FyF

Writer Reader Handout

This handout was written for the Basic Academic Writing class for students of English, but students in other writing classes have found it useful too. It aims to help you to be critical of your own writing and show you how to use and learn from the feedback you get from me.

(1) The concept behind my writing classes
(2) Questions for you as the writer of your text and as the reader of your text
(3) The correcting system I use
(4) Some technicalities

(1) The concept

"Dorothy L Sayers, in "The Lost Tools of Learning" (1948) wrote:
Modern education concentrates on teaching subjects, leaving the method of thinking, arguing and expressing one´s conclusions to be picked up by the scholar as he goes along; ...(Teachers) are doing for their pupils the work which the pupils themselves ought to do. For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men (sic) how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain."

Robert Barrass "Students must write", London, 1982
fse 440/b17

I see writing as a process, and teach it that way. You do some thinking, structure your thoughts, write a first version, check it yourselves, hand it in for marking, read my comments, make the corrections yourselves then hand it in again.

(2) Questions for you as both writer and reader

<u>WRITER</u>

Each time, before you start to write anything, take time to think about the following:

- Who am I writing to?
My diary? My English teacher ...?(who is this person?) A selection committee? An expert in the field? Etc.

- What will this person know?

- Why am I writing?
To inform? To persuade? To work out my own opinions? To share ideas? Etc.

(In the <u>Essay Writing</u> handout there are many more tips for organising your ideas before you start to write.)

Once you have written your text, put it aside for a while, then try to look at it as the
<u>READER</u> and answer the following questions (honestly!):

	Yes	No
Do you feel you have understood what the writer wanted to say?	☐	☐
Does the text have a conceptual beginning, middle and end?	☐	☐
Is the paragraph division sensible?	☐	☐
Is the style suitable?	☐	☐

Now check the following:

in the text are there any mistakes of

tense	☐
article	☐
construction	☐
adjective/adverb	☐
link words	☐

or whatever your "favourite" mistakes are!

When you read this you will probably want to protest that you don't know what your "favourite" mistakes are, but if you complete assignments regularly and read my corrections carefully you will soon get a clear picture of where your strengths lie and what your weaknesses are. Then you can begin to read your own work critically before you hand it in.

(3) The system I use for correcting your work

To help you correct your own work I will underline mistakes I am pretty sure you can correct yourselves and symbol-mark them as follows:

- **W   word**

Example: if you write "When do we write the next test" I will underline "<u>write</u>" and put a "W" above it to show that this word is wrong. If you look up "test" in the Cobuild you will find that we don't use the word "write" with "a test" in English. Look it up and see!

- **Ws   words**

- **w.o.   word order**

Example: if you write "I went yesterday home" I would underline "<u>yesterday home</u>" and write **w.o**. above it to show that these words are not in the right order.

- **T   tense**

Example: if you write "I have done it when I was in Scotland" I would underline "<u>have done</u>" and write **T** to indicate that the verb tense is wrong. What should it be?

- **Asp   aspect**

Example: if you write "I am doing it every day" I would underline "<u>am doing</u>" and write **asp** above it to indicate that the aspect is wrong. That just means that you have made the wrong choice between the simple form and the progressive form.

- **Art   article**

Example: if you write "The German history is very interesting" I would underline "<u>the</u>" and write **art** above it to indicate that the article is wrong.

- **G   grammar**

other grammar mistakes e.g. adjective/adverb; noun-verb agreement

Example: if you write "I speak French quite good" I would underline "good" because it is an adjective and here you need an adverb.

Example: if you write "Two of my friends has gone to Canada" I would underline "two of my friends has" because the subject is plural but the verb is singular.

- **C   construction**

Example: if you write "I want that schools introduce English in Primary School" I would underline "want that" . If you look up "want" in the Cobuild you will find that we use "want someone to do something". It is a different construction.

- **Sp   spelling**

- **P   punctuation**

- **St   style**

Example: if you mix very informal words "kids" and "cool" with quite formal ones like "subsequently" and "nevertheless" I would underline them and point out the strange mixture.

- **TC   text construction**

Example: if you jumble up your ideas and hop back and forwards, so that the reader gets lost.

- **?   I´m afraid I don´t get your message**

(4) Some technicalities

- Please write on decent paper, (not squared!). It is very tiring and time-consuming trying to decipher handwriting against a background of squares.

- Leave a wide margin. That gives me room to make comments on the content or the structure of your text.

- If you use a computer, then one and a half line spacing please.

- Write the name of the course at the top of the sheet, your name, the date, and the title of your piece of work.

- If you have more than one sheet then staple them together or put them in a plastic sleeve.

- When you hand in a second version, remember to hand in the original too.

- Please put your work in the right folder, marked "Basic Academic Writing" or "Essay Writing", in my basket.

September 2005