
UNIT 16 DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING

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16.0 OBJECTIVES

With the help of this unit you will

1. become familiar with the different types of writing that would be useful for ESL learners.
2. be able to distinguish the salient features of each of these types of writing.
3. be able to design your own tasks to teach these types of writing.

16.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last unit, we considered the process of writing in general. Now we shall look at specific types of writing, which we are required to teach at School. Research in writing is quite advanced today; interesting materials on teaching composition are being published almost every other day. With proper guidance, you could use them in your classes. They are sure to make the classes lively and useful.

In the days when I was a school kid, composition classes were dreary. All that we were asked to write were essays, precis and paraphrase of poems. Of course we failed to find them useful in our day-to-day life. What we learnt in the class-room had little relevance to the world outside. Further our teachers believed in the dictum, "the more you write, the better you will write". There was little guidance; infact no one took composition seriously. Teachers would laugh at the idea of "teaching" composition. After all, how

could one teach writing? One had to learn to write on his own? But today the scenario has changed drastically. ELT experts today believe that writing can be taught and that writing should be taught.

In the Unit, we shall look at non-traditional types of writing — diaries, form-filling, information transfer, etc. as well as traditional types like paragraphs, essays and letters. We shall first discuss the salient features, if any, of these types of writing and then present a few samples of new types of tasks. You could try these tasks in your classes. Later you could design similar tasks on your own. You could also use/adapt tasks from the reference material noted at the end of this unit.

16.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF WRITING

16.2.1 Filling in Forms

On several occasions in life we need to fill in forms for different purposes e.g. Application forms, forms for reservation on trains, money-order forms, cheques, etc. Many people feel intimidated by forms and always require someone else's help to fill them in. Most often our forms are rejected if they are not filled in properly. This can be regarded as one of the most basic writing skills — where vocabulary is involved and accuracy is important.

You may wonder if children at school need this skill. Yes, they do. And if we train them right from standard I, they will acquire a lot of confidence. We shall now look at some very simple tasks requiring this skill.

Task1: Here's a label you want to fix on your history notebook. Fill it in.

Name:

Class:

School:

Subject:

Now look at the label of a girl in R.K. Primary school:

Name: Supriya Sridhar

Class: III-B

School: R.K. Primary School

Subject: History

Supriya is a small girl. Her father's name is Sridhar. She studies in Class III-B in R.K. Primary School. History is one of her subjects.

Now, look at the label on your neighbour's notebook, and write four sentences about him.

Task-2: Rakesh Sinha is 12 years old. He was born on 10th May 1983. His father Ramesh Sinha is a doctor. They live at No.10, Meghraj Sethi Marg, Bombay. Rakesh studies in Adarsh Vidyashran. He plays cricket and chess. His hobbies include painting and stamp collection. Rakesh wants to join the local children's club. Could you help him to fill in the application form below?

1. Name :
2. Age :
3. Date of Birth :
4. Father's Name :
5. Father's Occupation :
6. Address :
7. Name of School :
8. Sports :
9. Hobbies :

Task-3: John Smith received the following telegram on his Birthday. Write three sentences about it.

To
 JOHN SMITH
 7, Kasturba Marg
 New Delhi 110 028

Message: HAPPY BIRTHDAY
 Sender: Ahmed Khan,
 20, Jawaharlal Nehru Road
 Madras 600 017.

