

The Basics of Language Teaching: Promoting Writing Skills

How to write about the content of a text¹

“I was hurt by a celeb serial snogger“
- Sophie Taylor, 18, was so excited to meet a celebrity she fancied... -

I'd gone to a bar with my mates to celebrate my 18th birthday, and there were a couple of guys in the corner who looked familiar. It was only when we got talking to them that we suddenly twigged – they were from a boy band!

We started chatting and David and I got on really well. He said they were on tour and we swapped phone numbers. I couldn't believe it when he texted me the next day, inviting me out for a meal.

I met him at his hotel, and we went to a little Italian restaurant round the corner. I was so excited! David told the manager he was going to be on TV the next day – and I felt really special to be there with him.

After the meal we went back to his hotel room where we had a lovely snog. “D'you want to stay the night?“, he asked. But I said no, and asked him to call me a taxi. Even though he'd obviously expected more, he was still sweet and polite so I hoped that he might call me again. However, two day later I saw a story which said he was dating a Hollywood film star!

I felt really foolish and used, but I suppose it was naive of me to think that he could be interested in me when he's usually surrounded by gorgeous women. I'll know better than to be seduced by fame again.

(from: Sugar, November 2003, Hachette London p. 48)

Vocabulary:

celeb/ celebrity – Berühmtheit, Star; *celeb serial snogger* – ein andauernd Affären beginnender Star; *to fancy*: sich etwas gedanklich ausmalen; *to twig* – (umgangssprachlich) – kapieren; *to text* – eine SMS verschicken: *we had a lovely snog* (umgangssprachlich) – wir knutschten; *gorgeous* – wunderschön; *to be seduced by fame* – sich von der Berühmtheit einer Person verführt lassen

Dear students,

in order to check if you understood the given text and to be able to write about it (in a class test) you might be asked some questions on the text like, for example,

- *Who does Sophie Taylor meet on her 18th birthday?*
- *How does the new friendship between Sophie and the young man develop?*
- *What does Sophie think about her experience now?*

Maybe you will have to write a summary of the text, too.

To be able to do that the following tips help you to write about the content of a text. Let's give it a try!

¹ The text, the idea and some tasks have been taken from Volker Möbius/ Stephanie Kießling. Englisch – Textproduktion. How to write good English texts, Stuttgart (Manz), 2005, p. 6ff.

Step One: Guess from the headline² what the text could be about.

Look at the **headline** of the text first. It tells you what the text is about. This is the headline of our text:

"I was hurt by a celeb serial snogger"- Sophie Taylor, 18, was so excited to meet a celebrity she fancied...

Because of the vocabulary explanation you now know that "celeb serial snogger" means "ein andauernd Affairen beginnender Star." You also read the name "Sophie Tayler" who is 18 years old.

Now what do you think will the text be about?

I think the text is about 18-year-old Sophie Taylor who is meeting
a famous person who likes dating girls.

Step Two: Write in your own keywords and simple sentences what you remember after having read the text once.

Read the text in one go. Then put it away. Write down what **you remember** from your first reading. The "W"- questions help you here:

- **Who does something? Who is important in the text?**
- **Where does the action take place?**
- **When does the action take place?**
- **What happens?**
- **Why do things happen the way they do?**

Here are the questions again and your possible answers in key words and simple sentences:

Who does something? Who is important in the text?

Sophie Taylor (and her friends) – David and the other band members

Where does the action take place?

at a bar - in a restaurant – in a hotel room

When does the action take place?

at Sophie's 18th birthday and a little later

What happens?

Sophie meets David. The next day he takes her out. Later he wants her to stay the night in his hotel room. But Sophie says 'no'.

² to guess from the headline.: aus der Überschrift schließen auf...

Why do the things happen the way they do?

Sophie does not want to have sex with somebody she hardly knows - Later David dates another woman - Sophie reads about it and feels like a fool - But she has learned a lesson

If you had problems taking down notes after the first reading without looking at the text please **study the text again** and **write down the "w"-questions and your answers to them in speech bubbles**³. See my example:

Who? Sophie Taylor

Where? a bar

Who? Sophie's friends

When? At Sophie's 18th birthday

I'd gone to **a bar** with **my mates** to celebrate my **18th birthday**, and there were **a couple of guys** in the corner who looked familiar. It was only when we got talking to them that we suddenly twigged – they were from **a boy band**!

