

## Writing a news report

**Topic:** News reports

**Aims:**

- To develop students' abilities to organise information and construct it into a text
- To develop students' abilities to revise, redraft and improve their writing
- To develop students' abilities to construct questions

**Level:** Pre-Intermediate and above

**Introduction**

During this lesson students will go through the process of developing ideas and collecting and organising information. They will then use the information to create the first draft of an imaginary news article. They will then focus on some key areas of good writing and try to redraft their articles with these in mind.

A variety of follow up tasks are offered after the main plan.

**Procedure**

**Pre writing tasks:**

**Rationale:** This part of the lesson should give students the opportunity to collect information before writing the news report. This should reduce the amount of creativity needed during the actual writing.

- Write up the headline:

### **Mystery Disappearance of English Teacher: Students Suspected**

- Put the students in groups or pairs to try to predict the content of the story and what may have happened to the teacher.
- Get the students to change groups and compare what they think may have happened.
- Give out a pile of about 10 or 15 slips of paper. Tell the students to write a question about the story on each slip of paper and give each one to you. **(You might want to put up some question words on the board to help prompt them. i.e. Who...? What time...? How many...? Etc.)**
- As they give you the slips of paper write very brief answers on them and give them back.

**Tip:** This works best if the students give each question to you as soon as they write it and you write your answer on their slip of paper and return it immediately. The answers you give them will help to prompt them to produce more questions. If you have a very large class this may not be possible and you may want to stage this over more than one lesson so you have time to write all the replies.

- Stop when the students have either used up all their slips of paper or run out of questions.
- Students then collect up the information they have on the slips of paper. Tell them they will use the information to compose a news report to go with the headline. Before they start writing the report ask them to decide what order they will put the information in.

**Tip:** A common order for newspaper reports of this kind is:

- Headline
- General info about crime
- More details about what happened
- A description of any suspects or the criminals
- What police have done / are doing to try to solve the crime (possible appeal for witnesses)

### Writing Tasks

- Once they have grouped the information tell them to write the report and make sure to include all the information from their questions.
- Once the students have written their reports ask them to exchange them with another student and give out the Editor's checklist. The students then use this to check through each other's work and write on any comments or suggestions for improvement.

#### Editor's checklist:

- Is the information grouped into logical paragraphs?
- Are the paragraphs in a logical order?
- Is there any unnecessary information?
- Is any necessary information missing?
- Are there any parts that you can't understand?
- Are a lot of the same words repeated?
- Can more precise words be used?
- Is there too much repetition of linkers like **and, but, then** etc?
- Do all the verbs agree with their subjects? (e.g. **she are is ...**)
- Have articles (**the, a, an**) been used correctly?
- Have the correct verb forms been used?
- Is the punctuation correct?
- Have all the words been spelt correctly?

- They then give the checked report back to the original writer who makes any corrections or changes and produces a final draft.

**Tip:** Generally I've found that the process of drafting, adding comments and redrafting works best when done on a word processor as it is much easier for students to make changes to their text without having to rewrite the whole thing.

If your students don't have access to computers then you might consider spreading the redrafting over more than one lesson.

**Possible follow up tasks**

- Put the reports up on the walls around the class and get the students to look at them all and choose the one they think is best.

**OR**

- Collect up the students' slips of paper with their questions on and do some error correction work.

**OR**

- Collect some short authentic news articles from either the internet or newspapers and tell the students to compare them with their own:  
They should look for:  
The way information is organised (how many paragraphs, what is the focus of each paragraph?)  
The verb forms or structures used (present perfect, present simple, active or passive?)  
Ways in which the writer has made the writing more exciting (use of adverb, adjectives, variety of lexis)

**OR**

- Give the students the following headline:

**Mystery of the Disappearing Teacher Solved**

- Ask them to produce a report for the radio or TV on how the mystery was solved and what happened. They could even include interviews with the teacher and students involved  
(You could record this or video it if you have access to a camera)