

To students

Writing in English is difficult. If English is your second language, it's even more difficult. This book tries to make writing as easy, painless, and fun as possible. I hope you enjoy it!

To teachers

The following paragraph, written by an intermediate ESL student asked to describe a grocery store scene, is why I wrote this book.

It was a busy day at the store. She was a talk on the phone. She not want buy candy for child. He wasn't early his date, he buy eggs but his child she play. One cashier is confuse he need a break. The store full and just it have open two lines.

I think of students like this as trying to make coq au vin without knowing how to boil an egg.

I wrote *Writing in English: Step by Step* to teach students to write clear, coherent, grammatically correct paragraphs—a skill that is a prerequisite for writing the longer, more in-depth, and more creative pieces that will be required of them when they take more advanced ESL and English classes.

The audience for this book is ESL students at the low intermediate level as well as native English speakers who, for whatever reason, didn't master rudimentary writing skills. It assumes students have been exposed to basic English grammar, including knowledge of subject pronouns, possessive adjectives, preposition of time and place, and simple present and present continuous verbs.

This book's methodology is simple; each chapter includes short lessons in grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics that students work through in preparation for an end-of chapter writing assignment that, in most cases, is based on a personal experience. Ending each chapter with a writing assignment is a key component of this book. I know from direct experience that learning a foreign language is a seemingly endless process. By completing a writing assignment using newly-acquired knowledge, students are reminded that they are indeed progressing.

As teachers know only too well, students, particularly those who have limited experience writing in their native language, rarely grasp grammar points the first time around. I address this issue by reviewing basic grammar during the early chapters of the book, while also focusing on mechanics and sentence structure. The final chapters introduce what for many students are new grammar constructs including past tense verbs, future tense verbs, phrasal verbs, adverbs, conjunctions, and comparative adjectives.

Writing is a solitary activity. Yet students, regardless of what they're learning, thrive on interaction and engagement. Thus, while this book includes extensive writing exercises, it also provides a multitude of conversation activities. In some of these activities, students analyze text, comparing, for example, why one paragraph is clearer or more interesting than another. In other exercises, students engage in conversations in which they practice the same skills they're learning to apply to their written work.

How this book is organized

Each chapter in this book includes the following components:

Chapter opening: As a class, students read and answer questions about a paragraph similar to the paragraph they will write as their end-of-chapter assignment.

Chapter content: Each chapter includes several short lessons focusing on skills relating to mechanics, grammar, and sentence structure that students must use when they complete the end-of-chapter assignment.

Editing challenge: Students edit a paragraph using the writing and editing skills they've learned in the current and previous chapters.

Preparing to write: Students complete a pre-writing activity that facilitates their writing of the end-of-chapter assignment.

Writing assignment: Students write a grammatically correct paragraph on an assigned topic. I strongly encourage you to require students to save each of their writing assignments or to save students' assignments for them. That way, after completing the book, students can look back on their work and take pride in what they've accomplished.

Editing check list: Students verify the correctness of their paragraph before turning it in.

In writing this book, I tried to keep explanatory text to a minimum and focus on activities in which students learn by doing. These activities include:

Talk about it: Working with a partner, students converse using the grammar and/or sentence structures being taught.

Think about it: Working with a partner, students respond to short answer questions.

Write about it: Working with a partner, students provide written answers to questions.

Practice: Students work independently on written exercises.

Extending this book

To maximize the efficacy of this book you may want to incorporate the following additional activities.

Editing check-up: Start every class with an editing exercise. On the board, write sentences containing errors that are taken directly from students' writing assignments. Ask students to correct the errors and explain their corrections.

Peer editing: In addition to editing their own work, students edit the writing of their peers.

Partner swaps: Have students work with multiple partners for the *Talk about it* exercises. This cements the grammar point or sentence structure being introduced and also encourages students to interact with a variety of classmates.

Reader's theatre: After they have completed an assignment, students read their paragraphs aloud to their peers. Then students question each other about the paragraph's content. Another approach is to hold a Writer's Theatre once every few weeks in which students read their favorite assignments to the class.

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Pre-tests, post-tests, and input

Please contact me at ElizabethWeal@tenaya.com if you would like a copy of a pre- and post-test to gauge what students have learned as a result of working through this book. I also want to encourage you to email me with comments and suggestions. One of the joys of being both author and publisher is that I can easily modify content to reflect input from you and your students, so don't hold back!