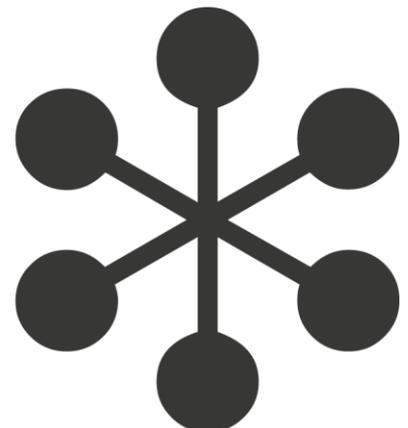
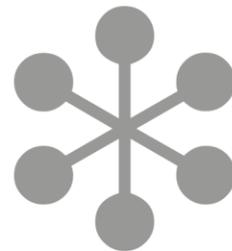
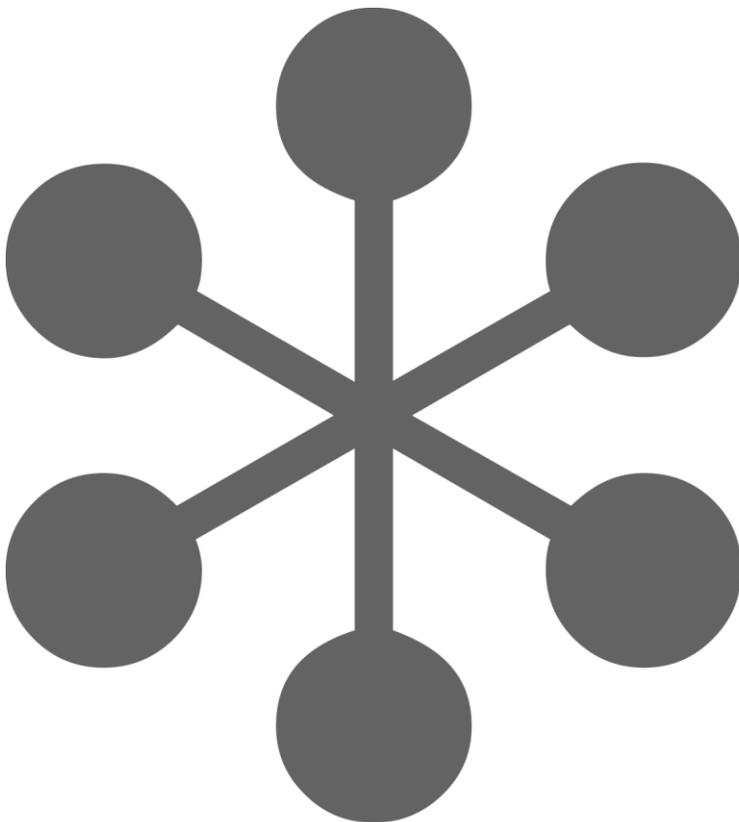




Cambridge English

Engaging learners in the assessment of writing skills at B2 and C1

6Y05



Classroom activities

Classroom activity: How is my writing marked?

Timing about 1 hour

Materials worksheets: **What the writing assessment criteria mean; Check the marking**

Rationale The aim of this activity is to familiarise learners with the assessment criteria used in Cambridge English writing tests, and what they mean. Learners then discuss the criteria with reference to a specific writing task, then look at a sample answer, discuss each criteria, and match comments given by an examiner to the criteria.

Procedure

1. Ask learners to think about the last piece of writing they did in English. What was it? Now ask them to think about how good it was. What was good about it? What could they have improved? Brainstorm as many ideas as possible with learners, noting ideas on the board, e.g. 'the spelling' or 'some good vocabulary'.
2. Tell learners that in a Cambridge English writing test, they will be given four marks – there are four different criteria which their writing is assessed against. Give them the four assessment criteria: Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, Language. In pairs or small groups, ask learners to discuss which criterion each of the ideas they brainstormed would fit into. Elicit some ideas in plenary.
3. Now give out a copy of the **worksheet: What the writing assessment criteria mean**. Ask learners in pairs to match each descriptor to the relevant criteria. When they have finished, elicit the answers (see key to step 3, below) – and ask for or give examples, where necessary. Highlight any descriptors which learners had not included in their brainstorm, and discuss briefly why the descriptor is important and possible reasons why learners didn't come up with it.
4. Now give learners a copy of **worksheet: Check the marking**. Ask them to look at the first part, which is a sample B2-level writing task (from *Cambridge English: First*). Ask learners to look at the question, and in pairs think about what a good answer should include/be like. Tell them to note down one or two specific points relevant to each of the four assessment criteria. Monitor as they are doing this, and encourage learners to come up with specific ideas. Go through ideas with the class for each criteria.

