



HANDOUT: WRITING ACTIVITIES

The Unnamed Food

This activity is good for helping learners improve their use of description and detail in writing. Use a mind map or other graphic organizer to help learners brainstorm during the prewriting step.

Steps

1. Ask learners to think of a food. Explain that they shouldn't tell anyone what their food is. Ask them to write the name of the food in the center of a piece of paper and draw a circle around it.
2. Ask learners to write the word "ingredients" off to one side, draw a circle around it, and connect it back to the circle with the name of their food. Now ask learners to think of the ingredients in their food and write them around the circle.
3. Follow Step 2 with the following topics:
 - How the food is prepared
 - How the food looks, smells, feels, sounds, and tastes
 - Why the learner enjoys this food.
4. Now ask each learner to take a fresh sheet of paper and write a paragraph describing his or her food without naming it. When learners have finished, have them give their paragraphs to their partners. The partners try to guess the foods correctly. The goal is to describe the food well enough that a partner can identify it.

Variations

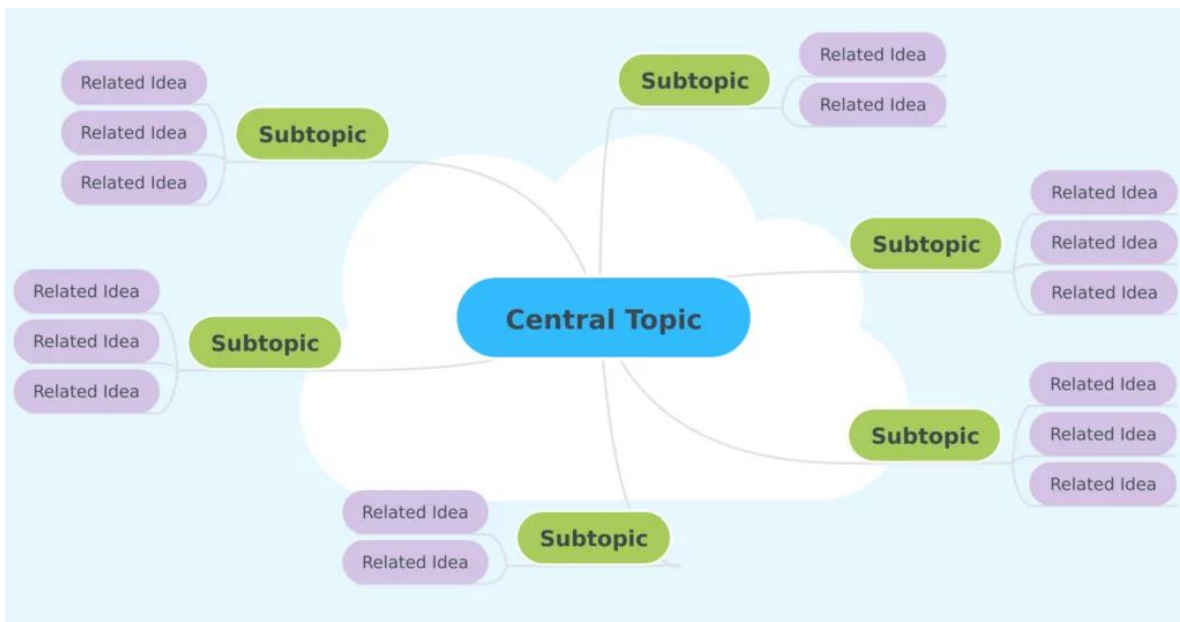
This activity can be done with holidays, modes of transportation, clothing, sports, places to eat or visit, or any other common learner experience.

Mind Mapping

Mind mapping is a great tool to use during the prewriting step of the writing process. Mind mapping allows writers to quickly capture thoughts and connect those ideas in ways that make sense to them. Learners can then use their mind maps as starting points for creating first drafts.

Steps

1. Write a word or topic in the center of the page and circle it.
2. Ask the learner what comes to mind when thinking about the topic.
3. Write what the learner says. Group related ideas using circles or lines to show connections.
4. Talk about the finished map and make additions or revisions.
5. Ask the learner to choose which parts of the map to include in the writing.
6. For beginning learners, do all the mind map writing, and read the results back to the learner. More advanced learners may be able to create their own maps.
7. To help a learner get comfortable with maps, you might want to make a map of a reading selection.
8. As an intermediate step, you can ask a learner to brainstorm thoughts about a topic and dictate them to you. You write them in a list. Go over the list with the learner and ask which ideas belong together. Write these ideas in clusters and use them to prepare a map.



