

# Designing an Integrated Writing Project

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## Abstract

In this workshop, participants will practice using the principles of effective writing projects in developing a writing project appropriate for the level of students they teach. The presenter will also facilitate the discussion of issues and questions related to the plenary talk and to second language writing in general.

**Principle 1.** Effective writing projects put the writing task in a realistic context of writing.

**The Context of Writing** includes:

- Writer (writer positions)
- Subject
- Audience
- Genre

**Principle 2.** Effective writing assignments are presented as part of writing projects.

**A Writing Project** consists of:

- Assignment (Task and Procedure)
- Inquiry (Reflections and Research)
- Process (Drafting and Revising)
- Feedback (Teacher and Peer)
- Assessment (Self and Teacher)

## 4 Steps of Developing an Effective Writing Project

**Step 1. Explore possible contexts of writing.** Consider possible contexts of writing that learners can and would want to access.

**Step 2. Prioritize learning goals.** Develop a general sense of what you want learners to learn through the writing project (but remain flexible to allow for incidental learning).

**Step 3. Develop a project-specific rubric.** Articulate your sense of what you expect to see (or not see) in the resulting piece of writing in terms of: 1) purpose, 2) audience, 3) content, 4) organization, and 5) vocabulary, style and conventions. Use this rubric to guide learners in writing and in providing peer feedback; it will also guide the teacher in feedback and assessment stages.

**Step 4. Draft a contextualized writing assignment.** A writing assignment should include information about the purpose, subject, audience (and the writer's relationship with the audience), and genre.

### Step 1: Explore Possible Contexts of Writing

Step 1a: List available elements of the writing context for your learners.		
	Safe Options (what students already know)	Challenging Options (what students need to learn)
<b>Writer</b>	What roles have the learners played in different communities? (E.g., son/daughter; sibling; student; team member; class president.)	What roles do the learners need/want to play? In which communities?
<b>Subject</b>	What do the learners already know? What are they currently studying/reading? What resources do learners have easy access?	What do the learners need/want to learn? What do they need or want to read? What resources do they need or want to learn to use?
<b>Audience</b>	Who do the learners usually interact with? In what kinds of relationships?	What kinds of relationships do the learners need/want to develop?
<b>Genre</b>	What genres have the learners used? What do they usually read? What are the characteristics of those genres?	What genres do the learners need/want to learn? What are the characteristics of those genres?

<b>Step 1b: Create realistic combinations of the elements of the writing context.</b>			
From the lists generated above, create a combination of writer, subject, audience and genre that resemble realistic communication. For less advanced or younger learners, choose fewer challenging options for each combination. (See Audience, Genre and Purpose Continua below.)			
Writer	Subject	Audience	Genre

**Audience, Genre and Purpose Continua**

<b>Beginning</b> < ----- > <b>Advanced</b>	
<b>Genre:</b>	<b>simple, familiar</b> < ----- > <b>complex, unfamiliar</b> to-do list      postcard      flyer, brochure      op-ed journal entry      response paper      summary and critique      research paper
<b>Audience:</b>	<b>small, concrete, private</b> < ----- > <b>large, abstract, public</b> self                      a classmate      classmates      campus community  siblings      a friend/roommate      biology majors      biologists
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>simple, singular</b> < ----- > <b>complex, multiple</b> to explore              to express              to inform              to inform/persuade
<b>teacher-selected, less flexible</b> < ----- > <b>learner-selected, more flexible</b>	

## Step 2: Prioritize Learning Goals

<b>Step 2a: Identify important learning goals.</b>					
<b>Check learning goals that are important in the project/learning unit.</b>	<b>Rate the importance of each goal.</b> (1 = Not Important; 5 Very Important)				
<b>Learning Emphases</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> To be reflective; to form a sense of identity	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To learn the subject and related vocabulary through writing	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To learn how to display the knowledge of the subject	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To learn forms and functions of written English (genre, grammar, conventions)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>General Aim of Writing</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> To reflect on or express ideas, feelings and/or experiences	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To record or inform the audience through clear and accurate communication	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To persuade the audience	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To entertain the audience or to experiment with the form	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Organization of Ideas and Information</b>					
<input type="checkbox"/> To tell a story or report past events (time segments)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To describe ideas, things and people (whole and parts)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To classify ideas, things and people (set up and apply categories)	1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/> To evaluate ideas, things and people (set up and apply criteria)	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Step 2b: Match important learning goals with writing contexts.</b>
List a few learning goals that are most important in this project. (For less advanced or younger learners, choose fewer goals.)
From the contexts (combinations of writer, subject, audience and genre) generated in Step 1b, which contexts are going to provide most opportunities for addressing the most important learning goals above?