5. Now give learners a copy of a sample answer. Ask them to read it, and think about each of the four criteria in turn: is the content relevant, and has the question actually been answered? Would the writing have the right effect on the reader? How well organised is it? Is there a good range of language, without too many mistakes? Again, monitor pairs as they discuss their ideas.
6. Now ask learners to look at the comments that an examiner gave for this piece of writing. They must match each comment to the correct criteria (see key to step 6, below).
7. Finish by asking learners to produce their own essay. Allow plenty of time for this. As learners finish, pair them with another learner who has also finished. Ask them to swap writing with each other, read, then give one or two comments for each criterion. Tell learners that the comments must be helpful and constructive. If time, learners can then make improvements to their writing (or this can be done for homework). Collect in the work (first drafts, comments and rewrites) to look through.

Key (step 3)

Descriptors

- Content: B, F, L
- Communicative Achievement: A, E, I
- Organisation: C, G, J
- Language: D, H, K

Key (step 6)

Examiner's comments

- Content: B, F
- Communicative Achievement: A, D
- Organisation: C, H
- Language: E, G

Worksheet: What the writing assessment criteria mean

Match the descriptors (A–L) below to each assessment criteria. Write the letters in the appropriate box.

Content	Communicative Achievement
Organisation	Language

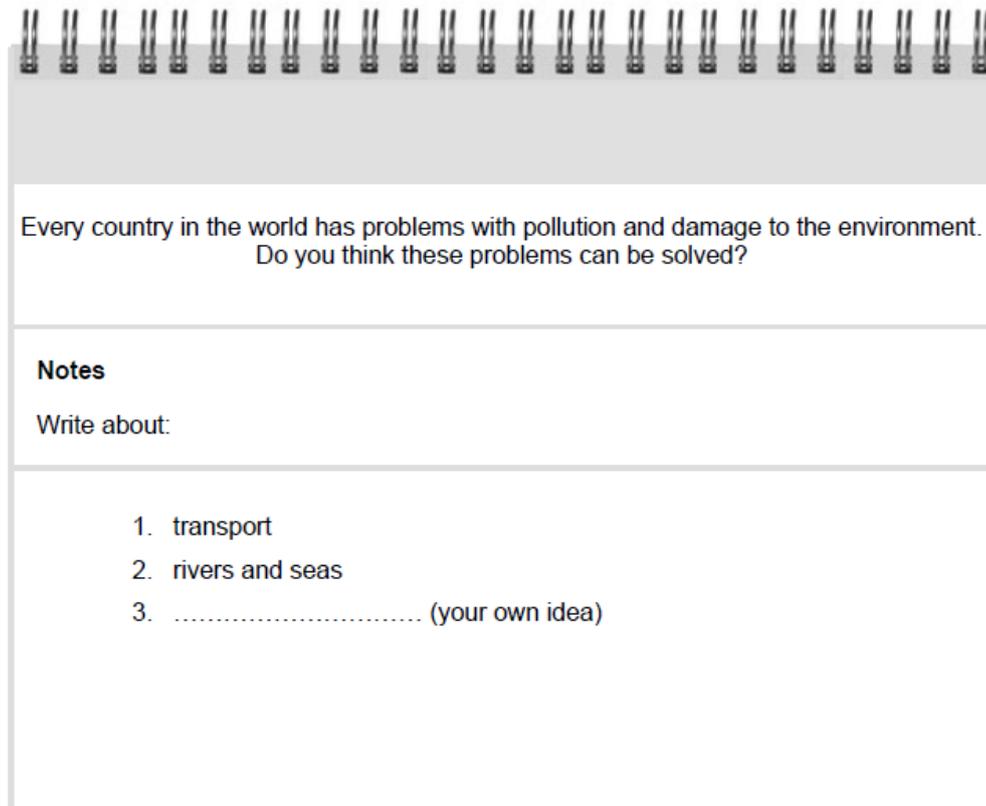
- A) if the writing is in the right style, layout, etc., for the task
- B) how well the candidate has fulfilled the task
- C) if the candidate has used a variety of words/phrases to link their ideas
- D) the range of vocabulary and grammar
- E) if the writing would have the right effect on the person who is reading it
- F) if the candidate has done what they were asked to do
- G) how well the ideas are put together
- H) if the candidate has used some less common words and structures
- I) whether the candidate has used the appropriate register (e.g. informal/formal)
- J) if the writing is in a logical order
- K) how accurate the writing is
- L) if all the information in the piece of writing is relevant

