

TIRÉ À PART

1^{re} année du 2^e cycle
3^e secondaire

Topics for every occasion

3



Topics for Every Occasion

3

*Subject ideas
for various written and oral situations*

Topics for Every Occasion 3

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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 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.

Choose a subject among the following two. Follow the content development proposed for each one.

BEING AN ONLY CHILD

Setting the scene

Siblings sometimes tire of each other and wish there were no more brothers or sisters to *infringe on** their privacy and *disrupt*** their lives. Reflect on how life would be like from an only child's perspective.

Body of the message

- List the advantages of being an only child (e.g. more attention, more gifts...):
 - develop each one
 - say if and why the child could tire of being raised alone
 - say what positive impact being brought up alone can have on a child (e.g. more self-assurance, more assertiveness...),
- List the disadvantages of being an only child (e.g. lonelier, spoiled more...):
 - develop each one
 - say what negative impact being brought up alone can have on a child (e.g. he/she is more withdrawn, less sociable...),
- explain if and how an only child can develop important social skills (i.e. sharing, reliability, compassion...),
- say if an only child has more trouble adapting to a class environment where the teacher's attention is not entirely focused on him/her and
- say if being brought up alone can and will affect the kind of adult he/she will become (why or why not?).

* *Violate, trespass on, intrude on, invade.*

** *Throw into disorder.*

MY FAVOURITE OUTING(S)*

Setting the scene

What best way to enjoy oneself than to go out with friends. You will write about the outings you prefer.

Body of the message

- Determine what your favourite outing is (e.g. walking around town, trekking through a forest, going on a picnic, visiting a farm, berry picking in the country, going to the beach, going to an amusement park,...),
- mention other outings you might equally like,
- write about the season you do your favourite outing(s) in, how often you do it (them) and with whom,
- describe in detail what there is to see and do on the outing,
- list all the reasons you like going on this or these outings,
- say how you feel when you are there and
- mention the physical and psychological effects that remain with you even after the outing event or events are over.

* *A brief usually outdoor pleasure trip.*

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Read about the basic meaning and form of the imperative form:

THE IMPERATIVE FORM

The imperative form is used to:

- give commands (e.g. Open the door!),
- make polite requests (e.g. Give me the bill, please.) and
- give directions (e.g. Turn left at the corner.).

The simple form of a verb is used in imperative sentences. The understood subject is **you** (meaning the person the speaker is talking to):

e.g. (You) pass me the salt.

NOTE

The negative imperative form is built with **Don't** + the simple form of a verb:

e.g. Don't walk on the grass.

Choose one of the three following composition topics where the imperative form is mostly used. Follow the suggested content development.

RECIPE INSTRUCTIONS

Setting the scene

Good food is enjoyable. Being able to prepare special meals yourself adds fun to the enjoyment. You will give step-by-step instructions on how to prepare a special dish or dessert.

Body of the message

- Decide on the dish or dessert you will give instructions to make. First list the ingredients to be bought or prepared. Then give all the steps that must be followed to make the baking experience a success. Don't hesitate to include not-to-do things to your list and add details for more complete and helpful guidelines:

e.g. *Buy one pound of lean ground meat. Keep it in the refrigerator as you get the rest of the ingredients and utensils ready... Don't forget to wash your hands before you start; cleanliness in the kitchen is a must... Peel the onions, cut into thin slices and put aside... Don't forget to turn the oven on to 350° F so it is ready when time comes to bake your meat loaf. Peel... fry... boil... mix... beat... stir...*

WHAT TO DO IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY

Setting the scene

Many lives can be saved when you know exactly what has to be done in an emergency situation. You will give detailed instructions on what to do in case someone finds himself/herself in a bad predicament*.

Body of the message

- Choose a problematical or life-threatening situation (e.g. accident, fire, earthquake, flood, heart attack, gunman attack...). Give all the steps that must be followed to increase the chances of saving someone's life. Don't hesitate to include not-to-do or not-to-forget things to your list and add details for more complete and helpful guidelines: e.g. *See to it that the victim is comfortable. Don't forget to ask somebody to call an ambulance or 911... Reassure the victim that help is on its way. Cover him/her to keep the body warm. Check the vital signs. Perform CPR if needed by following these precise steps: Check for responsiveness. Shake or tap the person gently. See if the person moves or makes a noise... Pinch his/her nose... Breathe into his mouth...*

* *Dangerous or unpleasant position or situation.*

HOW TO ORGANIZE A GREAT PARTY

Setting the scene

Parties are successful when attention is put on the details of its organization. Give out the list of dos and don'ts to make someone's next party a success.

Body of the message

- Determine the type of party you are giving tips for (e.g. a birthday party, a surprise party, a Halloween party, a New Year's Eve party...); the organizational tips will vary from party to party. Give all the steps that must be followed to make the gathering a success. Don't hesitate to include not-to-do or not-to-forget things to your list and add details for more complete and helpful guidelines: e.g. *Don't forget to make a complete list of the people you want to invite. Remember to call or send out the invitations early before any of the expected guests make other plans. Sit down and elaborate a menu. Determine the things to be done ahead of time (e.g. buy the balloons...) and at the last minute (e.g. make the cake...).*



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