

## Strategies for Helping a Student Write Sentences



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### 1. Word List-Builds spelling confidence and increases self-reliance

- A. Keep a list of commonly used words in the student's notebook for the student to refer to each time he or she writes. When the student learns a new word, add it.
- B. Before reading or at the beginning of a unit, have the student make a list of important vocabulary. Have the student refer to that list when using that vocabulary in a sentence. You could also refer to a vocabulary page in the student's ESL book.

### 2. Use Repetition-Increases retention of vocabulary and language structures

When learning a new language, a student needs to use vocabulary many times before it is stored in long term memory. Use the words on the word list over and over again. Look for opportunities to use grammar structures the student knows in writing.

### 3. Connect to Experiences or a Story-Good for language building

Write a sentence about something you just learned in the ESL book; give a sentence starter. For example, if you read about going to the supermarket, ask the student to write a sentence about what vegetables he or she likes or doesn't like. Say, "I like.....", "I don't like.....".

### 4. Recite-Builds recognition of individual words in a sentence

Have the student say the sentence out loud, many times if necessary, before writing. If the student has difficulty discerning words, ask him or her how many words are in the sentence before writing. Count the words as you recite the sentence together. Have the student continue to count down the words as he or she writes. Help sound out words while writing.

5. Dictation-Builds recognition of individual words in a sentence

You say a sentence, many times. The student repeats it and counts how many words there are. The student writes it without help as you both continue to repeat it. After the student finishes writing the sentence, give him or her a chance to check that no words have been left out. Then, according to level, give him or her a specific task for checking the sentence, such as making sure he or she has -ing if the sentence is present progressive. Finally, have the student try writing a sentence on his/her own, using the same sentence pattern. Ask him or her to write this type of sentence again next time you see this student.

6. Checking Task-Student can try writing first, think about editing after

Before the student starts writing, tell him or her what things to correct when finished. *Ask the student's teacher what the student should be editing for.* For example, you might tell a beginner to decide where to have a capital letter and to remember to use a period or to use spaces between words. The student should not be concerned with everything being perfect, but should check for the assigned things when finished writing the sentence.

7. Word Scramble-Work on grammar and word order

Take a sentence from the student's book, using a grammatical structure the student has learned previously. Write the words out of order and have the student put them back in order. Then ask the student to write a new sentence with the same structure. Next time you see the student, ask him or her to write another sentence like it.

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**Read each scenario. What can you do to help each student write a sentence?**

**Each student has read about shopping at a supermarket and has been asked to write:**

Student A:

...about what foods he or she likes. The student cannot write the sentence, but can tell you the foods.

Ex. "tomato....like". What can you do to help? (Beginner)

Student B:

...about where he or she goes shopping. The student writes "I goes shop for Soomalia Moll." What would be a good checking task to assign to this student? (Intermediate)

(Choose only one or two important things for this student to focus on, according to his/her level)

Student C:

...a sentence comparing fresh produce in Somalia and in the U.S. The student keeps asking how to spell every word and keeps forgetting his or her sentence. (Advanced)