

TIRÉ À PART

2<sup>e</sup> année du 2<sup>e</sup> cycle  
4<sup>e</sup> secondaire

# Topics for every occasion

## 4



ÉDITIONS  
**MARIE  
FRANCE**

Marthe Blanchet

# Topics for Every Occasion

# 4

*Subject ideas  
for various written and oral situations*

### **Topics for Every Occasion 4**

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www.photos.com © 2009-2010, JupiterImages Corporation

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Dépôt légal 2<sup>e</sup> trimestre 2010  
Bibliothèque et Archives Canada  
Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec

Éditions Marie-France sont membres de



ISBN 978-2-89661-003-7

Imprimé au Canada

*Nous reconnaissons l'aide financière du gouvernement du Canada par l'entremise du Programme d'aide au développement de l'industrie de l'édition (PADIÉ) pour nos activités d'édition.*

Gouvernement du Québec - Programme de crédit d'impôt pour l'édition de livres -  
Gestion SODEC

## FOREWORD

Providing different writing and oral situations is necessary in every classroom to help students develop their writing and oral skills. Diversifying topics within these situations is equally important to encourage personal expression and creativity.

If varying the situations by having students write short paragraphs, compositions, letters, articles, poems, song lyrics, design posters or flyers and do orals, debates or discussions seems like a relatively simple task, finding a wide range of topics within each one is not often the case. It is not always easy for the teacher to come up on a regular basis with a list of topics that are both diversified and interesting to the class as a whole. *Topics for Every Occasion* seeks to help teachers in this task by suggesting varied topics in an array of writing and oral situations.

Teachers can of course transform any given topic to meet the class' interests and/or needs more fully. With their teacher's approval, the students can do the same, provided it increases their overall motivation by making the writing or oral exercise more enjoyable for them.

The topic suggestions can therefore be used as proposed or in whichever way needed to make written and oral expression a more fulfilling and pleasant classroom experience for students and teachers alike.

The author

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# ESL CORE PROGRAM AND COMPETENCIES

Learning English gives the ESL students access to a wealth of information and entertainment available in the media. It also broadens their opportunity to communicate with people who speak the language in Quebec, Canada and throughout the world and so enables them to construct their understanding of other cultures and their world-view.

The Secondary Cycle Two ESL program builds on language skills learned in the Secondary Cycle One ESL program as it continues to improve the students' ability to use English and help them become competent language learners. It focuses on the continued and further development of the three competencies found in the elementary school and the Secondary Cycle One programs:

- *The student interacts orally in English.*
- *The student reinvests understanding of texts* (by using any form of English communication i.e. spoken, written or visual).
- *The student writes and produces texts.*

From autonomous and confident second language Secondary Cycle One learners, the Secondary Cycle Two ESL students continue to develop accuracy and fluency to become more efficient and competent second language learners and communicators as they further develop those competencies.

The Secondary Cycle Two ESL program is based on the communicative approach, strategy-based learning, cooperative learning and cognitive approaches to language learning. As in the elementary school and the Secondary Cycle One programs, the evaluation at the Secondary Cycle Two level has a double purpose, namely to support learning and recognize the competencies.

Previously, the secondary school objective-based program taught listening, speaking, reading and writing skills separately for specific purposes. The new ESL program transcends the sum of those skills by developing the three competencies within an interactive learning environment. Unlike the former individually-taught skills, the three competencies draw upon each other as their reinvestment is carried through each other.

To maximize the development of each of the three competencies, certain conditions must ideally be put into place:

- Cooperation and interactive collaboration in a trusting, supportive and respectful classroom environment are required between the students and their English teacher to better develop communicative competence.
- A positive and stimulating English class environment where an array of visual and auditory stimuli, material resources and human support and feedback are a must to properly immerse the learner and help him/her attain an increasingly better command of English.
- The active participation of the students in the management of their language development and evaluation of their competencies supported by the encouragement and guidance of the teacher are also crucial in the English learning process.