Worksheet: Check the marking

Read this task. What will a good answer be like? Think about **content**, **communicative achievement**, **organisation** and **language**.

- 1 In your English class you have been talking about the environment. Now, your English teacher has asked you to write an essay.

Write an essay using **all** the notes and giving reasons for your point of view.



Every country in the world has problems with pollution and damage to the environment.
Do you think these problems can be solved?

Notes
Write about:

1. transport
2. rivers and seas
3. (your own idea)

(*Cambridge English: First Handbook for Teachers*, p.31)

Now look at this answer. Think about the four assessment criteria again – how good is it?

DEVELOPMENT VS ENVIRONMENT

If we surf the web looking for pollution and environmental catastrophes, we will find out that every country in the world suffers them. This is a natural consequence of the struggle between development and environment.

If a country decided to live isolated from the rest of the world, living on what it can naturally grow and produce, it surely wouldn't be highly polluted. But we all want exotic food and technological items from all over the world, so we have to pay the price.

Investing on electrical transport would benefit the environment a lot. Even more if this electricity came from a natural source of energy like wind, rivers and solar boards. It's difficult to achieve this because petrol companies will fight against these actions.

We also have to take care of our rivers and seas. We all have heard about factories throwing highly toxic substances to rivers, without minimizing their poisoning effects. A really strict law should be applied to fine these factories and make them change their policy.

But what about ourselves? We also can do a lot! If, when possible, we bought larger packs of food, we would be producing less rubbish. And this is only an example!

(Cambridge English: First Handbook for Teachers, p.38)

Now look at these comments from an examiner. Match each comment (A–H) with the correct assessment criteria (1–4).

Content	Communicative Achievement
Organisation	Language

- A) The essay format is used effectively to hold the reader's attention.
- B) All the information is relevant.
- C) A good variety of words and phrases have been used to link ideas together.
- D) The introduction and conclusion both help to get the message across clearly.
- E) There are some less common words and phrases, e.g. *environmental catastrophes*.
- F) A problem (water pollution) has been described, and an opinion about whether it can be solved has been included.
- G) There are very few errors, and they don't cause the reader any confusion.
- H) Each paragraph contains a separate idea. Perhaps they could be linked a bit more?

Classroom activity: Introducing correction symbols

Timing about 20 minutes

Materials **worksheet: Introducing correction symbols**

Rationale This is an activity to introduce learners to correction symbols, so that in future you can mark up their written work with symbols to indicate what type of mistake has been made, and so that learners will be able to correct their work themselves. By thinking about mistakes and correcting them, learners are likely to become more aware of the type of errors they make, and will hopefully make fewer errors in future.

Procedure

1. Ask your learners to think about the last piece of writing they did in English. Elicit what they wrote about, and why.
2. Now ask them to tell you what they did well (e.g. they answered the question, they used paragraphs, they checked their spelling), then what they found difficult or didn't do so well (e.g. they couldn't think of any ideas, or they couldn't remember how to spell some words). Allow any answers – this is just to get the learners thinking about the process of writing.
3. Tell learners that different people make different types of mistakes when they are writing. Ask them in pairs to see if they can think of ten different types of mistakes, and note them down. Allow 2 minutes, and monitor what the learners are noting down. Elicit some of their ideas.
4. Tell the class that you would like learners to start correcting their own writing. Ask them why this is a good idea – elicit that they can learn from their mistakes, and hopefully not make the same mistake so often in future.
5. Give each learner a copy of the **worksheet: Introducing correction symbols**, and ask them to look at Task 1 – they have to match each symbol/code with its definition. When they have finished, they can check their answers with a partner, then quickly elicit the answers from the group (see key to step 5, below).
6. Now ask them to look at Task 2 on the worksheet. This time they have to mark each sentence with the relevant correction symbol. Do the first sentence with the class as an example: explain that in the sentence 'My mother thinked I lived in London' the verb form is wrong – so they should write 'VF' next to it, and change 'thinked' to 'thought'. Allow a few minutes for the learners to work individually on the sentences, then to check their work with a partner, before eliciting the answers from the group (see key to step 6, below).
7. Tell learners that next time they do some writing for you, you will use these symbols to mark their work, and they will have to correct it themselves. Tell them to keep a copy of this worksheet in a safe place so they can refer to it easily.