### Step 3: Develop a Project-Specific Assessment Rubric

<b>Step 2: Develop a project-specific assessment rubric.</b>	
<p>This form helps to develop a simple assessment rubric that gives learners a general sense of what the teacher is looking for in student writing (which is much more complex and multi-faceted than what students often imagine). The teacher may wish to share this rubric (with examples, if possible) with the learners to guide them in providing peer feedback or in interpreting teacher feedback. For each element of the context of writing, write a statement that begins with "A good _____ (genre) is...." (See sample rubric on the next page.)</p>	
<b>Purpose</b>	
<b>Audience</b>	
<b>Content</b>	
<b>Organization</b>	
<b>Vocabulary, Style, and Convention</b>	

<b>Sample Rubric</b>	
<b>Personal Essay (for High School to College Students)</b>	
<b>Purpose</b>	A good personal essay helps the writer to remember and reflect on people, things or events that are (or have the potential of becoming) important in their lives. It helps the writer to come to a new understanding about the significance of those people, things and event—the understanding that can be shared with the readers to relate to or make an impact on them.
<b>Audience</b>	A good personal essay addresses an audience that is larger than yourself but much more specific than "people in general" or "anyone who is interested in the topic." It presents the writer's unique point of view or insight to readers who can appreciate, identify with, or learn from it. A good personal essay makes an intriguing point and/or provides significant insights for the intended reader by presenting the writer's unique perspective supported by the writer's own thoughts and experiences.
<b>Content</b>	A good personal essay draws primarily on the writer's reflections on people, things and/or events, although it may also include information and perspectives from other people or sources. It gains and sustains the reader's interest by using descriptions of concrete details (to let readers experience what the writer experienced) and narratives (to show how the event unfolded). The main issue, theme, or point of the essay may or may not be stated explicitly, but it should become clear to the reader by the end of the essay.
<b>Organization</b>	A good personal essay begins by drawing the readers to the main theme or topic and sustains the readers' attention by taking them through the text. The conclusion usually provides a sense of closure by resolving issues, answering questions, posing questions, discussing the implications, etc. It may use literary devices such as narratives, dialogues and detailed descriptions of scenes and characters to reconstruct the writer's experience. The organizational structure of personal essays are often (but not always) less explicit than other genres, but the readers should be able to tell how each part functions in support of the whole.
<b>Vocabulary, Style, and Convention</b>	A good personal essay uses vocabulary and style that are consistent with the writer's self-construction in relation to the reader. Because a personal essay represents the perspective of the writer, it is often (but not always) written in the first person. A good personal essay follows general conventions of edited written English. It may draw on external sources, but they are usually introduced in text rather than in parenthetical documentation.

### Step 4: Draft a Contextualized Writing Assignment

#### Step 4: Draft a contextualized writing assignment.

Draft a writing assignment that incorporates the information about the contexts of writing, including purpose, audience, genre, subject and the writer's relationship with the audience. (See Sample Writing Assignments below.)

#### Sample Writing Assignments

Decontextualized	Contextualized
Write about what you did this summer.	Write a <u>postcard</u> (genre) to a <u>friend</u> (audience, writer) to <u>report what you did this summer</u> (subject, purpose).
Write a description of your room.	A <u>friend of yours who lives in Japan</u> (audience, writer) is planning to buy a poster for your birthday. Write a <u>letter</u> (genre) to <u>her</u> (audience) to <u>describe your room so that she can choose the best poster for your room</u> (subject, purpose).
Should animals be used for experiments that benefit the cosmetics industry, drug development, and medical research?	Produce an <u>informational brochure</u> (genre) <u>explaining</u> (purpose) <u>to consumers</u> (audience) <u>why animals should or should not be used for experiments</u> (subject) that benefit the cosmetics industry, drug development, and medical research.