



DON'T ASK THEM TO WRITE COLD

Think it. Talk it. Plan it. Then write it.



THE IDEA

Asking EAL learners to write extended answers without preparation puts them at a disadvantage.

They may have the ideas, but they need time to process, organise language and rehearse before writing.

A short period of thinking, talking and planning builds confidence, improves quality and helps students express what they know.



IN THE CLASSROOM

Build in a preparation stage before writing. Use visuals, questions or a planning frame. Give time to talk or jot ideas.

Encourage key vocabulary and sentence frames. Let students organise their ideas (e.g. mind map, notes, sequence).

Only then ask for the written response.

Use this routine for essays, lab reports, explanations and any extended writing.

THE 3 STEPS

1



THINK

Give time to think.

Use a question, image or key words. Allow quiet thinking time. Encourage students to recall knowledge and consider their ideas.

*What do I want to say?
What do I already know?
Which ideas are most important?*

2



TALK

Let them talk or rehearse.

Students share ideas with a partner or small group. They can say their ideas, use key vocabulary and try out sentence structures. This helps them organise their thinking.

*"First, I think ..."
"Another reason is ..."
"I want to say ..."*

3



PLAN

Help them organise, then write.

Use a simple planning frame, mind map or notes. Check key vocabulary and sentence starters. Once they are ready, students write their full response.

*"My first point is ..."
"In addition ..."
"To conclude ..."*



WHY IT WORKS

- Reduces anxiety and cognitive overload.
- Helps students organise ideas and language.
- Leads to higher quality, more coherent writing.
- Builds confidence and independence.
- Supports all learners, not just EAL students.



EAL UPGRADE

- Provide key vocabulary and useful phrases.
- Use visual prompts or model texts.
- Offer a planning scaffold or template.
- Allow talking in the first language where helpful.
- Build routine so students know what to do.



TRY IT TOMORROW

- Choose one writing task.
- Add a 2–5 minute think time.
- Get students to discuss ideas with a partner.
- Use a simple planning frame.
- Then ask for the written response.
- Compare the quality – you'll see the difference.



TEACHER LANGUAGE

*"Take a few minutes to think."
"Tell your partner your ideas."
"Use these words to help you."
"Make a quick plan first."
"Now write your answer."
"You can do this – you've already done the hard thinking."*