Key (step 5)

Λ	You need to add a word here.
/	This word isn't necessary.
P	The punctuation is wrong.
VOC	This is the wrong word.
VT	The verb tense is wrong.
VF	The verb form is wrong.
GR	There's a grammar mistake here.
SP	There's a spelling mistake here.
ART	There's a mistake with the article (a/the).
WO	The word order is wrong.
?	This part isn't very clear.

Key (step 6)

- 1) VF My mother thinked I lived in London.
My mother thought I lived in London.
- 2) P „Goodbye” she said „see you later”.
“Goodbye,” she said. “See you later.”
- 3) VT, VOC We live here since five years.
We have lived here for five years.
- 4) SP I had a suprise party on my birthday.
I had a surprise party on my birthday.
- 5) /, VOC My friend she borrowed me her book.
My friend lent me her book.
- 6) VF, ART Because I woken up late, I didn't have the breakfast.
Because I woke up late, I didn't have breakfast.
- 7) Λ, WO I explained my father why was I late.
I explained to my father why I was late.
- 8) /, P The elephant, it broke it's leg.
The elephant broke its leg.
- 9) VOC, VT The man was claiming to the policeman that someone took his wallet.
The man was complaining to the policeman that someone had taken his wallet.
- 10) GR, WO How many differents countries you have visited?
How many different countries have you visited?

Worksheet: Introducing correction symbols

Task 1

Match the symbols (on the left) with the definitions (on the right).

^
/
P
VOC
VT
VF
GR
SP
ART
WO
?

There's a grammar mistake here.
This is the wrong word.
This word isn't necessary.
The verb form is wrong.
The word order is wrong.
You need to add a word here.
There's a mistake with the article (a/the).
This part isn't very clear.
The punctuation is wrong.
The verb tense is wrong.
There's a spelling mistake here.

Task 2

Look at the sentences below. Mark each sentence with one (or more) of the correction symbols above. Then correct the sentences.

- 1) My mother thinked I lived in London.
- 2) „Goodbye” she said „see you later”.
- 3) We live here since five years.
- 4) I had a suprise party on my birthday.
- 5) My friend she borrowed me her book.
- 6) Because I woken up late, I didn't have the breakfast.
- 7) I explained my father why was I late.
- 8) The elephant, it broke it's leg.
- 9) The man was claiming to the policeman that someone took his wallet.
- 10) How many differents countries you have visited?

Classroom activity: Pairwork correction

Timing about 30 minutes

Materials **worksheets: Pairwork correction**; learners also need a copy of the correction symbols (which they must have been introduced to previously)

Rationale The aim of this activity is to give learners practice in using and understanding correction symbols – both so that they can use them in peer correction activities in future, and so that they can understand them when you use them on their work. This task focuses on narrative verb tenses and forms, but it could easily be adapted to focus on another aspect of language, such as linking devices, articles, collocation, etc.

