

A class or company newsletter

A collaborative writing lesson

by Karen Richardson

Function: Writing short articles, reviews, interviews, notes, etc. for a newsletter

Level: Elementary to advanced, mixed-ability

Age: Any, but works especially well with teenagers and young adults

Class type: Group work, whole class collaborative work

Time: 60 to 90 minutes

You need: Samples of daily news handouts produced for hotels (see link). A computer with Word. If possible, take a laptop to the class so that the students can type their articles in during the lesson. Otherwise, the students will need to write their articles on paper and hand them to the teacher who will be responsible for typing the articles in to the newsletter.

Layout: I used the "newsletter.dot" format provided with Word. If you would prefer a different style you can find many more free newsletter templates at <http://office.microsoft.com/en-gb/templates/CT101043281033.aspx>

The idea for this lesson comes from the one page news print-outs found in many hotels around the world.

It's a good idea to print out a few copies of the sample and take them into class so the students get a feel for what the end product could look like.

This lesson works well with mixed-ability groups as the students are free to write as much or as little as they wish.

Try to give the lesson a personal twist; either relate the articles to the area in which you teach, the company you teach in, or the field of business the students work in or study.

Step 1

Elicit what types of articles you would expect to find in newsletters or newspapers, e.g. short articles, reviews, interviews, adverts, letters.

Elicit what subjects they may cover, e.g. news, sport, eating out, music, nightlife, business reports, TV and film, science, etc.

Write the suggestions on the board and ask each student which subject they would like to write about for the newsletter which you are all going to compile during the lesson.

Step 2

Encourage students to help each other; they can work in pairs from the beginning, or proofread each other's work.

Monitor and give help where needed.

With lower levels it will probably be enough just to check grammar and spelling and give some vocabulary input. Encourage higher levels to think about style and more sophisticated vocabulary too.

Step 3

Have a computer already set up in the classroom so early finishers can start writing in their articles when they are ready.

Step 4

When faster students have finished and written in their articles, they could start a second article or help any weaker students. It is important to make the students aware that this task is about collaboration and working together.

Step 5

While the last students are finishing off, ask the early finishers to present their article to the rest of the class. They can read out what they have written, say why they chose that topic and answer questions from the listeners.

Step 6

Make sure the students get a print-out of the end product either at the end of this lesson, or at the beginning of the next lesson.