

Activity 1 – An Introduction to the Skill of Writing

Activity 1.1 – Gathering Ideas/Information

You are going to write a short introduction to a teacher training book called 'The Skill of Writing'. The book will be used by PCC students who want to improve their writing. First, your trainer will tell you how to collect information in order to complete the table below.

Information to include in the introduction to 'The Skill of Writing'
▪ e.g./i.e.

Activity 1.2 – Writing the First Draft

Now use the notes you collected in Activity 1.1 to write the introduction to the book called 'The Skill of Writing' in the box below. Remember that the book will be read by PCC students who want to improve their writing skills. Put the information in a logical order and add cohesive devices, and more information if appropriate. You only have a short time to write this first draft – you will have time to revise it later.

Activity 1.3 – Editing

Now work with a partner to edit your writing. Read each other's work from the point of view of the intended reader, the PCC student, and help each other to make changes to the order of contents, vocabulary and grammar if necessary.

1.4 – Reflection

1. Did you enjoy doing the writing activity? Why/why not?
2. Did you find the writing activity difficult? Why/why not?
3. What language or skills did you practice when doing the activity?
4. Was it helpful to work with other participants? Why/why not?
5. What did you learn about the skill of writing?
6. Could you do an activity like this with your learners? How would you adapt it to suit them better?

Activity 2 – The Process vs. The Product (Model)

1. Which of these features were included in the writing you just completed in Activity 1?

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| a. the intended reader | b. the purpose of writing | c. gathering ideas |
| d. planning the writing | e. writing a first draft | f. editing the text |
| g. writing a final draft | h. publishing the writing | |

The above features are all part of the writing process, which most people go through when writing something in their own language. Think about the last time you wrote an extended text – perhaps an email or a composition. Did you go through this process (perhaps in a different order)?

If we follow this process when writing in our own language, then we should allow learners to go through the same process when practicing writing in a foreign language. It is unrealistic to expect learners to write without knowing who the reader is, or why they are writing. There should be time and stimulation to help the learners generate ideas for their writing. Also, learners need to know that the first draft can be revised and rewritten – it is very difficult, even for professional writers, to produce a perfect piece of writing in the first draft. This process-oriented approach to teaching writing is therefore more authentic than focusing on the final product only.

2. Now imagine that you are writing an article for a newspaper about a fishing boat accident. Put the writing stages below in the order in which you would do them. Check your answer with a partner:

- a. Read and make changes and corrections;
- b. Write a rough draft;
- c. Organize your ideas;
- d. Talk with witnesses and other relevant people;
- e. Write a final copy.

3. Think about writing outside the classroom and consider these questions with a partner.

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. How do the intended reader and the reason for writing influence the level of formality we use?b. Where do we get ideas and information for the content from before we write?c. Who edits the first draft?d. What does the editor look for?e. Who reads the final draft?f. Real-life writing involves a number of different processes or stages. What implications does this have for the way we teach writing in our classrooms? |
|--|

Module 10: Writing Course Book

Activity 3 – Writing Activities: Controlled to Free

Activity 3.1 – Joined Up Text

Rewrite the following text on the notepad below, adding spaces and punctuation.

lowerlevellearnersandthosenotusedtowritingneedmoresupportorcontrolledactivitieswhenpracticing writingintheclasroomtheteacherexplainedintermediateandadvancedlearnersandthosewithmore experienceofwritingneedlessupportorfreeractivitiesshesaidthatthiswouldgivesuchlearnersthespacet oexperimentwiththelanguagethemselvesandthereforetolearnbydoing

Dotted lines for handwriting practice.

Activity 3.2 – Ranking

Your trainer will now give you written descriptions of several writing activities. Rank the activities from most controlled to most free, by placing their letters on the continuum below.
controlled free
← →

Activity 3.3 – Reflection

1. Some of the writing activities in Activity 3.2 were product-oriented (involved learners interacting with the final product), while others were process-oriented (gave opportunities to go through one or more of the stages of the writing process). Which was which?

Product-oriented Activities	Process-oriented Activities

2. Should teachers use a mix of product-oriented and process-oriented writing activities in their lessons? Why/why not?

Activity 4 – Dealing With Errors in Writing

Activity 4.1 – Identifying Errors

(Adapted from *Grammar Games* by Mario Rinvolucri, Cambridge University Press, 2008)

- a. Could you do the Identifying Errors pair work that you just completed with your learners?
- b. Would you make any changes to the activity to make it more appropriate to your learners' needs?
- c. What are the objectives of doing such an activity?
- d. How would you follow up the activity?

Activity 4.2 – Categorising Errors

Read the following errors taken from learners' work, and identify what aspect of writing each learner has got wrong, e.g. spelling, collocation, tense, formality, etc.

1. His mother went to the market this morning and buy some vegetables.
2. She will pick up her outside bus the station.
3. The gril recieved an intresting letter that morning.
4. It was difficult for him to help the boy. He was only visiting him for a short time.
5. The family stay here during the week and goes to the beach every weekend.
6. It was very dark; there was a heavy wind and strong rain.
7. We would like to express our best wishes in response to your getting hitched announcement.
8. The teacher said the student, was crazy.

Which of the sentences do you think are the most difficult to understand?

Which errors do you think should the teacher bring to the attention of the learner?

Teacher C's Response

Dear Mr (Imran) Tariq,

t ww

sp

I afraid I do not make the homework. Because I did not have time. My muther was sick so I

t

sp

sp

have to buy the dinner and cook the dinner for hole family yesterday. Muther is OK now so I will

ww

make the homework today. Sorry about that.

Naseem, Class 4W

Glad to hear your Mum is better. I look forward to receiving your homework tomorrow.

Can you correct your work yourself?

Which teacher has provided the best feedback? Why do you think that?

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There is an example of a correction code at the bottom of Course Book Additional Material Activity 4.3 – Answer Sheet.

Do you know any other effective ways to give feedback on written work?

4.4 – Reflection

“Errors show that the learner is not learning.”



“I disagree. I think errors show that the learner is making progress.”



Do you agree with either of these teachers?

Activity 5 – Evaluating and Adapting Writing Activities

Complete the checklist below to evaluate and, if necessary, adapt two language learning textbook writing activities.

Components of a Good Writing Activity	Course Material A		Course Material B	
	Satisfied?	Adaptations Required	Satisfied?	Adaptations Required
Is the activity age appropriate (ie. authentic and of interest to learners)?				
Does the activity have a clear communicative purpose?				
Is the activity the right language level (ie. Too controlled or too free or just right)?				
If process-oriented, does the activity clarify the reader, purpose for writing and give the writer time to gather ideas/information and re-draft?				
If product oriented, does the activity provide an authentic model for learners?				
Does the activity integrate other language skills (eg. listening etc.)?				
Does the activity require learners to produce whole texts?				

Activity 6 – The Teaching of Handwriting

Activity 6.1 – Differences in Handwriting

Copy the following sentence into the space below.

The unlucky fisherman fell into the turquoise water when a big shark jumped into his expensive zinc boat.