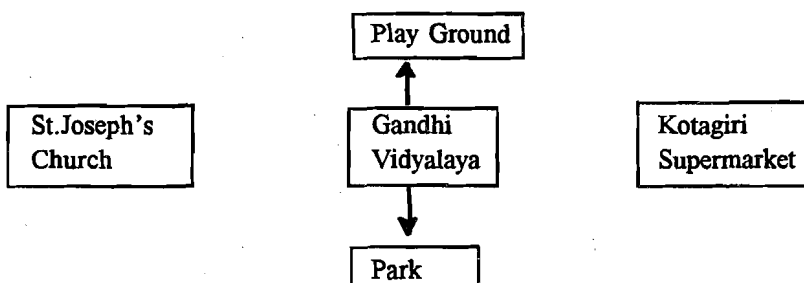
16.2.2 Information Transfer

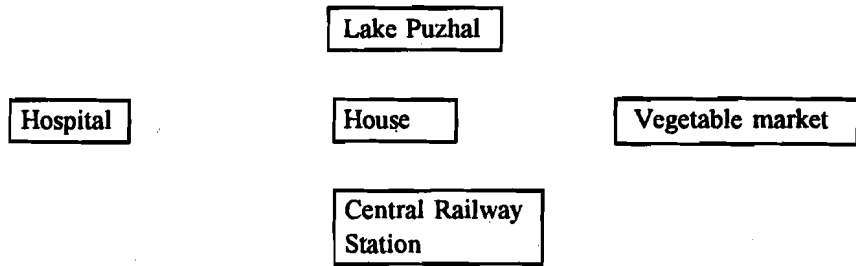
What do we mean by "information transfer"? To put it simply, it means, transferring information from one form to another e.g. writing a paragraph based on a graph; or drawing a table based on given data. In almost every walk of life we have to use this skill. While the change of non-verbal communication like tables and charts, into verbal communication (i.e. a paragraph or a report) develops composition skills, the reverse process enables learners to develop their comprehension skills. This is an important study skill which would be useful to children in their study of subjects like Mathematics, Science, History, etc. In fact, form-filling is also a type of information transfer.

Task-1: Read the following description of Deepika's school.

I study in Gandhi Vidyalaya. In front of my school there is a big park. The corporation playground is behind my school. To the left of my school is the famous super-market 'Kotagiri's.' St. Joseph's Church is to the right of my school.

Now here is a sketch of the school:





Task-2: Look at the boxes below and describe how to make a cup of coffee:



Task-3: Study the following menu card from "Hotel Dwaraka"

Idli	-	3.00 Rupees
Rava Dosa	-	6.00 Rupees
Masala Dosa	-	7.00 Rupees
Poori Potato	-	5.00 Rupees
Pongal	-	4.00 Rupees
Samosa	-	2.50 Rupees
Vadai	-	4.00 Rupees
Coffee	-	3.50 Rupees
Tea	-	2.00 Rupees

Rajiv Menon orders the following:

One plate Idli	:	Rs.3.00
One plate Vadai	:	Rs.4.00
One cup of tea	:	Rs.2.00

His friends Kishore and Rahim want different items; none of them wants to spend more than Rs.10/- for breakfast. Can you write out their orders for them?

Check Your Progress 1

1. Make a list of different forms (at least ten) which children may have to fill-up in the course of their school life.

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2. Refer to the science/history/maths book of your pupils. Choose any table/graph/diagrams from them and prepare a transfer exercise based on it.
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16.2.3 Composition

Pictures have always been popular with good teachers of English. Andrew Wright lists a number of roles for pictures in language learning

1. Pictures motivate the student. They make him want to pay attention and to take part.
2. Pictures bring the real world into the class room and provide a context for language learning.
3. Different responses are possible to pictures; they can be described in an objective way, or interpreted, or responded to subjectively.
4. Pictures can stimulate and provide information which could be referred to in conversation, discussion and story-telling.

Pictures are easy to prepare, and easy to organise. They are interesting and provide scope for meaningful and authentic use of language.

Pictures can be used with students at all levels - from beginners to advanced learners, from children to adults. Once the teacher has a collection of pictures, and has identified the ways they can be used, she requires little time for preparation. That is, once she has a bank/file of pictures, s/he can draw on them as and when s/he needs to. Further in a developing country like ours where sophisticated, high-technology, educational aids are not practical, pictures offer an economical but interesting resource. We shall now look at some tasks where pictures are used for developing writing skills.

Task-1: This task is suitable for beginners/small children. We can present a set of jumbled up pictures which tell a story. Then we can also write down a sentence matching each pictures. Now the pupils could be asked to match the pictures and sentences and rewrite the story in the correct order.

