The four skills of language are:

LISTENING, SPEAKING, READING AND WRITING.

In traditional teaching the emphasis tends to be on the students doing reading and writing, probably because it seems to keep them quiet and it is easier to organize. Similarly most teachers probably do most of the talking. While the students do most of the listening, with a questionable amount of understanding.

In real life, it is not so easy to separate these four skills, as most language skills are preceded or followed by a different skill. This integration is constant and confusing for language learners to understand and practice themselves.

However these teaching guidelines for the skills of language do separate the skills. The main reason for this is to organize learning activities into some order, and to assist teachers in deciding exactly what the aim of their lesson is, and choices, as to how to do it. Each skill is sub-divided into several sub-skill activity, listening, speaking, reading or writing is emphasized, but with other skills an integral part of the activities, as in real life.

The following pages contain at least a hundred different activities. However, it is to be emphasized that they represent a range of possibilities. The students do not have to do all the suggestions, nor in the order represented. As with any Teachers’ Guide, it is up to the individual Teacher, in an individual school with an individual group of students, to decide what can be done, in given time with limited facilities. For example, if a text book has a reading passage, by turning to the ‘Reading Skills’ section, a number of different ways of doing activities involving reading will be presented.

Teachers need not feel restricted by these suggestions. Use as many or as few is felt necessary. All examples are based on the varied teaching experiences of practicing teachers, but of course adapt the suggestions to suit. These ideas are primarily aimed at language teachers (not just English), but would be useful in many subject which involves listening, reading, speaking and writing.
LISTENING  SUBSKILL:  Discriminating similar sounds

AIM:            To practice accurate listening and understanding

METHODS:       - Show students 2 pictures for example of a pin and a pen. Say one of the words (pin/pen) and ask students to:
               - repeat correctly, and / or
               - write correctly, and / or
               - show / draw the correct picture.
               - Ask students to show one of the pictures and ask class/partner to say correct word
               - Comparing and contrasting similar emphasis e.g. today is a holiday / today’s a holiday/today’s a holiday.

LISTENING   SUBSKILL:  Dictation

AIM:           - To encourage detailed listening, understanding and interpretation to the written word.

METHODS:      - Teacher (or students in turn) speaks and students write,
               In pairs one student speaks and other writes,
               In groups one student speaks and others write,
               Fill in the blanks, in pairs, where each student has different blanks.

LISTENING  SUBSKILL:  Listening for the main idea(s)

AIM:          - To encourage listening to important ideas, whilst ignoring unimportant details.

METHODS:     - Listen + summarize (orally/written)
              - Listen and answer general questions (orally/written)
              Listen and pick out characters/events/situations.
LISTENING  SUBSKILL: Task listening (listen then do something)

AIM:
- To teach learners to listen for specific information and apply it immediately.

METHODS:
- Look at questions before listening, then answer while/after listening.
- Listen to a conversation/story, and
  - fill in a chart (one-word answer/✓ or ✗/ true or false/yes or not.
  - Draw a pictures in the order heard.
- Listen to a conversations/story and take notes.
- Listen then do appropriate action e.g:
  - ‘Simon says’
  - Instructions
  - Train announcements (‘move’ to correct ‘platform’)
- Listen then retell in own words to another person.
- Chinese whispers (whisper something to your neighbour who in turn whispers what they heard to their neighbour, and so on round the group/class.)

LISTENING  SUBSKILL: Listening for detail

AIM:
- Teaching learners to listen carefully for specific points only.

METHODS:
- Listen and answer detailed questions (orally and/or written) seen before or after listening.
- Quick responses to questions (on cassette?)
- Listen and then sing-a-long (pop song/nursery rhymes/folk songs)
- Listen and repeat (drills) as a class or individually.
The subskills of speaking are:

- Responding to visual clues
- Roleplay
- Conversation
- Word-games
- Story building
- Problem solving
- Asking for and giving information

**SPEAKING**

**SUBSKILL:** Responding to visual clues (pictures and words)

**AIM:**
- To make students aware of connections between visual and oral representations of language.
- To encourage a more spontaneous use of language that the students know.