Who? David

Who? Some boys from a band

We started chatting and **David** and I got on really well. He said they were on tour and **we swapped phone numbers**. I couldn't believe it when he texted me the next day, inviting me out for a meal.

Where? at his hotel

What? David invites Sophie out for a meal the next day

What? Sophie and David swapped phone numbers.

I met him at **his hotel**, and we went to **a little Italian restaurant** round the corner. I was so excited! David told the manager he was going to be on TV the next day – and I felt really special to be there with him.

Where? At an Italian restaurant

Where? At his hotel room

What? David asks her to stay. But Sophie says 'no'.

After the meal we went back to **his hotel room** where we had a lovely snog. "**D'you want to stay the night?**", he asked. **But I said no**, and asked him to call me a taxi. Even though he'd obviously expected more, he was still sweet and polite so I hoped that he might call me again. However, two day later **I saw a story which said he was dating a Hollywood film star!**

What? Sophie feels like a fool.

What? David dates someone else.

I felt really foolish and used, but I suppose it was naive of me to think that he could be interested in me when he's usually surrounded by gorgeous women. **I'll know better than to be seduced by fame again.**

(from: Sugar, November 2003, Hachette London p. 48)

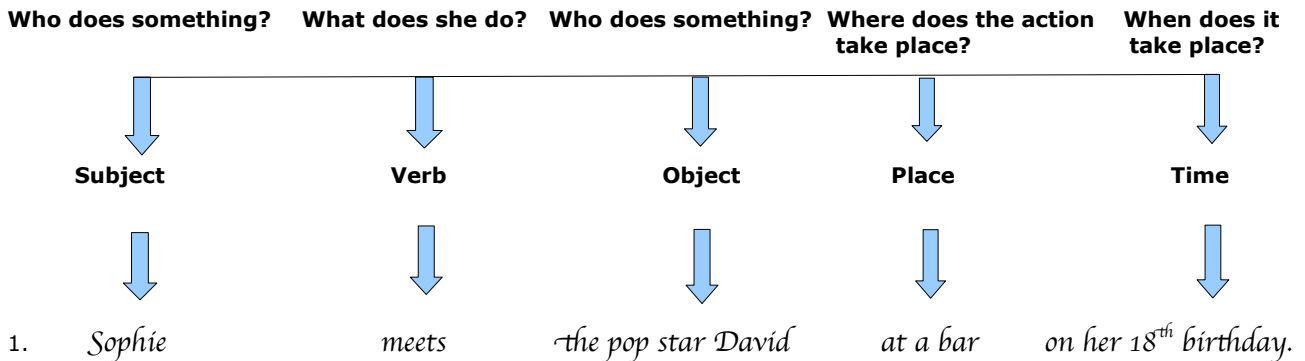
What? Sophie knows better now.

Step Three: Give a brief summary of the text. Write in your words.

This is probabaly the most difficult part now. Here are **some tips for you**:

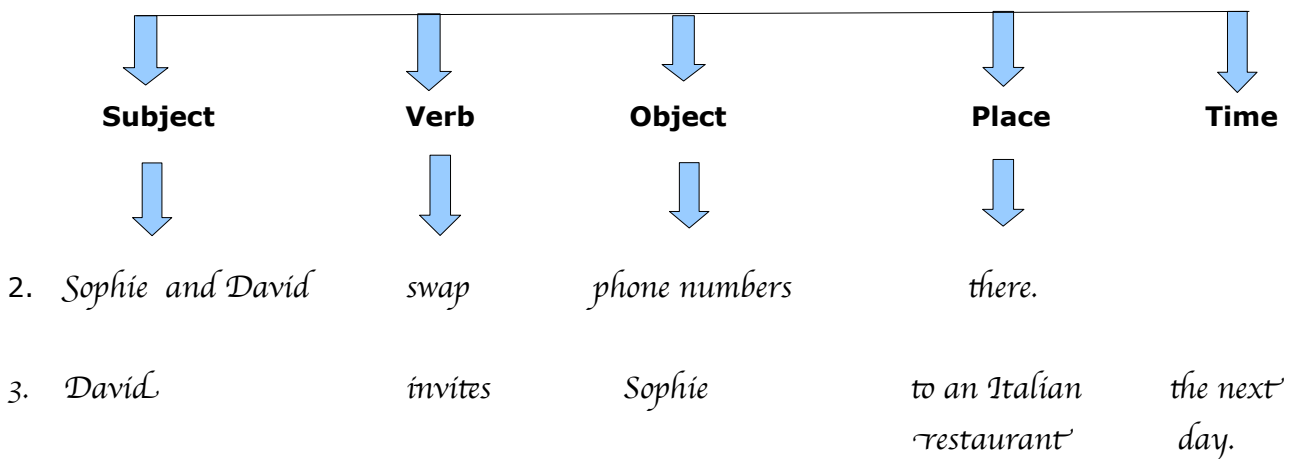
1. If you have difficulties in writing your own texts make the sentences **as simple as possible**. That means **make short sentences** by following the **word order** in English which is always: **Subject – Verb – Object – (Adverbial of) Place – (Adverbial of) Time**

Let's try making simple sentences with the help of our "W"- questions!



2. Remember to write in the **"Third-Person-Form"** ("He/ She / They"...)! Use the **present tense** only Let's go on...

What happens?



3. To make your text more fluent you should **link your sentences** with connectives (Verbindungswörter) at the beginning of a new sentence. These words are, for example:

Then / After that ... (dann, anschließend)

First / Second / Third... (erstens, zweitens, drittens)

But... (aber)

However ... (nichts desto weniger)

On the one hand ... on the other hand ... (auf der einen Seite... auf der anderen Seite)

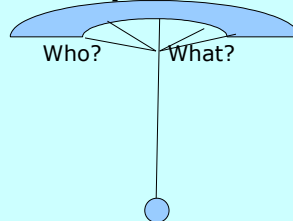
Consequently / As a consequence ... (Als Konsequenz darauf...)

That's why... (deshalb)

Eventually / Finally... (schließlich)

	Subject ↓	Verb ↓	Object ↓	Adverbial Phrase ↓
4. Then	David	asks	Sophie	to stay the night.
5. But	she	says 'no'.		
6. That's why	she	goes	home.	
7. However	she	thinks that...		
	... he	is		still very nice.
8. Eventually	Sophie	reads	in the newspaper that...	
	...David	dates	another woman.	
9. Consequently	she	feels	like a fool.	
10. But finally	Sophie	understands that...		
	... celebrities	are often		unfaithful.

4. Start your summary with an **introductory sentence** (Einleitungssatz). This so-called **umbrella sentence** is like an umbrella:



It has all the information which is important to get a first idea of what the text is about and of what you want to write about next. These umbrella sentences ususally start like that...

The text "...", written by ... , is about...

So finally here is our complete summary...

The text "I was hurt by a celeb serial snogger", written by Sophie Taylor, is about her experiences with a famous pop star.

Sophia meets the pop star David at a bar on her 18th birthday. David invites Sophia to an Italian restaurant the next day. Then, David asks Sophia to stay the night. But she says 'no'. That's why she goes home. However she thinks that he is still very nice. Eventually Sophia reads in the newspaper that David dates another woman. Consequently she feels like a fool. But finally Sophia understands that celebrities are often unfaithful.

5. If you are asked to write about a given text remember that you mustn't copy the sentences. **You have to write in your own words.** Often you can find your own expressions for some of the phrases and vocabulary used in a text. Take a look at our example:

Sentence /Phrase/ Word in the text	Your Word
"(...) and David and I got on really well. " (line 5):	and I liked David and he liked me, too.
"(...) we swapped phone numbers." (line 6):	he gave me his phone number and I gave him mine.
"(...) where we had a lovely snog " (line 14):	where we kissed.
"(...) but I suppose (...)" (line 19)	but I think
"(...) he's usually surrounded by gorgeous women. " (line 21):	he is often together with pretty women