- e.g.
- a) The thief drove away in a car
 - b) He lay down on a stretcher
 - c) A thief stole of Rs.10,000/- from a bank
 - d) The hospital ward boy took him to the operation theatre
 - e) The policeman chased the thief
 - f) He looked for him at the hospital but couldn't find him
 - g) He escaped through the back gate of the hospital



Task-2: This task can be used at different levels. Here we need to have a picture where many things are wrong:

- e.g. A man is wearing a shoe on one leg and a chappal on the other.
- A lady is carrying a shoulder bag, which has no straps.
- There is a clock, which has no hour hand.
- There is a notice which is upside down, etc.

The children have to look at the picture carefully and identify the mistakes.

Task-3: Children today (why, even adults!) love reading comics. We could take a comic story and remove the words and ask the students to narrate the story on their own. If you want the task to be simpler, you could retain the words and ask the children to rewrite the story in the form of a narrative.

Task-4 : An interesting photograph from a magazine or newspaper could be given to the students and they could be asked to construct a story around it. Later, they could compare their story with the original report.

16.2.4 Diaries

A diary is personal record. hence the way in which we write a diary differs from the way we write English normally. We don't need to write English normally. We don't need to write complete sentences. Nor do we have to worry about continuity. Thoughts and feelings are often expressed in a disconnected manner, as they flash through the mind. We can use abbreviation so far as our own. The language of a diary is close to the language of a telegram.

Task-1: The following is a page from the diary of Sheila.

Woke up at 7 - Mom not at home - Granny says she has gone to hospital. I'm worried. Dad comes home at 8— leaves me at school. I want to go to hospital - dad says 'no'-evening dad picks me up at school. - all smiles - gives me 2 five stars -wega straight to hospital - and how nice to see mom - wow. There's my baby brother. So soft and cuddly - just like a doll. I'm going to call him JoJo. He'll call me 'akka'- Today happiest day of my life.

Rewrite this diary entry in the form of a continuous paragraph.

Task-2: Write a diary entry for the day when your results were published and you learnt that you were promoted to the next class.

Task -3: Your Headmaster maintains a diary for his engagements every day. What would he write on the Annual Day celebrations of your school?

You may begin as follows:

3.00 p.m. Tea for guests

3.30 pm

4.00 p.m.

Check Your Progress 2

1. What are the advantages of using pictures in the English Class?
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2. How do diary entries differ from telegrams?
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 3. Choose any picture and think of a way of using it to teach composition.

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4. Ask your students to keep a diary to enter their reactions to the English classes. Collect them at the end of the week. What do they tell you about yourself as a teacher?

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16.2.5 Dialogues

Dialogues belong to Spoken English. But often they are included as part of the composition syllabi because it is quite difficult to test spoken English. Dialogues could be very simple or matter of fact as in day-to-day conversations. They could also be highly artistic and imaginative as in literary texts — especially novels. At the primary and secondary levels we could concentrate on simple dialogues.

What makes a dialogue natural - that is, very similar to the way we speak every day?)

- a) dialogue need not always be in a full sentence
- b) It is enough if simple vocabulary is used
- c) A number of abbreviations are used e.g. can't,don't, etc.
- d) Colloquial expressions are allowed e.g. tummy,oops, wow! dad, etc.

Task-1: The following is an incomplete conversation between a mother and her son. Fill in the blanks and complete the dialogue:

Son: Mom, our class is going on an excursion to Simla.
 Mother:
 Son: In May, during the summer holidays.
 Mother:
 Son: For ten days. Two teachers are coming with us.
 Mother:
 Son: Not much - only Rs.500 per head. Mom, can I go?
 Mother:
 Son: Thank you ma. You are a pet, aren't you?

Task-2: The following is a part of a telephone conversation between Ahmed and Sharif. Reconstruct the whole conversation.

