



State of Israel
Ministry of Education
The Pedagogical Secretariat
Languages Department
Inspectorate for English Language Education



TEACHING WRITING

A GUIDEBOOK

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Introduction

Dear Teachers,

Writing sometimes receives less attention in English teaching, as compared to listening, speaking or reading. It is, however, essential for students to be able to express themselves in writing, as part of their general proficiency in English.

Writing activities can also be interesting and enjoyable components of lessons, as we hope will be clear from the suggestions below.

This guidebook material provides practical ideas to help you teach students at all levels to write fluently and accurately in English, based on the [Can-do Statements](#) for written production in the Curriculum. It is not intended to replace your coursebook, but simply to supplement and enrich it.

The guidebook includes:

- Engaging classroom activities;
- Sets of practical tips;
- Guidance on teaching procedures such as correcting, assessing, and more.

We hope you will adapt, simplify, or expand all activities and teaching ideas to suit your learners and your teaching style.

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Sincerely,

The English Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education

For questions about any of the content of this guidebook, please contact your regional inspector, your counselor or your writing course facilitator.



Chapter 1: Pre-A1, A1 Levels

The material in this chapter is suitable for students in Elementary school, and for students in Junior High and High School who need extra support in basic writing skills.

This chapter is divided into five main sections:

1. Writing single letters
2. Writing letters in context and simple letter-combinations
3. Writing meaningful words and brief phrases
4. Writing longer phrases and sentences
5. Writing short texts.

1. Writing single letters

Can-do statements

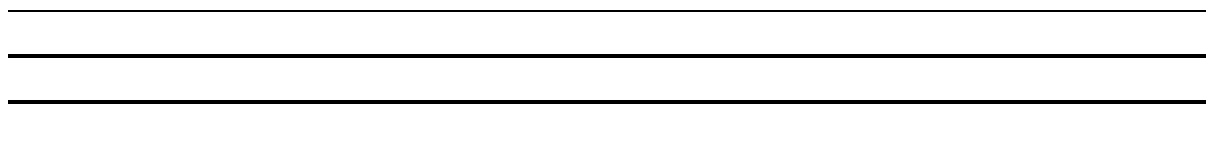
Can-do statements from the pre-A1 level covered in this section include:

- Can copy individual letters in the correct direction (written production)
- Can write the letters of the alphabet in upper and lower cases (written production)
- Can write their own name with the correct use of capital letters (written production)

Letter sizes and shapes

Your Ministry-approved course materials will provide you with a plan of how to teach letters, with illustrations of each letter, probably drawn with arrows to show direction of writing.

If your course material does not include pages where students can write, then use a notebook, or sheets of paper (or mini-whiteboards, see Tips below), preferably with lines that look like this:



The lines indicate the height of small letters, capital letters and letters that have taller 'heads' ('d' for example) or lower 'tails' ('y' for example).

Order of teaching letters

Teach letters in order of usefulness, not in alphabetical order: letters like e, t, n, are more useful and should be taught earlier than letters like q, j, z. Hopefully your course materials do this anyway.

Suggested activities

Demonstration

Start by demonstrating how to draw a letter on the board (upper and lower case), showing direction. Make sure that there is a left-to-right arrow at the top to remind them that English writing goes from left to right. Most textbooks have little arrows on the letters themselves to help students remember which direction to write them; but you might like to add such arrows yourself on the letters you show on the board.

Copying

Your coursebook will probably include a workbook where students copy or trace letters.

An alternative is to get students in class to copy rows of letters from the board on paper or mini-whiteboards. Walk around to help and to check that they are writing correctly.

Repeat in later lessons until you have taught all the letters. If you have four lessons a week, this should take about 6-8 weeks. If you have fewer lessons, then it will obviously take longer.

Air-writing

Get students to draw the letters with their fingers in the air: either from dictation, or pointing to one of the letters on an alphabet poster (see the Tip 6 below).

Tips

1. Do a writing activity every lesson.
2. Encourage students to use different colored pencils or markers for their letter-writing.
3. Have a colored marker ready yourself if you walk around while students are writing, to insert an encouraging ✓ or 😊.
4. Note that Hebrew and Arabic speakers are likely to write letters from right to left, and the round ones counterclockwise, as they do in their mother tongue. You need to look out for such problems, and correct them before they become a habit that is hard to break.
5. Before teaching a new letter, review those the students have recently learned.



6. Hang a poster or runner up on the classroom wall, or above/below the whiteboard, displaying the entire alphabet in lower and upper cases. Perhaps tick off or highlight the letters as you teach them, to give a sense of progress and achievement.
7. To begin with, teach the sounds of the letters: for example, /s/ rather than 'ess' for S. Later you will teach their names as well, but sounds are more important for the students' own reading and writing.
8. For vowels, teach the basic short sound first: other longer sounds (for example, the capital 'O' sound for 'o') will come later.
9. Mini-whiteboards are great as a tool for students to practice their writing of letters and, later, words and sentences. You can either buy them (they are not expensive) or make your own by putting lined paper into a plastic envelope. In either case, each student would have an erasable marker and a tissue to delete.
10. If you want students to have English notebooks, then make standard notebooks into English ones, like this: turn the notebook around, so that the binding is on the left, and then stick a new large colored sticker on the left (now front) cover (or get students to do so). Tell them to write their names in English and the word 'ENGLISH' on it. Then margins will be on the left, so they will be more likely to start writing from left to right. They can also decorate the cover, if they wish.

2. Writing letters in context and simple letter-combinations

Get students to write words, or bits of words, such as *tap sit, on*, as long as they can pronounce them, even if they do not know their meanings yet. Nonsense syllables can also be used for practice at this stage.

Students should still be using the lines as shown above, using either paper or mini-whiteboards.

Teach at this point some common letter combinations that are pronounced as a single sound; these might include: *th, sh, ch, ee, ea*.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the pre-A1 level covered in this section include:

- Can form letters in accordance with standard print conventions and in relation to marked lines (written production)
- Can copy individual letters in the correct direction (written production)

Suggested Activities

Copying

Students copy from the board rows of items like *at at at at...* or *in in in...*

Dictation

Students write short words or syllables from dictation.

Easier: Provide words on the board with only one letter missing; then dictate each and challenge students to write out the full word. For example, students see *p _ t*, you say ‘pat’, they write out *pat*.

Easiest: Give students worksheets with numbered words, each missing only one letter: they fill in the missing letter from dictation.

Dictations are particularly useful at this stage for raising awareness of vowel letters, which would often be missing from the same words written out in Hebrew and Arabic: see the second tip below.

Changing case

Students read words written in lower-case (on the board, or on worksheets), and copy them out in upper-case, or vice versa.

For example, students see ‘pat’, write out *PAT*; or they see ‘PAT’, write out *pat*.

Scanning

Students work on any authentic text in English: an extract from a newspaper for example, or a bit of a website. They are invited to a) identify items they can read, b) highlight or underline them, and then c) copy them out. Note that stage a may be done either on paper or on a digital device.

Easier: Students identify and copy only the letters they can recognize and pronounce.

More challenging: students identify and copy full words they can read and understand.

Rewriting in English letters

Write words on the board in the students’ L1 (mother tongue) that are easily written out in English letters: simple names of people or places (*America*, for example), or cognates (*bank*, for example). (Prompt an AI tool to give you a list of words that are similar in the students’ L1 and in English, and choose items from it.) Students write these out in English letters.

This is another useful exercise for raising awareness of the importance of vowel-letters in English, contrasted with Hebrew and Arabic: see the second tip below.

Easier: Tell students they don't have to write out all the words: they can choose only the ones they feel they can succeed in writing.

More challenging: Invite students to choose their own L1 words or names to write out in English: as many as they can in the time you allot.

Identifying letters

For any picture of something they know in English, students write at least one letter they can hear in its name, not necessarily the first. For example, for a picture of a dog some students might write only 'o' or only 'd', others might write two of the letters, or the full word.

Note that the instruction 'write at least' means that different students can work at different levels and speeds.

An effective technique for activities like the last three described above is **work cards**. See the last tip below.

Tips

1. Encourage students to say or whisper the sounds of the letters and words as they write them.
2. Explain (in L1) that vowel sounds in English are always written as full letters, unlike Hebrew and Arabic; illustrate with English 'consonant-vowel-consonant' syllables contrasted with Hebrew or Arabic ones (for example, Ben as compared with בן or بن). You might use 'Dictations' and 'Transliteration' activities above to practice this.
3. Words or syllables that students write at this stage do not have to be meaningful; it is acceptable to use nonsense words, as long as students can write and pronounce them correctly.
4. If you ask students to work in pairs or groups, don't have more than three in a group, and make sure that **all** the members of the group actually write the responses suggested.
5. Tasks can be based on proper names, like names of people or places, or easily recognized cognates like *tennis* or *pasta*.
6. Hebrew-speaking students often have problems hearing the short 'a' and confuse it with 'e': for example, they may write 'tep' instead of 'tap'. Spend a few minutes showing and pronouncing such pairs, and clarifying the difference; then check that they have grasped the difference by doing dictations.
7. Arabic-speaking students often have a problem hearing the sound 'p' and confuse it with 'b', for example, they may write 'ben' for 'pen'. Spend a few minutes showing and pronouncing such pairs, and clarifying the difference; then check that they have grasped the difference by doing dictations.
8. Teach students to write their own names in English, even if they have not yet learned all the component letters. And tell them that people's names, both first and family



names, always begin with an upper-case letter. You do not need to tell them more about rules for upper-case, that can wait until later.

9. Use work cards. Choose one of the activities above. Take about ten work cards (postcard-sized slips of colored paper or cards), write a different brief task (two or three items) based on the activity. Make three or four copies of each card, and put them all in a pile on your desk. Students each take one, do the task on paper, on a mini-whiteboard or in their notebook, return it and take another, each working at his or her own pace. Each student does as many as he or she can in the time allotted, while you walk around helping. Note that students do NOT write on the cards, so they can be re-used with other classes.

3. Writing meaningful words and brief phrases

By this time, students should know how to write letters of the appropriate height, so you may now have them do writing assignments using conventional lined paper, as in their notebooks.

Provide students with simple activities that get them to write words and phrases meaningfully, so that they can not only read aloud what they write, but also understand what it means.

At this point start teaching simple spelling rules: see Chapter 6.

Some possible activities follow; for all the activities except the dictations, the material students work on can be provided in the form of worksheets, or work cards (see the last tip above), or displayed on the board.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the pre-A1 level covered in this section include:

- Can label simple pictures related to familiar topics by copying (written production)
- Can copy short sentences containing familiar words (written production)

Suggested activities

Multiple-choice

Students get a set of simple pictures, under each one of which there are three wrong labels (single words) and one correct one. They copy only the right one.

Easier: Provide only two labels, one right and one wrong, for students to choose from.

Put in order

Students get sets of words expressing items of different sizes (for example, *four*, *six*, *ten* or *baby*, *woman*, *boy*). They copy them out in order of size, the biggest first.

Easier: Students copy out only the biggest, or only the smallest, of the items.



More challenging: When they have completed the required task, ask students to add another item to as many lists as they can, even bigger than the biggest item listed, or smaller than the smallest.

Odd one out

Students get sets of four words, of which one is an odd one out (for example, *yellow, big, red, black*). They copy only the odd one out.

Easier: Invite students to choose only two of the sets to respond to: more if they can.

Dictations

Dictate simple words or phrases for students to write out. Provide the L1 meaning if you are not sure that an item is understood.

Translation dictation

Say the L1 translation of simple words or phrases students should know. They write out the English version. Don't worry if the spelling is not completely accurate; if the word is clearly recognizable, that is acceptable at this stage.

Sorting out

Students see (on the board or on paper) a set of six words, three belonging to one category and three to another: animals and things, for example. Students copy them into two columns headed 'Animals' and 'Things'. You can of course increase the number of items and the number of categories, according to the level of the class. Other categories you might use: parts of the body, food, people, colors, places, sports.