.....

.....

.....

Now compare your sentence with a partner. Are there any handwriting differences? What are they?

.....

.....

.....

Activity 6.2 – Demonstrating Letter Formation

Your trainer will allocate your group a letter. Work with your group to discuss, then demonstrate to the class how to form your allocated letter. Make sure you clearly demonstrate:

- i. starting and finishing points
- ii. letter direction
- iii. both upper and lower case letters

Write notes below:

.....

.....

Activity 7 – Reflection

Think back over the work covered throughout the writing module and:

- choose five key words or phrases that will help you to remember the main points of the module.

- choose one of the activities that you would like to try with your learners. Explain why?

- choose one of the activities that you will not try with your learners. Explain why?

- choose one point from the writing module that you think would be most useful for your colleagues.

Assignment (optional – for existing teachers and/or student teachers on practicum)

Your assignment is to try out a new idea/activity from this module with one of your classes. You should then reflect on your lesson. Use the following guidelines for your assignment.

1. Where appropriate, make up materials for the new idea/activity you will be trying out, focusing on the particular language points and learning outcomes you are aiming for.
2. Write your whole lesson plan, including your new idea/activity on the lesson plan document, then teach the lesson. After the lesson, write a reflection including: i. What went well? Why?; ii. What didn't go well? Why?; and iii. What changes will I make next time?
3. Attach your lesson plan (including list of materials used) and your reflection.
4. Submit your assignment by handing/emailing it to your trainer. The deadline for completion of this assignment is

Glossary

Concept	Definition
cohesive devices	The glue that holds a text together, such as conjunctions, (eg. and, but, however, consequently), substitution and referencing
controlled activities	Activities which have language and an output largely controlled by the teacher, rather than the learners
first draft	The first piece of writing produced by the writer, which will probably need rewriting after editing
formality	The level of formality depends on how well the writer knows the reader and the difficulty/urgency of the situation. This affects whether formal or informal language is used.
fossilized	An error that has become a habit for the learner, who has no motivation to correct it
freer activities	Activities which have language and an output produced largely by the learners, rather than the teacher
genre	A type of writing, which usually has an identifiable style or format, e.g. a formal letter, a postcard, a news article, a book review, etc.
Input Hypothesis	Part of Dr. Stephen Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory, published in 1981. He stated that learners should be exposed to language, which is comprehensible +1, i.e. slightly above the language level they have reached. He believed that learners will be able to understand such language by using the context and their world knowledge, and at the same time, acquire the new language
integrated skills	When more than one language skill is used to complete a task, e.g. listening to a telephone message, writing it down, then speaking to pass the message onto someone else
lexical chunks	Phrases or groups of words that can be learned as one lexical item, e.g. 'looking forward to it', 'see you later', 'give me a break', etc.
process-oriented activities	Writing activities which guide learners through some or all of the stages of the natural process of writing, i.e. thinking about the readers' needs, gathering ideas, planning the writing, writing a first draft, editing, writing a final draft, etc.
product-oriented activities	Writing activities which give learners practice in producing the final writing product, usually by interacting with it in some way, e.g. a gap-fill

Recommended Reading

- **How to Teach Writing** – Jeremy Harmer, Pearson Longman, 2004 – a comprehensive description of why and how to teach writing, including sections on the writing process, ‘Nuts and bolts’ (spelling, handwriting, punctuation, etc), cohesion and coherence, and responding to learners’ written work
- **Writing** – Tricia Hedge, Resource Books for Teachers, Oxford University Press, 2005 – outlines the value of using the process writing approach when teaching writing, and suggests a variety of activities for each stage of the process
- **The Teaching of Handwriting** – Course Book additional material of particular relevance to elementary school teachers.
- **Ready to Write Series** – Karen Blanchard & Christine Root, Pearson Longman, 2010
- **Simple Writing Activities** – Jill & Charles Hadfield, Oxford, 2000
- **Fundamentals of Academic Writing (level 1)** – Linda Butler, Pearson Longman, 2007
- **First Steps in Academic Writing (level 2)** – Ann Hogue, Pearson Longman, 2008
- **Introduction to Academic Writing (level 3)** – Alice Oshima, Pearson Longman, 2007
- **Teaching ESL/EFL Reading & Writing** – I.S.P. Nation, Routledge, 2009
- <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/approaches-process-writing> – an article by Graham Stanley, 2003, which details the what, why and how of the process writing approach, including activities for different stages
- <http://teachingenglish.org.uk/try/activities/writing-activities> – links to various motivating writing activities, compiled by Jo Budden
- <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/error-correction-1> – an overview of error making and correcting by Rolf Donald, 2003

Additional Material

Activity 1.2 – Writing the First Draft & Activity 1.3 - Editing

This is one possible version of the final draft of the introduction to 'The Skill of Writing' book. You may have a different version, which is equally valid.

Writing doesn't come naturally, unlike speaking, so it is a skill that learners need to learn and practice. There are several other differences between writing and speaking, most notably the absence of the reader. Because the writer and the reader often don't meet, the language needs to be clear to avoid any misunderstanding. As a result, writers have to do much more than simply form letters with a pen. A skilful writer considers the readers' needs, the genre, the content, the best way to order the information and the appropriate tone as well as vocabulary, grammar and cohesive devices. All these components usually mean that the writer needs time to formulate ideas, plan the writing and edit a first draft before producing a final draft. Despite, or because of all the above, writing is very valuable for learners because it gives them time to experiment with the language and consolidate their skills.

Activity 3.1 – Joined Up Text – Answer Sheet

“Lower level learners and those not used to writing need more support, or controlled activities, when practicing writing in the classroom,” the teacher explained. “Intermediate and advanced learners and those with more experience of writing need less support, or freer activities.” She added that this would give such learners the space to experiment with the language and therefore to learn by doing.

3.2 – Ranking

Rank the 8 activities below, from most controlled to most free, by placing their letters on the continuum in Course Book Activity 3.2.



a. Joined up text

Give learners a short text with no spaces between words and with punctuation marks and capital letters missing. Learners should rewrite the text, putting in spaces, punctuation marks and capital letters where required.

b. Picture story

Give learners a sheet of paper with five or six pictures randomly spaced. The pictures should include the main elements of a story, e.g. a character(s), a place, an object(s) an activity etc.

Learners work in pairs to make up a short story using all the pictures, verbally. They should note down the order the pictures occur in their stories by numbering them.

Learners then work with a new partner and retell their stories to each other. The new partner should listen carefully and note down the order the pictures occur in the new story by numbering them, using a different coloured pen or pencil.

Learners can then repeat this process with a third partner, so that they have three different stories using the same set of pictures.