Ahmed:

Sherif:

Ahmed: And you know, the Maths teacher was also on leave today.

Sherif: So you had two free periods? That means I didn't miss much after all!

Ahmed: Oh, we had a 'fab' time! How I wish you had come to school today. You and your silly 'flu'

Sherif:

Ahmed:

Task-3: Imagine, that on your way to school, a stranger asks you the way to the Railway station. Write the dialogue between yourself and the stranger.

Task-4: Group Composition

A picture is displayed so that the whole class can see it. Each group studies it and then creates a five minute drama which finishes with the picture. Then they act out the drama in front of the whole class. The other groups watch the drama and because the same picture is referred to, their interest is retained.

16.2.6 Letters

All of us write letters for various reasons. Letters enable us to communicate with people who are away from us. Some of the purposes for which we write letters are: to inform, to invite, to enquire, to complain, to congratulate, to express sympathy, etc. Every letter has a writer, a reader and a situation. There are two types of letters: formal letters are written for business purposes usually among strangers. Informal letters include all correspondence between friends, members of a family, relatives, etc.

The important parts of the letter are:

The writer's address, date, the receiver's address, salutation, body of the letter; subscription, signature and the writer's full name below the signature.

The important parts of an informal letter are:

The writer's address, date, salutation, body of the letter; subscription and signature.

Now we shall look at some interesting task types on letter writing:

Task-1: Letter to a pen friend on a picture post card

Date	
<p>Dear Jane,</p> <p>My name is Rani, Will you be my pen-friend? I am ten years old. I study in class V. I have a brother. My dad is an engineer and my mum is a teacher</p> <p>I love swimming and cycling.</p> <p>Please write to me about yourself.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yours affectionately,</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Rani</p>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 30px; margin: 0 auto;"></div> <p>M/s. Jane Gilpin 7, Mayfield Road Edinburgh, Great Britain.</p>

This is Rani's first letter to her pen-friend Jane. Now write a similar letter to your pen-friend.

Task-2: Jumbled up letter

Read this letter from Asha to her mother. Asha is describing her life in the hostel. The paragraphs are jumbled up. Put them in the right order.

At night we have chapatis for dinner and a glass of milk too. We study upto 10 p.m. Then the lights have to be switched off. You know how difficult it is for me.

How many late night movies I used to watch at home?

In the hostel four of us share a room. Each has a cot, a table, a desk and an almirah. My roommates are Sharmila (from Calcutta), Sapna (from Delhi), and Nandita (from Kerala). I am learning some Bengali and Malayalam too. We sit and chat for a long time in the nights. We always do everything together.

Dear Mom, hope things are fine with you. You had asked me about the hostel. I'm now going to bore you to death with my description!

Can you believe mom, that your dear daughter wakes up at 5 o' clock in the morning? Yes, hostel has changed me lot. No bed coffee till six, but a mad rush for the bathrooms. If we don't reach the dining hall by eight no breakfast either! Don't think your daughter is suffering. I must tell you about my friends.

Task-3: Suresh wrote the following letter to his Headmaster. But his Headmaster was very angry when he read it. Why? Can you help Suresh to correct it?

My dear headmaster,

Hope you are fine. I am not feeling very fine. I have fever. Sorry I can't come to school today. Please excuse me. Can I take leave for today.

Yours affectionately,
Suresh

Task-4: A letter from Space

This is a letter from a girl in Mars to her friend Rajesh on earth.

5, Center Street
Red Colony
Mars

Dear Rajesh,

Thanks for your letter and photographs. It was lovely to see them. You look so different.

You wanted to know about me. My full name is Beepentina. I have red hair and a green face. Do you know I won the first prize in the beauty contest at my school?

How do you manage with two hands? We all have four arms and four eyes - we can look at all the four directions at the same time. We eat a lot of fruits and flowers. We drink only milk.

We speak Martiana. Our songs are beautiful. On New Year's Day we sing and dance throughout the day. We also exchange gifts.

Please write again soon and tell me more about yourself.

