

WRITING SKILLS

Teacher's notes

Write from notes



Warm up

As a class, brainstorm ideas for making notes. Encourage students to share all the techniques they use. Discuss the Cornell method of note-taking. If students don't know this method, explain the process:

- 1 Students separate the page for notes into two columns, with space at the bottom.
- 2 They make notes in the right-hand column about the main ideas of the text.
- 3 Students later review their notes. They write questions and keywords in the left-hand column, to help them make sense of their notes in the future.
- 4 Students cover the right-hand column and only read the left-hand column, checking that they remember as much information as possible.
- 5 Students write a very brief summary of their notes at the bottom of the page.

Elicit thoughts about this method of note-taking and encourage students to discuss the advantages and disadvantages.

Practice

1  Look at the notes below and, with a partner, find as many different ways as possible to write them up. You should only write one sentence each time.

- You might like to do the first item with the class. Elicit a variety of suggestions if possible (see suggested answers below). Correct any mistakes in the suggestions, making sure they contain all the relevant information. As they come up, make sure students are aware that they are inserting relative pronouns, verbs, articles and auxiliaries.
- For the remainder of the items, ask students to work in pairs or small groups at first so that they can help each other understand the meanings. Give help if necessary. They can then work alone to attempt to write up the notes.

Suggested answers

The answers below are suggestions. Allow your students to offer different suggestions. Accept any logical answers. Where appropriate, point out what has been done to turn the notes into prose (word order changed, relative pronoun, auxiliary verb, article, linking word added, etc.).

- a George Soros, who is/was a Hungarian-American investor and philanthropist, was born in 1930.
- b Plants in space metabolize carbon dioxide into/producing oxygen, and also stabilize the humidity.
- c Her school marks were poor due to her illiteracy.
- d She went to / attended / studied at the London School of Economics (LSE) between 1980 and 1983 / from 1980 to 1983.
- e In 1990, she lived in / moved to Berlin, which was her favourite city.
- f In the swimming at the Beijing Olympics in 2008, Michael Phelps won / was awarded / got eight gold medals, seven of which set new world records.

2 Look at the notes below that an art student has taken about the life of an artist. The notes have been written up, but there are gaps. Suggest ways to fill in the gaps. There is often more than one answer.

- Here, students have the chance to write up a completely unseen set of notes. Spend a few minutes with the class, making sure they understand any abbreviations or obscure-sounding information.
- Ask students to work alone to fill in the gaps. If you wish, you can let them compare notes with a partner after they have attempted the task.

Suggested answers

Again, allow your students to offer different suggestions, and accept ideas that work in the context of the piece.

- a** who was a
- b** was born in
- c** due to
- d** he went to / attended / studied at
- e** became/was
- f** studying under
- g** on/onwards
- h** had a variety of / held a number of / did
- i** (which was) where
- j** over / more than
- k** his/with paintings showing/depicting
- l** was awarded / won / was given
- m** (only) resuming / to resume / starting again

3 Read the notes and discuss what they mean. Then write them up into a paragraph.

- Explain that, since these are not notes that your students have made, they need to understand them before they can write them up.
- Spend up to five minutes guiding students so that they understand the relevance of the notes. When they are satisfied that they understand, they can begin writing them up.

Possible answer

Expect a great deal of variety in the way students express these notes. You might want to go round the class checking to make sure they are on the right lines. Gently correct any students who are having difficulty. In checking the answers, you might want to build up a paragraph (or 2–3 separate paragraphs) on the board one sentence at a time as students tell you their suggestions. The paragraph could look something like this:

MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses)

In the past, these were known as 'distance learning' or 'correspondence courses', and the materials were sent by post. Today, they are often referred to as 'online courses'.

The main benefits of MOOCs are greater access for more people to more affordable education, while the main drawbacks are that the courses can be disorganized. In addition, computer knowledge is required, as is online access. Furthermore, students need to motivate themselves.

MOOCs fall into two main types. Firstly, cMOOCs connect learners and allow them to collaborate and work on joint projects. In this way, cMOOCs evolve over time, which is a good thing. As Chomsky said: *'If you're teaching today what you were teaching five years ago, either the field is dead or you are'*.

On the other hand, xMOOCs are more traditional, with a fixed syllabus. They work on the principle that the instructor is the 'expert'. The future of this kind of MOOC is in doubt.

Reflect

4 Look at the checklist below. Which of the points did you practise when you wrote up Exercise 3? Would any of the others have helped?

- Encourage students to look back at Exercise 3 and tick the points that they used in writing up the notes. Ask individual students if their writing would have benefited from any of the points that they didn't use.
- Remind students to use the checklist when they have to write up their own notes.