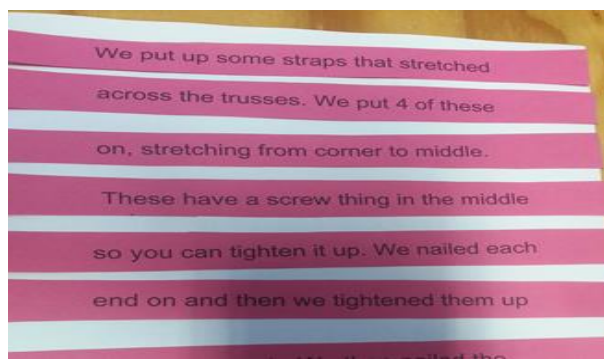
Ordering text

Cut up a text, paragraph or sentence and get learners to put it in the right order.
Example 1: words – this helps learners to understand the order of words in a sentence:

Example 2: **sentences** – this helps learners to understand how to organize sentences into sections like paragraphs:

Using templates

Give the learners a template – this could be the first sentence of each section, a diagram or a question that they need to answer to complete each section. These shapes show what the writing should look like:
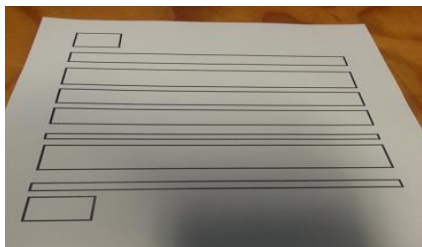
Use sentence starters to show learners what they need to write:

- After wetting the client's hair, you need to… *(learner adds writing here)*
- When you set up the dumpy, remember to… *(learner adds writing here)*

Error correction

You can do this in 3 stages:

1. Tell learners how many errors they have in each section and they find and correct then.
2. Underline the errors and they correct them.
3. Underline and use symbols to show them what to fix.

(sp for spelling, p for punctuation, ^ for missing word):

- Wear a mask <u>wen</u> installing Pink Batts. **sp**
- <u>cut</u> the Batts before you install it. **p**
- Check your measurements ∧ you cut.

Give the learners the symbols and their meanings in a sort of correction code for them to use.