

# Writing Instruction

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Writing is difficult, and it is a process. Writing is not an easy skill to learn. Writing cannot be learned (or taught!) in just one class. Writing is necessary. Writing is something we all do everyday. Writing is a way to express ideas, to show creativity and especially to convey information. Too often students are asked to copy a textbook example and only change a few words. This is NOT writing. Writing in a foreign language can be taught, yet in order to teach writing, there are three things teachers need to think about: Aim; Audience; and Discourse Type (Genre).

## Aim

This is the **purpose** of the writing. All writing has a purpose. When we write a shopping list (bread, milk, eggs), our aim is “not to forget” any of the items. When we write a letter to a friend, our aim is to “share our life”. There is always an aim. Therefore, especially for junior high school students, there **must** be a very clear aim. The aim should NEVER only be “for the teacher to correct and give a score”!

## Audience

This is **who** will read the writing. In the case of a shopping list, is the reader your husband, wife, son or daughter? Or is the reader yourself? In the case of a letter, maybe the reader is your friend. There is always an audience. Again, the audience **must** also be clear, and I suggest the audience should NOT be oneself. Our students should write to be read by another. If so, they will take more care in what they do, and they will focus on communicating.

## Discourse Type (Genre)

This is the type of writing. There are many types of writing. For example, there are letters, lists, e-mails, postcards, advertisements, stories, reports, and diaries. Yet when is the last time you wrote a poem, a newspaper story, a movie review or a song?

What we have to understand is that **experience** plays an important role in being able to write in different genres. Our students have limited overall writing experience even in Japanese. In a foreign language, students should understand the discourse type (its aim and

audience) in their own language before trying to understand it in their foreign language. Understanding a discourse type includes the culture of writing, namely organization and format. All must be taught.

After you choose the Aim, Audience and Discourse Type, you are ready to begin.

1. Basic Writing Activities
  - ⊗ Fill in the blanks
  - ⊗ Re-ordering
  - ⊗ Substitution
  - ⊗ Correct the facts
  - ⊗ Correct the mistakes
  - ⊗ Topic-based free writing
  - ⊗ Dialog journals
2. Pre-writing
  - ⊗ List topic vocabulary
  - ⊗ Make an outline
  - ⊗ Discuss the Discourse Type
3. While-writing
  - ⊗ Write without stopping
  - ⊗ Use correct Discourse Type structure
  - ⊗ Draft writing (write and re-write)
  - ⊗ Draft checking (peer and teacher)
  - ⊗ Do not “correct” drafts. Highlight mistakes for students to correct.
  - ⊗ Final writing
4. Post-writing
  - ⊗ Students respond to another student’s writing. Remember “Audience”.
  - ⊗ Post and/or publish your students writing at school. This will generate more interest in writing for the writer and the audience.
5. Evaluation
  - ⊗ Tell students beforehand about the evaluation points.
  - ⊗ Evaluate the whole process—**NOT** just the final assignment.
  - ⊗ Evaluate content and grammar.
  - ⊗ Praise what was done well. Show what needs to be improved.
  - ⊗ Perhaps focus only on communication. Could the contents be fully understood? If so, full marks could be awarded.

Writing should be a collaborative effort. Have students work together on writing tasks. They will co-teach and co-learn together.