Ask individual learners to choose the version they like best, and write a first draft of the story. Editing and writing a final draft will be done next lesson.

c. Collaborative story

Ask learners to sit in groups of five or six. Give each learner a piece of writing paper. Dictate the first sentence of a story, e.g. "One dark, damp night a boy woke suddenly in his bed." All learners should copy down the sentence at the top of the paper. The teacher should then ask them to write another sentence or two answering the question "What woke the boy?" All learners should write their own answer to the question after the first dictated sentence, so that it seems like a story. Then, the learners pass their paper to the next learner in their group. Now, the next learner should add the next sentence or two of the story "What did the boy do next?" Each learner should read the sentences that have gone before and make her/his addition follow to make sense. Repeat this a few more times, with each learner adding a bit more to the story they receive, then passing it on to another learner who should add a little more. After a few additions, tell the learners they should now write the end of the story. This is the first draft.

d. From notes to text

Tell learners you have a friend who is applying for a part-time job – and she needs help with her application letter. Here is the job advertisement:

Do you enjoy helping people? Are you knowledgeable about the local area?

COME and **JOIN** our **CARING TEAM** at the **TOURIST OFFICE**

We need a cheerful part-timer to answer the phone on Saturdays and help tourists make the most of our town. Please send your application letter to the manager...

Your friend has provided some notes to include in the application letter:

- Like helping people – volunteer at old people's home
- Worked part-time in uncle's office answering phone
- Have lived here for 15 years
- Many school trips to local parks and museums
- Free on Saturdays

The learners should turn the notes into a complete application letter.

e. Describe and match

Find and cut out pictures on a theme from magazines or catalogues. For example, the theme could be 'the countryside' or 'furniture' or 'fashion'. The pictures should all be similar. You will need the same number of pictures as learners. You could ask learners to find such pictures at home and bring them in.

Give one picture to each learner, who should write a paragraph describing their picture, without using any proper nouns. Encourage them to use prepositions to describe where things are and adjectives to describe what things look like. Collect in all the written descriptions.

Post the pictures on the walls around the classroom, then distribute the written descriptions to different learners – NOT the learners who wrote them. Learners should now read the descriptions they've been given and stick them on the wall next to the picture they think they describe. All learners should then check to see whether any of the descriptions have been mismatched, in which case they should move them. Ask the writers to check whether the readers matched their descriptions correctly.

f. Gap-fill

Write a film or book review, leaving gaps for the learners to fill in their own information. For example:

The last film I saw was _(TITLE OF FILM)_____. Overall, I thought it was _(GENERAL IMPRESSION OF FILM) _____, but I thought _____.

The film was about _(BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FILM CONTENTS) _____.

The actors were _(NAMES OF ACTORS AND COMMENT ON THEIR PERFORMANCE)_____.

My favourite part was when _____.

But I didn't like the part when _____.

I recommend/don't recommend you watch the film because _____.

g. Opposite postcards

Divide learners into two groups, A and B. Give each group a different postcard: Group A's postcard should describe a positive holiday experience, group B's postcard a negative holiday experience, e.g.

A: Went to a fantastic museum yesterday, then some great shops. Everything's such good quality and so cheap! Weather's lovely too – I feel so relaxed!

B: Weather's very bad – hotel is uncomfortable and dirty! There's nothing to do. Went shopping yesterday, but everything is so expensive. I want to come home!

Each learner should rewrite their postcard, changing it from positive to negative (Group A) or negative to positive (Group B), e.g.

A: Went to a boring museum yesterday...

B: Weather's lovely – hotel is so comfortable and clean! ...

Learners then 'send' their postcards to another learner – A to B, B to A. The learner should now rewrite the postcard they've just 'received', changing all the negatives to positives and vice versa.

Finally, show learners the original versions of the postcards to see if they used the same expressions, or whether they found different ways to express meaning.

h. School magazine article

Divide learners into small groups. Each group should produce an article for the school magazine. The theme for the article is 'Go green!' Give learners access to the Internet to collect ideas, and enough time to plan and write a first draft. Collect the work in to edit, then return it to the learners in the next lesson for them to rewrite into a final draft. Publish the articles in the school magazine and encourage learners from other classes to comment on them.

Activity 4.3 – Responding to Learner Writing – Answer Sheet

Teachers should respond to learners' writing as if the teacher is the intended reader – and make it clear to learners whether their message has been understood or not. Praise the learner for making any part of the meaning clear, even if the grammar is not correct. After all, communication is the main purpose of writing. Think about all aspects of writing, not just grammar, when giving feedback. Is it exciting (if it's a story)? Is it clear (if it's a letter)? Is it informative (if it's an article)? How about tone? Is the genre correct? Cohesive devices?

Teachers should help the learner to learn from her/his mistakes but do not highlight every mistake as this will discourage learners from experimenting with new language, which is a necessary stage in learning. Focus on errors you know the learner can correct. Point out what/where the mistake is, then give the learner time to correct it her/himself. This effective feedback can be done in a number of ways:

- Underline the mistakes you want the learner to correct.
- Indicate in the margin how many mistakes there are in a certain line. The learner has to find and correct the mistakes.
- Write a message to the learner at the bottom of the work, stating which parts are difficult to understand and suggesting how to make them clearer.
- Write 'dictionary' or a grammar reference in the margin, so that the learner can go and study independently.
- Highlight errors with a code which the learner understands, and which tells her/him what kind of mistake has been made, so that s/he can correct it her/himself. Here is an example, but you should devise one that is suitable for your learners.

Symbol	Description	Example
sp	spelling	This is my opinian .
ww	wrong word	It's dark – please open the light.
t	tense	I see him yesterday.
^	something missing	She stayed in hotel .
()	something not necessary	I went to shopping.
wo	word order	I enjoy very much the film.
pl	plurality	I have two sister .
punc	punctuation	Although he said goodbye . He didn't leave.
sva	subject verb agreement	There were good information.

Don't forget to give the learner time to make the corrections or rewrite the text – and read it yourself again.

Approaches to Process Writing

It is a myth that all it takes to write is to sit down in front of a blank page, to begin at the beginning and write through to the end, with no planning, break, editing, or changes in between. And yet, this is sometimes what we ask our students to do. Good writers plan and revise, rearrange and delete text, re-reading and producing multiple drafts before they produce their finished document. This is what process writing approach is about.

What is process writing?

The process approach treats all writing as a creative act which requires time and positive feedback to be done well. In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself.

Why should teachers be interested in a process approach to writing?

White and Arndt say that focusing on language errors 'improves neither grammatical accuracy nor writing fluency' and they suggest instead that paying attention to what the students say will show an improvement in writing.

Research also shows that feedback is more useful between drafts, not when it is done at the end of the task after the students hand in their composition to be marked. Corrections written on compositions returned to the student after the process has finished seem to do little to improve student writing.

The changing roles of teacher and students

The teacher needs to move away from being a marker to a reader, responding to the content of student writing more than the form. Students should be encouraged to think about audience: Who is the writing for? What does this reader need to know? Students also need to realize that what they put down on paper can be changed: Things can be deleted, added, restructured, reorganized, etc.

What stages are there in a process approach to writing?

