

Strategies for teaching writing:

Writing must be simple, clear, meaningful and coherent in order to avoid misinterpretation or misrepresentation of ideas. Some basic aspects that must be taken care of while teaching writing may be summarized as follows:

- i. Language –
 - a. Use of correct and consistent spelling
 - b. Appropriate use of grammar and syntax
 - c. Accurate and wide range of vocabulary
 - d. Appropriate style and tone
 - e. Clarity of purpose
- ii. Organization and layout –
 - a. Relevance of the text written
 - b. Effective organization of content
 - c. Logical links between successive sentences or sections
 - d. Appropriate punctuation marks
 - e. Coherence
 - f. Appropriate linking words and phrases
- iii. Clarity –
 - a. Appropriate coverage
 - b. Clear statement of ideas
 - c. Logical links between events
 - d. Sequential coherence

Keeping all these in view the teacher must devise organized activities for teaching the skill of writing. Writing exercises mostly boil down to exercises in composition which broadly signify arrangement of points in a certain order. The writing or composition tasks can be broadly of three types –

- i. Guided or controlled composition: Both content and expression are provided by the teacher and the learner is thus exposed to writing in a graded and systematic manner. Guided writing is a somewhat more flexible variant of controlled writing where the teacher provides appropriate hints to the learner, who then responds individually. The degree of control and guidance is progressively reduced as the learner develops proficiency in due course of time.
- ii. Free composition: learners with sufficient proficiency in structural and syntactic aspects of writing, select vocabulary and structures independently in order to express their thoughts.
- iii. Collaborative composition: Writing exercises in formal classroom settings are now carried out in groups and pairs to facilitate a sharing of ideas, expressions, editing skills

and self correction to generate an acceptable and correct version of writing. This calls for organization, planning and management, but is effective in promoting writing skills through psychologically sound enjoyable activities.

In different types of composition or writing exercises some fundamental aspects are to be kept in mind for developing suitable strategies. They are –

- i. **Generating awareness:** An awareness about elements of standard writing, format and style is necessary and may be generated in the learners through some of the following strategies –
 - a. Analyzing text to point out elements of good writing
 - b. Analyzing text to point out the shortcomings and structural weakness
 - c. Comparison of multiple texts in terms of style
 - d. Ordering of jumbled sentences and paragraphs to create coherence
 - e. Exercises in dividing a given text into sections to generate an awareness of contextual focus and sequence.
- ii. **Providing support:** After generating awareness about the fundamental characteristics of writing support may be given by the teacher to promote writing skills. Such planned support may be in the form of grammatical inputs, exercises in relevant vocabulary, elicitation of appropriate ideas and themes and effective guidelines.
- iii. **Focussed practice procedures:** The learners must be focussed on well planned drills in order to gain proficiency in the skill of writing. Some such activities may be in the form of taking and organizing notes, ordering of sentences and paragraphs to generate coherence, insertion of missing information into a given text or combining simpler sentences to make more complex and loaded articulations.
- iv. **Advanced practises:** Once the learners have gained proficiency through focussed practice, they must be encouraged to create texts from relevant prompts or in accordance with the model, gradually proceeding towards independent creation of logical, coherent, meaningful and creative writing.
- v. **Vocabulary and grammar:** For developing effective writing skills organization and stylistic choices must be complemented by sufficient knowledge of vocabulary and grammatical norms. This may be achieved by specific exercises in the form of error correction, planned exposure of the learners to reference books, indicating selected words and grammatical uses in those books and discussions on the errors in a piece of writing. Feedback is of utmost importance and the teachers and learners may collaborate as co-writers in reviewing and rewriting selected pieces for prompt feedbacks and enhancement of the writing skill.

Some of the commonest forms of writing used extensively are given below. Graded exercises and planned strategies of teaching writing thus inevitably centre around most of the following.

- i. Dialogues: should be ideally related to the real life situations of the learners. Use of abbreviations and colloquial expressions are allowed and incomplete sentences as used in real-life conversations are accepted. Apart from dialogue writing incomplete dialogues may also be provided for reconstruction of complete conversations. Group compositions may also be encouraged in which groups of learners may create a five minute drama on the basis of a given text or picture, which they enact in the classroom setting.
- ii. Letters: letter writing constitute important communicative mode, especially in connecting with physically distant people in form of invitation, enquiry, complaint, application etc. Letters are principally of two types, namely formal and informal letters. Formal letters are written for business purposes while informal letters signify correspondence between friends, family and acquaintances. Apart from simple exercises in letter writing, other strategies for enhancing this skill may be employed in the form of jumbled up letters where the learner must reorganize sections for a coherent whole.
- iii. Reports: reports are of several kinds like newspaper reports, academic or scientific reports, field reports, business reports etc. The elements encouraged in such exercises are brevity, completeness, lack of digression, accuracy, clarity, precision, inclusion of relevant details, logical arrangement and lack of emotional or sentimental overtones. Writing reports on the basis of telephonic conversations, school celebrations, planning of school events, excursions, local events and campus journalism are some of the popular strategies for developing writing skill. Campus news bulletins are interesting ways of developing writing skills among the learners.
- iv. Paragraphs/essays: One of the most popular strategies for teaching writing since paragraph writing allows an effective exercise in continuous and coherent writing. Apart from the elements of unity, coherence and organization of ideas, creativity and critical thinking of the learners are also enhanced for advanced writing skill.
- v. Newspapers may also be used in innovative ways to teach writing. Front pages may be circulated and learner s may be urged to jot down word s that they like the most. With the help of those words they would now be urged to write a coherent story on their own. They may also be asked to do the same with words jotted down on hearing any recorded piece or any piece narrated by the teacher. They may also be urged to ferret out and jot down words with positive or gloomy connotations and write sentences in accordance with the moods expressed by the individual words.

- vi. Diaries: Refers to a personal record and thus thoughts may be expressed in informal manner without strict adherence to rules of continuity. Exercises in diary writing boost the interest and motivation level of the learner. It also inspires independent thinking and is effective modes of teaching writing skills.
- vii. Picture Composition: Andrew Wright(1989) refers to a number of roles for pictures in teaching writing, including heightened motivation of the learners, interesting and relevant contextualisation, multiplicity of response- both subjective and objective.