Easier: Ask students to choose only one word from each category to copy into the correct column. You might also use L1 headings for the columns, and only the words to be copied will be in English.

More challenging: Ask students to think of and add more words of their own to each column.

Brainstorming

Students write down as many words as they can that include (i.e., not necessarily start with) a specified letter.

Tips

1. Require students at this stage to do all their writing by hand.
2. It is fine to use the students' L1 as a way of eliciting written English, 'translation dictation', for example.



3. Avoid tasks that involve sorting out scrambled letters or words, or puzzles like 'wordsearch'. In most cases students spend too much time puzzling out, and relatively little time actually writing.
4. Don't worry too much about spelling at this stage. For example, in dictations or brainstorming activities. If the word is recognizable, accept it; but see tips 2, 6 and 7 in the previous section. You might want to later review the words students spelled wrong by writing up the correct versions on the board and drawing attention to their spelling.
5. Allow students to sometimes do the activities in pairs, helping each other get their answers right, but then make sure that both partners write the answers.
6. Create a 'word wall' - a noticeboard or poster on the wall of the classroom where you write up all the new vocabulary you teach; students can then refer to it to help them use the new vocabulary in their writing.

4. Writing longer phrases and sentences

Students should now be ready to start writing full sentences and composing their own short texts without the careful scaffolding they have had up to now.

Spelling

When students write words that they have learned so far only in their spoken form, spelling mistakes are inevitable. See Chapter 6 for some guidance on teaching spelling.

However, spelling mistakes are not a disaster. Give students credit if they succeed in writing a word which is recognizable and meaningful, even if there is a spelling mistake.

Punctuation

A lot of English punctuation is similar to that in their L1, so you will only need to remind students to use periods, commas, question marks and exclamation marks as they would in their L1. See Chapter 6 for more detail.

You will, however, need to actively teach the rules about the use of upper-case letters, mainly for beginning sentences and for proper nouns, which will mostly, at this stage, be names of people and places.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from A1 level covered in this section include:

- Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences using level-appropriate language (vocabulary and grammar). (written production)
- Can describe certain everyday objects. (written production)

Suggested activities

Scatter writing

This activity combines writing with vocabulary teaching and review.

- Write on the board about 10 to 12 words that you have taught, scattering them around the board, in no particular order.
- Start by eliciting a few phrases or sentences orally, using some of these words.
- Give students a few minutes to write as many sentences as they can, including one of the words.
- Finally, have volunteers read their funniest or most surprising sentences, and perhaps let the class vote for their favorites.

Easier: Ask students to compose a brief phrase rather than a full sentence, for example, if the word is *red*, to write something like ‘a red pen’.

More challenging:

- Ask students to write sentences that include at least two of the words.
- Ask students to write sentences about themselves.
- Ask students to write nonsense, or false, sentences.
- Ask students to write negative sentences.

Add a word

- Write one word on the board: for example, ‘Today’, and a student comes to the board to write another word: for example, ‘we’; then another student adds another word and so on, until there is a full sentence. They can add words in the middle of the sentence, not only at the end. Correct spelling as necessary.
- When they finish, you read the final result aloud, and/or they read the sentence aloud together.
- Later, individual students do the same on paper or on a mini-whiteboard, with a ‘starter’ word that you provide.
- Volunteer students read their finished sentences. If they are shy, you can read them out for them.

Easier: Allow students to work in pairs, helping each other. Make sure they both write out the resulting sentences.



Sentence starters

- Write a set of sentence starters on the board, such as:
 - *I like...*
 - *I don't like...*
 - *I can...*
 - *I can't...*
 - *There is...*
 - *There are...*
 - *I can see...*
 - *My favorite... is...*
 - *I never...*
- Provide students with two or three completed sentences as models:
 - *I don't like pizza.*
 - *I like my baby sister.*
 - *I can't play the guitar.*
- Tell students to complete the sentence starters with their own ideas, with or without a word bank, depending on the students' level, and write them on paper, in their notebooks or on a mini-whiteboard.
- Then as above: volunteer students read their sentences, or you read them out for them.

Easier: Allow students to work in pairs, helping each other. Make sure they both write out the resulting sentences.

Writing about pictures

Show a picture with plenty of detail and ask students to write sentences describing something in the picture.

Pictures can be downloaded from the Internet, or chosen from the coursebook. Or ask your students to bring or send photos of their own, and use one of them each time you do the activity.

Easier: Students write single words or brief captions about the picture instead of full sentences.

More challenging: Students write as many sentences as they can in the time you allot.

Follow-up (1): The students move into pairs or threes, read each other's sentences and help each other expand these sentences by adding more words.

Follow-up (2): Each student chooses a picture from anywhere in their coursebook, and does the same as above, writing as many sentences as they can.

Writing with comic strips

- Give students a comic strip with speech bubbles but no text, or just a drawing of two characters interacting, with speech bubbles.
- The students write one sentence for each character in speech bubbles. You can find comics with blank speech bubbles [here](#), or ask an AI tool to draw one for you.

Easier: Students are asked to choose only one speech bubble and write a phrase or short sentence.

Changing sentences

- Write a short simple sentence on the board (one you make up, or from the coursebook).
- Under it, write a new sentence with a one-word change, then a third sentence with a further one-word change. Encourage students to use funny or unexpected words. For example:
 - *The cat is in the garden.*
 - *The dragon is in the garden.*
 - *The dragon is in the classroom!*
- Provide a new sentence and invite students to do the same individually on paper or on a mini-whiteboard.
- Invite volunteer students to read out their final sentences or the whole series.

Story writing with the 'magic wand'

Give a small group of students a 'magic wand' and a piece of paper. Each time one student holds the wand, he or she can say and then write one sentence of a story on that piece of paper, and then pass the wand to another member of the group. In the end, the group has a story that they have written together.

Easier: If a student has difficulty composing a sentence, he or she can just say a word relevant to the story, and the other students in the group help him or her to write a full sentence.

Class message wall

Set up a noticeboard on a wall, or on a digital space like Padlet or Google Slides, for students to write short sentences or comments to each other. Each such entry should have space below it for responses. Provide beginnings of responses to get them going. See the parentheses in the examples below.

- *Things I like (sentences beginning 'I like...')*
- *A new word (sentences beginning 'I know a new word: ...')*
- *'What's the time'? / What's the weather like? (sentences beginning 'The time is...' or 'the weather is')*
- *Do you have brothers or sisters? (sentences beginning with 'I have / I don't have...')*
- *What do you want? (sentences beginning 'I want...')*
- *What can you do? (sentences beginning 'I can...')*

Students can be invited to add contributions as they are gathering at the beginning of the lesson; or use this activity to occupy students who have finished a task early.

Easier: Students who are still having difficulty writing full sentences could just add a word.

Sentence race

- Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Give each group a piece of paper or a small whiteboard.
- Suggest a topic (like 'food' or 'animals'), or give a word (like 'orange').
- Each group works together and writes a full sentence about the topic or using the word. For example:
 - The topic is 'food':
A possible sentence: *'I like pizza.'*
 - The task is to use the word 'orange'
A possible sentence: *'She drinks orange juice.'*
- When the group is ready, they raise their hands and show their sentences.
- Check the sentences:
 - If a sentence is not correct, the group can try again.
 - The first group with a correct sentence gets a point.

- Then repeat the process with a new topic or word.

Variation: Challenge the groups to write the most interesting sentences they can. You check the sentences and correct them; but the points are awarded for interest, originality and humor rather than correctness. The winner is the group with the most interesting/funny (and correct) sentence.

Running dictation:

- Choose a long sentence or a short, simple text and make several copies. Hang copies of the text in different places in the classroom so groups can read without crowding.
- Make teams by dividing the class into small groups (3-6 students). Each group has its own writing area (desk, table, or space on the floor).
- Say: 'Let's start running!' or 'Go!' The first runner from each group goes to read the first part of the sentence/text. The runner memorizes as much as he or she can, then runs back to the group.
- The runner tells the group what he or she remembers. Every group member (including the runner) writes down what is dictated.
- Next, another runner goes to read the next part and comes back to tell the group.
- Repeat until the whole sentence or text is written. Members of the group check with each other and make sure they have a correct version to show the teacher.
- When a team finishes, they call the teacher for a check.
- The teacher checks the team's work for accuracy (spelling, grammar, punctuation).
- If there are mistakes, the teacher:
 - underlines the line with a mistake (no correction given)
 - or says how many mistakes are in that section.
- The team then goes back, fixes it, and calls the teacher again.
- The winner is the team to finish first with a correct copy of the original sentence or text.

Tips

1. As students are writing in any of the activities above, walk around the classroom encouraging, helping, and correcting.
2. For activities that result in individual writing, invite students to join together in pairs to help each other eliminate mistakes or improve their compositions.



3. For group/team activities: if a team finishes early and is waiting for others, give them a follow-up task linked to the original activity.

5. Writing short texts

Once your students are comfortable writing phrases and full sentences, they are ready to combine them into short texts, to prepare them for submission to you for feedback and possibly grading. 'Short texts' in this section refer either to longer sentences (using connectors such as *and*, *but*, *so*, *first*, *then*, *because*), or full free-standing texts. Such texts do not have to be in the form of paragraphs: they could be lists, mind-maps, poems or other forms (see some examples below). At this stage, you will need to focus more on correct spelling (see Chapter 6) and grammar, though the top priority is still conveying meaningful - and interesting - content.

Note that although students may like to receive numerical grades, these, without your accompanying comments, may not be helpful, in our experience.

At this stage, some may start typing into digital devices instead of writing by hand, and you will be able to use more and more online sources. Note that not all websites and apps are recommended for student use, as some may not protect students' privacy and safety. Before doing activities based on digital sources, check which are officially approved by the Ministry of Education; see guidelines [here](#). And note that the Ministry does not approve direct use of AI by students at this level: see guidelines [here](#).

It is a good idea to tell students to keep their students' short compositions in writing portfolios (see Chapter 6 for explanations and practical guidelines). Portfolios can also be used for assessment.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A1 level in this section include:

- Can write about themselves and fictitious people, where they live and what they do (written production)
- Can describe certain everyday objects (written production)
- Can write messages and online postings as a series of very short sentences (written interaction)
- Can leave a simple informative message (written interaction)

Suggested activities 1: Without rewriting

Describe and draw

- Students write a short description of a scene or character (s): for example, '*A dog is in the sea near a shark*'; or they describe an imaginary monster, with details of parts of their body, color etc.

- They then do one of the following:
 - Draw what they have described.
 - Pass on their description to a classmate, who draws the picture.
 - Give to you: you use an AI tool to create pictures based on the descriptions, and display both to the class in the next lesson.

Follow-up: Students look at pictures created by classmates (or by you, as suggested above), and try to reconstruct what the original description was. They then compare their new description with the original.

Picture description

- Display a picture with plenty of detail, and tell your students to describe what they see in writing (a more challenging version of ‘writing about pictures’ in Section 4 above).

Easier: Provide sentence starters such as ‘*I can see...*’, or ‘*There is / There are...*’.

More challenging: Require longer sentences, using connectors such as *and, but, so, first, then, because*.

Pass it on stories

- Every student copies onto a piece of A4 paper the beginning of a simple sentence, such as: ‘One morning my cat Jess...’. Do the same yourself.
- Then each student (and you!) adds an ending (for example, ‘*jumped on my bed*’) and exchanges his or her paper with another student who has also finished writing a sentence, or with you. They read the first sentence, add sentences of their own.
- Other possible starters:
 - *Once upon a time, there was...*
 - *The student was very sad because...*
 - *Two dogs, Jack and Jill, went to...*
 - *The old man was asleep in bed when...*

Possible ways of exchanging papers:

- A student who finishes his or her sentence brings the paper to the teacher’s desk and exchanges it with the next student (or with you!) to continue writing.
- A student who finishes his or her sentence raises the paper and looks around for another student who has raised his or her paper (or you), and they exchange papers.