Sometimes a few very important **phrasal verbs** (Verbphrasen) help you to express yourself in a very good way. Here there are some important ones.⁴

break		
break down	fail to function	kaputt gehen (Auto)
	have a physical or mental collapse	zusammenbrechen
break in	interrupt a discussion	unterbrechen
	burglar	einbrechen (in Haus)
	soften with use (shoes)	einlaufen (Schuhe)
break off	discontinue (therapy, relationship)	(Beziehung) abbrechen, (Therapie) absetzen
break out	escape from prison, begin suddenly	ausbrechen
break up	end a relationship	Schluss machen
bring		
bring about	cause to happen	herbeiführen
bring forth	give birth to	zur Welt bringen
bring forward	draw attention to sth	vorbringen, (Antrag) stellen
bring on	cause to happen or appear	zu etwas führen
bring round	persuade	jemanden umstimmen
	cause to recover consciousness	wieder zu Bewusstsein bringen
bring up	rear, educate a child	aufziehen (Kind)

⁴ <http://www.ego4u.de/de/cram-up/grammar/phrasal-verbs/list> (very good webpage for English learners!!)

	mention	anbringen, erwähnen
	vomit	erbrechen
call		
call back	return a phone call	zurückrufen
call for	require	verlangen
call in	communicate by phone	anrufen
	consult a specialist	aufsuchen, konsultieren
call off	cancel	absagen
call out	read names aloud	Namen ansagen
	order workers to strike	Streik ausrufen
call on	request sb to do sth	jemanden bitten, etwas zu tun
call up	reach by phone	anrufen
	summon for military services	einberufen, einziehen (Militär)
carry		
carry away	remove	davontragen
	inspire, affect emotionally	(emotionell) mitreißen
carry off	take away (by force)	erbeuten, verschleppen
	win	gewinnen
	remove, degrade (earth)	abtragen
carry on	continue	weitermachen
carry out	accomplish, make	ausführen, bewerkstelligen
carry through	complete	etwas durchsetzen, vollziehen
	bring out of difficulties	durchbringen
come		
come about	happen, to be achieved	zustande kommen
come across	find/meet by chance	stoßen auf ...
come after	follow	jemandem folgen, hinterherlaufen
come at	attack	auf jemanden losgehen
	reach, discover	erreichen, entdecken
come back	return	zurückkommen
come by	pass, go past, visit	vorbeikommen
	buy, get	erwerben, bekommen
come down	fall (price)	sinken (Preis)
come down to	mean, signify	auf etwas hinauslaufen
come down with	fall sick with	erkranken an

come in	enter, be received	hereinkommen
	prove to be	sich als etwas herausstellen
come in for	receive, be object of (criticism)	(Kritik) ernten
come off	become detached	abfallen
come out	become known, be published	herauskommen
	be removed (stain)	herausgehen
come over	come from a distance	herüberkommen
come round	visit sb	vorbeikommen
	recover consciousness	zu sich kommen
come to	amount to	sich auf ... belaufen (Summe)
	arrive/reach a place	ankommen, erreichen (Ort)
come up	be mentioned/discussed	zur Sprache kommen
	(problem) arise	(Problem) auftreten
come up against	be faced with (problems)	treffen auf (Probleme)
come upon	find/meet by chance	stoßen auf ...
come up to	match (a standard)	(einem Standard) entsprechen
come up with	produce an idea	eine Idee haben
do		
do away with	abolish	abschaffen
	kill	aus dem Weg räumen, töten
do up	dress up	sich gut anziehen, aufbrezeln
	fasten, secure (clothing)	zu machen (Kleidung)
do with	need	brauchen
do without	not require	ohne zurechtkommen
fall		
fall apart	fall into pieces	auseinander fallen
fall behind	fail to keep up pace	zurückfallen
fall for	be in love with	verliebt sein in
	be deceived by	hereinfallen auf
fall in with	meet by chance	aufeinander stoßen
	coincide with	zusammen fallen, aufeinander fallen