**METHODS:**
- Look at a series of pictures to tell a story by eliciting / giving key vocabulary sequencing skills- use of joining words.
- Look at a silent piece of video give a commentary-while watching / after watching
- See a flashcard with a word on it; say it aloud; put it into a sentence, change the tense, give the opposite, or give a synonym.
SPEAKING  SUBSKILL:  Role play (students play a given role, with given opinions to talk about)

AIM:
- To encourage students to use language they know
- To encourage students to speak, adapting given information
- To make students aware that they can use a language to say what they want.

METHODS:
- Student A imagines (s)he is a farmer/secretary/driver etc. Other students ask him/her about his/her daily routine to guess the job.
- A group of friends have to decide where they are going together at the weekend, each student has a card with things they don’t like doing – they have to use this information and come to an agreement.
- A debate, for example about ‘Pollution’ one student is a villager, one student is a landlord, one student is a factory owner. Debate pollution using the given information on role play cards.
- In pairs, students act out a dialogue, in a shop/post office/laundry for given situations, e.g. complaints special requests etc.
- Act out from a skeletal outline of a play written by someone else or the students themselves.

SPEAKING  SUBSKILL:  Conversation

AIM:
- To encourage ‘real’ questions and answers in context.
- To practice conversation skills and techniques i.e.
  interruption for – repetition wanted
  - explanation wanted
  - more information wanted
  turn – taking - giving the conversation to someone else and taking your turn in the conversation.
METHOD:
- **‘Social’ language:** (5 minutes at the beginning/end of class:) who did what/when/why/where? Ask about: festival days/holidays/local or national news/TV or videos seen/school events etc
- **‘Organising’ language:**
  Checking attendance (who is absent? Where is Ali?). Organizing groups (which group do you want to you?).
  Asking pupils to do things (fetch things/give things out/etc.)
- Encourage students to ask questions when they do not understand or want repetition by reacting positively to such requests.
- **Turn-giving / taking**
  (giving) - “What do you think, A?”
  - “Do you agree B?”
  - “Do you do this?”
  (taking) - “I’d like to say / add …”
  - “My opinion is that …”
  - “I disagree with …”
- **Interruption game**
  One student start talking (about anything or a topic pulled at random out of hat). The first student to properly interrupt takes over and so one, the aim of the game being to correctly interrupt as much as possible. (Give marks for each appropriate interruption)

SPEAKING SUBSKILL: Word Games

AIMS:
- To revise previously taught vocabulary or structures,
- To encourage students to use the language they know spontaneously in new situations.
- To encourage fluency through competition
- To make learning fun.
METHODS:  

- **Talk for a minute**  
The students talk for a minute on the topic pulled out of hat, without (too much) hesitation or repetition.

- **Hangman**  
Guess the word from the blanks on the blackboard. Correct letter suggestions are filled into the correct blanks of the word and the wrong letter or word suggestions add to the hanged man, one line at time, until either the word is guessed or the hanged man is complete.

- **Guess my job**  
A students picks a ‘job’ or choose a job from his/her own imagination. The other student try to guess the job by asking questions to which the student answer’s only ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

- **Guess the picture**  
The teacher of the student has the picture turned away from the other students try to draw the picture by asking Yes/No questions. Check by describing back the picture to the person who has the original.

- **Alphabetical noun/verbs/adjectives**  
  apple, bear, cat ........  
  ask, beat, carry ........  
  ancient, brown, crisp.......  
Go round the class/group one by the eliciting examples, or as team competition.

- **Beginnings and Endings** (Word dominoes noun/verbs/adjectives)  
  hat – table – elephant ........  
  go – open – need – drink ........  
  happy – yellow – white – energetic ........  
Go round the class/group, each student adding a word as above, or a team competition.
**SPEAKING**  | **SUBSKILL:** Story Building
---|---
**AIMS:** - To give students practice in sequencing of events  
- To practice using sequencing words e.g. the, next, afterwards….  
- To give practice in retelling actions/situations in own words
**METHODS:** - Each group is given one picture of a series to study and talk about. Re-group and each individual discusses their picture and the group decides the order, comparing the rest of the class.  
- The pictures of a series are shown one by one, with important vocabulary elicited/given and written on the blackboard/in the students’ notebooks. Elicit more sentences about the pictures and ask individual students to retell in their own words or using the words give. This can be used as a basis for guided writing.

