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| In this unit, we explore your previous approaches to writing and introduce you to several effective approaches for learning to write. You will also apply specific strategies for planning your writing assignment for this course. |

**Reflection**

**Task 1: Discussion**

Read the following statements about writing and learning to write. Decide which **three** you most strongly agree with. Compare your answers with a partner and give your reasons for agreeing with the statements.

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| 1. | Writing is an intellectual activity that takes a lot of time for thinking and analyzing. |
| 2. | When giving feedback to students, it is important for the teacher to indicate every grammatical error that a student has made. |
| 3. | Writing can be used not only to express ideas, but also to discover new ways of thinking about ideas. |
| 4. | Students should be taught to write a good sentence first, then a good paragraph, and only then to write an essay. |
| 5. | When giving feedback to students, it is important to focus on whether the ideas are expressed clearly and whether the content supports the writer’s idea. |
| 6. | It is important to prevent students from making mistakes by presenting key grammar points before students begin to write. |

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| *A few years ago, the Chief Executive Officer of Lockheed-California said the following to a group of engineering educators:*  *From a purely technical and scientific standpoint, your engineering colleges are sending us the best-educated, best-prepared new engineering graduates we have had. We are strained to challenge their technical and quantitative abilities. However, these same graduates have one glaring deficiency: they can’t write. I want you to send me engineers who can WRITE! WRITE! WRITE! WRITE! WRITE!*  Borowick, J. N. (2000). *How to write a lab report*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. |

**Task 2: Oral Presentation**

Think back to your experiences about learning to write in secondary school. Describe a “typical” writing lesson to your group members. How similar was your experience in learning to write to the experiences of other group members? What differences were there? Be prepared to present your group’s experiences to the rest of the class.

**Reading: Product versus Process**

**Task 3: Skimming**

Skim read the following article about writing as a product and writing as a process. What is the author’s position about teaching writing? What reasons does the author give for this position?