Sal's Poem

Sal
Mexican, brave, hardworking, hopeful
Son of Ben and Bella
Brother of Carmen, Victor, and Martin
Who feels glad to be here
Who likes sunny days
Who needs family, friends, and work
Who lives in Dallas, Texas
Castro

Write A Poem About Yourself:

Think about Sal's Poem. Think about what you would say about yourself. Write a poem about yourself. Write a draft here.

Your first name: _____

Four words that tell about you: _____

Son or daughter of: _____

Brother, sister, or friend of: _____

Who feels: _____

Who likes: _____

Who needs: _____

Who lives in: _____

Your last name: _____

Read the draft of your poem. Does it say what you want? Change any words you want to change.

Ask another person to read your poem. Can he or she understand it? Make any needed changes.

Write the final draft of your poem.

Teaching Handwriting

Here are some teaching strategies you can use when teaching handwriting.

1. **Keep a handwriting chart available** and visible to learners when they are working on any writing activity and make sure each learner has a copy for home. Preferably, the chart will show the direction of the pencil as the letters are formed. You can find many examples of these charts by searching for “handwriting charts” online.
2. **Progress from large motor to small motor skills.** Learners who haven’t done a lot of writing may not have the fine motor skills needed to write legibly in a small space while holding a small pencil. Begin by having learners use their arms and hands to write the letters in the air. Next, have them write the letters on the top of a desk using their fingers. Or put salt into a rimmed tray and have them draw the letters in the salt. From there, have learners use pencils to write the letters on unlined paper. Finally, have them trace the outline of the letters on lined paper, and then write them independently.
3. **Start with printing.** Print is easier to learn and closely resembles the text learners see in books and online.
4. **Start with the letters the learner needs or wants to learn.** Written letters do not need to be taught in alphabetical order. Letter formation is better taught in the context of what the learner needs to learn to write or by grouping letters that are formed with similar motions.
5. **Copy.** After a learner can form letters, have the learner copy words and sentences. The learner can copy vocabulary words, sentences from the story, or a story that he or she dictated and you wrote down. Copying activities should be short and should be related to learners’ needs or learning goals.

Spelling: A Multisensory Approach

Many learners have difficulty with spelling. Here is a multisensory approach to spelling that encourages the learner to use as many senses as possible to increase the likelihood of remembering how to spell a word.

Steps

1. Look at the word.
2. Say the word.
3. Note the parts that are written the way they sound.
4. Note the parts that are not written the way they sound.
5. Note any special points to remember.
6. Say the word again.
7. Say the letters in sequence as you look at the word.
8. Say the letters in sequence as you trace them.
9. Look at the word again. Say it.
10. Close your eyes and see the word in your mind.
11. Spell the word aloud as you see it in your mind.
12. Write the word without looking at the model.
13. Check to see if you are correct.

Combining Sentences

This activity can help learners move from writing simple sentences to connecting ideas and writing more complex sentences.

Steps

1. With the learner, choose a familiar topic.
2. Ask the learner to write several short sentences about the topic. Model an example of a short sentence if necessary. If a learner has trouble writing simple sentences, have the learner tell you the sentences and you write them down. Have the learner copy the sentences afterward.
3. Show the learner examples of short sentences on a topic, and then show examples of those sentences combined into more complex sentences.
4. Discuss with the learner which simple sentences were combined into more complex sentences. Ask the learner to point out how the sentences were combined—by combining subjects or objects, or by using linking words to join two complete sentences.
5. Ask the learner to choose two sentences to combine and to tell you how he or she would like to combine them.
6. Guide the learner to a grammatically correct sentence.

Additions: Teach the learner the acronym FANBOYS to remember the linking words: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*.

Sentence Building

This activity can help learners develop very complex and descriptive sentences from basic sentences.

Steps

1. Ask the learner to write a five-word sentence with a subject, verb, and object. The sentence should not include proper names, pronouns, or prepositional phrases. The sentence should use an action verb. Example: The boy threw the ball.
2. Ask the learner to add an adjective for each noun.
3. Ask the learner to add an adverb.
4. Ask the learner to add a prepositional phrase.
5. Ask the learner to add another adjective for each noun.
6. At this point, you can ask the learner to change any words they would like to change. Perhaps they want to use a different subject, verb, or object; or to replace pronouns with nouns.
7. To continue the activity, ask the learner to write a short paragraph based on the idea in the sentence.