**SPEAKING**  | **SUBSKILL:** Asking for and giving information
---|---
**AIMS:** - To give students practice in discovering what information is missing.  
- To guide students to forming questions to elicit the information required.  
- To give students practice in giving requested information.
**METHODS:** - ½ and ½ lists products wanted, availability and prices. Ask for what is wanted, and reply that it is available or not, and at what price.  
- Train/bus plane arrivals and departures with different information missing for each student, can be in chart form.  
- Form-filling and matching story, (one student has form and other has information in text).  
- Blank – filling, one student has some blanks and other students has different blanks, ask each other (don’t look) for the missing words.  
- Questionnaires made up by group/individual and filled in by asking other students/groups.  
- Pictures with missing bits or different details, discover the differences by asking partners.
SPEAKING  SUBSKILL:  Problem Solving

AIMS:  
- To practice language of dis/agreement (I don’t agree /disagree with you because…….)
- To practice using persuasive language (e.g “I think …..” and “Why don’t we …”)
- To give students a reason for speaking.

METHODS:  
- **Pyramid discussion**
  Pairs of students discuss and come to an agreement on a controversial topic, then in 4’s, 8’s, 16’s, etc. until the whole class agrees.
  Students must argue a bit, not just immediately agree with each other.

- **Desert Dilemma**
  In groups give a list of about twenty objects for survival in the desert. Each group has to agree on the six most important items on that list for the survival in the desert. They then present and explain their choices to the rest of the class.

- **The Best Person for the Job**
  Each group has the biodata for one person who has applied for the job. Each group gives reasons why their candidate is best and the other students criticize and argue against that candidate.

- **Lateral Thinking**
  Tell the students a situation (e.g. A man with a pack on his back is lying in a field, dead). The students then ask “Yes/No” questions to form the whole story. (In the case of the situation in the example given above, the answer is that his parachute failed to open)
We read for:
- Pleasure
- Information

Material we read includes:
- Short stories
- Plays
- Poems, nursery rhymes, limericks
- Letters, postcards, notes
- Newspapers, magazines, TV guides
- Advertisements
- Puzzles, problems, rules for games
- Instructions, directions, rules, regulations, posters, notices, road signs, price list, menu etc.

Some of the subskills that can be used in Reading:
- Predicting
- Skimming
- Scanning
- Questioning
- Modeling
- Blank filling
- Sequencing
- Reading aloud
- Sensitizing
- Matching
- Summarizing
- Dictionary skills
- Silent reading
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>READING</strong></th>
<th><strong>SUBSKILL:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Predicting</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIM:</strong></td>
<td>- Encouraging students to predict or guess the content of the text from its title or its illustrations or to anticipate the end of a sentence, or story, using language they already know.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>METHODS:</strong></td>
<td>- Show the title or a picture from the story. Ask learners to predict or guess what is likely to happen. (Write their predictions on blackboard?). Discuss the predictions and finally reveal the real version.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Show students the title or a picture from the story to be read and ask for vocabulary connected with the title or picture. These words can be written on the blackboard by the Teacher or by groups.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Read one or two sentences from the story and ask students to predict what might come next. Continue reading, pausing and asking for predictions. This can be done individually or in groups.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>READING</strong></th>
<th><strong>SUBSKILL:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Skimming.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AIMS:</strong></td>
<td>- To discourage learners from putting equal importance on each word and getting delayed by not knowing certain words.</td>
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<td><strong>METHODS:</strong></td>
<td>- Give students a time limit to read a story.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- The teacher reads a text quite quickly and asks students to follow with their eyes (not fingers) on the words.</td>
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<td>- Get students to answer questions in a time limit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Asks students to underline important sentences in each paragraph or important (content) words in a sentence.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>READING</strong></th>
<th><strong>SUBSKILL:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Scanning</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIM:</strong></td>
<td>- To train children to run their eyes over a text quickly in order to locate specific information, by looking for key words.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Trying to locate specific information. Letting children wander over the text until they find information or answer.</td>
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</table>
METHODS:  - Specify information needed, orally or in writing.
- Give a time limit to force speed, gradually shortening the limit over a series of lessons.
- To guide learners initially, indicate which paragraph or line the required information is in.
- Make the exercise into a competition; either in teams or individually, again to encourage speed.