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| **Approaches to Writing: Product versus Process**  Charles Lockhart  Although the ability to write well is widely accepted as an essential skill for success at university and in the workplace, there is less agreement on how students can learn to become successful writers. Two seemingly contradicting approaches to teaching writing are the product-based approach, which focuses on grammatical accuracy and structure, and the process-based approach, which focuses on decision-making and problem-solving strategies associated with producing a piece of writing. Although language accuracy is important, this essay argues that a process-based approach to writing has several advantages over a product-based approach.  The traditional method to teaching writing focuses on the final product with an emphasis on the correct use of grammatical forms, vocabulary choice, and paragraph structure. Accuracy is considered the main feature of good writing, while the actual content, or the *meaning*, is secondary. This approach assumes that writing is the application of language rules, and that these rules form the building blocks that comprise a well-written text, and that writing development is the result of imitating and manipulating various models provided by the teacher (Hyland, 2003). In this approach, the teacher typically provides a model of an essay with a particular organizational structure (e.g., cause and effect) and then students are asked to reproduce the structure by writing about a different topic. The essay is often written during class time, after which the teacher collects the essays, marks the grammatical errors, and then asks students to correct their mistakes.  This type of product-based orientation, however, can create serious problems. One drawback is that the formal patterns provided by the English teacher may not be realistic examples of texts that students encounter, or need to produce, during their academic studies (Hyland, 2003). For example, outside of the English classroom, students may never be required to produce a “cause and effect” essay for their university content teachers. A second disadvantage is that a focus on language errors does not necessarily lead to improvement in grammatical accuracy (White & Arnt, 1991). Research studies indicate that the time and effort teachers spend marking and correcting students’ essays have little effect on learning (e.g., Belcher, 1989; Radecki & Swales, 1988). For example, many students will look only at the final grade given and ignore all the comments and corrections the teacher has made (Burkland & Grimm, 1986); other students may have difficulty understanding the meaning of the comments given (King, 1979; Hahn, 1981); while students who manage to decipher a comment often have no idea how to improve their paper based on the comment (Sperling & Freedman, 1987). The most serious weakness with this approach, however, is that it neglects writing as a communicative event, in other words, a piece of writing is produced in a particular context, with a particular audience, and for a particular purpose. As Hyland (2003) points out, good writers use their knowledge of their readers to decide what to say and how best to say it, and are aware that language forms can be used to express different relationships and meanings.  In reaction to these deficiencies of a product-based approach, teachers have looked beyond language structures as a basis for teaching writing and have begun to realize that language – and writing – develops not only through attention to form, but also through attention to meaning. This perceptive of writing draws on a body of research that has investigated what writers actually do as they write, and that has compared the decision-making processes of skilled, successful writers with the processes of beginning, inexperienced writers. For example, Beach (1979) reports that experienced writers consider the audience and purpose of their paper before writing and spend a large amount of time planning what to write. As they write, they re-read what they have written and are willing to make changes to their original plan. They often produce several drafts before being satisfied with a final version, and the drafts produced may be drastically different from each other. Unskilled writers, on the other hand, tend to take less time to plan (Pionko, 1979), and their plans are less flexible (Rose, 1980). Unskilled writers make fewer changes to their drafts, and when they do, the revisions tend to focus on correcting surface-level errors rather than evaluating and reworking the content. The first draft either becomes the final draft or resembles it very closely (Raimes, 2001). Thus, the process approach assumes that teaching the behavior of skilled writers – considering audience and purpose, generating ideas, drafting, obtaining feedback, and revising – can help unskilled writers to become better writers.  The evidence and research presented here indicate that a product-based approach is insufficient for learning the necessary writing skills for university work. Supporting a process-based approach, however, does not mean abandoning all interest in the product. On the contrary, the main aim is to arrive at the best product possible. It is still necessary within a process-focus approach to study grammatical patterns and essay structures. This can be achieved by analyzing language structures within texts, not as a model to copy, manipulate, and use as a final aim in itself, but to explore the language choices that are available to convey meaning.  **References**  Beach, R. (1979). The effects of between-draft teacher evaluation versus student self-evaluation on high school students’ revising of rough drafts. *Research in the Teaching of English, 13*, 111-119.  Belcher, D. (1989). How professors initiate NNS students into their disciplinary discourse communities. *Texas Papers in Foreign Language Education, 1*, 207-225.  Burkland, J. & Grimm, N. (1986). Motivating through responding. *Journal of Teaching Writing, 5*, 237-247.  Hahn, J. (1981). Students’ reactions to teachers’ written comments. *National Writing Project Network Newsletter, 4,* 7-10.  Hyland, K. (2003). *Second Language Writing*. 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(1991). *Process Writing*. London, England: Longman. |

**Exploring and Reacting**



**Task 4: Reading and Discussion**

Read the article again in more detail. Then discuss the following questions with a partner or with your group.

1. Which ideas did you find most interesting?
2. Which ideas do you agree with? Which ideas do you disagree with?
3. After reading this article, have your perceptions about writing and learning to write begun to change? If so, in what way?

**Summarizing**

Summarizing a text in your own words is one way to demonstrate your reading comprehension. Reducing your summary to one sentence helps to crystallize your thoughts and ensure that your ideas are clear and concise.

**Task 5: Summary Writing**

Write a one-sentence summary of the article. Begin your summary with “Lockhart (2015) states that …” and use **your own words** to complete the summary.

When you are finished, compare your summary with those of other students in your group. Then, combine the “best” elements of each summary to write a one-sentence “group” summary. Be prepared to share your group summary with the rest of the class.

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**Consolidation**

Complete the following sentences about the writing process with the words and phrases from the box.

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| audience | change | | develop |
| discuss | draft | | focus |
| general statements | generate ideas | | organize |
| plan | purpose | | related ideas |
| relevant | | support | |

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| Planning | a. | Think about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for your essay, and how expectations of the reader can affect what you write. |
| b. | Think about the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of your essay and how best to achieve these goals. |
| c. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by quickly writing down all the ideas you can think of that may be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the topic. |
| d. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the topic with other students. |
| e. | Read texts on the topic to help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your own ideas and  provide \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for your opinions. |
| f. | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your ideas logically and group \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ together. |
| Drafting | g. | Introduce the topic of each paragraph with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and gradually become more specific. |
| h. | Write each paragraph so that it has a clear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |
| i. | Be flexible and willing to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ your plan, if necessary. |
| j. | Read and comment on another student’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |

**Applying the process**

The previous tasks focused on the writing process and emphasized the importance of considering the audience and purpose, and the strategies of planning and drafting. The following tasks will ask you to apply some of these strategies to the writing assignment you need to do for this course.