- You give a time limit to write (2-3 minutes). At the end of that time, each student passes the paper to his or her neighbor, even if the sentence is unfinished.

Mind map

- Write a central topic like *'food'* on the board.
- Tell your students to copy it in the middle of their papers or mini-whiteboards.
- Invite them to add associated ideas in the form of a mind map: whole sentences or phrases linked to the central topic, or to each other, by radiating lines.
- Write new useful vocabulary on the board in response to their requests (and remember to review it later).

Easier: Tell students they can write single words instead of whole phrases or sentences.

Menus

- Tell your students to write a menu for
 - a meal they would love to eat.
 - a meal someone in their family would love to eat.
 - a meal their pet would love to eat.
 - a meal they would find disgusting.

Easier: Students write not a full menu, but at least one food that they would include in whichever of the above meals you have suggested.

More challenging: Students write out a restaurant menu (i.e., with options to choose from for the starters, main course, desserts).

Poems

Students write simple poems: acrostics for example.

Write a word vertically on the board, for example:

**F
R
I
E
N
D**



and invite students to suggest a word or phrase using each letter that is relevant to the word's meaning. For example: FRIEND

F un
Nea R me
Sm I les
H E lps me
N ice
Rea D y to listen

Then give another word, and invite students to work in pairs or threes doing the same. Remind them that in English each new line of a poem begins with a capital letter.

Each student writes out the resulting poem, which can be stored in their portfolios (see Chapter 7).

Variation: Each student writes an acrostic using his or her own name as a basis.

See Section 5 of the next chapter for more advanced acrostic-poem writing. You will find more ideas for simple poems that students can compose in Chapter 8.

Suggested activities 2: With rewriting ('process writing')

Process writing involves a sequence of steps that are involved in creating a good piece of writing that will eventually be submitted for you to assess. This sequence will be further developed at more advanced levels.

The steps are as follows:

1. The assignment

Give students the assignment, which could be any of those in the previous section, or paragraph-based compositions like the following:

- **Instructions**

Students give instructions on how to do something they know about: a recipe, for example, or how to play a game or do a sport.

- **Descriptions**

Students describe a person they know well, or a pet, or a place they like.

- **A short story**

Students write a short story based on a given first line, or re-tell part (or all) of a well-known story, or relate a personal experience based on sentences or phrases like '*I was really scared*' or '*A nice surprise*'.

Answer any questions the students might have about the assignment.

Note: the first few times you do this, all the students should do the same assignment, in order for you to be able to provide ideas and support in the full class. Later you might provide two or three different ones to choose from.

2. Prewriting

At this stage, students brainstorm:

- any content they might include (this could be done in L1).
- words or phrases they might need and vocabulary they think they might need for the writing topic or task that you have assigned.

Both the above can be done:

- on the board, led by you.
- in pairs, using paper or the mini-whiteboard.
- individually, using paper or the mini-whiteboard.

3. First draft

- Each student starts composing his or her written text.
- Explain that for this draft, the main focus must be on getting their thoughts onto paper, and not on correct spelling or grammar.
- If a student cannot think of how to say something in English, he or she can write it down for the time being in L1, and translate later, with your help or the help of a dictionary.
- You meanwhile check that everyone is on task, help where needed with content or language, encourage. Attend particularly to those who you know need extra support.

4. Second draft

- In the next lesson, students reread what they have written, and start writing out their composition in full, based on their first draft: adding more content and checking grammar.
- They may find it helpful to use a checklist to help them. The checklists below are samples, but feel free to adapt them to your students' needs and offer them in whichever language you feel appropriate.



- Optionally, they might type their draft into Word, and then see if Word has detected any mistakes. They then rewrite the text, using the corrected forms.

● Is my writing clear and tidy?	
● Are my ideas clear to the reader?	
● Did I check capital letters and periods?	
● Did I check spelling?	

	● הכתיבה שלי ברורה ומסודרת?
	● מה שכתבתי ברור ומובן לקורא?
	● בדקתי שימוש באותיות גדולות ונקודות סיום משפט?
	● בדקתי כתיב?

	● هل كتابتي واضحة ومرتبّة.
	● هل ما كتبتّه واضح ومفهوم للقارئ؟
	● هل تأكدت من استخدام الحروف الكبيرة ونقطة في نهاية الجملة؟
	● هل تأكدت من الإملاء؟

5. Share

This is an optional stage, but it is often helpful. The students share their work with classmates and help each other with their suggestions to make it better. Then they combine those suggestions with their own further thoughts, and rewrite their work accordingly. This rewriting is the third draft.

6. Third draft

- The students submit their work to you.
- You provide them with helpful feedback on content, organization and language and hand the assignment back to them.
- Don't give a grade yet!

7. Final draft

- Students rewrite in light of your feedback and submit to you again as a final draft.
- You read and may give a grade. If you have time, give further feedback.

Tips

1. When your students are getting ready to write, perhaps have them act things out first. For example, if they are going to write about walking in deep snow, have them actually pretend to walk through the snow. Or draw a picture of what they are going to write about. This helps them turn the doing into words.
2. When you teach new words, get the students to act those words out, too. This helps them really grasp what the word means and makes it easier for them to choose the perfect word when they write.
3. Keep your word wall (see Tips in section 3 above) updated with new vocabulary so students can refer to it when writing
4. When using the draft-redraft process, try to make sure there are time breaks between the different stages, putting work away and coming back to it later. It always helps to come back with fresh eyes to what you have written (professional writers also do this!).

References

[Comics with empty speech bubbles](#): comic strips with speech bubbles to fill with text.

[Guidelines on the use of AI in schools](#) (in Hebrew)

[Websites and apps approved for use in schools](#)



Chapter 2: A2 Level

The material in this chapter is suitable for students in Junior High and for students in High School at 3-point or 4-point Bagrut levels. Some may also be used with advanced Elementary students, with appropriate scaffolding and support, to further challenge and advance their writing skills. Similarly, many of the activities in Chapter 1 can be adapted for use with less advanced students in Junior High School.

This chapter is divided into seven sections:

1. Writing short texts
2. Writing for communication and interaction
3. Writing in longer, more complex sentences
4. Writing one-paragraph compositions
5. Writing creative texts

Spelling and punctuation

You will occasionally need to devote time to the teaching of spelling and punctuation: see Chapter 6 for rules and some ideas for spelling and punctuation activities.

1. Writing short texts

It is important for students to get lots of writing practice, through tasks that are simple, short and likely to provide successful writing experiences. Written texts do not have to be in the form of full sentences or paragraphs. A lot of writing today is in other formats: lists of various kinds, forms, diagrams, questionnaires, short notes, poems, headings, picture captions, and more.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A2 level covered in this section include:

- Can write an introduction to a story or continue a story (written production)
- Can convey personal information of a routine nature (written interaction)
- Can relay in writing (in Language B) specific information contained in simple, informational texts (written in Language A) (mediation)



Suggested activities

Filling out forms

Provide forms for students to fill out. An example follows.

What's your name?	
Where do you live?	
How old are you?	
What do you like doing?	
What's your favorite color?	
What's your favorite sport?	

- Go through the items in the left-hand column with the whole class, making sure all are understood.
- Students fill out answers on their own.

Easier: Allow students to write some of the responses in their L1 if they do not know the English; then help them translate into English.

More challenging: Invite students who finish early to add further rows with questions about themselves, and to add their responses.

Personal information

Students write short personal introductions: *I'm Dana. I'm 13 years old. I like music and drawing.*

Easier: Students write all the words they know that relate to themselves (for example, *boy, tall...*).

More challenging: Students finish writing about themselves, and then write a similar introduction about one of their friends (they then check with the friend that they got it right).

Brainstorming

Students write down as many phrases or sentences as they can according to a given cue. You might like to give a time limit (perhaps five minutes). They then share in groups or in the full class, or pool on a digital board like Padlet.

Some examples of cues are:

- Write as many sentences as you can that are **not** true (for example, *'The sun is cold', 'A lemon is sweet'*).
- Write tips for a new student in this class (for example, *'Don't use your cellphone during lessons', 'Say hello to the person sitting next to you'*).
- Write tips for a new teacher in this school (for example, *'Please wait for the class to be quiet before you start talking, or we won't be able to hear you.'*).
- How many different ways might you use a pen? Write down all your ideas (for example, *'You can use a pen as a bookmark so you don't lose the page in your English book'*).

Easier: Students write single words or brief phrases in response to cues such as: 'small things', 'round things', 'things I like', 'things I don't like', 'things you can do after school', 'things I can see in the street'.

Pass it on

Each student gets a sheet of lined paper, and writes *'Once upon a time'* at the top. He or she completes this sentence as the beginning of a story, and then exchanges it with anyone else in the class who has also finished writing. The student then adds another sentence to the beginning he or she has received, and exchanges again, and so on, until you tell them to stop.

Variation: You give a title for a poem: for example, *'Winter'*. Each student writes a single line of the poem and passes it on. The next student composes the next line, and so on.

The results are then read out or displayed on the wall.

Recipes

- Students write a list of the ingredients for a dish they know how to prepare.
- They then write out the instructions on how to prepare it. They can number the steps, and/or use connectors such as *'First...', 'Then...', 'Next...', 'Finally...'*.
- Optional: suggest to students that they add drawings to illustrate their recipes.

Easier: Students write only the list of ingredients.

More challenging: Students add further tips on how to add to or vary the dish.

Definitions

- Write a definition of something the students know how to say and write in English, (for example: *This is a very small boy or girl*), and challenge them to write down what it is. Check answers.
- Give students five minutes to write similar definitions. You might limit to a certain category: animals, for example, or things, or occupations, or words we have learned this year. Slower-working students might write only one definition in the allotted time; others may write two or more.
- Share the definitions, and check the answers in one of the following ways:
 - One student reads out his or her definition, other students, or you, identify the answer.
 - Students exchange their definitions and write in the answers, then check with the writer that they got it right (or ask for the right answer if they couldn't guess it).
 - Definitions are written on slips of paper, with the writer's name, and given to you as they are written. You later guess and write in the answer on each slip. If you have time to correct any mistakes, do so. But if you are short of time, don't: the activity is useful and valid even if mistakes are not corrected (see the first Tip below).

Captions

- Provide students with a set of public signs (easily downloaded from Google Images or through AI), and tell them to write out their meanings (for example, '*You can't drink the water.*' or '*Stop here!*' for the signs below).

Easier: Students write out only single words for as many of the signs as they can.



More challenging: Students write out full sentences for all the signs.

Most challenging: Students find more signs online, or draw them, and label them.

Translate

- Provide students with a few short sentences to translate in writing from L1 to English. These could be composed by you, or taken from textbooks in other subjects, or your own translation into L1 of English sentences in their coursebook.
- They can, of course, look up in the dictionary, or online, words they do not know how to translate, or ask you.

Easier: Give only short, easy phrases to translate.

More challenging: Give a longer series of sentences, challenging students to translate as many as they can.

Note that this is a good way to review recently taught vocabulary or grammar.

Vocabulary practice

- Write up a set of words or phrases that you have recently taught, and tell students to write a sentence for each word (i.e., a sentence that includes the word).
- Variations:
 - The sentence must include two of the items.
 - The sentence must include one of the words and be true of the writer (i.e., includes one or more of the words: *I, me, my*).
 - The sentence is a question that includes one of the words.
 - The sentence uses one of the words to express a statement that is not true.