*Topics for Every Occasion* helps the core and enriched ESL students to focus mostly on the development of the third competency brought forth by the new ESL program by which they will develop additional means to communicate. Where the core students' focus is on attaining eventual written accuracy and effectiveness throughout the development of the competency, the enriched students' interest lies in the further pursuit and enrichment of their already high level of written proficiency. *Topics for Every Occasion*, also touching the other two competencies, is clearly competency-oriented:

- The students are prompted to *interact orally in English* through the various proposed oral and debate/discussion topics.
- When asked to rewrite lyrics to well-known songs the students work *on reinvesting their understanding of texts*.
- The various popular and information-based writing situations geared towards different audiences and purposes, give the students the incentive and opportunity to expand their knowledge of internal and external features of texts and *write and produce* meaningful and creative *texts* of their own.

Worked on at a core level or at a more enriched level, the *Topics for Every Occasion* writing and oral activities are a step toward making the ESL present-day students more aware of their responsibilities, namely:

- to build and develop an inventory of resources, proper learning strategies and monitoring skills to become more proficient in English
- and
- to get personally, actively and interactively involved in their lifelong language learning experience.



Whenever needed and if your teacher doesn't provide you with specific ones, refer to these general guides for writing a composition:

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A COMPOSITION

### TITLE

- Write the title of the composition on the first line.
- Space the title so that it is in the middle of the line.
- Capitalize the first and last words and all other words except short prepositions (at, in, on...), conjunctions (and, but, nor, or...) and articles (a, an, the).
- Do not put a period at the end of the title.

### BODY OF THE COMPOSITION

- Skip a line between the title and the body of the composition.
- Indent the first word of each paragraph.
- The title is not part of the body of the composition. You must introduce your subject at the beginning of the composition and not depend on the title being at the top.
- Each new important idea you introduce and develop warrants the starting of a new paragraph.
- The concluding paragraph should summarize your topic or add a new idea.
- If a word must be divided at the end of a line, do so between syllables. Use a hyphen at the end of the first line.
- Write complete sentences.
- Write the composition the length asked for by your teacher. **If the writing pages provided in this booklet are insufficient, use their flip side for added space.**
- Write as legibly as possible in a neutral color: black or blue. Remember that you are writing something that somebody else will read.
- Proofread your composition. Grammar and spelling mistakes distract from the content.





# 3

## TENSE-ORIENTED topics

*The topics in this section are grouped according to the verb forms that will probably be used in developing them.*

Read about the basic meaning and form of the simple present tense:

### THE SIMPLE PRESENT TENSE

The simple present tense is used to express:

- habits (We travel every year.),
- routines (Alice eats lunch at twelve.),
- facts (You learn quickly.),
- likes/dislikes (I like pasta. / He hates liver.),
- wants (The workers want more time.).

The base form of the verb is used after I-you-we-they. After he-she-it (3<sup>rd</sup> person singular) the verb has a final **-s**:

	<b>SINGULAR</b>	<b>PLURAL</b>
1 <sup>st</sup> PERSON	I eat	we eat
2 <sup>nd</sup> PERSON	you eat	you eat
3 <sup>rd</sup> PERSON	he eats she eats it eats	they eat

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> PERSON SINGULAR SPECIAL FORMS**

- Verbs ending in **S-X-CH-SH** have a final **-es** (e.g. misses-waxes-watches-wishes).
- Verbs in **Y** preceded by a consonant change the **Y** to **I** before adding **-es** (e.g. cries).
- “Do” and “go” have a final **-es** (does-goes).
- “Have” has an irregular 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (has).

#### **NOTE**

The simple present form of “To be” is completely irregular:

I am - you are - he is - she is - we are - you are - they are

Choose one of the two following composition topics where the simple present is mostly used. Follow the suggested content development.

### THE PROFESSION I ADMIRE THE MOST

#### **Setting the scene**

You probably find all professions to be worthy of admiration. But a few stand out when your particular taste is taken into account. Write about the one that inspires you the most.

#### **Body of the message**

- Name the profession,
- list the talents, skills and studies needed,
- give a complete job description and an idea of the work load,
- list and comment on the advantages and disadvantages linked to this profession,
- name a person (well-known or not) who practices this profession and inspires you,
- mention when your interest in this professional career started and
- conclude by saying if you are personally aspiring\* towards it.

