

Preliminary Decisions	How they can help you:	What can happen if you do not ask this question:
1. Determine the level of the learners' language skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ identify tasks realistic for the learners' level of language ✧ identify sub-components of the task that you will need to plan for in instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ students can get frustrated with the task if it is too easy or too difficult for their level ✧ students may miss important sub-skills that prevent them from completing the task
2. Select level-appropriate writing purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ clarify what the underlying learning objective in the task is (e.g., an "essay" that asks students to use 5 adjective endings, 6 verbs in the simple past, is not an "essay" it is a grammar activity – could that practice be done more effectively in a different format? what instructions would actually make this writing a real essay assignment or a plausible real-life communicative task? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ students are savvy, and if you really ask for grammar forms with the pretext of an essay, they will only focus on the grammar, not on the coherence and narrative purpose of the essay ✧ grading may be in conflict with your assignment (write essay, but grade assigned for grammatical accuracy)
3. Decide on writing as a support skill or as a main skill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ decide whether the activity is a one-shot deal (e.g., the students write responses to interview questions to help them prepare for partner-work) or a recursive, multi-step process (e.g., brainstorming, draft one, expansion, etc.) ✧ identify the specific guidelines you want to give your students (e.g., self-editing check-list or a set amount of time for responses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ students may get confused about the assignment ✧ students may consider writing to play merely a support function, thus missing out on opportunities to develop L2 literacy
4. Identify the sub-skills students need in order to complete the main task.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ identify what aspects of language you need to practice/review/build with your students before they are ready for the writing assignment (e.g., build vocabulary, review relevant grammar before you ask them to talk about a childhood mischief) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ if students do not have the relevant linguistic, cultural or other relevant background information, they will not be able to complete the assignment
5. Design activity set that prepares sub-skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ make the exercises that prepare the sub-skills explicitly connected to each other and to the main task. Students need to see how different components of language work together to create meaning. They will also spend less time mentally shifting from one "unit" to another if the activities link to each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ if the activities are not obviously connected to each other, students can get frustrated or they can fail to see how one aspect of language may create meaning in combination with other aspects of language. They may also fail to see that all of these activities work towards the main pedagogical task at the end of the class period.
6. Guide students through pre-, during- and post-writing activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ have clear instructions, resources for students and be available for any questions they may have regarding each step in the writing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ if you are not in tune with the students' progress or where they cannot progress, the activity may be less or not effective and students may not be able to complete it.
7. Another possible question: Will students need / have access to technology?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ incorporate the use of technology into your writing assignments (self- and peer-editing, computer-mediated-communication, spell-check & thesaurus capabilities, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ if technology is available and you do not use it, students lose an important opportunity for various modern types of writing tasks ✧ alternately, if you plan on using technology but it is not available (or it is not functioning properly, lacking support, etc.), you may have to engage in some last-minute planning for alternate lesson plan ideas (<i>nota bene</i>: you will not be able to replace a research project that relies on the Internet with a non-technology supported research project on the fly!)