Tips

1. Give feedback and corrections when you can (see Chapter 5); but you will not have time to do so for everything students write. Leave some written tasks without correction; it is very important for students to have plenty of experience writing meaningful text even if it includes uncorrected errors.
2. If you are using portfolios (see Chapter 7), remind students to put their work (whether or not corrected) into the portfolio.
3. If students are doing these tasks in pairs or groups, make it a rule that everyone has to write the sentences.
4. For most of the activities above, it is useful to give a time limit: do as much as you can in the time you allot. That way, everyone works at his or her own pace.



2. Writing for communication and interaction

Students learn to write notes, messages, short emails and questionnaires.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A2 level covered in this section include:

- Can write short, simple notes, emails and text messages (written interaction)
- Can write a variety of short, simple, interpersonal messages on familiar topics (written interaction)

Suggested activities

Everyday notes and messages

- Invite students to write (on paper) short messages, such as:
 - a note to your teacher explaining why you are late
 - a message to your friend to invite them to a movie
 - a complaint about a test
 - a question about the homework
 - a message to coordinate plans (meeting at the mall, going to the movies, etc.)
- Invite some of the students to read their messages aloud.

Easier: Display models and useful phrases on the board such as *'I'm sorry...'*, *'Do you want to...?'*, *'Can you...?'*.

Optional follow-up: Move on to an oral activity where students suggest what the responses might be to some of the messages that result from the task you have given.

Exchanging messages

- Invite students to send questions, or other types of messages, to you or to each other through WhatsApp.
- You, or the other student, respond(s).
- The original writer may then respond again, and so on.

Below are some examples, including sample message-beginnings:

Messages from students to teacher:

- Something in the lesson they enjoyed (*'I really enjoyed...'*)

- A question they have about something in English (*'I want to ask you about...'*)
- Something they don't understand (*'I don't understand...'*)
- Something they would like to have in lessons (*'I'd like to have... in lessons'*)

Messages to other students:

- A question about the other student: his or her favorites, plans, past activities, family (*'What's your favorite...?', 'What are you going to do...?', 'What did you do...?'*)
- Something that worries them (*'It worries me that...'*)
- Something they would like to know (*'I'd like to know...'*)
- Something they like (*'I like...'*)
- Something that annoys them (*'It really annoys me when...'*)

Variation: As above, but using paper:

- Students write their notes on paper and post them on 'chat walls', where other students can answer them.
- Students write their notes at the top of a sheet of paper, and then place them face down on your desk (or in another central location). They then pick up a paper that someone else has placed face down, take it to their own desk, write a response and take it back to your desk, and so on. At the end of the activity, collect the completed exchanges. In a later lesson you might read out some of the more interesting exchanges (with the permission of the authors!).

Questionnaires

Students are asked to write out a set of questions that they might ask:

- in an interview with a famous person / the teacher / a fictional character. (Then perhaps run the interview as a follow-up with you as the interviewee.)
- as part of a survey on, for example, television-viewing habits, or sleeping habits, or diet, or sport. (Then perhaps collect the questions into a survey questionnaire and ask students to administer it and draw conclusions.)

In either case, it is a good idea to brainstorm and write on the board basic types of questions that students might use to frame their own questions. Students at this point might suggest a question in their L1, which you can help them formulate in English. Some examples that might come up:

- *Do you ever...?*



- *What is your favorite...?*
- *When do you...?*
- *How often do you...?*
- *Can you tell me...?*

20 Questions with AI

Students play '20 Questions' in writing to practice question format. Tell them to write the following prompt into an AI app like Gemini: *'I want to play a game. Describe something mysterious to me, in simple English, and I will use questions to try to guess what you are describing.'*

Then see what happens! They write 'yes/no' questions such as *'Does it / Do you...?' 'Can it / Can you...?' 'Is it a... / Are you?'*

Email

- Write an email to a friend which needs an answer. For example
 - Tell the friend about a problem and ask for advice
 - Invite the friend to an event (a party, a trip...)
 - Ask the friend's opinion on something (a television program, a recent local event).
- Follow-up: Students write answers to the emails they composed; alternatively, they exchange emails and compose answers to one written by a classmate.

Tips

1. Walk round the class as students are writing, encouraging, and helping them with ideas, new words or spelling; or sit with a 'focus group': a particular set of students who are having difficulties.
2. While monitoring students' ongoing writing in class, remember to compliment them on correct language, in addition to correcting mistakes.
3. If the students have created brief written texts, select some of them to read aloud to the class yourself, correcting as needed. Your reading of their texts is a compliment to the writer, and you can make them sound much better.
4. If you take in students' work that has been written in class, you may not have time to correct it; but it's a good idea to make a note of common errors and then devote time in a later lesson to drawing students' attention to the correct forms.



3. Writing in longer and more complex sentences

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A2 level covered in this section include:

- Can write simple texts on familiar subjects of interest, linking sentences with appropriate connectors (written production)

Suggested activities

Sentence connectors

- Give students a list of simple connectors (*and, but, because, so, when, although*).
- Give sentence beginnings with a conjunction, and invite students to complete them.
For example:
 - *I stayed home yesterday because...*
 - *She smiled, but...*
 - *I was disappointed when...*
 - *My mother was angry, so...*
- Give sentence endings with conjunctions, and invite students to write appropriate beginnings (remind them to use a capital letter at the beginning). For example:
 - *...because it was too late.*
 - *...but they came to the party anyway.*
 - *...when I realized what the time was.*
 - *...so we decided to have a party.*

Easier: Ask students to join pairs of short sentences, for example:

- *I like pizza. I don't like salad. → I like pizza, but I don't like salad.*
- *I'm very tired. I went to bed late last night. → I'm very tired because I went to bed late last night.*
- *We won't get any food all day. We'll be hungry in the evening → We won't get any food all day, so we'll be hungry in the evening.*
- *Tom stopped talking. The teacher told him to be quiet → Tom stopped talking when the teacher told him to be quiet.*



More challenging: Give a set of sentence beginnings or endings, like those shown above, but no connectors, and no ‘bank’ of connectors. Students complete them however they like adding text before or after, using connectors of their choice. For example, for a cue sentence like *‘We won’t get any food all day’*, a student might write

- *We’ll be in the desert and nobody will be able to reach us, so we won’t get any food all day.*
- *We won’t get any food all day; however, we have enough water to last us until the evening.*

In all cases, invite students to share their completed sentences.

Expand the sentence

- Write a short sentence on the board; for example, *I enjoy going to the mall.*
- Demonstrate how to add additional details to expand the sentence, for example:
 - *I enjoy going to the mall with my friends.*
 - *I enjoy going to the mall with my friends after school.*
 - *I enjoy going to the mall with my friends after school, because I like to shop.*
- Give students a new sentence. Students copy the sentence, then rewrite several times, each time adding at least two more words.
- Each student writes a simple sentence (4-5 words) at the top of a sheet of paper, then places it face-down on your desk. The student then takes a paper that someone else has put there, goes back to his or her desk, copies the sentence, adding at least two more words (or more if they like), returns it to your desk and takes another.

Tips

1. Use writing tasks like those suggested above to recycle recently-learned vocabulary or grammar.
2. Let students decide if they want to work in pairs or alone. If they work in pairs, both partners must write.

4. Writing one-paragraph compositions

It is useful to do some writing activities based on single paragraphs, or short texts like poems, before progressing to full essays. The paragraph is the basis for the following activities, but since students vary widely in their proficiency, you may find that some will expand their texts to two paragraphs or more, while others may only write a sentence or two. In any case you may wish to encourage them to check their paragraphs later using a checklist (see Chapter 5).

Increasingly, students will type their written texts, though most assignments, both in class and at home, will probably continue to be hand-written.

Most students will be familiar with the QWERTY keyboard from their cellphones, and will have no problem finding letters.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A2 level covered in this section include:

- Can write short, simple, imaginary biographies and/or simple poems about people (written production)
- Can write a simple story (written production)
- Can give his/her impressions and opinions in writing about topics of personal interest (written production)

Suggested activities

Picture to paragraph

- Show a picture of a scene and invite students to write a single paragraph describing what they see.
- Show a picture of a person, and invite students, using their imagination, to describe the person: their name, nationality, job, personality, family and so on.

Picture-sequence to paragraph

Show 3–4 related pictures (for example, a weekend trip, a school event, a cartoon strip, a sequence of pictures depicting a short story). Students write one connected paragraph describing the sequence of events using connectors.

Compare and contrast

- Ask students how two things are similar and different, for example, tennis and football, Tel Aviv and Haifa, two foods, two animals, two professions.
- Students then write 4–5 sentences comparing them using *both*, *but*, *also*, *however*, and comparative forms of adjectives or adverbs.

Easier: Provide sentence frames like '*Both X and Y are...*' or '*While X is... Y is...*', or '*X is more... than Y.*'

More challenging: Ask students to compare two things that are completely different: a computer and a pencil, for example, or a window and an orange, or a dog and a spider. You might need to do this once orally on one pair of nouns, as a class brainstorm, before asking them to write about a different pair.

Opinion

- Choose a controversial but familiar topic, such as:
 - Which is your favorite (music, social medium, television program, school subject) and why?
 - Which is a better pet, a dog or a cat?
 - Which is better, summer or winter?
 - Should students wear school uniforms?
 - How important is it to learn to hand-write in the digital age?
 - Should students have to do homework?
 - Should schools teach cooking?
 - Is it OK to keep secrets from parents?
- Suggest a structure: students should state their own opinion on the issue either at the beginning of their paragraph or at the end (or both) and use the main section to provide reasons, arguments and examples.

Easier: Ask students just to state their preference and give at least one reason. When they have done this, help them to think of and express more reasons, or reservations, or examples.

Tips

1. Suggest to students that they type in their short compositions on a computer, and ask an AI tool like ‘Gemini’ to correct or improve their texts. They then implement the improvements.
2. Students insert their brief compositions into their portfolios if they have them (see Chapter 7).

5. Writing creative texts

Students write imaginatively to create original, pleasing or funny texts.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the A2 level covered in this section include:

- Can write short, simple, imaginary biographies and/or simple poems about people (written production)
- Can write diary entries that describe activities, people and places (written production)
- Can write a simple story (written production)



- Can write basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences (written production)

Suggested activities

Poems

Students can write poems successfully if given an easily-followed framework.

An example is an acrostic poem.

A word is written vertically, and each letter begins a word, phrase, or sentence. Introduce and demonstrate the format by providing examples and asking students to identify the vertical word being spelled. Here is an example (a more advanced version of the acrostic poem presented in the last section of Chapter 1):

White snow falling down
Ice on the streets and roads
New coat keeps me warm
Trees have no green leaves
Every day is cold
Rain changes to snow

My best friend is very nice
Always ready to play games
Riding bikes after school
Invides me to her house
Ask me questions in class

- Choose a meaningful word such as the name of a person or place, a new vocabulary item, or a topic being studied, and write it vertically in capital letters down the left-hand side of the board.
- Get students to brainstorm words, phrases, or sentences for each letter that relate to the word's meaning; choose one each time and fill it in on the board.
- Invite students to write their own acrostics: provide some suggested base words or invite them to use their own names or the name of someone they know.
- Share results: You read out selected poems, or get their authors to do so, or post them on the classroom wall or on the class website.

Easier: Write the word down the **middle** of the board, and invite students to write a word/phrase on each line that includes it as an alternative to beginning with it. For example:

S
U
N

I **S** ee the light.
The bl **U** e sky.
There are **N** o clouds.

Then give another word, and invite students to do the same on their own.

For more ideas for kinds of poems students can write, see Chapter 8.

