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**Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students



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## **Deafinitely English: Online materials for teachers of English as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing students**

### **Deafinitely English resource pack**

Unit 1: EFL for Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners and study stays abroad: An overview

Unit 2: Teaching Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners in EFL settings

Unit 3: Teachers' Guide to the Booklets for Students

Unit 4: Strategies for Reading. Student's Booklet

Unit 5: Strategies for Essay Writing. Student's Booklet

Unit 6: Developing Study Skills. Student's Booklet

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# Unit 1

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**EFL for Deaf, deaf and hard of  
hearing learners and study stays  
abroad: **An Overview****

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This brief introduction into the area of international mobilities of Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing students<sup>1</sup> is closely connected to the whole idea behind the LangSkills project<sup>2</sup>, funded by the Erasmus+, KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practice grant. The LangSkills project's aim was to support the foreign language education of D/d/hh students in higher education with a set of teaching and learning resources and events. The partners are convinced that the development of language and communication skills can enhance the readiness of D/d/hh students for engaging in study stays abroad, as well as their competitiveness in the labour market, and inclusion in European social life.

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1/ The terminology choice was made with respect to the preferences voiced in the concerned community and the current trends in academic literature. While there seems to be little consensus even within the community (Pudans-Smith et al., 2019), the wide term is used in the effort to provide space for self-identification to all individuals whether based on their sense of belonging to the Deaf community, their preferred language or with primary focus on the audiological experience. The authors opted for using the abbreviation D/d/hh throughout the text. Other commonly used options include DHH or d/Dhh.

2/ LangSkills, acronym for the full title 'Language Skills of Deaf Students for EU Mobility', runs over three years, spanning the period from September 2017 to August 2020, receiving a four-month extension till December 2020 in view of the covid-19 pandemic.

## 1.1 PARTICIPATION OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING STUDENTS IN STUDY STAYS ABROAD: THE CHANCES AND CHALLENGES

Internationalization processes are usually regarded as a means to enhance the quality of higher education and to contribute to the future social and professional success of the students. Many universities across Europe have introduced a foreign language requirement into their curricula and motivate students to take part in study stays and internships abroad, international conferences and projects. There is also strong support for the instruction in foreign languages, though the policies in individual EU countries and universities differ. Such internationalisation projects and activities, including study stays and internships abroad the LangSkills project focuses on, offer plenty of benefits both for the higher education institutions and the students, but they can nonetheless be challenging.

On the positive side, studying abroad, for a semester or two, considerably contributes to the students' personal growth and independence, and provides a chance to compare education at their home university and the receiving institution (Beerkens, 2015). Study and work exchanges offer a unique window into the lifestyle of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, rendering a firsthand cross-cultural experience. The cultural enrichment extends also to the proficiency in foreign languages, as the participants get a chance to practise their language skills in a variety of settings and communication scenarios. Another strong argument for taking part in mobility programmes such as Erasmus+ is the improved employability of those who successfully completed their one or two-semester study stay<sup>3</sup>. Overall, research confirms that the impact of study stays abroad on those who took part in them is strong and long-lasting, providing the participants with knowledge and skills that are useful in their academic, personal as well as civic life (Paige, 2009). In view of these benefits, combined with well established administrative processes and a well-known brand, it is not surprising that the overall number of students experiencing Erasmus+ exchanges is increasing<sup>4</sup>.

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3/ According to the Erasmus Impact Study of 2014, those who travelled on their Erasmus have better employability skills after a stay abroad than 70% of all students (European Commission, 2014, p. 3).

4/ In fact, Erasmus+ is the most frequently used student mobility programme worldwide (European Commission, 2015, p. 6).

However, engaging in exchange programmes is also an undeniable challenge, as the students are facing an unfamiliar environment, new languages and new cultures. The challenge is even greater for students with special needs whose participation rates remain low and are, in fact, stagnating rather than increasing (Mapped project report, 2019, p. 2). Wit and Jones draw attention to the fact that there is a general lack of representation in mobility programmes in terms of income, ethnicity, migration history and disability (2018, p. 17).

### **1.1.1 D/d/hh student mobilities and language skills**

One of the reasons behind the low engagement of students with special educational needs in international mobilities may be related to the relatively high requirements of English language proficiency to take part in one or two-semester exchanges under Erasmus+. The required level tends to be a B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR; Council of Europe, 2001). This is because students are expected to attend the chosen courses at the host university, use the study materials and take the end-of-course exams, which are all delivered in the language of instruction indicated by the host university, typically English. In fact, limited language skills are cited by the European Commission as one of the main barriers to the participation in European education, training and youth mobility opportunities in all students (Erasmus+: Online Linguistic Support), which is also confirmed by further research (Beerkens, 2015, p. 8).