Although there are many ways of approaching process writing, it can be broken down into three stages:

Pre-writing

The teacher needs to stimulate students' creativity, to get them thinking how to approach a writing topic. In this stage, the most important thing is the flow of ideas, and it is not always necessary that students actually produce much (if any) written work. If they do, then the teacher can contribute with advice on how to improve their initial ideas.

Focusing ideas

During this stage, students write without much attention to the accuracy of their work or the organization. The most important feature is meaning. Here, the teacher (or other students) should concentrate on the content of the writing. Is it coherent? Is there anything missing? Anything extra?

Evaluating, structuring and editing

Now the writing is adapted to a readership. Students should focus more on form and on producing a finished piece of work. The teacher can help with error correction and give organizational advice.

Classroom activities

Here are some ideas for classroom activities related to the stages above:

Pre-writing

- **Brainstorming**
Getting started can be difficult, so students divided into groups quickly produce words and ideas about the writing.
- **Planning**
Students make a plan of the writing before they start. These plans can be compared and discussed in groups before writing takes place.
- **Generating ideas**
Discovery tasks such as cubing (students write quickly about the subject in six different ways - they:
 - 1. describe it
 - 2. compare it
 - 3. associate it
 - 4. analyze it
 - 5. apply it
 - 6. argue for or against it.
- **Questioning**
In groups, the idea is to generate lots of questions about the topic. This helps students focus upon audience as they consider what the reader needs to know. The answers to these questions will form the basis to the composition.
- **Discussion and debate**
The teacher helps students with topics, helping them develop ideas in a positive and encouraging way.

Focusing ideas

- **Fast writing**
The students write quickly on a topic for five to ten minutes without worrying about correct language or punctuation. Writing as quickly as possible, if they cannot think of a word they leave a space or write it in their own language. The important thing is to keep writing. Later this text is revised.
- **Group compositions**
Working together in groups, sharing ideas. This collaborative writing is especially valuable as it involves other skills (speaking in particular.)
- **Changing viewpoints**
A good writing activity to follow a role-play or storytelling activity. Different students choose different points of view and think about /discuss what this character would write in a diary, witness statement, etc.
- **Varying form**
Similar to the activity above, but instead of different viewpoints, different text types are selected. How would the text be different if it were written as a letter, or a newspaper article, etc.

Evaluating, Structuring and Editing

- Ordering
Students take the notes written in one of the pre-writing activities above and organize them. What would come first? Why? Here it is good to tell them to start with information known to the reader before moving onto what the reader does not know.
- Self-editing
A good writer must learn how to evaluate their own language - to improve through checking their own text, looking for errors, structure. This way students will become better writers.
- Peer editing and proof-reading
Here, the texts are interchanged and the evaluation is done by other students. In the real world, it is common for writers to ask friends and colleagues to check texts for spelling, etc. You could also ask the students to reduce the texts, to edit them, concentrating on the most important information.

The importance of feedback

It takes a lot of time and effort to write, and so it is only fair that student writing is responded to suitably. Positive comments can help build student confidence and create good feeling for the next writing class. It also helps if the reader is more than just the teacher. Class magazines, swapping letters with other classes, etc. can provide an easy solution to providing a real audience.

Writing as communication

Process writing is a move away from students writing to test their language towards the communication of ideas, feelings and experiences. It requires that more classroom time is spent on writing, but as the previously outlined activities show, there is more than just writing happening during a session dedicated to process writing.

Potential problems

Writing is a complex process and can lead to learner frustration. As with speaking, it is necessary to provide a supportive environment for the students and be patient. This approach needs that more time be spent on writing in class, but as you have seen, not all classroom time is spent actually writing.

Students may also react negatively to reworking the same material, but as long as the activities are varied and the objectives clear, then they will usually accept doing so. In the long term, you and your students will start to recognize the value of a process writing approach as their written work improves.

Further Reading

- Hedge T 1988 *Writing* Oxford University Press
- Krashen SD *Writing : Research, theory and applications* Pergamon Press
- Kroll B 1990 *Second Language Writing : Research insights for the classroom* Cambridge University Press
- Raimes A 1983 *Techniques in teaching writing* Oxford University Press
- White R & V Arndt 1991 *Process Writing* Longman

Source: Graham Stanley, <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/approaches-process-writing>

Error Correction

When it comes to error correction we are dealing with one individual's reaction to a student's piece of writing or utterance. This inevitably means that there will be some disagreement among teachers about what, when, and how to correct. Therefore the aim of this article is not to be prescriptive, but to highlight some key areas. In this article we look at ...

- Attitudes to error correction
- Categorising errors
- A model for correcting writing
- The role of planning
- Practical techniques / ideas for correcting writing

Attitudes to error correction

Attitudes to error correction vary not only among teachers but also among students. A teacher may be influenced by:

- The fact that English is their second language and great emphasis was placed on correctness at their teacher training college.
- The fact that as a native speaker they have never had to worry about their English.
- A particular methodology / approach. In the 1960s a teacher using Audiolingualism would have adopted a behaviourist approach to error. More recently a teacher following the Natural Approach (influenced by second language acquisition theory) would have adopted a wholly different approach. Other methodologies / approaches, such as Suggestopaedia and Total Physical Response, highlight the psychological effects of error correction on students.

As for students, we not only have to consider their age but also their approach to learning. Some students are risk-takers, while others will only say something if they are sure it is correct. While being a risk-taker is generally positive as it leads to greater fluency, some students only seem to be concerned with fluency at the expense of accuracy. The same can be true when it comes to writing. Some students take an eternity to produce a piece of writing as they are constantly rubbing out what they have written while at the opposite extreme the writing is done as fast as possible without any planning or editing.

Categorising errors

We can categorize an error by the reason for its production or by its linguistic type.

- What's the reason for the error?
 - It is the result of a random guess (pre-systematic).
 - It was produced while testing out hypotheses (systematic).
 - It is a slip of the tongue, a lapse, a mistake (caused by carelessness, fatigue etc.) (post-systematic).

To be sure about the type of error produced by a student we need to know where the student's interlanguage is (the language used by a student in the process of learning a second language).

- What type is it?
We can classify errors simply as productive (spoken or written) or receptive (faulty understanding).
Alternatively we can use the following:
 - A lexical error - vocabulary
 - A phonological error - pronunciation
 - A syntactic error- grammar
 - An interpretive error - misunderstanding of a speaker's intention or meaning
 - A pragmatic error - failure to apply the rules of conversation

A model for correcting writing

When writing we do not have the chance to rephrase or clarify what we are saying. Our message must be clear the first time. Written errors are also less tolerated than spoken errors outside the classroom.

Look at this model for correcting written work and evaluate it for your teaching situation.

- 1. Comprehensibility
 - Can you understand the output?
 - Are there areas of incoherence?
 - Do these affect the overall message?
 - Does communication break down?
- 2. Task
 - Has the student addressed the task?
- 3. Syntax and Lexis
 - Are they appropriate to the task?
 - Are they accurate?