Procedure

1. Ask learners to think about the last time they went on holiday. In pairs, ask them to tell each other where they went, and what the journey was like. Allow 2 minutes, then ask a couple of learners to tell the class what their partner told them.
2. Ask learners what verb tenses they should use to describe the journey – elicit past tenses, or narrative tenses: past simple, past continuous, past perfect simple and past perfect continuous. As a quick reminder, ask them to look at the first exercise on **worksheet: Pairwork correction** – they have to match the verb tenses (1–4) with their uses (A–D). Check the answers together (see key to step 2, below). Elicit a few examples of each verb tense as well, to highlight the form.
3. Now ask learners to look at the short description of someone's journey that didn't go too well on the worksheet. Ask them to fill in the gaps by choosing the correct verb tense. Allow a few minutes and monitor learners as they are working; as learners finish, pair them with another learner to check their answers together.
4. Elicit the correct answers (see key to step 4, below), explaining any verb tenses that have caused problems or confusion.
5. Now divide the class into two groups: A and B. Within each group, put learners in pairs. Give the A's a copy of Student A text; give the B's a copy of Student B text.
6. Remind learners of the correction symbols you used previously. Ask them to find a copy of their symbols (these have also been provided on the first page of the worksheet). Tell them that each learner must mark up their text using the correction symbols, then check with another learner within their group.

Tell learners that most of the mistakes are related to narrative tenses, but there are some other mistakes as well. Allow a few minutes, monitoring closely.

7. When learners are ready, pair up A's and B's, and ask them to swap texts with each other. They have to correct their text, using the correction symbols to help them.
8. Check the answers together, or provide a copy of the improved texts for learners to check themselves (see key to step 8, below).

Key (step 2)

Narrative tenses

1) D 2) A 3) B 4) C

Key (step 4)

The sun **was** shining, we were all happy and **looking forward** to our summer holiday. We **had left** home at 6 a.m., and we **had been driving** towards the airport for two hours when we **decided** to stop for some breakfast. We **pulled up** at a motorway service station, **went** inside, and **ordered** some food and coffee. We **bought** a newspaper and **felt** quite relaxed as we **had** plenty of time before our flight. As I **was going** to pay, I **noticed** to my horror that the clock on the wall said it was 10.30 a.m. I **realised** that my watch **had stopped** two hours earlier. We **rushed** to the car and **drove** at top speed until we **reached** the airport. We **ran** to the check-in desk, where the lady **told** us that unfortunately the plane **had just taken off**.

Key (step 8)

Student A:

Last year I wanted to go on a trip to Iceland. I **had** never been there before, and I **had** heard from so many people that **it** is a really beautiful place to visit. So, I looked online and found a company which **was offering** a good deal. I checked the details and then booked and **paid** with my credit card. I got an email to confirm, which said I **would** receive the tickets **in** two weeks. But two weeks later, I still **had** no tickets, so I called the company. The number **would not connect**, and I started **to feel** worried. Then I looked **online again**, and the website was no longer there. I found out later that the company was false. Luckily I **got** my money back from the credit card company, but unfortunately I didn't get my holiday in Iceland ...

Student B:

Two months ago I decided to go to Paris with a group of friends **to** celebrate my birthday. We were all quite busy so we thought a long weekend **was** the best idea. I **booked** all our tickets online, and **reserved** some rooms in a small hotel near the Eiffel Tower. On the day of our **departure**, we all met at the airport. However, it **had been** snowing since the night before, and when we got to the check-in desk, we found out that our flight **was** delayed. We went for a coffee and waited. Three hours later, the flight **was** cancelled. The airline **told us** we could fly again **the following** afternoon, so we **went home**. In the end we got to Paris, but we **spent** one-and-a-half days **there** rather than three. Better than nothing!

Worksheet: Pairwork correction

Narrative tenses

Match these verb tenses (1–4) with their uses (A–D):

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1) past simple | A) to describe background events at a particular time (which started before, and will continue afterwards) |
| 2) past continuous | B) to describe something which happened before a time in the past |
| 3) past perfect simple | C) to describe something which started in the past and continued up to a point still in the past |
| 4) past perfect continuous | D) to describe events in sequence in the past |

Choose the correct tense to fill in the gaps in this story.

The sun (shine), we were all happy and (look forward) to our summer holiday. We (leave) home at 6 a.m., and we (drive) towards the airport for two hours when we (decide) to stop for some breakfast. We (pull up) at a motorway service station, (go) inside, and (order) some food and coffee. We (buy) a newspaper and (feel) quite relaxed as we (have) plenty of time before our flight. As I (go) to pay, I (notice) to my horror that the clock on the wall said it was 10.30 a.m. I (realise) that my watch (stop) two hours earlier. We (rush) to the car and (drive) at top speed until we (reach) the airport. We (run) to the check-in desk, where the lady (tell) us that unfortunately the plane (just take off).

