

Writing: Strategies to develop writing from memory and with reference resources

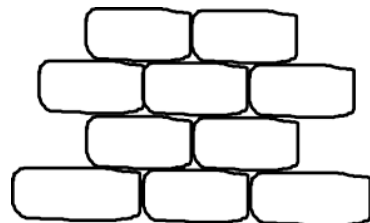
Key principles

1 Core structures

Students need to have a bank of structures and core language that they can manipulate well across the range of contexts at GCSE. This learning begins at KS3 (or earlier if the language is studied at KS2). Once identified this key language, made up of high-frequency verbs, adverbs, adjectives, nouns and pronouns, is introduced systematically, built up over time and then repeatedly recycled across topics so that students combine and re-combine the elements to develop what they can write (and say). It is essential that teachers keep this core language uppermost in their planning.

Resources useful in identifying this core language:

- 1 QCA KS3 Progression tables – French, German, Spanish
- 2 The 100 most common words in any language (Tony Buzan)
- 3 Google searches for top 50 verbs
- 4 Language booklets on my website: www.rachelhawkes.com



2 Sentence-building

Students need to learn how to form simple, compound and complex sentences. There are a great number of classroom activities for developing sentence-building in the classroom. Many speaking tasks can function just as well as writing tasks, too.

- Change one detail plenaries – give learners a statement and, using whiteboards for written version or orally, learners respond by changing a detail. Make this more interesting by focusing the statements on a visual stimulus.
- Grow the sentence – instead of changing a statement, add something to it. There could be a list of options, or the task could be cumulative. This can be done as a ‘consequences’ style activity, folding over and passing writing on.
- Target text – (the written equivalent of target talk) – pose a question and insist that answers have a set number of words (start with 7, 8 or 9). In subsequent rounds, set a minimum limit of 10, 11, 12.
- Picture description - provide a visual stimulus and ask for three statements describing the picture: two should be true and one false.
- Provide two pictures with some sentences / text describing one of them. Students adapt these to describe the second picture.
- Adaptation tasks – for example, give students this sentence: **Je joue au football avec mon frère** and the following instructions:
 - change the subject (je)
 - change the sport
 - put “mon frère” in the plural
 - add one adjective
 - add one time expression
 - add 5 words or more to the sentence, making sure that it still makes sense at the end!Now think of one sentence yourself and give it to your partner for them to do the same exercise!
- Pyramids – visual way to model and practise creating longer sentences for both speaking and writing.
- Mastermind – essential idea is for teacher or student to create a sentence and write it down (from the grid of options you’ve designed). Learners create sentences in turn orally, trying to match the mastermind sentence. Each time feedback is given, indicating how many of the 3 sentence segments are right.
- Wordle, Tagxedo etc. – use these tools to display words jumbled. Students sort into categories and then use them to form sentences.

3 Fix language in longer-term memory

Students need to retain language (including spelling, gender, accents) accurately over time. This involves repeated practice, but also a decisive, strategic approach to memorising language in the first place. Specific strategies relating to memory are in the separate SOTB Memory Strategies handout.

4 Develop accuracy: be attentive to detail, able to spot and correct errors

Here are some ideas for using in the classroom to support noticing skills and independent accuracy.

- Prompt retrieval of written language by providing the words in a variety of different ways:
 - 1) vowels missing
 - 2) upside down
 - 3) back to front
 - 4) mirror image
 - 5) first letter of each word
 - 6) pictures only
- Txt Spk – provide text in a version of text speak (most usually involving the most well-known abbreviations plus omission of vowels)
- Sentence auction activity (or other variations on the theme of ‘spot the mistake’)
- Gap-fill paragraphs with verbs missing (or given in the infinitive only)
- Online vocabulary learning (Vocab Express, Quizlet etc..)
- Translation from English into the target language (see the Translation handout)
- Use checklists / tick grids - essentially a list of the expected features in the text. Students apply them either to their own, a peer’s work or a text provided
- Peer testing – using mini whiteboards or similar
- Reference resources – teach students to use dictionaries and online reference sites to check for gender, spelling, conjugations etc..
- Ensure that students look back at previous work before starting every new piece
- Give lesson time over to ‘book back’ tasks, where students are directed to respond to previous work with further activity / learning

5 Develop variety in vocabulary and structure use

Increasing students’ vocabulary beyond a basic level is important for all skills.

- Use authentic texts, and particularly literary texts to expand students’ vocabulary
- Give students a choice in their vocabulary learning (e.g. 10 core words + 10 words of choice)
- Use the 80:20 ratio in all written tasks – i.e. 80% of the writing produced should be recycled language from the classroom learning, 20% should be new, researched language of choice
- Push students to produce synonyms and antonyms frequently in classroom work
- Insist that students use the ASL (Average Sentence Length) measure on their own written work to ensure that they are including longer, more developed sentences.
- Use group writing in the classroom, allocating different roles to each person, as well as different parts of the task
- Use harvesting / creative transfer – when moving on to a new topic, students first brainstorm all the language from the previous topic that could be recycled in the new one
- Functions and themes – teacher prepares a grid with all the sub-themes from one overall topics and a list of the functions (question, opinion, reason, suggestion, reported speech, likes and preferences, customs, comparison, future plans, past experiences) and allocates each student a pair (one function + one sub-theme) to generate language for. There are a lot of possible combinations and a lot of rich language is produced and then shared.

6 Write for different purposes, showing an awareness of style and register

This can be a really good way to develop vocabulary and structure range, too.

- Writing for narration. Working with stories, either adapting well-known stories or writing narrative scripts to accompany short video sequences, gives learners the opportunity to write with a purpose and then to read with a purpose and for an audience, which then in turns helps to develop their oral narration skills too.
- Writing creatively. A response to reading a poem can often usefully be to write one themselves.
- Writing a review. There are excellent websites with reviews of hotels and tourist attractions and there are many film review sites in the three languages, too.
- Writing online. Setting up a link with a partner school can give writing a real purpose. There is no reason why there won't be time for this now, even at KS4.
- Writing articles about news stories, real or imaginary.
- Writing diary entries.

Some websites for the development of writing.

Holiday reviews	www.tripadvisor.fr / www.tripadvisor.es / www.tripadvisor.de
Film reviews	http://www.allocine.fr/ / http://www.sensacine.com/ / http://www.filmstarts.de/
Poetry writing	http://escuelabloguera.blogspot.co.uk/2013/04/aprendemos-escribir-poesia.html For more poetry links, see the Reading Handout appendices.
Writing stories	http://www.cincuentapalabras.com/ (50 word stories – will not all be appropriate but worth exploring) http://lemotdelasemaine.com/agerie5.html (again - selection is needed, here) https://ultrakurz.wordpress.com/ / http://www.schreibwerkstatt.de/55-wort-geschichte-t5603.html
Newspaper articles	http://www.fodey.com/generators/newspaper/snippet.asp Very good to get the students to write a short article in the target language, very professional looking. http://www.20minutes.fr/ / http://www.20minutos.es/ http://www.20min.ch/