\* *Putting a lot of energy towards reaching a goal.*

### MY COUNTRY

#### **Setting the scene**

Whether you live in it or have left it temporarily, your country is and will always remain your home. You will write about it.

#### **Body of the message**

- Name the country and give its location (i.e. on what continent, near what other country...),
- describe some of the special sights to see and the things it is famous for,
- talk about the climate, its inhabitants, the language, the religion, the government, its schooling system...,
- name the friends or relatives who live there and
- conclude:
  - by describing the special bond\* you have with this country and
  - by mentioning how this bond makes this country your home.

\* *Uniting force or tie.*



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Read about the basic meaning and form of the simple past tense:

### THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE

The simple past tense is used to talk about an event or action that occurred at a specific time in the past:

It rained last week.

I helped my father.

Regular verbs take a final **-ed**:

I	} walked (verb + ed)
you	
he	
she	
it	
we	
you	
they	

#### **SPECIAL FORMS**

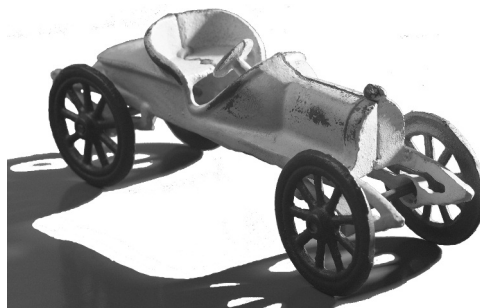
- Verbs in **Y** preceded by a consonant change the **Y** to **I** before adding **-ed** (e.g. tried).
- Short verbs ending in a consonant preceded by a vowel, double the consonant before adding **-ed** (e.g. dropped-planned).
- Verbs ending in **e** just add **-d** (e.g. decided-memorized).
- Irregular verbs have a completely different past form (e.g. ate-understood-was/were...).

#### **NOTE**

The past form of irregular verbs comes from old English.

They have no general set rules for their formation.

They must be learned.



Choose one of the two following composition topics where the simple past is mostly used. Follow the suggested content development.

### THE DAY I RECEIVED A STRANGE...

#### **Setting the scene**

Events quietly follow each other until something unexpected happens and creates temporary havoc. Narrate a true or imagined incident where an unexpected turn of events caused personal confusion.

#### **Body of the message**

- Select one the following: *package, letter, e-mail, phone call...* and insert it into the title space,
- narrate the event as it happened,
- create as much suspense and excitement as warranted by your story,
- emphasize the moment when your life was momentarily disrupted,
- describe the feelings and emotions you experienced throughout the event and
- conclude with a surprise ending.

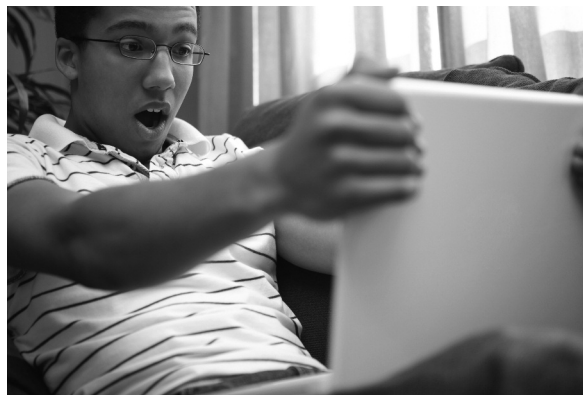
### THE LIFE OF CAVE PEOPLE

#### **Setting the scene**

Cave people didn't have it easy. Imagine the life they might have led.

#### **Body of the message**

- Describe the living quarters and its inhabitants,
- explain how food was obtained,
- describe the hunting instruments used and how they were fabricated,
- list the dangers they faced and what means of protection were available,
- say how food was prepared and cooked,
- imagine what they did when they were hurt or got sick,
- describe what they did in their leisure time,
- imagine what caused them happiness and joy, and
- describe the uncertainties, anxieties and turmoil that was very much part of their daily existence.



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