fall off	decrease	zurückgehen
	drop from	herunterfallen/herabfallen von
fall out	quarrel	sich streiten
fall out with	quarrel with	sich mit ... verkrachen
fall through	fail, miscarry	ins Wasser fallen
fall to	start an activity eagerly	sich auf etwas stürzen (Aktivität)
get		
get across	communicate (an idea)	rüberbringen, verdeutlichen
get along	be in good terms with somebody	sich mit jemandem verstehen
get away	escape	entkommen
get away with	escape (punishment)	(einer Strafe) entkommen
get by	manage, cope	über die Runden kommen
get down to	turn one's attention to sth	sich auf etwas konzentrieren
get in	enter (car, taxi)	einsteigen (Auto, Taxi)
get off	disembark (bus, train etc.)	aussteigen (Bus, Bahn usw.)
get on	enter (bus, train etc.)	einsteigen (Bus, Bahn usw.)
get out	disembark (car, taxi)	aussteigen (Auto, Taxi)
get over	recover (illness, upset)	über etwas hinwegkommen
get through	pass (an exam)	durchkommen
	be connected on the phone	durchkommen (am Telefon)
get to	reach	ankommen, erreichen
get up	rise from bed after sleeping	aufstehen
go		
go against	be contrary to (principles, rules)	widersprechen (Prinzipien, Regeln)
go along with	take the same view	zustimmen, unterstützen
go away	depart	weggehen
go down	become less	abnehmen
	decrease in price	sinken (Preis)
	sink (ship)	sinken, untergehen

		(Schiff)
	set (sun)	untergehen (Sonne)
go for	pick up, go and get	abholen
go off	explode	explodieren, hochgehen
	deteriorate (food)	verderben
	begin to sound (alarm)	losgehen (Alarm)
go on	continue	weitermachen
go out	leave the house	ausgehen, rausgehen
	strike	streiken
go over	inspect the details of sth	durchsehen
go past	pass	vorbeigehen an
go round	visit informally	bei jemandem vorbeigehen
go through	deal with	durchgehen
	discuss in detail	durchgehen, durchkauen
	experience sth (usually bad)	etwas durchmachen
go up	increase in price	steigen
	explode	hochgehen, explodieren
go with	match	zu etwas passen
keep		
keep away	prevent from / avoid being near	(sich) fernhalten
keep back	withhold	zurückhalten
keep down	not to increase	niedrig halten
keep off	avoid (a topic)	nicht über etwas sprechen
	stay away	nicht betreten/berühren usw.
keep on	not stopping doing sth	nicht aufhören etwas zu tun
keep up	continue, carry on	weitermachen
keep up with	not to fall behind sb	mit jemandem mithalten
look		
look after	take care of	sich kümmern um
look down on	regard with a feeling of superiority	herabsehen auf
look for	seek	suchen

look forward to	anticipate with pleasure	sich freuen auf
look into	investigate (a crime)	untersuchen (Verbrechen)
look on	be a spectator	zuschauen
	regard	betrachten
look out	be careful	aufpassen
look over	inspect hastily	drüberschauen, schnell durchsehen
look through	pretend not to see	über (jemanden) hinwegsehen
	examine the contents of sth	etwas durchsehen
look up	consult a reference book	nachschlagen (Wort)
look up to	respect	aufsehen zu
make		
make for	have/produce a particular effect	sorgen für (bestimmter Effekt)
make off	run away	sich davonmachen
make out	recognise, distinguish	erkennen
make up	constitute, form	ergeben
	invent a lie	ausdenken
	put together, prepare	vorbereiten, (Bett) machen
	apply cosmetics	sich schminken
make up for	compensate	wiedergutmachen, entschädigen
	regain (time)	aufholen
put		
put across	express in an understandable way	vermitteln
put back	put sth to its proper place	zurücklegen, zurückstellen
	lay money aside for the future	Geld zurücklegen
	move back the hands of a clock	Uhr zurückstellen/zurückdr ehen
put by	save for later use	zur Seite legen
put down	repress	niederschlagen (Aufstand)
	write down	aufschreiben
	store (food)	einlagern, einkellern