The role of planning

Giving students time to plan not only results in a wider range of language being used, it also helps students to avoid some of the following:

- Inappropriate layout
- No paragraphs
- Lack of cohesion
- Inappropriate style

Whichever style of plan (linear notes or a mind map) these questions will help students to plan their writing:

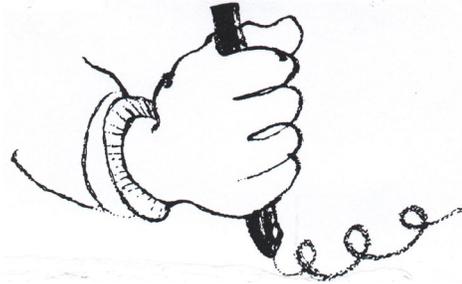
- What am I going to write? (An informal letter etc.)
- What layout do I need?
- What information am I going to include?
- How many paragraphs do I need?
- What grammar / vocabulary am I going to use?
- What linking words (because, and etc.) am I going to use?

Practical techniques / ideas for correcting writing

- Training students to edit
Even though they have invested time in doing a writing task, students often don't spend a few more minutes checking their writing. The following activities not only help to develop students' editing skills in a fun way, but also enable the teacher to focus on key errors without individual students losing face.
 - Grammar auctions: (From Grammar Games by M.Rinvoluceri CUP) Students receive a number of sentences taken from their written work. Some are correct, some wrong. Students in groups have to try to buy the correct ones in the auction. They have a limited amount of money. The team with the most correct sentences wins.
 - Mistakes mazes: (From Correction by Bartram and Walton Thomson Heinle). Students have a list of sentences. Their route through a maze depends on whether the sentences are right or wrong. They follow white arrows for correct sentences and black ones for incorrect ones. If they have identified all the sentences correctly they escape, if not they have to retrace their steps and find out where they went wrong.
- Correction techniques
It can be difficult to decide on what and how much to correct in a student's piece of writing. Students can develop a negative attitude towards writing because their teacher corrects all their errors or if the teacher only corrects a few, they might feel that the teacher hasn't spent sufficient time looking at their work. Evaluate the following techniques and decide which would be appropriate for your teaching situation. Underline inappropriate language in a piece of writing using a specific colour.
 - Using a different colour from above, underline examples of appropriate language.
 - Correct errors by writing the correct forms in their place.
 - Use codes in the margin to identify the type of error(s), for example, VOC = a lexical error. Students have to identify the error(s) and if possible make a correction.
 - Alternatively put crosses in the margin for the number of errors in each line. Students then try to identify the errors and make corrections.
 - Put students into pairs / groups. They correct each other's work using one or more of the techniques above.
 - From time to time give students an individual breakdown of recurring problems in their written work.

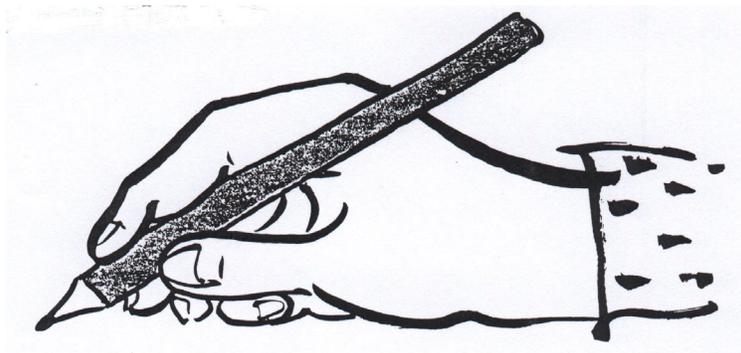
Source: Rolf Donald, <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/think/articles/error-correction-1>

Activity 6 – The Teaching of Handwriting

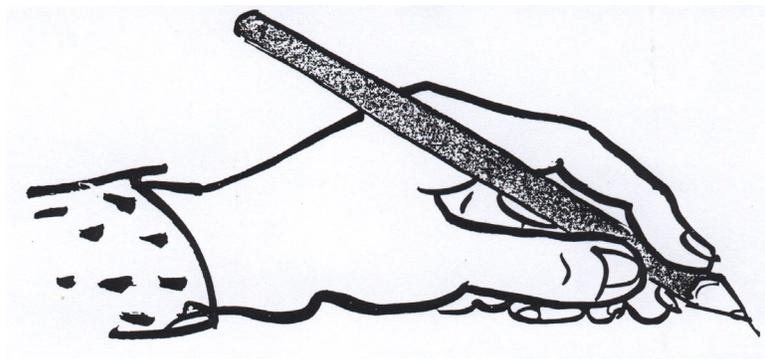


1. **Grip:** The grip illustrated below allows fine finger and wrist movements which enable the formation of smaller letters. It can be developed between the ages of four to six years but may not be mastered by some children until they are seven or eight years of age. The writing implement should be held two to three centimetres from the point.

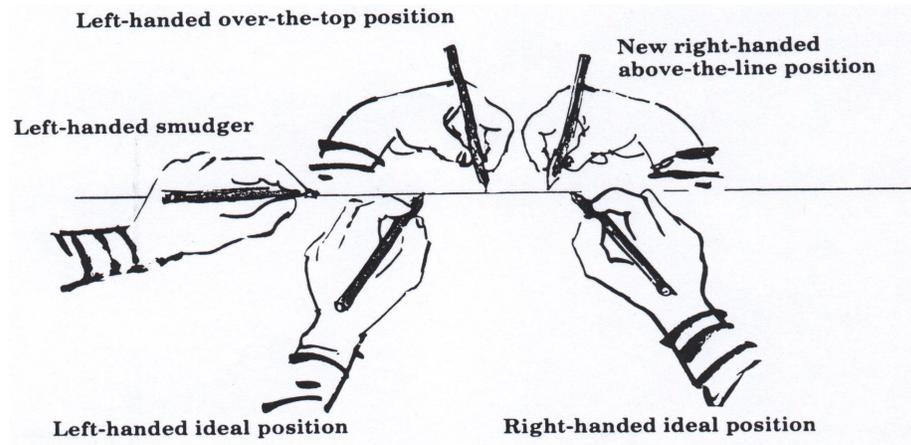
i) **Right Handers**



ii) **Left Handers**



2. **Hand Positions:** The hand positions for both right and left handed writers can be seen below. The ideal hand position is below the writing line. This enables the child to see what has been written.

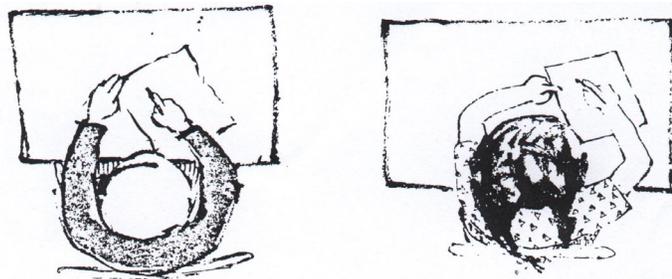


3. **Paper Placement:** Correct paper placement helps the writer to see what is being written and allows freedom of movement when writing.