Blog entries

Ask students to write brief blog entries based on their own experiences, for example:

- *My weekend*
- *A day to remember*
- *I was disappointed*
- *A scary experience*

Easier: Provide sentence-starters

- *'Hi! Today I want to tell you about...'*
- *'Last weekend I...'*
- *'I will never forget...'*

Descriptions

Have students describe a person, place, or favorite activity. For example:

- *My (sister/brother/mother/father)*
- *A famous person*
- *A place I love*
- *A food I like*
- *My pet*

Short stories

Provide students with a stimulus to write a fictional story. This could be:

- a title (for example, '*A surprise*', '*A happy ending*', '*The dog saved the day*', '*A joke*').
- a beginning to stimulate the imagination (for example, '*Once upon a time there was...*', '*The night was dark...*', '*The door slowly opened...*').
- an ending (for example, '*...So we all laughed and went home.*', '*...At last they got married.*', '*...To this day, I do not understand how I did it.*').

- a set of four or five (completely disconnected!) words that have to occur in the story (could be words you have recently taught)

Variation using AI

- Students write a few sentences to start a story, ask AI to continue, then add the next part themselves. They submit the completed story, indicating which parts are AI and which they wrote themselves.
- Students describe a character or place and ask AI for ideas to develop it further. They submit the entire text, indicating which parts are AI and which they wrote themselves.



Chapter 3: B1-B2 Level

The material in this chapter is suitable for 4- or 5-point Bagrut students, or for advanced students in junior high school.

The material in this chapter is divided into three sections:

1. Writing paragraphs
2. Writing full compositions

1. Writing paragraphs

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the B1 level covered in this section include:

- Can write straightforward descriptions on a range of familiar subjects and topics of interest (written production)
- Can write accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in connected text (written production)
- Can write a description of an event, a recent trip, real or imagined (written production)
- Can engage in written correspondence describing experiences, feelings and events in some detail (written interaction)

Remind students what a paragraph is - a set of sentences that together present an idea or event or a set of clearly connected ideas/events.

Suggested activities

Topic and supporting sentences

Give a few paragraph openings to choose from. For example:

- *Our school library is...*
- *My favorite subject at school is...*
- *The weather this week is going to be...*
- *It's not usually a good idea to...*
- *I have never been so...*
- *I would appreciate some information regarding...*
- *In my opinion, there are several reasons why...*

Ask students to complete these sentences and then add supporting sentences. These could be reasons, examples, exceptions, added information.

Tips

When students have composed any kind of short text, you might ask them to share through one of the following strategies:

1. Students leave their papers on their desks and walk around looking at what other students have written. Students can leave a comment on a sticky note next to the written work.
2. Students copy compositions onto a Google Slide, or other approved online sharing tool. Allow the option for comments and likes.
3. Volunteer students read out their texts
4. You collect the texts that the students have written and share some with the class. Discuss what is good about some of the texts, and some possible improvements.

Brief writing tasks

Provide students with brief paragraph-writing tasks which can be done at the beginning or end of a lesson. Give them a time limit, and walk around the class helping and checking while they write. This work does not need to be checked, but it is a good idea to keep what they have written in personal **writing portfolios** (see Chapter 7).

Write two or three possible topics on the board, perhaps chosen from the examples below

Examples:

- further sentences or a complete paragraph to a coursebook text
- a short continuation to a story or add another stanza to a poem
- your mom's and/or dad's job
- your best friend(s)
- your favorite season, and why
- something you did wrong
- something you're happy you did
- something that makes you angry
- how you use your cellphone
- If you could meet someone from a book or movie, who would it be? why?



- What job would you like to have after school?
- some things that make you happy
- a childhood memory
- some things you'd like to do this year

See Chapter 2 for some easier, writing tasks.

Describe the Picture

Show a picture (for example, a market, a classroom, a family scene, a person, a still from a movie, a picture from a newspaper) and ask students to write a detailed description.

Variations:

- Students study a photo of a person, imagine their background (name, nationality, age, job, likes/dislikes, interests, family) and write a description. You can also use AI-generated images, for example:



- Students see an action photo, perhaps a still from a movie or a newspaper. Invite them to imagine and write: an explanation of what is happening in the photo, what led up to it, and what might happen next.

Interactive writing

Tell students to write a question to a classmate at the top of an A4 sheet of paper; they then exchange papers with another student, answer the question they have received, and write a new, or follow-up question and exchange again... and so on.

Provide students with two or three possible questions on the board to choose from (perhaps chosen from the list below), but make it clear that they can invent their own.



Example questions

- What's your favorite...?
- Where would you like to be if you weren't here?
- What do you think about (a local issue)?
- What's your main goal in learning English?
- Why do you think it's important to learn English?
- What are you planning to do after you finish school?
- What kind of a job do you think you'll do in the future?
- What kinds of jobs would you never do?
- What's the best thing that ever happened to you?
- What makes you scared / happy / relaxed / angry?

2. Writing full compositions

Students are now ready to start writing full free-standing compositions of various kinds. It is important not to fall into the trap of getting your students to write only Bagrut-type essays, which may limit the development of your students' writing abilities in general. Use a variety of writing tasks and genres as bases for compositions, as suggested below.

In this section, we suggest first guidelines on the writing process: helping your students plan, draft, redraft and finalize their compositions. These are followed by suggested activities: a variety of writing genres and tasks suitable for this level.

Specific guidance on essay-writing, in preparation for Modules C and G of the Bagrut, appears in Chapter 4.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements from the B1 and B2 levels covered in this section include:

- Can write short, simple essays on topics of interest (B1 written production)
- Can write brief reports containing factual information following a standard conventionalized format (B1 written production)
- Can engage in written correspondence describing experiences, feelings and events in some detail (B1 written interaction)
- Can write cohesive, coherent, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects and topics of interest including accounts of experiences and events (B2 written production)

- Can write a report/essay on a subject of interest, addressing advantages/disadvantages, expressing and justifying his/her position (B2 written production)
- Can consider formality and basic conventions appropriate to the context when writing letters and emails (B2 written interaction)
- Can obtain, by written correspondence, information required for a particular purpose, collate and forward it to others (B2 written interaction)

Guidelines on the writing process

1. Giving the assignment

Provide a definition of the composition task. Each definition should include not only the topic, genre and desired length (numbers of words), but also the target audience. For example: *'Write a blog entry for teens of your age to describe a recent, unusual event. It should be 70-90 words.'*

When starting out, it is best to give one task to the entire class. This enables you to do the planning, brainstorming, and some of the additional stages with the entire class together. Later, students can be given a choice of 2-3 topics (perhaps all from the same genre).

2. Pre-writing

Pre-writing involves:

- brainstorming of ideas or brief notes on the planned content of the composition.
- brainstorming of vocabulary related to the topic.

3. First draft

At this stage, students write a rough draft of at least the first part of their composition, possibly all of it. This is best done in class, while you are around to help.

Tell students to write the first draft as quickly as possible, not worrying too much about spelling, grammar or punctuation. If there is a word they do not know and you are not available to help, they should write it in L1, and translate it into English later: the main thing is to get down on paper as much of the content of their composition as they can.

4. Second draft

There should be a time-lapse between first and second drafts; the second draft might be done in the following lesson, or for homework.

- Students read through what they have written:
 - correcting spelling, grammar and punctuation where they can;
 - filling in or adding vocabulary;

- changing, if they like to improve their text;
- adding an ending if they have not gotten that far in their first draft.

Optional further stages:

- Students work in pairs to read each other's drafts and offer help to one another with the language or ideas (peer-editing).
- Students compose a draft and then ask an AI tool, such as Gemini, to improve it. They may, but don't have to accept the AI suggestions. They then a) submit all three versions to you for checking, and/or b) rewrite, individually, as a second draft.

5. Feedback

The second draft is handed in to you for corrections and feedback. See Chapter 5 for some useful guidance on providing feedback on writing.

6. Third draft

The students rewrite their compositions with the help of your feedback, and hand in the final draft for assessment (See Chapter 5).

Suggested activities

The genres as bases for compositions provided in your coursebooks are typically limited to personal narratives, information and opinion. These are included in our list below, but we have added more, with a sample activity for each.

Blog or diary entries, personal experience

Write about an experience based on a feeling or event. Some possible topics:

- *I was really shocked*
- *A problem that was solved*
- *A strange experience*
- *A surprise*
- *A disappointment*

Movie reviews

Write to your friend about a movie you have seen and would like to recommend to him/her. Or write about one you hated, and tell them why not to watch it.



Advice

Give someone advice. For example:

- Give advice to a lonely student on how he or she might make friends.
- Suggest tips to a friend who complains that he/she feels tired all the time.
- Advise a friend who is looking for an after-school job.
- Give general advice to a new student in the school.
- Give advice to a student who has trouble getting through all his or her homework.

Instructions

Write instructions for a friend:

- how to play a game you know
- how to choose a gift for a family member
- how to get to a specific destination
- how to do something that you yourself know how to do (prepare your favorite recipe, for example, or how to mend something)

Monologues

Write the text for a speech that is appropriate for a given situation (for example, a movie star accepting an Oscar, a student receiving an award at school).

Dialogues

Write a dialogue, for example:

- an interview with a well-known personality on television
- a conversation between two people who have just met and are finding out about each other

Future plans

Write about:

- what you plan to do this weekend
- what you want to do after finishing high school
- what someone in your family is planning



- what you will NOT do in the future, and why
- a community or environmental project you would like to start

Descriptions

Describe something or someone you know. For example:

- Your favorite place and why it is special to you
- A favorite food
- A person you admire
- A pet
- The best gift you have ever received

Opinions

- Write to the school newspaper on your opinion about a given topic:
 - Should there be more sports in schools?
 - Do you think social media does more harm than good?
 - Should students wear school uniforms?
 - Should cellphones be banned in schools?
 - Should schools start an hour later in the morning?
- Write a composition for or against the idea that:
 - Israel should adopt a 4-day work week
 - children should be expected to do household chores
 - parents should limit their children's social media time

Comparisons

Compare and contrast two things, explaining the differences and similarities. Explain which you prefer and why. For example:

- cats and dogs
- card games and board games
- living in the city and living in the country
- basketball and football

- two school subjects: e.g., history and science

Information

Write a short composition about something you yourself know quite a lot about; or check out information on a topic you are interested in, using a search engine. For example:

- The importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Explain, giving examples.
- How the use of solar energy can contribute to solving the energy crisis.

Letters

- Write an informal letter. Note that even if the letter is in fact sent by email, letter-writing conventions still apply: a salutation at the beginning ('Dear ...'), and a sign-off before your name at the end ('Best wishes', 'Love', 'Yours sincerely' etc.). If it is an email, there should also be a subject line at the top. For example:
 - Write to a childhood friend you've lost touch with, reconnecting after several years.
 - Write a letter to your 12-year-old self, with advice.
 - Write to a character from a book you've studied, responding to a dilemma they faced.
- Write a formal letter, for example:
 - There is a dangerous intersection near your school that the municipality has ignored. Write to your city council member requesting that action be taken.
 - You want to work at a summer camp in the USA. Write a letter applying for a counselor position and explaining why you would be a good candidate.
 - You want to take a trip abroad with friends. You heard about a youth hostel that you might like to stay at, but you need more details. Write to the manager of the youth hostel requesting the information that you need.

Stories (fiction)

Ask students to tell a fictional story. Some examples:

- Retell a traditional story in your own words.
- Retell a well-known story (or one from the textbook) adding a new character.
- Retell a traditional story from someone else's point of view (for example, Cinderella, from the point of view of one of the ugly sisters).

- Compose a story that begins or ends with a sentence provided by the teacher.
- Compose a story that includes a given set of vocabulary.
- (For more advanced students looking for a challenge) Adapt a biblical story/legend or a traditional fairy tale for modern readers.

Poems

There are various poetic forms which are easy and fun for students to use when composing their own poems: the acrostic, for example, or clerihew, or haiku.

Have a look at Chapter 8 for some examples and illustrations.

