

## Improve your English writing skills

ENGLISH language learning focuses on four main skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Many consider writing to be particularly difficult. According to Jeremy Harmer, a well-known English language teacher and trainer, students find speaking easier as speaking comes from exposure and environment, but writing has to be consciously learned.

However, there are strategies to practise and improve writing skills both in and out of the classroom.

### Quick writes

If you find it difficult to start writing or come up with ideas, find short topics or questions and just practise writing for five to 10 minutes without stopping and without worrying about spelling mistakes or grammar. It is recommended to use a timer.

If students do "quick writes" every day, they will see an increase in written fluency and creativity in coming up with ideas, as well as have ongoing practice in a meaningful but less pressured way.

The following site has a list of writing topics that might be useful as quick writes: <https://eslgold.com/writing/topics/>

### Attempting different types of written discourse

Students often face different types of writing tasks in class or daily life. It is important to understand that each type is different and requires different language. Students can start by looking at an example of the type of writing they want to write and come up with a list of words or ideas related to the topic.

Initial brainstorming of ideas and vocabulary helps students think about the topic further. Brainstorm with a friend or classmate if the topic is quite challenging.

The next step is to come up with an outline or plan. A plan makes it easier to imagine what will go in each paragraph or section.



With practice, students will feel more confident to try writing on their own.

After writing a first draft, it is useful to re-read and circle any mistakes you might have made. Editing your own work will help you understand your mistakes in grammar, spelling and sentence structure, and make you aware of them when you write in future. An experienced writer or teacher can give further feedback and provide useful insight on ideas, language, and grammar.

There are many useful examples and writing prompts for different writing tasks on the main British Council website, which also has prompts to practise these tasks at <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/writing>

Following these tips will help writing tasks less stressful and easier to attempt on your own or in class. With practice, students will eventually feel more confident and motivated to attempt writing on their own. Teachers refer to this as learner autonomy.

The British Council supports students in developing writing skills both inside and outside the classroom through various courses such as myClass, Smart English and Business Skills workshops.

■ To learn more about the full- and part-time courses for adults, visit <https://www.britishcouncil.my/english/courses-adults>