With Love,

BEEPANTAINA

Check Your Progress 3

1. Think of at least 5 contexts which are common for communication in school. e.g. A teacher discussing a child's progress.

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2. Identify at least 5 occasions when a pupil has to write letters e.g. a letter asking for leave.

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3. Design one task each on (a) teaching dialogue
(b) teaching letter writing

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16.2.7 Paragraphs/Essays

Paragraphs form a part of any continuous piece of writing in essays, reports, letters, etc. So it is necessary to teach our pupils to write good paragraphs. What are the characteristics of a well-written paragraph?

- a) It has unity: Each paragraph deals with a specific idea. Generally most paragraphs have a topic sentence, i.e. the sentence which contains the key idea of the paragraph.
- b) A paragraph is well organised —it has a definite plan. There are various types of paragraph organisation e.g. exemplification of an idea, narration, i.e. a time-sequenced organisation of events; comparison - contrast, etc.
- c) A paragraph has coherence —each sentence logically follows from the previous sentence, and anticipates the next sentence.

When we teach the children paragraph/essay writing, we should impress upon them these facts.

Task-1: At the elementary stage we can provide a model paragraph and ask the children to closely imitate it.

Kiran has lost his pencil box and he puts up the following notice:

My pencil box is red in colour. It has the picture of Mickey Mouse on it. There are two pencils in it. One pencil is black and the other is blue. There is also a pink eraser in it. There is a Superman sticker inside the box. I also kept a two rupee coin in it.

Now write a paragraph about your school bag in the same way.

Task-2: In the passage below, two paragraphs are jumbled up. Can you separate them?

Once there lived a cruel wolf in a town. One day a king saw an old man planting small mango plants. He asked him, "when will you get any fruit from these plants?" Saint Francis visited the town and wanted to see the wolf. The king laughed and said "You'll die before the trees bear fruit." People told him that he would be killed. But the saint would not listen. The old man smiled and said "Yes, but others will eat the fruit. Now, I am eating the fruit from the trees which my grandfather planted." He went into the forest. When the wolf ran towards him, he said "Come here Brother Wolf ". The king was ashamed. The cruel wolf closed its mouth and sat down at his feet.

Task-3: Use the following hints to write a paragraph.

Mohaandas Karamchand Gandhi - born 1869 Porbander — Father Karamchand Gandhi—Mother Putli Bai - went to England to study law - worked as lawyer in South Africa — Came to India — joined the freedom movement — believed in Ahimsa and Satyagraha — won freedom for India in 1947 — always spoke the truth — tried a simple life — fought for Hindu - Muslim unity — killed by Godse in 1947 — remembered as Mahatma, Father of the Nation.

Task-4: Choose any interesting picture from a magazine. Ask the students to write a paragraph describing the picture.

16.2.8 Reports

A report describes an event or an experience. Reports are of several kinds: newspaper reports, scientific reports or business reports. The following are the salient features of a report.

1. A report is brief
2. It is usually written in the third person
3. It includes only relevant details - there are no digressions
4. It avoids emotional overtones
5. The ideas are logically arranged

Task-1: Imagine that you are the editor of the school newsletter 'School Times'. You have to report the Independence day celebrations. Use the following hints and write a report.

15 August 1995 - 7.00 a.m. - all students in white, assembled under the flag post—Chief Guest, the police Commissioner arrived at 7.30 a.m. - Flag hoisted - Everyone sings flag song - guard of honour presented to Chief Guest by N.C.C. students meeting at the hall - "Duties of youngsters to Mother India" —Vote of thanks proposed by the school Principal - Tea for all pupils.

Task-2: Nitin telephone Ben but Ben was not at home. His sister Rita picked up the phone. The following conversation took place between Nitin and Rita.

Rita: Hello, this is 8265279.

Nitin: Hello Rita, this is Nitin. Could I speak to Ben?

Rita: Sorry, he's gone out. Can I take a message for him?