The paper should be sloped according to the angle of the writing arm. For right handers, the paper should be placed to the right of the body mid-line.. For left handers, the paper should be placed to the left of the body mid-line.

The writing arm should be parallel with the edge of the paper.

i) **Right Handers**



ii) Left Handers



4. Posture:



Children must be encouraged to adopt a good posture at all times, including when writing. For correct posture children should have access to a table or desk suitable to their size. A table that is too low causes strain. A table that is too low causes slumping.

When writing, the child should maintain a straight back even when leaning over work.

The non-writing arm should take any weight from the upper portion of the body.

The eyes should be about 20 to 40 centimetres from the paper.

5. Writing Implements: To allow children to produce dark and contrasting lines, the following guidelines are recommended:

Pre-School	B and 2B pencils.
Grades 1 and 2	B and 2B pencils
Grades 3 and 4	B, 2B and HB pencils. Introduction to the ball point pen.
Grades 5 and 6	As for Grades 3 and 4.

Crayons and chalk are not recommended to use for handwriting for the following reasons:

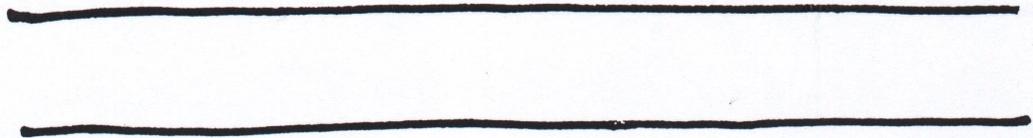
- They do not help develop the correct writing grip.
- The coarse, broad line made interferes with the mastery of detailed letter shapes.
- The point of these implements is not easily seen causing children who use them to lean their head and body over their work in order to see what they are writing. This does not create good posture.

6. Building Handwriting Skills:

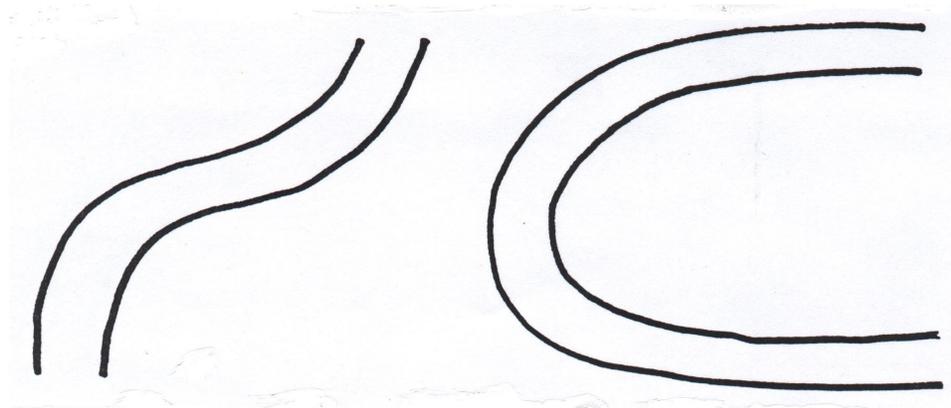
The following activities foster motor development and coordination skills that children need in order to master writing. They also help the development of visual memory as well as the motivation for writing. Specifically, the activities assist children to establish a hand writing preference, fine motor, muscular and hand-eye coordination and a good pen hold.

i) Motor Development

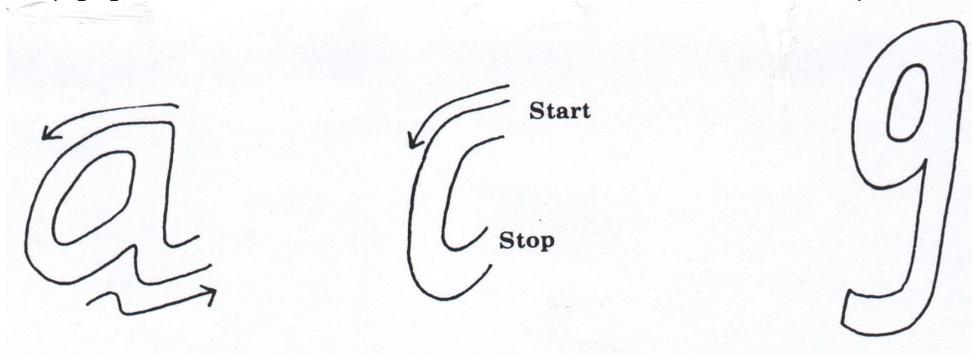
- Ball games
- Clay modelling
- Moulding – with clay, sand, oatmeal, baking dough and sawdust.
- Tearing, cutting and folding paper (scissors are more suited to older children).
- Cutting and pasting
- Finger painting
- Painting and drawing
- Sewing and weaving
- Stringing beads
- Daily events for example tying knots and bows, buttoning, zipping, screwing lids on jars.
- Hammering
- Drawing between parallel lines. Make them simple at first.



Reduce the width and introduce curved lines to increase difficulty.



The parallel lines can also form the shape of letters. Starting and finishing points and direction should be shown (eg. green dots for start, arrows for direction, red dots for finish).



ii) **Visual Memory**
Copying Shapes.

- Start from simple known shapes to more complex unknown shapes.

For young children, one simple shape should be used at a time.



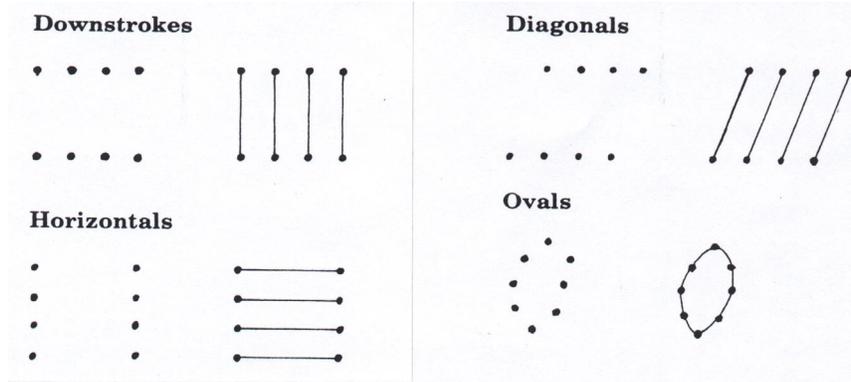
For more able students, two or three shapes may be drawn.



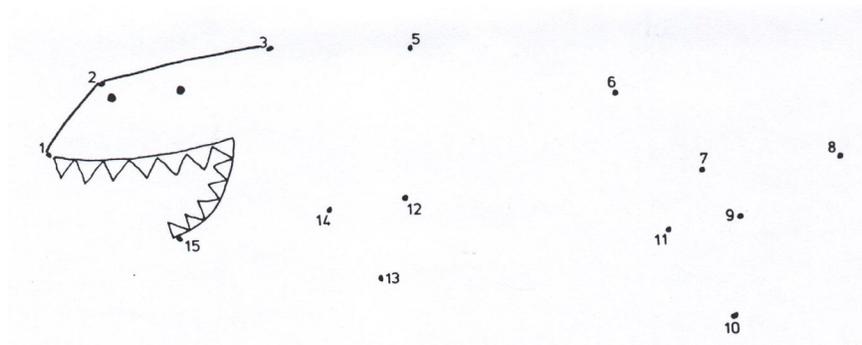
- The *Look – Cover – Draw – Check* method is useful for encouraging children to reproduce patterns/shapes/drawings from memory.