A	You need to add a word here.
/	This word isn't necessary.
P	The punctuation is wrong.
VOC	This is the wrong word.
VT	The verb tense is wrong.
VF	The verb form is wrong.
GR	There's a grammar mistake here.
SP	There's a spelling mistake here.
ART	There's a mistake with the article (a/the).
WO	The word order is wrong.
?	This part isn't very clear.

Student A

Read this story about a holiday, and mark any mistakes with correction symbols.
Focus in particular on the verbs.

Last year I wanted to go on a trip to Iceland. I never been there before, and I heard from so many people that is a really beautiful place to visit. So, I looked online and found a company which offerred a good deal. I checked the details and then booked and pay with my credit card. I got an email to confirm, which said I will receive the tickets at two weeks. But two weeks later, I still was having no tickets, so I called the company. The number was not connected, and I started feel worried. Then I looked again online, and the website was no longer there. I found out later that the company was false. Luckily I could get my money back from the credit card company, but unfortunately I didn't get my holiday in Iceland ...

Now swap your text with Student B, and correct the mistakes in their text.

.....

Student B

Read this story about a holiday, and mark any mistakes with correction symbols.
Focus in particular on the verbs.

Two months ago I decided to go to Paris with a group of friends for celebrate my birthday. We were all quite busy so we thought a long weekend the best idea. I had booked all our tickets online, and did reserve some rooms in a small hotel near the Eiffel Tower. On the day of our depart, we all met at the airport. However, it was snowing since the night before, and when we got to the check-in desk, we found out that our flight delayed. We went for a coffee and waited. Three hours later, the flight cancelled. The airline was told to us we could fly again tomorrow afternoon, so we went to home. In the end we got to Paris, but there we spend one-and-a-half days rather than three. Better than nothing!

Now swap your text with Student A, and correct the mistakes in their text.

Classroom activity: Make your own checklist

Timing 20–30 minutes

Materials **worksheet: My writing checklist**

Rationale The aim of this activity is to encourage learner autonomy in terms of writing skills, by making learners aware of the types of mistakes or weaknesses in their writing. To do this activity, learners need a portfolio of their written work, including notes, drafts and comments. When they have several pieces of work in their portfolio they can go over the comments and identify their own particular strengths and weaknesses, and make themselves a checklist for checking future pieces of work. Learners should already be aware of the four assessment criteria for Cambridge English writing tests.

Procedure

1. Ask learners to think about their written work. What do they think about the way you mark it? For example, do they just want to know a grade or mark? Do they read comments? Do they think the comments are useful or not? Allow learners to comment freely.
2. Ask learners how they think they can improve their written work. Elicit ideas, e.g. they may just need much more practice, or they might like to see examples of good answers. Point out that you can help them in class, and with your comments, but they also need to help themselves too. One way of doing this is by encouraging them to check their own work carefully as they are writing it, and when they have finished. Ask learners what sort of thing they should check for – elicit, e.g. spelling mistakes, grammar mistakes, whether or not they have answered the question.
3. Remind learners of the four assessment criteria for Cambridge English writing tests: elicit that these are Content, Communicative Achievement, Organisation, and Language. Quickly check understanding of these – what each one means.
4. Ask learners to consider which of these they think cause them most difficulty – for example, do they often make grammatical mistakes? Or do they find it hard to organise their ideas into clear paragraphs? Now ask them to get their folder/portfolio of written work out. Give them a few minutes to look through it, checking the comments you have given them. Ask them to note down any that they think they need to pay particular attention to, for example, if the same comment is repeated more than once.

5. Tell learners they are going to make themselves a checklist, i.e. a list of questions that they should refer to each time they finish a piece of work. If they often make grammatical mistakes, elicit what the question on the checklist could be, e.g. is my grammar accurate? If the grammatical mistakes are commonly verb tenses, the question could be more specific: are the verb tenses correct?
6. Tell learners to put together their own checklist – give them a copy of **worksheet: My writing checklist**. Monitor carefully as they are doing so, and suggest any specific questions for learners who have particular weaknesses or recurrent problems.

Worksheet: My writing checklist

Look through the comments on writing tasks that have been marked recently. Are any comments repeated? Write yourself a checklist, to remind you to check your written work in future before you hand it in.