In the case of D/d/hh students the situation is yet more challenging. Deaf people from non-English speaking countries who use their national sign language as their first or preferred language, typically regard English as a third language to learn<sup>5</sup>, the second being the national written language of their country (Hilzensauer, 2010, p. 185); therefore, attaining the necessary level of proficiency in written English as well as learning a new sign language to follow the instruction at a host university and to take the final exams, is a significant challenge<sup>6</sup>. It is therefore fundamental to deliver sign language cultural pedagogy as part of the intercultural strategy (Clark & Lee, 2018). There are diverse communication scenarios which Deaf students encounter at the host university, such as attending a course with predominant frontal instruction, taking part in group discussions with their hearing classmates, using study materials,

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5/ It may even be considered as a fourth language, the third being the sign language they use for international communication with foreign deaf signers.

6/ The topic of English language skills of D/d/hh higher education students in relation to study stays abroad is expanded on in the section Needs analysis of the **About the course** guide that was prepared under the Langskills project as part of the resource pack for instructors working with the Online English for International Mobilities e-learning course. Please refer to the guide at [www.teiresias.muni.cz/langskills/O3](http://www.teiresias.muni.cz/langskills/O3).



delivering presentations, submitting essays as well as communicating with people who are outside the university, etc., in which different communication strategies need to be applied. Especially at the beginning of a study stay, the students may have difficulties communicating at the host university before they pick up the local sign language and may benefit from the services of local sign language interpreters.

D/d/hh students may find it challenging to be using speech to text transcripts in English in their classes at the host university. Typically, the students work with transcripts in the national language of their home university, and therefore are not used to dealing with transcripts in the English language. This may be quite a new experience for the student.

Hard of hearing students who rely on residual hearing and express themselves in spoken language similarly encounter specific communication situations. An example is lip reading in English: this skill is not typically trained in English classes at mainstream schools<sup>7</sup>, nor do the students have ample opportunities to practise lipreading a foreign language before the actual stay. This does not only relate to academic settings but also to situations outside the classroom, for instance during outings with friends, shopping or handling administrative formalities and so on. On the other hand, the students' experience of expressing themselves verbally in foreign languages is highly individual and some of them might feel uncomfortable contributing in a large classroom discussion, which is another aspect that needs to be considered in relation to their study abroad and other internationalization activities.

It is true that many universities and other institutions offer preparatory courses to those who are going on their Erasmus<sup>8</sup>. The Erasmus Commission does offer free online language support; however, these courses are typically not suitable for D/d/hh in terms of accessibility of instruction and materials, they may also not be relevant content-wise. To make sure the D/d/hh students get the most of their stay abroad and can fully participate in the study and free time activities, a sound language preparation is recommended before the actual exchange. In fact, enhanced language skills may help D/d/hh students engage better in different internationalization activities in general, whether they study abroad or take a course led by a foreign tutor at their home university, beyond their university years.

Apart from accessible instruction at a host institution, courses recommended to Erasmus+ students are typically provided in English, there is the important element

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7/ This is observed at least in the Czech Republic, where the coordinating team of the LangSkills project is based.

8/ For instance, Masaryk university offers preparatory courses in English, German, French and Spanish, as of 2020/2021 (<https://czs.muni.cz/cs/student-mu/informacni-zdroje/jazykova-priprava-cjv>).

of communication outside the classroom. In the case of signing students, learning the local sign language seems a natural and preferred option. Acquiring the local sign language not only allows Deaf students to use the services of local interpreters in their classes and other administrative negotiations but it also enables them to connect with the local Deaf community, which helps to eliminate the feeling of isolation in a new environment. It might be beneficial for the student to start learning some basics of the sign language used by deaf students at the host university before the actual stay.

Students who lip read, on the other hand, might appreciate the opportunity to develop their lip reading skills in English before starting their study abroad programme. As Hirata and Spencer attest, studies have shown that even though adult learners struggle to learn to perceive certain phonemes of a second language, their perceptual capacities can be substantially improved by intensive training (2010, p. 298). Such classes would be worth continuing throughout the stay as this skill helps hard of hearing students follow the conversations in and outside the classroom when the speech-to-text reporting service is not available.

