

Summary of key messages about writing

- There are many commonalities in the way that all learners develop writing skills. However, there will be some noticeable differences in English language learners' patterns and rates of progress.
- As for all students, the better prepared and supported an English language learner is for writing, the better their writing will be.
- English language learners should be encouraged to write in their home language(s).
- Younger writers generally take a shorter time than older students to reach cohort level in writing.

Writing well

Writing on familiar topics is very important at early stages of learning to write in English. At the same time, it is important to develop writing skills in curriculum-related contexts (e.g. a science report, explanations of processes etc).

In order to write well, learners need to build and/or have access to a bank of vocabulary that is appropriate to the writing task. This would include general vocabulary and topic-specific vocabulary.

Teachers need to analyse writing errors carefully to discover what is causing them.

- If a learner leaves *-ed* off a verb, this may be because the learner's home language does not have a past tense construction. Therefore, this feature of English needs to be explicitly taught and not treated just as a spelling error.
- If a five-year old writes *'I goed to the beach'* it may be attributable to the developmental stage of the learner rather than proficiency in English