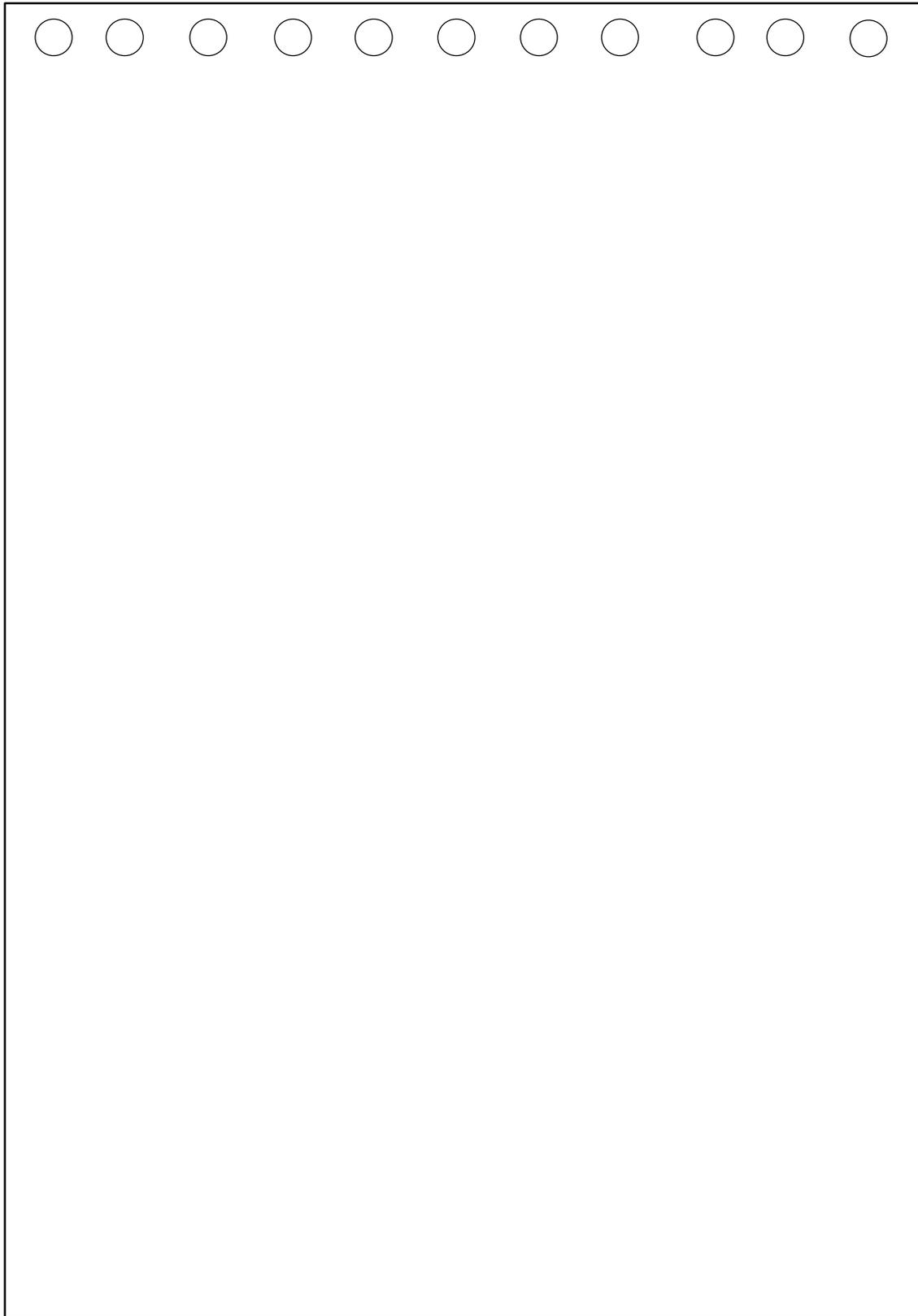
For example: if the teacher comments that you could try to avoid repeating the same word or phrase, the first point on your checklist could be:

1) **Have I repeated words or phrases?**

Write your checklist here:

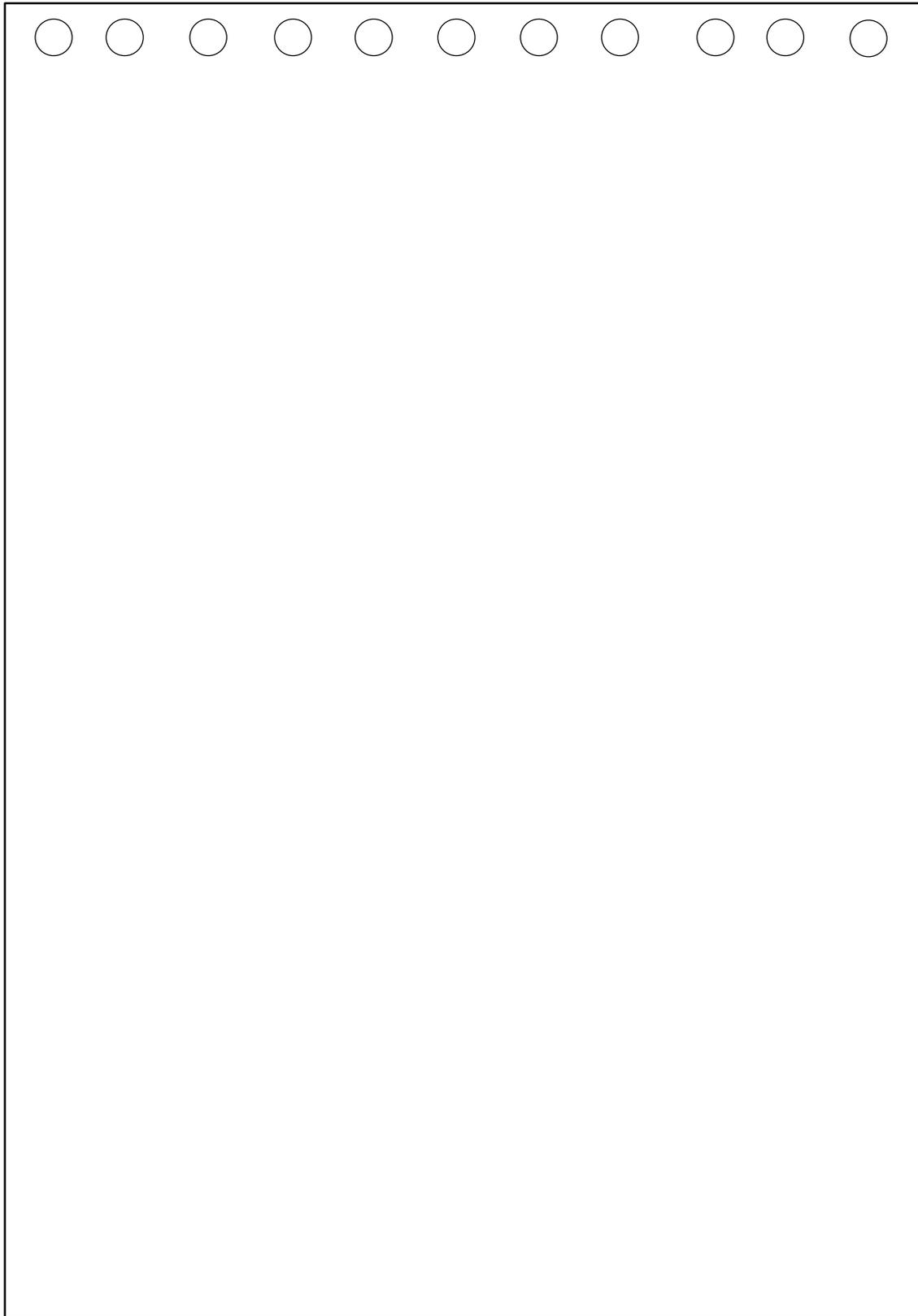
- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____
- 7) _____
- 8) _____
- 9) _____
- 10) _____

Notes



A large rectangular box for taking notes, featuring a row of ten small circles along the top edge, resembling a spiral binding.

Notes



A large rectangular box for notes, resembling a spiral notebook. The top edge of the box contains ten small circles, evenly spaced, representing the spiral binding. The rest of the box is empty, intended for writing notes.