**Audience:** The intended readers of your essay will be students at City University, your English teacher, and other academic professionals.

**Purpose:** The purpose of your essay is to convince your audience of your point of view on the topic. You will need to narrow your focus of the topic, develop an “angle” for your topic, and decide your viewpoint. When writing your draft, you will need to present convincing supporting information (using outside sources) in order to persuade your audience.

**Task 6: Brainstorming Technique #1 – Freewriting**

Freewriting is a technique in which you write down anything that pops into your mind about a topic. The focus should be on ideas and can be used to see how much you know (or don’t know) about the topic before you begin researching the subject matter. This technique can help you to:

* “warm up” before you begin writing your draft.
* discover new ideas
* discover your attitudes and viewpoints towards the topic

When you do freewriting, you should write in complete sentences without worrying about your grammar, organization, or vocabulary. Remember that the focus on is on ideas, and thus you should try to keep your pen moving across the page without stopping.

Spend 5 – 10 minutes freewriting about the assigned topic. When you are finished, re-read what you have written and circle or highlight any ideas that you think might be useful to develop more fully in your essay.

**Task 7: Brainstorming Technique #2 – Listing**

Think about a possible viewpoint, or stance, towards your topic (this does not have to be your final viewpoint of your essay – you can change your viewpoint later). Write down this viewpoint. Then, list 3-5 points in three separate columns: 1) points to argue in favour of your stance, 2) points to argue against your stance, and 3) points to counter those arguments you listed in column 2.

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| Possible viewpoint or stance: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | | |
| Points in favour: | Points against: | Counter arguments: |
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**Next Steps**

1. Read widely about the topic.

* You should read the sources that are provided by your teacher, as well as additional sources that you find from the library and the Internet.
* Remember that your sources should be appropriate for academic purposes. In general, newspaper articles, blogs and Wikipedia articles are **NOT** suitable as citations in academic essays.
* As you read, you should make notes about what ideas you can include in your essay, how you can use the information, and what points you could make to evaluate, comment on, and expand the information.

1. Develop a detailed outline of your essay.

* Review all the pre-writing activities that you have completed in this unit, and other planning activities that you have done outside of class.
* Review the reading you have done and your notes that you have made.
* Think about the points you want to include in your essay, and the best way to organize these points.
* Talk to your classmates and friends about your ideas.
* If you need to think of additional ideas for your outline, do some more freewriting and/or additional research.
* Think how you can introduce your purpose to the audience in the beginning of your essay.
* Write down the main idea and supporting points for each body paragraph.
* Write down some points you want to include in your conclusion to make a good final impression on your reader.

1. Draft your essay

* When you have a good outline, write a first draft of your essay.
* Your draft should be a complete essay, written in complete sentences and paragraphs.
* Remember that your draft is a starting point for producing an excellent essay. You will need to re-read, analyse, and revise your draft several times before you submit the final product. Later units in this course will help you to revise your paper to produce a more effective essay.



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| **Useful Resources**   * <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/1/> This website gives a wealth of information about the writing process as well as tips for planning and drafting an essay. * After you have written a good draft, **make an appointment with the Writing Studio**. The tutor there will give you advice to make your paper even better.   Go to [<https://booking.lc.cityu.edu.hk/Booking/>](https://booking.elc.cityu.edu.hk/ELC.Booking/) to make an appointment.   * Sign up for a writing workshop on: *Revision Strategies*, *Editing for Clarity and Style*, and/or *Proofreading Techniques*. Go to <https://booking.lc.cityu.edu.hk/Booking/> to make an appointment. |