Tips

1. It often helps to show a model composition to students. But avoid spending too much time reading and analyzing such texts: time should mostly be devoted to writing!
2. Allow students to use L1 for preliminary notes and brainstorming.
3. Encourage students to look for more precise or interesting vocabulary as they are writing: 'Look for a better/different word'
4. Let students help each other at pre-writing stages, and also give feedback after writing. The actual writing should be done alone.
5. Remind students who their target audience is.
6. Establish a feedback routine so students know that their work will be reviewed and graded at least once.
7. Use the dictionary to check spelling, rather than to look up new words. It's best to use words you already know.

References

[כלים ומשחקים דיגיטליים](#) - a list of Ministry approved websites and apps for use by teachers in the classroom

[Gemini](#) - a tool for designing classroom activities and exercises approved by the Ministry at time of writing this document



Chapter 4: Writing for Bagrut – Modules C and G

The aim of this guidebook is to provide teachers with tools for teaching writing from the pre-A1 level through the B2 level. By working through the stages laid out in the first three chapters, teachers will find that their students are well prepared for the writing sections of Module C and Module G. The descriptive and opinion tasks that generally appear on these exams are natural outcomes of a broad, well-developed writing repertoire, and students who have learned to write across genres, for real purposes and real audiences, will approach exam tasks with confidence and flexibility.

Our goal, however, is not to train students for a test. It is to give them something far more lasting: the ability to write, in English, as a means of expression, reflection, communication, and creativity. The genres explored in this guidebook, from reviews and blog entries to monologues and poetry, reflect the can-do statements of Curriculum 2020 and the kinds of writing that matter beyond the classroom. If we do our job well, students will leave school not merely having passed an exam, but having become writers.

That said, we recognize that the Bagrut exam is a reality students face, and teachers rightly want practical guidance for helping them meet its demands. We have therefore included this short chapter on Bagrut writing.

Note that the possible genres for Bagrut writing in Module C include opinions, stories and personal letters. In Module G the genres include opinions, stories, formal letters and emails. There are a few things that you can do to help your students organize their writing when under the pressure of an exam and also some points that you might want to emphasize.

Planning the essay

- Present on the board the following guidelines on essay planning:
 - Read the topic carefully to understand what is required.
 - Make preliminary notes on any background knowledge or experience you have on the subject and might include in your essay.
 - Make preliminary notes of useful and topic-related vocabulary that you know. Students taking Module G will be expected to use vocabulary from Band III.
 - Decide which tenses are suitable for use with this topic.
 - Plan the essay: what ideas, examples, reasons, and supporting details will you include?
- Provide a sample topic, chosen from previous Bagrut essay topics (see the [Bagrut archives](#)).

- Tell students to use the guidelines on the board to plan their essays, individually or in pairs; tell them how much time they have in class to do so.
- Then do one of the following:
 - Share and discuss what they have planned in class.
 - Collect their plans, and give feedback in writing.

Writing format

- Remind students that they must write an introduction, a body and a conclusion.
 - Module C: An introductory sentence, several sentences in the body and a concluding sentence.
 - Module G: An introductory paragraph, one or two paragraphs in the body and a concluding paragraph. Note that generally, each paragraph should contain more than one sentence.
- Teach students to rephrase the question in their introductory paragraph, rather than copying it word for word.
- Avoid teaching students 'formulas' for writing a composition. Our aim is to teach students to express themselves through writing, not to 'fill in the blanks'. Your students' compositions should not all look the same!

Opinion essays

- Students can present either one side or both sides of an argument, but they must remember to include their own opinion.
- It is important for them to include supporting reasons and examples for their opinion.

Letter writing

- When teaching students to write letters, be sure to teach them proper salutations and sign-offs and also the format for a formal letter (for Module G).
 - Salutations include 'Dear Sir/Dear Madam' for a very formal letter, 'Dear Mr. X / Ms. X' for a formal letter 'Dear [first name]' for an informal letter.
 - Sign-offs include 'Yours truly' for a very formal letter, 'Yours sincerely' for a formal letter, 'Best wishes', 'Love' or 'With love' for an informal letter
- The opening sentence of a formal letter should be the reason for writing, for example:
I am writing in response to your call for applicants for positions at Camp Hidden Lake. I am interested in the job of head counselor.



- The closing should be a request for action, for example: *I believe that the experience that I described above makes me a highly suitable candidate for the job of head counselor and I hope that you will consider me for the position. I look forward to hearing from you.*

Writing coherent text

- Students are expected to present their ideas coherently, in logical sequence. A statement may be followed by, for example, their opinion, or an example, or a generalization or any of the other functions listed in the left-hand column below. In each case, it will probably help to use the linking vocabulary listed in the second column below.
- See sample connectors in the table below:

Function	Useful vocabulary
Expressing opinion	in my opinion, I believe that, I think that, from my point of view, in my view
Giving examples	for instance, for example, an example is, to illustrate.
Generalizing	in general, usually, generally, as a rule
Making exceptions or reservations or expressing an opposing argument	however, but, an exception is, on the other hand, nevertheless, although, even though
Clarifying	in other words, to clarify
Giving reasons	because, since, therefore, consequently, as a result
Sequences of ideas	first, second, third; primarily... but also, next, then, lastly
Sequences of events	at first, at the beginning; next, then, later; finally, in the end
Adding extra information or detail	also, and, in addition, furthermore, moreover, besides; not only... but also
Expressing alternatives	or, alternatively, on the one hand... on the other (hand)

These connectors are tools for coherent writing in any context, and students who internalize them will use them naturally, in exams and beyond.

- Write sentences on the board that might introduce a paragraph in an essay. For example:
 - *Today, it is essential to be able to communicate in English.*



- *Should homework assignments be cancelled?*
- *A lot of teenagers are addicted to video games.*
- *Cinderella had a difficult life.*
- *Basketball is a great sport.*
- Tell students to copy this sentence at the top of a sheet of paper. They may work individually, or in pairs (but preferably not in groups of three or more).
- Then tell them to add a sentence, using one of the 'Functions' from the table.
- Ask them to expand their text, adding more sentences. In composing new sentences, they may use more of the options shown in the table.
- Allow students to continue writing until you see that everyone has texts of at least two or three sentences.
- Discuss some of the mini-compositions with all the class together, praising clear, coherent and interesting texts, pointing out any problems.

Variation: after adding their first sentence, students exchange papers and add a further sentence to the text on the paper they have received. They then exchange them with someone else and continue. Share, as above.

Further ideas to promote good essay-writing

Improving essays

Display a student-written essay (perhaps from one of your previous courses), and discuss with students how the vocabulary, grammar or organization could have been improved. You might use a lexical profiler, for example, vocabkitchen.com to help you assess the level of the vocabulary.

Adapting essays

- Invite your students to rewrite a completed and satisfactory Bagrut essay (one written by you or by students) in the following ways:
 - Express the opposite opinion.
 - Write a different introduction/conclusion.
 - Add or replace words to make more impact on the reader.
 - Add or replace sentences within the essay, maintaining the main message.

- Students who can argue the opposite position, or rethink an introduction, are not just preparing for an exam. They are learning to see writing as a living, revisable act of communication.

Tips for students

The tips below are useful for writing a Bagrut essay, and many of them apply to writing of essays in general, even outside the exam.

1. Remember to plan your essay first; don't start writing the final text immediately
2. When you finish writing your first draft, reread and correct as many mistakes as you can.
3. Keep an eye on the time: make sure you leave enough time to finish and review your essay.
4. Write at least three paragraphs.
5. Leave a blank line or indent between paragraphs.
6. Make sure your ideas are clear to you and to your readers.
7. Make sure you don't repeat yourself, use different words.
8. Make sure you use clear and precise words, not vague ones like 'nice' and 'big'.
9. Check spelling with a dictionary.
10. Do not look up new words in the dictionary unless absolutely essential, better to use the ones you know.
11. Reread your conclusion and check that it fits the introduction and main arguments of your essay.

What you are ultimately teaching is not how to pass an exam, but how to write. The planning, organizing, revising, and choosing of precise words that students practice here are habits they will carry into their adult lives, in university, in the workplace, and beyond. The Bagrut is one occasion to use them. It will not be the last.

References

[Vocabkitchen](#) - A quick way of finding out what CEFR level a word or text is.

[Bagrut archives](#)



Chapter 5: Feedback, Correction and Assessment

The best way for students to progress in their writing is to write, get feedback (corrections, criticisms, compliments), and to write again. So it is crucial to know how to provide helpful feedback on writing.

We also need to know how to assess writing fairly, both for formative purposes (letting students know how good their writing is to encourage improvement) and for summative (providing a grade at the end of a term or year).

1. Corrective feedback on writing assignments

General guidelines

- **You do not necessarily need to correct every piece of writing your students do.** It is good for them sometimes to write something without handing it in; you will not have time to correct everything anyway if your students are, as we recommend, doing a lot of writing - particularly if you have large classes.
- Having said that, correction is really important for students' progress, so do collect and **correct as much as you reasonably can.** If you are short of time, you might collect assignments selectively: some of the students this week, and others next week.
- You may or may not wish to correct all the mistakes. If a student makes a lot of mistakes, it is depressing and unhelpful to correct everything. On the other hand, research indicates that most students do want you to correct everything! Use your own professional judgment when deciding how much to correct. Note that it is not, on the whole, helpful to correct only one kind of error (for example, spelling) and ignore the rest.

Underlining, codes, explicit correction.

There are various strategies for correcting written work:

- In some circumstances, if you are fairly sure a student can work out for themselves what the right form should be if an error is pointed out, it is enough just to underline or highlight a mistake.
- Another useful strategy when working with students of A2 level and above is to underline an error and then use codes such as '*SP*' for spelling, or '*WO*' for word order, leaving students to correct themselves.
- A third strategy, if you feel the student would not be able to self-correct, is to underline the error and write in the full correct form.

Which is best? Probably a combination. You know your students: if they can self-correct a particular error if they think about it, or look it up in a dictionary, then underlining and perhaps a code is enough; if not, it's better to actually write in what the correct form should be. It is fine to use a combination of these within a single assignment.

Rewriting

- Get students to rewrite. If they do not have to rewrite a corrected assignment, they often simply ignore corrections and just look at the grade - as many of us have experienced! If they rewrite, incorporating your corrections, they are more likely to remember the correct forms.
- If you give a grade (see later in this chapter on grading), then give it only on the final rewritten draft.

Make comments

- Commend correct forms. We too often only draw attention to what is wrong, but it's important also to note what is right. Add a ✓ or a smiley or complimentary note in the margin for things students got right, and maybe also a positive comment at the end on what was good, as well as what was not.
- Add a final comment. Add a note at the end of an assignment: this could just be an assessment like '*very good*', but it is also an opportunity, if you have time, to add suggestions: see the next point.
- When adding comments, try to make these as specific as possible: not just 'very good', but rather, or together with, something like '*Remember to check with a dictionary when you aren't sure about spelling*', or '*Your description of the meal was very clear - made me hungry!*').

Peer feedback

- Occasionally, get students to help each other, by reading each other's assignments and giving feedback, before (or even instead of) handing in to you.
- It is important to stress that the point of peer-feedback is not to role-play the teacher and correct, but to suggest improvements so that the resulting composition is as good as possible.

Self-correction

- Tell students to read through what they have written and self-correct where they can, whether or not they are going to hand in the result.
- You may wish to invite students to use a checklist when self-correcting. See below.



Checklists

- Checklists should only include items that the students can readily check for themselves: it is not fair, for example, to include in an A1 checklist a criterion like 'The story is interesting to the reader'.
- If you are going to grade the assignment, make sure that the student checklist includes criteria that are identical to the those in the rubrics you use later for grading. Students should know how they are going to be graded.
- Checklists are normally in English; however, for A1 students they may be translated into L1.
- You can use one of the checklists we suggest below, or adapt, or design your own. In any case, make sure you go through it with students before asking them to use it, to make sure they understand and can apply all the criteria.
- It is also possible to devise the checklist together with your students in a class discussion: if they have been involved in designing the items, they are more likely to understand and apply them well.