put down to	give as a reason, attribute to	zurückführen auf
put forward	move forward the hands of a clock	Uhr vorstellen
	suggest, propose	vorschlagen
put in for	be a candidate for an election	zur Wahl aufstellen
put on	dress oneself with	anziehen
	tease	aufziehen, ärgern
	gain (weight)	zunehmen (Gewicht)
put off	postpone	verschieben
put out	extinguish (a fire, light)	löschen (Feuer, Licht)
put through	connect sb by phone	verbinden (Telefon)
put up	build	erbauen
	raise (hand)	(Hand) heben
	provide accomodation for	(jemanden) aufnehmen, unterbringen
	offer for sale	anbieten (zum Verkauf)
put up with	tolerate, accept	hinnehmen, sich abfinden mit
run		
run after	chase	hinterherrennen
run away	escape, flee	weglaufen
run down	knock down, collide with	überfahren, umfahren
	feel weak due to overwork	niedergeschlagen, überarbeitet
run in	imprison	einsperren (Gefängnis)
run into	meet by chance	auf jemanden stoßen
run off	escape, flee	weglaufen
run out	run outside	hinauslaufen
	become used up	alle werden
run out of	exhaust one's stock	(Vorräte) ausgehen
run over	overflow	überlaufen (Wasser)
	study quickly	überfliegen (Text)
	pass over, knock down	überfahren
run up against	meet with difficulties	auf (Schwierigkeiten) stoßen
set		
set aside	reserve for later use	beiseite legen
set back	hinder, slow down a progress	zurückwerfen (Fortschritt)
set down	write down	niederschreiben

set off	cause to explode	explodieren lassen
	start a journey	losfahren, aufbrechen
set up	start business	sich niederlassen (geschäftlich)
take		
take after	follow sb as an example	jemandem nacheifern
	resemble in appearance	nach jemandem kommen/geraten
take down	write down	niederschreiben
take in	understand (meaning)	verstehen (Bedeutung)
	deceive	hereinlegen
take off	undress	etwas ausziehen
	begin flight (plane)	abheben (Flugzeug)
take to	develop a habit	die Gewohnheit annehmen, sich angewöhnen
take up	continue, proceed	weitermachen, fortfahren
	become interested in	beginnen, sich für ... zu interessieren
take up with	begin to associate with	anbandeln mit
turn		
turn down	diminish the intensity	runterdrehen (Heizung), leiser machen (Radio)
	reject	ablehnen
turn in	hand in	abgeben
turn off	switch off	ausschalten
turn on	switch on	anschalten, einschalten
turn out	switch off	ausschalten
turn over	bring the reverse side up	umdrehen
turn up	increase the intensity	aufdrehen (Heizung), lauter machen (Radio)
	make an appearance	aufkreuzen, erscheinen

And here is a list of the most important 100 nouns (Nomen/ Hauptwörter) in English⁵:

1. time
2. year

⁵ <https://www.espressoenglish.net/100-common-nouns-in-english/>. This list of **100 common nouns in English** was selected from the [Corpus of Contemporary American English \(COCA\)](#) by Brigham Young University.

3. people
4. way
5. day
6. man
7. thing
8. woman
9. life
10. child
11. world
12. school
13. state
14. family
15. student
16. group
17. country
18. problem
19. hand
20. part
21. place
22. case
23. week
24. company
25. system
26. program
27. question
28. work
29. government
30. number
31. night
32. point
33. home
34. water
35. room
36. mother
37. area
38. money
39. story
40. fact
41. month
42. lot
43. right
44. study
45. book
46. eye
47. job
48. word
49. business
50. issue
51. side
52. kind
53. head
54. house
55. service
56. friend
57. father
58. power
59. hour
60. game
61. line

62. end
63. member
64. law
65. car
66. city
67. community
68. name
69. president
70. team
71. minute
72. idea
73. kid
74. body
75. information
76. back
77. parent
78. face
79. others
80. level
81. office
82. door
83. health
84. person
85. art
86. war
87. history
88. party
89. result
90. change
91. morning
92. reason
93. research
94. girl
95. guy
96. moment
97. air
98. teacher
99. force
100. education

With the help of these phrases (you don't have to know them all) and basic words you can come up with pretty cool sentences that are not very difficult and that make you sound like a native speaker! Wow!!

Examples:

I **cannot do without** my boyfriend.

My parent **keep on** telling me what to do after school.

My last essay **was turned down** by my teacher.

Vocabulary and Creative Writing Task:

Step 1: Write down **twenty** simple sentences using **twenty phrasal verbs** from the list above.

Step 2: Put these sentences into **a logical order** so that a **funny story** develops!