7. **Basic Writing Strokes:**

Dots on paper can be used to promote basic stroke patterns.



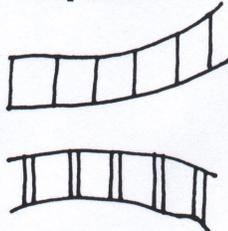
Basic writing strokes can be structured into games and activities such as dot patterns.

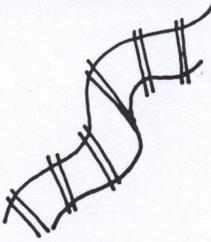


8. **Writing Pattern Activities:** The following activities incorporate the basic stroke patterns in their construction.

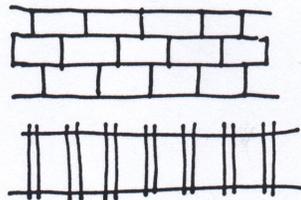
Downstrokes: top to bottom with even spacing attempted.

Patterns


Footpath


Train track


Kite

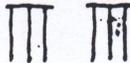

Fences


Grass

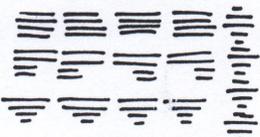

Rain


Hill
 e.g. Jack and Jill went up the hill


Flags


Cricket stumps


Horizontal: left to right with even spacing attempted.

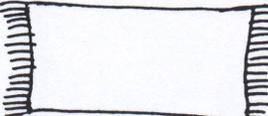
Patterns


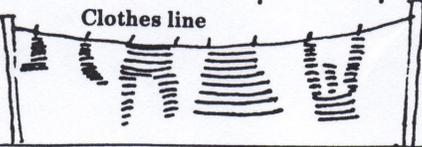
Ladder


Power lines


tree


Fences

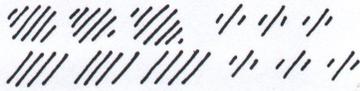

Mat


Clothes line


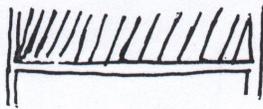
Flags


Diagonals: top to bottom with even spacing attempted.

Patterns



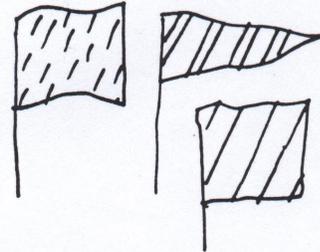
Bookshelf



Stormy rain

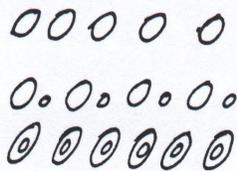


Flags

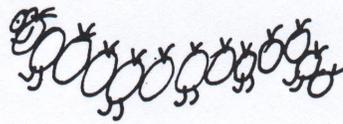


Ovals: begin at top, moving in an anticlockwise direction.

Patterns



Caterpillar



Birds



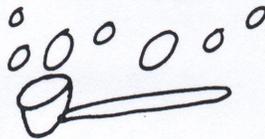
Plum pudding



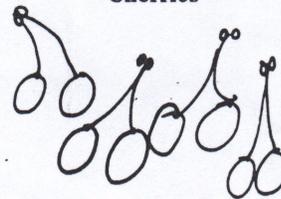
Grapes



Bubble pipe



Cherries



Eggs in nest



Egg cup



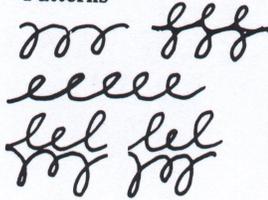
Spider (and other insects, such as ants)



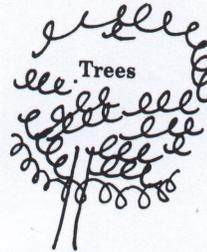
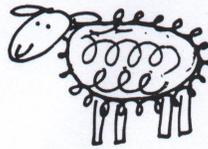
Clockwise and anticlockwise springs

Each idea may be used for either of above.

Patterns



Sheep



Trees

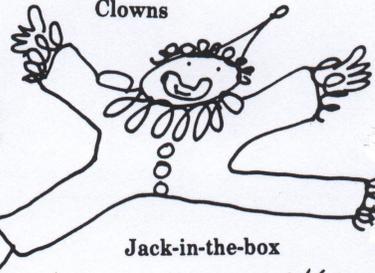
Flowers



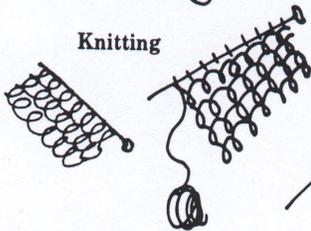
Hair



Clowns



Knitting



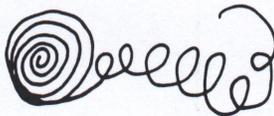
Smoke



Jack-in-the-box



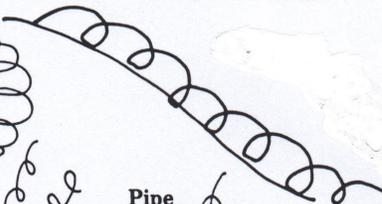
Wool



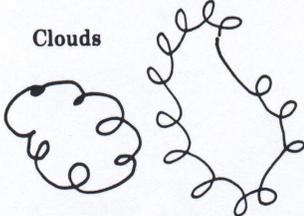
Cyclone



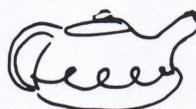
Rolling down a hill



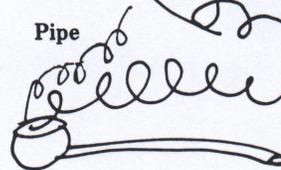
Clouds



Teapot

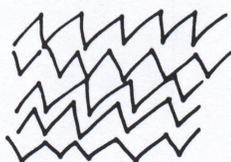


Pipe

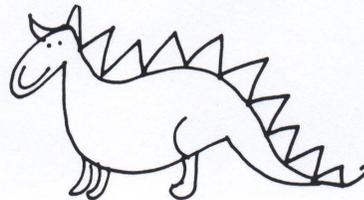


Marking time movement: begin at top, moving down, from left to right.
Hand below the pattern.