A1 Sample Checklists

• Is my writing clear and tidy?	
• Are my ideas clear to the reader?	
• Did I check capital letters and periods?	
• Did I check spelling?	

	• הכתיבה שלי ברורה ומסודרת?
	• מה שכתבתי ברור ומוכן לקורא?
	• בדקתי שימוש באותיות גדולות ונקודות סיום משפט?
	• בדקתי כתיב?



	• هل كتابتي واضحة ومرتبّة.
	• هل ما كتبتّه واضح ومفهوم للقارئ؟
	• هل تأكّدت من استخدام الحروف الكبيرة ونقطة في نهاية الجملة؟
	• هل تأكّدت من الإملاء؟

A2 Sample checklist

• I wrote the kind of texts that the instructions asked for.	
• I gave the information that the instructions asked for.	
• I checked my grammar.	
• I wrote a beginning, a middle and an ending	
• I used some of the vocabulary we learned in class.	
• I checked my spelling.	
• I checked my use of periods, commas and capital letters.	

B1/B2 Sample checklist

• I answered the question.	
• I stayed on the topic.	
• I included important ideas.	
• I gave examples or reasons.	
• My ideas are clear.	
• I have an introduction, main section(s) and conclusion.	
• I used connectors (and, but, because, however...).	
• I used different grammar structures.	
• I used a variety of vocabulary.	
• I checked my grammar, spelling and punctuation.	
• My writing is clear.	



2. Assessment

You will sometimes need to formally assess (give a grade on) a written assignment, for two main reasons.

- Because it may be required as part of a final grade at the end of the term or the year (summative assessment).
- Because students need, and want, to know how good their written work is relative to the standard required at their level, and how much they need to improve (formative assessment).

Forms of grades

Conventionally, grades are given in numerical form (a percentage, or out of 10 or 5). Here are some possible alternatives:

- Smileys. You might give one 😊 or two, or three. Or different smileys: 😊 / 😊 / 😊
- Checks/ticks. You might give a ✓ or ✓ ✓ or ✓ ✓ ✓

Criteria

- It helps to use rubrics (see examples below) to make sure that your grading is based on comprehensive criteria, balanced and consistent.
- Make sure that the major criterion for a piece of writing is whether or not it manages to get its ideas across satisfactorily.
- Add points for originality, effort, improvement. Remember, if students think they are only being judged on correct usages, they will not try to be original or interesting and will limit themselves to things they can express in English without making mistakes.
- Make sure that students are aware of your criteria for assessment, whether or not you are using rubrics, and that these criteria accord with any checklists you may have given them earlier.



Rubrics

You might like to use one of the rubrics shown below, or design your own.

A1

Component	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓
Neat Writing	The writing is neat and easy to read.	Some of the writing is neat and easy to read.	The writing is difficult to read.
Clear Ideas	The ideas are clear and easy to understand.	Some ideas are clear.	The ideas are difficult to understand.
Capitals and Periods	Capital letters and periods are used correctly.	Some capital letters and periods are used correctly.	Many capital letters and periods are missing.
Vocabulary	Band I vocabulary is used correctly.	Band I vocabulary is sometimes used incorrectly.	Band I vocabulary is often used incorrectly.
Spelling	Most words are spelled correctly.	Some words are spelled correctly.	Many spelling errors.

A2

Component	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓
Content	The topic is fully covered.	The topic is mostly covered.	The content does not match the topic.
Organization	There is a clear beginning, middle, and ending.	The structure is partially clear.	There is no clear structure.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary items from both Band I and Band II are included and are used correctly.	Vocabulary is mostly below Band II level and sometimes used incorrectly.	Vocabulary is low-level and often used incorrectly.
Accuracy: Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation	Grammar and spelling are mostly correct, punctuation is used appropriately.	A number of errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Many errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation.



B1/B2

Component	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓
Task & Content	The question is fully answered, on topic, and includes all important ideas with examples or reasons.	The question is mostly answered and on topic, with some important ideas and/or examples.	The question is not fully answered and/or important ideas are missing.
Organization	The writing has a clear introduction, main section(s), and conclusion. Ideas are well organized.	The writing has some clear structure, but parts may be missing or unclear.	The writing has little or no clear structure.
Vocabulary and Connectors	A variety of vocabulary is used correctly, including Band III vocabulary. Connectors are used appropriately.	Vocabulary is mostly below Band III level and sometimes used incorrectly. Some connectors are used.	No Band III vocabulary and vocabulary is often used incorrectly. No connectors.
Accuracy: Grammar, Spelling and Punctuation	Grammar, spelling, and punctuation are mostly correct.	Some errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	Many errors in grammar, spelling and punctuation.



Chapter 6: Teaching Spelling and Punctuation

This chapter provides some useful spelling and pronunciation rules, followed by suggested activities.

1. Spelling

Once students know the basic sound represented by each letter, they are likely to spell a lot of words correctly, but not all. The words not spelled phonetically can be divided into two groups: those that accord with easily-learned rules, and very common words that have developed special spellings over time and do not fit a rule. Luckily, most English words are in fact spelled according to regular rules. So once students have learned the very common oddly-spelled words like *are* and *one*, they will probably be able to spell more advanced ones if they know the rules. The main rules are summarized below.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements covered in this section include:

- Can spell the lexical entries in Lexical Band I marked as productive with reasonable accuracy (A1: orthographic control)
- Can accurately spell most of the productive items (from Lexical Bands I and II) (A2: orthographic control)
- Can spell words, punctuate and lay out text, for the most part, accurately (B1: orthographic control)
- Can write with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation, and can follow standard layout and paragraphing conventions (B2: orthographic control)

Spelling rules

Spelling rules will help students to spell most words correctly, but they should be aware that there are exceptions.

We suggest you take lesson time to teach explicitly some or all of the following. Most will need to be taught at the early levels (A1-A2), but it is useful to review them later on.

- Two-letter combinations of consonants like *th*, *ch*, *sh*, *wh* and the less common *ph*
- The final *e* ('magic e') which causes a previous vowel to be pronounced like its name, as in *late*, *these*, *time*, *hope*, *tune*
- The letter *c*, usually representing the sound /k/, is usually pronounced /s/ before *i*, *e*, *y*; and similarly *g*, usually representing the sound /g/, but usually (not always) pronounced /dʒ/ before *i*, *e*, *y*
- The suffixes - *tion*, -*sion*, -*ssion*



- The sound 'l' at the end of a short word is usually spelled 'll'; but long words ending with the sound 'l' are usually spelled with one 'l' (for example, compare *till* with *until*).
- The *qu* combination: q is always followed by u in English words.
- The 'k' sound at the end of a short word is usually spelled *ck* (for example, *click*); but at the end of a long word only *c* (for example, *magic*).
- The combinations *-igh* and *-ight*; *-ough* and *ought*; *-augh* and *aught*
- A double consonant usually makes the vowel before it short (i.e., not like its name), in words like *apple*, *filling* (compare *paper*, *filing*). Hence the rule about doubling the consonant when adding the *-ed*, *-ing* suffixes to short verbs (*sitting*, *stopped*), or making the comparative of short adjectives (*fatter*).
- *ai/ay* - The sound like a capital 'A' is usually spelled *ai* in the middle of words (for example, *rain*, *wait*) and *ay* at the end (for example, *day*, *play*).
- *ee/ea* - Both spell the long 'ee' sound (for example, *see*, *tree*; *read*, *meat*), but 'ee' is more common at the end of words.
- *oa/ow* - The sound like a capital 'O' is spelled *oa* in the middle of words (for example, *boat*, *coat*) and *ow* at the end (for example, *show*, *grow*).
- *oo* - Represents two sounds: long 'oo' as in *food*, *moon*) and a shorter sound as in *book*, *good*).
- Silent *e* at the end of words (already mentioned as 'magic e')
- Silent *k* before *n* at the beginning of words (for example, *knife*, *know*, *knock*)
- Silent *w* before *r* at the beginning of words (for example, *write*, *wrong*, *wrap*)
- Silent *b* after *m* at the end of words (for example, *climb*, *thumb*, *lamb*)
- *y* sounds like a capital 'I' at the end of one-syllable words (for example, *my*, *fly*, *try*); like 'ee' at the end of multi-syllable words (for example, *happy*, *baby*, *family*)
- *y* at the end of a word after a consonant changes to *i* before adding suffixes (for example: *happy* → *happiness*; *plenty* → *plentiful*)
- For plurals: usually just add *s*. Exceptions:
 - Add *-es* (not just *-s*) after *s*, *x*, *z*, *ch*, *sh* (for example, *boxes*, *classes*, *watches*, *dishes*).

- Words ending in a consonant + *y*: change *y* to *i* and add -es (for example, *city* → *cities*; *baby* → *babies*). This does not apply to words ending in a vowel + *y* (for example, *day* → *days*).
- ‘*i* before *e* except after *c*’ (when the sound is ‘ee’) (for example, *believe*, *piece*, *field* BUT *receive*, *ceiling*, *deceive*. Some exceptions: *weird*, *seize*

Suggested activities

Dictations

- of single words
- of phrases
- of complete sentences
- translation-dictation (you give the L1 word, students write it in English)

Translation activities

- Students translate written words from L1 to English.

Recall and share

- Display a set of words on the board, then delete/hide them.
- The students try to recall and write down as many as they can remember on their own, then share with classmates to recall more and check spelling.
- Finally display again the set of words for students to self-check.

Using spell-check

- Students type a word, sentence or paragraph into Microsoft Word, and note which words the spellcheck corrects.
- They then make a list of the (correctly-spelled) words that were corrected.

Tips

1. Avoid the use of ‘jumbled’ words to sort out or wrongly-spelled words to correct. (This is a time-consuming activity, and we want students to read correct words, not jumbled or incorrect ones.)
2. Avoid word-games like ‘Hangman’ or ‘Wordsearch’ where students spend most of the time puzzling and very little actually writing.



3. It is advisable to stick to American spelling (rather than British): it is simpler and more widespread.

2. Punctuation

Commas, periods (full stops), exclamation marks, question marks, dashes and parentheses are used very much the same way they are used in the students' mother tongues. So they probably do not need very much teaching. We recommend that you discuss them when you find student errors in their use. Take time out during the activity where the error occurred to explain correct usage.

If you aren't sure of your own mastery of some aspects of English punctuation, read Lynne Truss's classic *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*: easy to read, entertaining and very helpful.

Some general rules about other important features of English punctuation are shown below, followed by suggested activities.

Can-do statements

Can-do statements covered in this section include:

- Shows evolving control of periods, commas, question marks, apostrophes and capital letters (A1: orthographic control)
- Can use basic punctuation appropriately (A2: orthographic control)
- Can spell words, punctuate and lay out text, for the most part, accurately (B1: orthographic control)
- Can write with reasonably accurate spelling and punctuation, and can follow standard layout and paragraphing conventions (B2: orthographic control)

Capital (upper-case) letters

Capital letters do need teaching, at the early stages of students' learning to write, as they do not occur in Hebrew and Arabic. Their major use is at the beginning of sentences; they are also used with proper nouns (names of people, places, companies, festivals and the like), and major headings in a text (for example, headlines in a newspaper) may be in capital letters. You may wish to point out that capital letters are used for many abbreviations such as UN, BBC, USA (normally without periods).

Quotation marks and apostrophes

There are two kinds of quotation marks in English: single ('or') and double ("or"). Both are acceptable; the single tends to be used in British English, the double more common in American.

Direct speech

Quotation marks are used to indicate the beginning and end of any direct speech in texts: for example: ‘Good morning!’ she said.

Draw students’ attention to the fact that other kinds of punctuation (commas, full stops, question and exclamation marks) normally come **before** the final quotation mark, as in the example above.

Possessive ’s

Explain to students that the ’s comes at the end of a noun to indicate ‘of’. So *John’s father* means the same as *the father of John*.