Nitin: Yes, please. You see, we were planning to do combined study at your place tonight, but my mother is down with fever and I have to take her to the doctor. Could you tell Ben that I can't come tonight? Say I'm extremely sorry.

Rita: O.K. I'll explain it to him.

Nitin: Thank you, Bye.

Now Rita wrote down a message for Ben, reporting her conversation with Nitin. It began as follows: "Your friend Nitin rang up to say....."

Task-3: The students' union met to discuss the farewell party for seniors. The following items were discussed at the meeting.

1. Date and Venue
2. Budget
3. Items on the menu
4. Gifts for seniors
5. Speeches
6. Entertainment

Using this outline plan, write a report of the meeting, to be presented to the Principal.

1. Consult any one of the books in the reference section at the end of the unit (or any other text-book on teaching writing) and select a task each on paragraph writing, essay writing and report writing.
2. Ask each of your pupils to think of any one topic on which they would like to write a paragraph/essay. Collect them and make a list of the most interesting ten. Say why they appealed to you.
3. Collect from newspapers at least 5 reports which you could use in your class.

16.3 LET US SUM UP

1. Writing can be taught; writing should be taught.
2. We should teach our pupils what is relevant to their life.
3. We should teach traditional types of writing, e.g. paragraphs, essays, letters, reports, etc.
4. We should also teach non-traditional types e.g. dairies, form-filling, information transfer, etc.
5. Form-filling is a basic writing skill which demands accuracy and develops confidence in children.
6. The skill of information-transfer helps children to study subjects other than English too.
7. Pictures offer an interesting stimulus to develop various types of writing skills.
8. Writing diaries helps children to express their emotions freely without worrying too much about grammatical accuracy.
9. Dialogues offer an indirect means of training in spoken language.
10. Letters, formal and informal, are useful for various purposes in life. Each has a specific format.
11. Paragraphs and essays constitute the backbone of all good writing. A good paragraph should have unity, coherence and good organisation.
12. There are major types of reports : newspapers, scientific and business.

16.4 KEYWORDS

Information Transfer	a task which requires pupils to change non-verbal communication into verbal communication and vice-versa.
Picture Composition	using pictures as stimuli to develop writing skills.
Topic sentence	the sentence containing the key idea of a paragraph.

16.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

Bhaskaran, M.P. (eds.) (1989). *Onward English : Language Practice 1-5*. Madras: Orient Longman.

- Freeman, S. (1977). *Written Communication in English*. Madras, Orient Longman.
- Radhakrishnan Pillai, G., Rajeevan, K. And Bhaskaran Nair, T. (1990). *Written English for You*. Madras: Emerald.
- Saraswathi, V. (1979). *Organised Writing*. Madras: Orient Longman.
- Wright, A. (1989). *Pictures for Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Xavier, L and Ramani, P.N. (1987). *Written Communication I & II*. Pondicherry, Pondicherry University.
- Tickoo, M.L. and Bhaskaran, M.P. (eds.) (1985). *Gulmohar Graded English Course : Practice Books 1-5*. Madras: Orient Longman.

16.6 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Application form; bus pass form; library membership form; details in hand book; medical inspection form; etc.
2. No specific answer.

Check your Progress 2

1. The advantage of using pictures: motivating, participating, life-oriented, scope for objective/subjective responses, informative.

2. Diaries

Personal
 Brief or long
 Personal abbreviations allowed
 Meant for one's own self
 May or may not be clear to others.

Telegrams

Impersonal
 As brief as possible
 No personal abbreviations
 Meant for others
 Should be very clear.

- 3&4. No specific answer.

Check Your Progress 3

1.
 - a) Students and teacher planning a school event.
 - b) Teacher asking for explanation of misconduct.
 - c) Student seeking permission (for several things)
 - d) A parent complaining
 - e) A teacher commending children.
2.
 - a) letter requesting permission to do something.
 - b) letter apologising for misconduct.
 - c) letter of inquiry.
 - d) letter inviting someone to school.
 - e) thank you letters.
3. No specific answer.