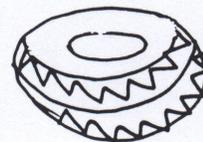
Patterns



Prehistoric monster



Tyre tread



Factory rooftop

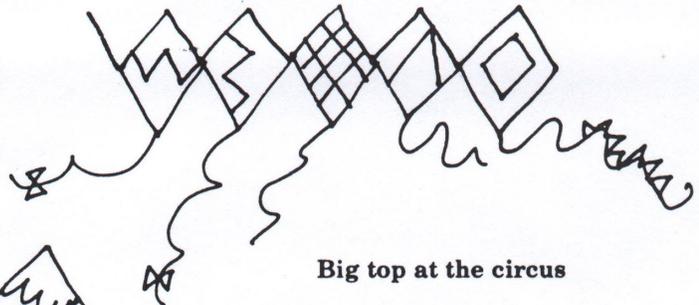


Zigzags: begin at top, moving down, from left to right.

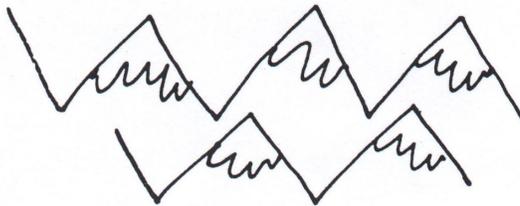
Roof tops



Kites



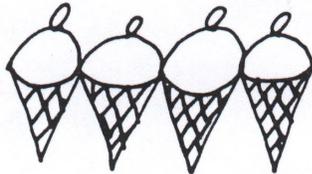
Ice-capped mountains



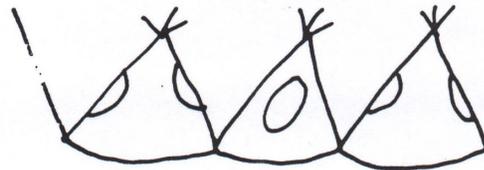
Big top at the circus



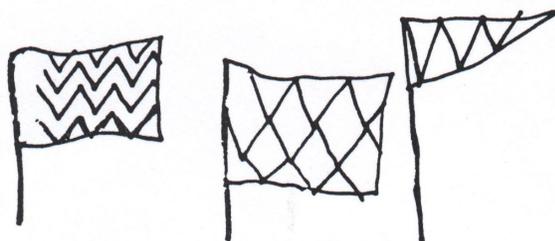
Ice creams



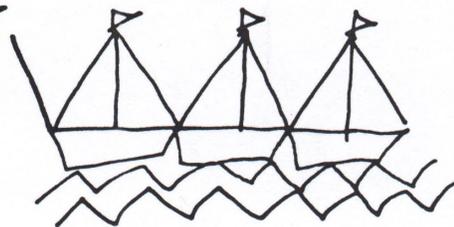
Indian tents



Flags



Sailing boats



9. Construction of Capitals

i) **Right Handers** (Letters marked with an asterisk are formed differently by left handers).



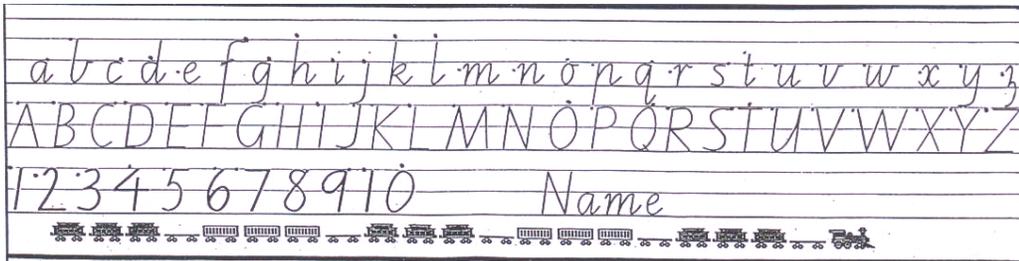
ii) **Left Handers** (Left handers form the letters below differently to right handers).



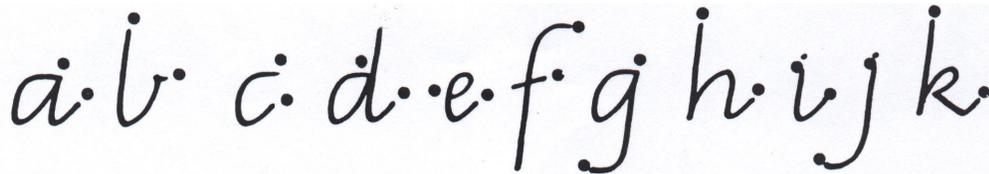
10. Overcoming Problems:

N Letter Reversals eg. b & d, N Letter reversals are generally age related and are common between five and eight years of age.

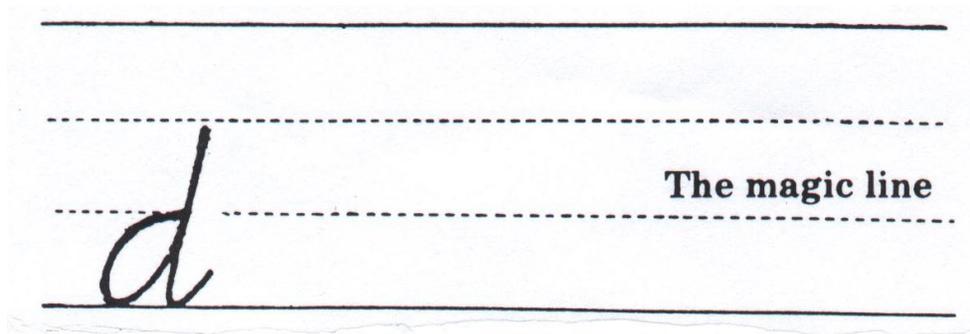
- Modelling. It is very important that the teacher models the correct starting and finishing points and directions of letters.
- An alphabet chart on the writing table in front of children will help.



- Dots can be added to the alphabet chart as an aid to help the child know where to start and finish letters. Green for start, red for finish.



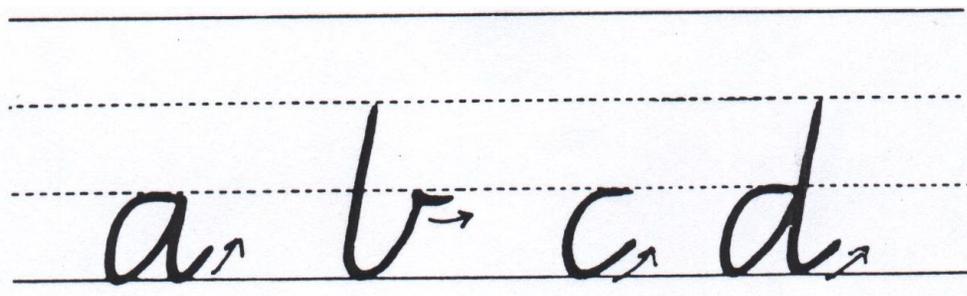
- Students should be taught that all letters start on or above the **magic line**, an imaginary line that runs along the top of the bodies of letters. Eg. The letter **d** starts on the **magic line**.



- Develop cues so children know which way letters face. Eg. The letter **s**.



- Mark the completion point of lower case letters. Nearly every letter finishes with an exit movement to the right.



- Dots and arrows can indicate starting point and direction.