If the noun already has an s because it is in the plural then the ’ comes after the s. So *the boys’ mother* means the same as *the mother of the boys*.

(Note that this does not apply to plurals which don’t have an s: so you would write *the children’s mother* to mean *the mother of the children*.)

The apostrophe as an indicator of a missing vowel in informal writing.

The apostrophe (’) is used to indicate a missing vowel in contracted forms like *I’m* or *doesn’t*. Warn students that in formal writing (a Bagrut essay, for example) they should not use such forms, but keep to the full forms (*I am*, *does not*). The contracted forms should only be used in informal communication, like cellphone texting, for example.

Colon and semi-colon

Teach these only to the most advanced students.

The colon

This can be used to introduce direct speech, for example: ‘*She exclaimed: “Oh, what a surprise!”*’

It also introduces lists or examples, as often used in this booklet when providing sample ideas to illustrate explanations of activities.

Finally, it may be used in the middle of a sentence to introduce an amplification or clarification of an idea. For example: ‘*An aspect of vocabulary worth considering is the similarity of an item to its equivalent in the student’s L1: if it is close in form to the L1 translation, it will be easier to learn.*’

The semi-colon

The semi colon divides a sentence into two or more clauses, and can often replace a period. For example: ‘*She was undecided as to whether or not to attend; it was a difficult decision.*’



It also divides items in a list, when at least some of these items are longer than a word or two. For example: *'Fares were offered to Corfu, the Greek island; Morocco; Elba, in the Mediterranean; and Paris.'* (Truss, 2003:126).

Suggested activities

Dictation

Dictate a full sentence, ask students to write it out, paying attention both to spelling and to punctuation.

Easier: dictate a very short sentence, where punctuation includes only a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end.

More challenging: dictate a long sentence including a list, or direct speech.

Indirect into direct speech

Provide students with sentences that include indirect speech, and ask them to write them out as direct speech. Note that this will also practice tense use in direct/indirect speech.

For example: You write on the board, or dictate: *'She said she was tired.'* Students write: *'She said: "I'm tired."'*

Make sure your sentences include questions and commands/invitations.

For example:

- *We asked if we could go home.*
- *They told us to stand up.*
- *The poster invites us to buy tickets for the concert.*
- *He said he had already seen the movie.*
- *Everyone was shouting that they hated the idea.*

Emoji into sentence

Give students a set of emojis, and ask them to write what they think the writer might have meant to say in each case, writing out their interpretation using quotation marks and any other punctuation they feel appropriate.

For example:



"I'm amazed and shocked at what you just wrote!"

Other emojis you might use:



... and any more you can find.

Punctuation into sentence

Ask students to:

- write one sentence with a comma. For example: *'I wanted to go outside, but it started to rain.'*
- write a sentence with a question mark (a question). For example: *'What time does the lesson start?'*
- Write a sentence with an exclamation mark. For example: *'I can't believe we won the game!'*

More challenging: Write a sentence with:

- two or more commas. For example: *'On Saturday, I met my friends, went to the mall, and watched a movie.'*
- a semi-colon. For example: *'I was very tired; I went to bed early.'*
- a colon. For example: *'I need three things for school: a notebook, a pen, and a ruler.'*

Tips

1. Display a 'Punctuation Reminder' poster:
 - a. a capital letter at the beginning of the sentence
 - b. a period / question mark / exclamation mark at the end of the sentence
2. Don't provide unpunctuated sentences for students to punctuate: students may remember the lack of punctuation rather than the correct forms.

Reference

Truss, L. (2003). *Eats, shoots and leaves*. Profile Books.



Chapter 7: Writing Portfolios

A writing portfolio is a collection of student writing that the student collects over the period of a term or the whole year. It includes everything the student has written. These can be short pieces composed in class or for homework with no corrections or grades from you, or they can be short or long compositions which you have corrected and perhaps given a grade. For more advanced classes, the portfolio should include all the stages of compositions which have been through multiple revisions, feedback and a final teacher assessment.

Uses

1. Individual portfolios can be collected when you have time (you don't need to collect them all at once). You may then do one or both of the following:

- Check out the progress students are making in their writing. You may or may not wish to insert comments and encouragement into each portfolio as you check it.
- Use the portfolio as a basis for assessment, to help you provide written assessments and grades at the end of a term or year.

2. Students can be given class time to leaf through their portfolios, to provide them with a sense of achievement and see for themselves how much they have progressed.

Organization

A simple option is to make sure each student has a paper or plastic folder (or large envelope), with his or her name on it. They put all written assignments into it. Some of these may be on separate pieces of paper, others may be written in a notebook.

A more advanced alternative is to require each student to purchase a folder, ten dividers and a lined A4 notepad, and bring it to class. They should write their names, class and a title (for example, *'My English Writing Portfolio'*) on the cover. The portfolio should open from left to right. All assignments are written on the paper from the notepad, and – immediately, or after having been checked by you – inserted in the portfolio.

In either case, all written assignments should be dated.

Process and activities

- **Introduce the portfolio:** Explain to students what the portfolio is - perhaps display a sample - and how they will use it throughout the year. Assure them that their effort and progress will be acknowledged in your comments on their report cards at the end of the school year.
- **Activate the portfolio.** Give the class one of the short writing activities suggested in earlier chapters. When they have completed these, tell them to write the date, and insert into the portfolio.



- **Remind.** Every time you give an assignment, whether in class or for homework, remind students to insert it into their portfolios. Do the same when you return any assignment that you have checked and corrected (and perhaps graded).
- **Admire and reflect.** Give time every so often for students to look through their portfolios, see how much they have written and enjoy the feeling of achievement. This can be simply reading and admiring; or you might give an actual assignment, such as one of the following:
 - Students choose the assignment they think is best, and draw a star on it (or get a sticker).
 - (For elementary students) Students decorate or illustrate selected assignments to make them look more attractive.
 - (From B1 level upwards) Students write a brief note to themselves saying how they think they have progressed and what they need to work on now.

Using digital portfolios

For students at a more advanced level (B1-B2) who are typing their assignments into a computer, assignments can be kept in a digital portfolio. This can be a simple folder within Word, or a Google Docs folder, into which they upload every assignment. This is a good way of keeping track of multiple rewrites of an essay.



Chapter 8: Writing Poems

Poems are fun to write: the results are pleasing, sometimes funny, and give students a sense of satisfaction with their own writing. Encourage younger students to decorate and display their poems on the classroom wall; or ask them to keep their poems in their portfolios (see Chapter 7 above).

The simplest poems to write are the *acrostic* and the *clerihew*. Also described below are the *cinquain*, *hero poem* and *who-what-where-when-why-how* poems, based on ideas taken from Holmes & Moulton (2001). Finally, there is the *limerick*, made famous by Edward Lear.

Acrostic

Write a word vertically on the board, for example:

F
R
I
E
N
D

and invite students to suggest a word or phrase using each letter that is relevant to the word's meaning. For example: FRIEND

F un
Nea R me
Sm I les
H E lps me
N ice
Rea D y to listen

Then give another word, and invite students to work in pairs or threes doing the same. Remind them that in English each new line of a poem begins with a capital letter.

Variation: Each student writes an acrostic using his or her own name as a basis.

More challenging:

- Each line has to begin with the key letter.
- The lines can be full sentences.

Clerihew

A clerihew is a four-line poem.

Line 1: Any word, phrase or sentence (often a name of a famous person, or someone you know; but could be anything!)

Line 2: A continuation (word, phrase or sentence) ending with a word that rhymes with the last word of the first line

Line 3: A continuation: may be a word, phrase, or sentence (as many words as you like)

Line 4: A word, phrase, or sentence that rhymes line 3.

Remind students to insert appropriate punctuation.

Examples:

Writing	Mark Twain
Is quite exciting.	Had a great brain.
I can choose	His mother wanted him to be a lawyer,
Which words to use.	But he wanted to write <i>Tom Sawyer</i> .

Cinquain

Cinquain is a five-line poem that creates an image without using complete sentences, focusing instead on specific parts of speech. This format teaches nouns, adjectives, participles, phrases, and synonyms while requiring economy of expression and careful word choice to refine vocabulary.

Instructions for Teachers:

1. Explain the pattern to students: Line 1 (noun), Line 2 (two adjectives), Line 3 (three present participles), Line 4 (four-word phrase), Line 5 (synonym for the noun).
2. Choose familiar topics for students to write about, such as animals, friends, or concepts they're studying, and brainstorm vocabulary for each line together.
3. Guide word selection by demonstrating how to use commas to separate items and helping students find the most descriptive and appropriate words for each line.
4. Review and revise the completed poems as a class, allowing students to make changes to enhance meaning or rhythm and encouraging them to share their work.



Examples:

Summer	My Cat
Warm, sunny	Soft, quiet
Swimming, playing, resting	Sleeping, purring, jumping
Fun at the beach	Lives in my house
Holiday	Pet

Hero poem

A hero poem is a six-line poem that describes someone the writer admires by using specific parts of speech. This format teaches proper nouns, adjectives, noun phrases, action words, prepositional phrases, and complete thoughts while allowing students to express their feelings and aspirations about their chosen hero.

Instructions for Teachers:

1. Explain the pattern to students: Line 1 (hero's name), Line 2 (three adjectives that describe the hero), Line 3 (place/group/activity identified with the hero), Line 4 (three action words ending in -ing), Line 5 (prepositional phrase about where actions occur), Line 6 (thoughts or feelings about the hero).
2. Have students choose a hero they admire — real or fictional, a family member, historical figure, or character — and discuss what makes someone a hero worth writing about.
3. Guide brainstorming and word selection for each line, demonstrating the use of capital letters for proper nouns and commas to separate items in lists.
4. Review and revise completed poems together, checking that lines flow cohesively to create a unified image of the hero and allowing students to refine their word choices.

Examples:

My Big Sister	My Teacher
Smart, caring, kind	Patient, smart, friendly
At home and at school	In the classroom with students
Reading, studying, singing	Teaching, helping, explaining
In her room every evening	At school every day
She teaches me many things.	She helps me learn new things.



Who-what-where-when-why-how poem

A who-what-where-when-why-how poem is a six-line poem that answers the basic questions of journalism, transforming factual information into a complete sentence arranged in poetic form.

Explain the pattern to students: each line answers one question: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? The order of the lines can be rearranged to form a complete sentence.

1. Choose a familiar story or event for students to write about, such as a fable, historical event, or personal experience, and help them identify the key information that answers each question.
2. Guide students to write responses for each question word, keeping the same order initially, then demonstrate how rearranging the lines can create better sentence flow.
3. Review and revise the poems together, helping students refine wording and line order until the six lines work together as both a poem and a logical, complete sentence.

Examples:

My little brother
ate all the cookies
in the kitchen
after school yesterday
without asking permission
because he was very hungry.

The small dog
ran away quickly
from the park
early this morning
because a big cat scared him
through the open gate.

Limerick

1. Write the first line introducing a character or place. Make sure it ends with a word that has many rhyming options (for example, *'There once was a man from Peru'*).
2. Write a second line that rhymes with the first. Keep 8-9 syllables for both lines (for example, *'Who dreamt he was eating his shoe'*).
3. Write the third and fourth lines with a new rhyme pair. These lines should be shorter, with 5-6 syllables each (for example, *'He awoke with a fright / In the middle of the night'*).
4. Finish with the fifth line, rhyming it with the first and second lines. This line may deliver a funny or unexpected idea (for example, *'To discover it was sadly true'*), or paraphrase one of the first lines (as in the example below).



Sample poem:

There was an old man who said 'Well!
Will nobody answer this bell?
I have pulled day and night
Till my hair has turned white
But nobody answers this bell!

(Edward Lear)

Reference

Holmes, V. L., & Moulton, M. R. (2001). *Writing simple poems: Pattern poetry for language acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.