

Writing, Grade 1

English Learner

Writing is just one aspect of learning English; some students will be more comfortable than others learning to write in English. Reassure English learners that they are learning new skills with each piece they complete. Encourage them to take pride in their hard work. Sending work home and having these students participate in class exhibitions can be especially important. Some English learners will come to first grade knowing different alphabet or character systems than those used in English; encourage these students to share what they know about other writing systems.

Language difficulties may prevent English learners from clearly writing their ideas, even though those ideas may be strong. Encourage them to express themselves in oral or written form. Remind them often to refer to the **Sound/Spelling Cards** they have learned. These are a valuable tool for all students to use throughout the year as they develop their reading and writing skills. In a safe environment that emphasizes good ideas rather than error-free English, students will take risks with a second language. These risks are associated with more rapid language acquisition.

Writing Seminar, teacher-student conferences, and Workshop are three periods of the day during which you can help English learners. Writing Seminar offers all students, especially English learners, the opportunity to build oral language by sharing their writing. When held regularly, Writing Seminar and teacher-student conferences can be valuable opportunities for supporting these students. During Workshop, you can preteach, review, or reteach skills as needed.

Pair an English learner with a native English-speaking student. Have them discuss their plans for writing and help each other with their writing ideas. Sharing ideas provides English learners with confidence and a sense that their ideas are worthwhile.

At first, English learners may wish to draw or cut out pictures to express themselves. Once they are reading, they may be ready to write. One way to ease the students into writing is to have them write as a group with these steps:

1. Explain the subject of a piece of writing. Give examples to help students start.
2. Each student may suggest a sentence, and the group can build a piece together.
3. Depending on the capabilities of your students, take one of these approaches:
 - Have your students write the sentences on their papers.
 - Write the sentences on the board for your students to copy onto their papers.
 - Write the sentences on paper for your students. (You may wish to write in light pencil.) Make photocopies and later, or as homework, have them trace over your sentences with ink or colored pencils.
4. The piece of writing may be considered complete at this point. Or they may use what they write in class as a template and write their own pieces, changing words here and there. They can also illustrate the piece. These activities may be done as homework.

Early on, it is important that students learn how to ask about anything they don't understand. As soon as possible, teach students to use the phrases, "What is _____?" and "Please explain _____." Students learn the vocabulary they are curious about fastest. Praise your students for asking questions, and use questions as an opportunity to clarify.

The goal is independence, but in the beginning English learners will need maximum support. It is important to scaffold learning for them. As they learn English and become comfortable with speaking, reading, and writing English, they will need less support.

