

Ten Ways to Teach Writing

Writing is very important for adult learners and is often very difficult for them. The best way to get better at writing is to do it each session and in between sessions. Since it is difficult, doing it in many different ways will make it more interesting and will provide a variety of practice activities to strengthen different writing skills.

1. Dictation will help your learners listen for words and sounds. They will have to think about whether the words that they wrote make sense and that the sentence is grammatically correct. Ask them to read the sentence out loud to verify that it is correct and nothing has been added or omitted.
2. Read a short text and then copy it (1-2 sentences). If your learners are familiar with words that they have just read and then copy a sentence or two, they will pay closer attention to word order, if words are left out or added, if the sentence makes sense, and if it is grammatical. Again, they should read what they wrote out loud to verify that it makes sense. Reading aloud will train learners to use their eyes and ears to pay attention to details.
3. After writing a sentence, find the word or words that tell who or what the sentence is about. Then find the action. If the sentence is missing one or both of these elements, there is a problem. Ask your learners to figure out ways to change the sentence so that it is complete.
4. Fill-in-the-blank activities will help your learners read for information and fill in words that make sense. For example: **I always ____ breakfast at 6 a.m.** Answers may vary (**prepare, make, eat**) but if a learner is able to get the sense of the sentence from the other words around the missing word, they will be improving their writing and understanding of how to write complete sentences.
5. Find an interesting picture. Talk about the picture and generate a vocabulary list together to help write about what's happening in the picture. Then write several sentences about the picture with as much detail as possible. If appropriate, write questions about things that happened before the picture was taken or about what will happen next. Write about the people, the location, objects in the picture, or emotions.
6. Email is a great way to practice writing. Consider not correcting errors in the emails, because they may prevent learners from writing as much. Instead respond to the emails, and if appropriate, model the correct usage where there are problems. Note the type of errors to teach separately.
7. For very basic writers, give your learners all the words that they will need to write, and then they will only need to put them together. For example, you can draw a circle and write the words **I like** in the center. Draw branches around the outside of the circle and ask your learners what they like. Examples could be **milk, spaghetti, fruit, oranges**, etc. Write these words next to the branches. Then

your learners can make several sentences just by copying the words from the center of the circle and the branches. Ask learners to check for capital letters and periods in appropriate places.

8. After reading a passage, ask your learners to write in their own words what they understood about it. This activity will not only help you verify that they understood the passage, but it will also cause them to write.
9. Play a game where you have different categories of words on flash cards or recycled paper. For example, you can create a list of action words, a list of subjects, a list of location words, a list of description words, etc. Then your learners can choose from each category to form a sentence. They can then try to make the sentence longer. Once they have a sentence that makes sense, they can copy it in their notebook.
10. Analyze the types of errors your learners struggle with. Then create sentences with those errors in them. Start with one type of error per sentence. Teach the new concept (for example, every sentence starts with a capital letter). Then ask your learners to read the sentences and find the errors. As they master one concept, move on to another one. Have samples of how the printed alphabet looks for reference.