

Developing Writing Skill

In the fundamental order of language learning, writing occupies the last place after listening, speaking and reading. Nevertheless, the importance of writing should never be underestimated. Great works of eminent writers, philosophers and scientists are preserved in written form. Without the written aspect, a language will not be worth the name. Through writing, a person is able to convey his thoughts or ideas to others who are not present in front of the writer. Moreover, writing makes the record permanent. Whatever is written once remains forever; unless it is knowingly destroyed. While writing a person has to be very exact.

The development of writing skill among students involves manual skill-the skill of controlling the small muscles of the fingers and the wrist and securing co-ordination of the hand and the eye. Secondly, it involves doing various exercises in written work. The exercises cover a vast field ranging from copying the phrases and sentences to composing a long essay.

There are two types of learners who can be taught writing of English language. The first category is of those who have not learnt the writing of any language. The second category is of those who already learnt the writing of the mother tongue. In the first case, the teacher has to explain to the learners how they have to sit, how to hold a notebook and pen in hand. After this, they are given preliminary practice of writing with a chalk. The students may be given the practice of drawing straight lines. In the beginning, the lines may not be straight. By and by, they should be given practice in drawing short lines, in one direction and then in another direction. After this, they should be given practice in drawing circles, semi circles etc. This type of practice should continue as long as the students are able to move their fingers and wrist according to the writing specimens. It will be all the more useful if the students are asked to study drawing as a compulsory subject at this stage. All that will be fully helpful in the learning of writing. This much practice will pave way for teaching the writing of alphabets. The second category of students who have learnt the writing of mother tongue, are already at this stage when writing of English alphabets is introduced to them.

Choice of Material

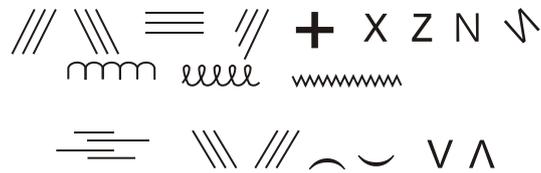
At the initial stage, the movement of arms should be regulated and writing should begin with strokes, lines, curves etc. Better still; the child should begin with his finger movements on sand. In many countries the pupils do their first writing on the black board with a soft piece of chalk. Very soon, they begin to write at their desks on paper with large sized lead pencils. Pupils may also write on slates. The use of pen and ink should be postponed until cursive writing is introduced.

Posture

Posture comprises the position of arm, head, paper, pen etc. when the pupil is writing at his desk; he should sit comfortably in an erect position. The distance of the eye from the paper should be about 30 cms. The pen should not be held too tightly and the teacher should not find it difficult to remove the pen out the pupil's hand. The pupil should not be allowed to bend upon the paper. Left handers should be discouraged.

Alphabet Writing

F.G. Frnech's method: French was not in favour of teaching writing letters straight. First of all, some free movements should be there by pupils whether in a tray of sand or with chalk on a brown paper as:



After these free movements, controlled movements should be taught through following procedure:

1. **Teaching strokes:** First of all, following strokes should be taught, involving straight lines.



These strokes help them learning the writing of letters involving straight lines, e. g. A, E, F, H, I, K, L, M N, T, W, X, Y, Z.

2. **Teaching Circles:** Pupil practise the writing of circular forms of different shapes and sizes. These structures help them in learning letters containing circles or semi-circles, e.g. G, O, Q etc.



3. **Teaching combining strokes and circles:** Some letters involves both i.e. the strokes and circles like, D, B, p, q, b, d etc. For them pupils are asked to practice the forms combining strokes and circles.



4. **Teaching curves:** For more complex letters like s, j, g etc., pupils are made to practice curves only



5. **Teaching combining strokes and curves:** Still some letters are left as h, m, n, r, u, f etc. which are written with the combination of curves and strokes. Practice of following structures train pupil's hands to write these letters legibly.

This is the procedure recommended by French. He has grouped small letters in his own discovered sequence as he recommended teaching of small letters first. The sequence to be followed by the teacher is given below:

o a c e d q g p
m n h r f j l i t y z
w v x z k s

This method is followed in most of the convent and English medium school these days. It has all the merits and demerits of free imitation method. The biggest advantage, however, remains its psychological approach and stress free procedure.

Word Writing

After the pupils have learnt writing small as well as capital letters, they should be told how to join letters to form words. They should be asked to copy words from the black-board or from their reader. The words they write should be familiar to them. They may be asked to write their own names. It will give them a lot of pleasure. Four lined exercise books may be used for writing.

Sentence Writing

After the learners have some practice in writing words, should be asked to combine words to form sentences. They may copy sentences from the black-board or from their reader, as stated earlier; four lined copy books are quite useful for writing at the early stage. Learners should be taught to put the letters of the words close together and to put a space between the words of a sentence. The rule should be 'letters close: words apart'. Proper spacing between letters and words should be taught.

Choice of Script

There are two main types of script-print script and cursive script. In print script, different letters of a word are not joined together. All the printed material is in this script and that is why, its name is print script. In cursive writing, different letters of a word are joined together by curves and it can also be called running writing.

Now the question is: which script out of these two should be followed? Cursive writing is natural and the pupils are to adopt it in their later life. But at the early stage, print script should be introduced because of the following reasons:-

1. It is easier than the cursive script and we should keep the maxim 'easy to difficult' in mind.
2. It avoids unnecessary strokes and curves.
3. The pupils come across this script in their primer or reader. If they are taught cursive script in the very beginning, they will be confused.

However, cursive script should take the place of print script as early as possible because it is the cursive script that the pupils should learn ultimately.

Choice of style

There are two styles: Vertical and Slanting. Slanting style has two kinds of slants-forward slant and backward slant. Vertical style is generally considered as the best one; however, if a learner is to have a slant in his style, it must be forward slant because backward slant retards the progress in writing. A learner should not write letters in different style-there should be uniformity in style.