READING  SUBSKILL: Questioning

AIM:  - To test children’s comprehension of text

METHODS:  - Questions can be:
  - from the book
  - made up by the Teacher
  - made up by the students
  - Questions types include:
    - yes/no answers
    - true/false
    - correcting statements
    - multiple choice
    - expanding answers
    - what/when/why/where/how?
    - opinion/inferential questions.
  - Questions can be:
    - oral and/or written

READING  SUBSKILL: Modelling

Is an attempt to get at the understanding of a text by re-structuring and re-presenting it. This method requires some form of diagrammatic representation of text using forms like flow charts, time lines and drawings.

AIM:  - To train children to understand the main points and sequence of a text.
METHODS: - Text given to children. Main points to be discussed. Children are to make a flow chart of the main points and the sequence in which they happened. Children then orally go through story, using cues.
- Give the events of the story in a jumbled form and ask students to reorder.
- Give students a chart to fill in with
  - characters (and descriptions)
  - events or situations and possible problems and solutions.

READING SUBSKILL: Blank filling

AIM: - To train the students to construct missing words by teaching them to read around (before and after) the gap.

METHODS: - Text given to children with some key words deleted. Children are to infer or guess the meanings of these words.
- As above, but give a word bank and students have to choose correct word for each space
- Blank out one in ten, to one in five words
- Blank out nouns or verbs or adjectives or adverbs

READING SUBSKILL: Sequencing

This activity involves words sentences, paragraph or a story being cut into sections and scrambled. It activity involves full discussions and reasoning before moving on to compare results with the original text.

AIM: - To help students to understand the chronogical sequence in a text, and the use of referential words: e.g. then, next, however, but, it, they, them, he, she, me.

METHODS: - Give each student one sentence/paragraph each and the whole class has to stand up and arrange everyone into a circle or a line to tell the complete story correctly.
- Give each pair/group a cut-up text and the students have to order it.
- Students tell rest of the class their selected order or check it against a copy of the whole story.
Each group gets one part of a story, which they have to read and remember. Take away the slips of paper and re-organize groups into new groups where each member contains one member of each original group. Students retell their part of the story and the story is reconstructed in the right order.

**READING**

**SUBSKILL:** Reading aloud

**AIM:**
- To practice good pronunciation (of single words and group of words) and intonation the way the voice moves up and down (for understanding and expression)

**METHODS:**
- Teacher says sentence/paragraph and students repeat chorally or individually
- In pairs or groups students read to each other and correct and help each other.

**READING**

**SUBSKILL:** Sensitizing

Making students sensitive and aware of the use of language by:

(i) Inference – understanding
(ii) Linking words and sentences to ideas.

(i) **Inference:** Deducing the meaning and use of familiar terms through contextual clues.

**AIM:**
- To train students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words or term.

**METHODS:**
- Give students a short passage to read and make them underline all the words/terms they do not understand. List words on blackboard. Group or class can try to guess each of these words and see how close they can get to their meaning.

(ii) **Linking words and sentences to ideas:**

**AIM:**
- To train students to read, recognize and understand sentences and words faster.

**METHODS:**
- Pick an idea from the text and by skimming and scanning find words and sentences linking the idea.
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<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>SUBSKILL:</th>
<th>Matching</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relating written information to pictures, diagrams and other words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIM:</td>
<td>To help students understand main information of text through identification of the corresponding pictures, or words.</td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODS:</td>
<td>Give students some pictures. Select relevant words/sentences/paragraphs and they match them to pictures.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Give each student a headline/title/caption or article. The students must find the matching pairs.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>As above, groups or pairs working together to match.</td>
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<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>SUBSKILL:</th>
<th>Summarizing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM:</td>
<td>To train children to sum up, as short as possible, a text with all the important information and/or ideas.</td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODS:</td>
<td>Ask students to underline all important facts/events in a text/story</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elicit these facts/events and write on blackboard in note form</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Write summaries in groups and compare each group’s work (pin on blackboard or read it out)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Give a word limit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Give a time limit</td>
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<tr>
<th>READING</th>
<th>SUBSKILL:</th>
<th>Dictionary Skills</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM:</td>
<td>To encourage students to make good use of dictionary and to be less dependent on the Teacher for explanations.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODS:</td>
<td>Have a competition to see who can find the meaning of a word first (encourages speed reading)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Teach students how to use a dictionary (alternative spellings of same sounds)</td>
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<td>Give students a choice of correct definitions and then discuss/look it up in a dictionary in pairs/groups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>READING</td>
<td>SUBSKILL:</td>
<td>Silent reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>AIMS:</td>
<td>- To give students the chance to read at their own speed</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- To encourage reading for pleasure</td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODS:</td>
<td>- Have a reading cupboard/corner where fast, bored tired students can choose what to read</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Do a reading comprehension when students read silently, and write answers, after the new/difficult words have been taught.</td>
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</table>
How is **writing** different to **speaking**?
- There is no immediate feedback
- There is possibly no known reader
- Writing has more permanence
- Writing gives more time to plan
- In writing, intonation (the way the voice moves up and down) is shown by punctuation

