

TIRÉ À PART

1^{re} année du 1^{er} cycle
1^{re} secondaire

Topics for every occasion I



Topics for Every Occasion



*Subject ideas
for various written and oral situations*

Topics for Every Occasion 1

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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 One ESL program builds on language skills learned in the Elementary ESL program. Its focus is on the continued development of the three following competencies initiated at the elementary level:

- *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 closely guided second language learners at the elementary level, the Secondary Cycle One ESL students progress, becoming more autonomous and confident learners in their work to further develop those competencies.

The Secondary Cycle One ESL program is based on the communicative approach, strategy-based learning, cooperative learning and cognitive approaches to language learning. As in the elementary school program, evaluation at the secondary 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 collaboration in a trusting and respectful classroom environment are required between the students and their English teacher to better develop communicative competence.
- A 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 eventually attain a good command of English.
- The active participation of the students in their language development and competency evaluation supported by the constant 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 beginner's level or at a more advanced level, the *Topics for Every Occasion* writing and oral activities are a step toward making the ESL present-day students more aware of their responsibility in developing proper learning strategies and getting interactively involved in their language learning experience.

SPÉCIMEN



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 page provided in this booklet is insufficient, use its 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.

Choose an idea among the following three. Follow the content development proposed for each one. Select an appropriate short title.

HOBBIES AND PASTIMES

Setting the scene

Everyone has leisure time. This is the time when a person can do what he/she prefers the most: engaging in a favourite hobby or pastime. You are going to write about the activity you enjoy doing in your free time.

Body of the message

- Select the hobby or pastime you prefer the most,
- say how you got interested in it or who introduced you to it,
- mention when, where and with who you do it,
- say how long you have been interested in it,
- write about why you do it (e.g. for the enjoyment it gives you, the relaxation you get from it, the self-confidence derived from it, skills and knowledge you acquire...),
- mention the material or equipment needed and its general cost and
- stress and explain the importance of finding a hobby (e.g. it can develop into a future job or sideline, it can become an enjoyable activity for many years to come, you can develop personal skills and meaningful relationships through it...).

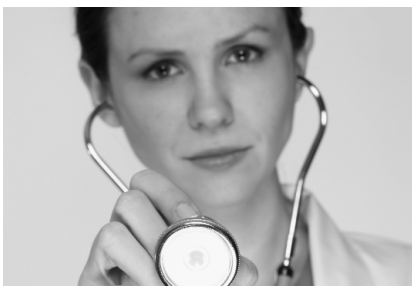
CAREERS

Setting the scene

You are at school preparing for life. You are slowly studying your way towards a career. Write about the one you are most likely to choose.

Body of the message

- Specify the career or general field (e.g. science, art...) that attracts you the most,
- say who or what gave you the initial spark,
- mention what studies are needed,
- mention the available job opportunities linked to your career choice,
- list the advantages (e.g. travelling, salary...) and disadvantages (e.g. busy schedule, long hours, dress code...) and
- say what you are doing now to prepare yourself for this future job (e.g. reading on the subject, talking to informed people, watching TV programs about it...).



HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Setting the scene

A holiday usually implies some form of celebration. Different cultures have different customs and ways to celebrate a special event. Explore this topic by writing about it.

Body of the message

- Choose a special holiday you personally like (from your country or not),
- give the reason it is held (what event is celebrated),
- mention when and where it is held,
- write about the length of the festivities,
- list the preparations involved (special clothes, food, decorations, guest invitation...) and
- give the reason(s) why this holiday and its celebration is so special to you.



SPÉCIMEN



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

THE SIMPLE FUTURE TENSE

The simple future tense is used to talk about an event that occurs in the future.

There are two ways to express the future.

You can use: • **will** + infinitive

• **be** (simple present) + **going to** + infinitive

will + infinitive

I
you
he
she
it
we
you
they

will eat, play...

be + going to + infinitive

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

going to eat, play...





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Topics Developed around a GIVEN SENTENCE

Here is a list of sentences to be inserted at the beginning, middle or end of a composition. Providing an element or sentence idea to be inserted in a specific place within a composition can contribute to sparking imaginative and creative writings.

FIRST SENTENCE SUPPLIED

Write a story beginning with the sentence provided. Follow the suggested content development.

Don't forget to select an appropriate short title for your story.

MY FRIEND TOLD ME WHY HE / SHE WAS FEELING SO...

Setting the scene

Your friend who is acting differently lately finally opened up to you about the reason he/she is feeling the way he/she is: sad, happy, excited, nervous, sick, afraid... Fill in the blank space of the preceding sentence with the specific feeling you have selected.

Body of the message

- Recopy the completed sentence on the first line of the following sheet (drop "he" or "she" in the transcription) and continue your composition:
- share the story your friend told you,
- list the emotions he/she experienced as he/she told you the story,
- tell us about the feelings you experienced when listening to him/her telling you the story,
- write about your reactions (what you said and did) after all was said and
- conclude the composition by mentioning how both of you parted (i.e. final words and feelings...).



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