**What can be written?**
- Essays
- Reports
- Notes
- Poems
- Letters (business & personal)
- Plays
- Diaries
- Instructions etc

**Why do we write?**
- To communicate ideas and information
- To recall experiences
- To entertain
- To explore feelings

**The sub-skills of writing are:**
- Copying
- Filling in the blanks
- Parallel writing
- Describing a picture or series of pictures
- Sentence/paragraph completion
- Editing and drafting
- Reacting to a situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING SUBSKILL: Copying</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIM: To give student model examples to promote success rather than failure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS: Elicit a story (from pictures, words cues) from students. Write it on the blackboard with ‘mistake’ of students. Elicit corrections, then students copy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy cards to passed around class, can be organized from easy and short to long and more difficult, according to students needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Story first to be re-ordered, (from cut-up sentences) then finally copied.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple choice storylines/answers chosen then copied.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING SUBSKILL: Fill in the blanks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS: To encourage limited creativity on a correct base.</td>
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<tr>
<td>METHODS: One word (verb/noun/adjective etc) or random gaps (from 1:5 to 1:10 missing words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To make this more learner centered, have 2 copies of a text with different words blanked out, students then work in pairs to give each other correct answers.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRITING SUBSKILL: Parallel writing</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AIS: To encourage creative/guided writing with reference to model examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODS: Using a model sentence/paragraph students change:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- grammar (noun/verb/adjective/adverb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- content (event/situations/description/ending)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(match to given picture or students’ own situation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRITING SUBSKILL: Describing a picture/series of pictures</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AIMS:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- To further encourage creative/guided writing, but with a given situation/stories line to keep words flowing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>METHODS:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Put a picture/series of pictures on the blackboard. Elicit words/structures, then ask individuals or groups to write the whole story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Give each group the same picture and together they write a group story, pin on blackboard or pass around the groups to check spelling/grammar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give each group one of a series of pictures to write about, discuss together, but write an individual story. Regroup the class, so each new group has representative of each picture. Take away the pictures and ask students to put the story in order and check each other’s spelling/grammar.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WRITING SUBSKILL: Completion</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>AIMS:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Giving guided practice in writing from given clues</td>
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<td><strong>METHODS:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give students half sentences to finish</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give students a wordbank to create story around (with or without a picture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give students the last paragraph of a story and ask them to create the previous events leading up to the given conclusion.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Give students the first paragraph of a story and ask them to complete it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- All these can be done: individually / in pairs/in groups</td>
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<td>- Students can compare their results by reading aloud or pinning their work up for comments and/or corrections.</td>
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<tr>
<th>WRITING SUBSKILL: Editing and drafting</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AIM:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- To give practice in finding and correcting mistakes (own and others) in grammar and spelling and content.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
METHODS: - Give back homework (coded to help with whereabouts and type of mistake)
- Swap class work and correct each other’s work
- Give students 5 – 10 mins near the end of writing lesson and ask them to check their work before giving it to the Teacher.

WRITING SUBSKILL: Reading to a situation

AIM: - To encourage written responses to everyday situations.

METHODS: - Listen to news item, conversation or read a newspaper/letter/invitation or watch an experiment, then:
  - write a letter (complaint / query / acceptance / refusal / thanks)
  - write a letter to a newspaper
  - write a report about an observation / experiment
  - students write what they think/feel/know about the topic under discussion.