In summary, the different cultural aspects, communication strategies as well as academic settings and requirements create a dynamic scenario. Therefore, careful planning involving the receiving institution, the sending university as well as the student is needed to ensure a positive experience for all parties involved.

### **1.1.2 Student mobilities and special needs services**

Having clear communication lines inside and outside the university as well as accessible study materials is a matter of crucial importance for a successful study abroad, as mentioned above. This relates to administration and negotiation of adequate services abroad that are necessary to ensure the accessibility of instruction as well as of other academic events and activities held at the foreign university for the incoming D/d/hh students. Based on Masaryk University's team experience of coordinating mobilities for students with special needs, the policies of administering provision of note taking, sign language interpreting, speech to text reporting, etc. differ greatly across European Union and each university observe their own guidelines. Typically, the service may be acquired either through the foreign university who has their own team of service providers or liaises with a reliable local provider, or the service may be provided through third parties such as the city council, NGOs, local deaf and hard of hearing associations. In some cases, the students themselves may be invited to bring their own service provider(s). In any case, negotiating and securing the right service providers may take some time. Administration of these accommodations can be both time consuming and stressful for the students.

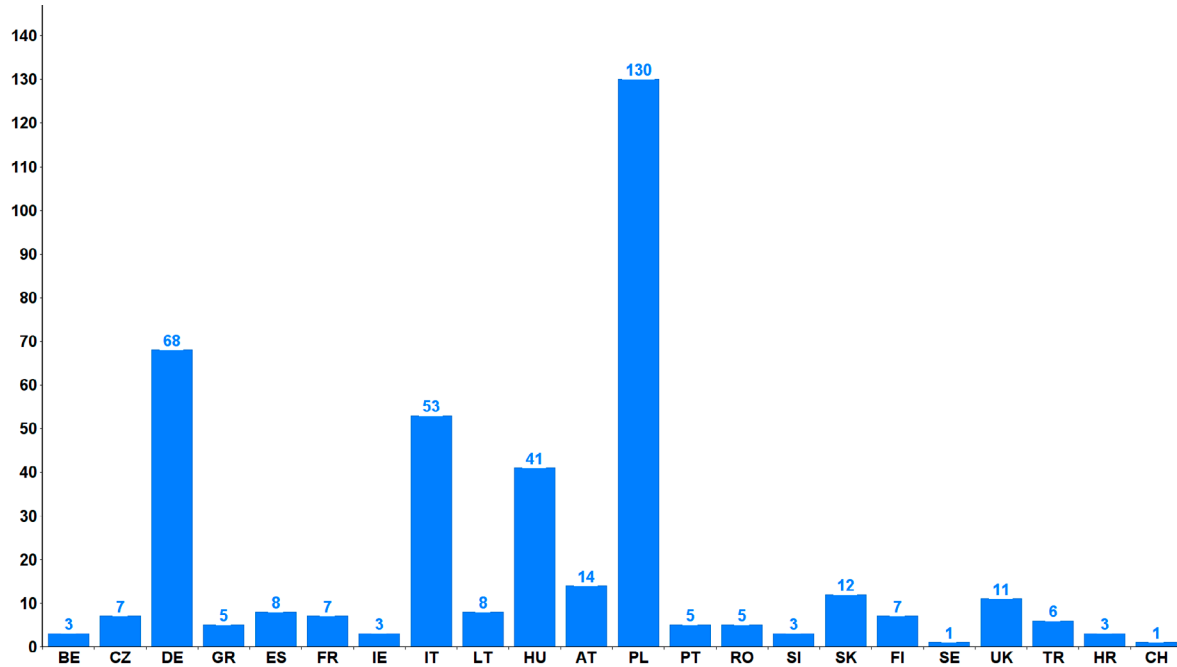
To motivate and support the participation of students with special needs, the Erasmus+ agency offers a supplementary grant to cover the increased expenses related to the required services and arrangements, called the [The Erasmus+ Funds for Students and Staff with disabilities grant](#). This grant provides additional funds to cover the costs associated with the special needs services such as interpreting, speech to text reporting, barrier free accommodation, etc. Depending on the type of the required services and accommodations, these may be more or less costly. The applicants are requested to submit an application with additional documents such as medical certificates and an overview of the estimated special needs related expenses for the duration of the study stay. Therefore, careful planning and an accurate quotation needs to be produced at the time of the grant application. In addition, the grant receivers need to be well-organised and keep all receipts for the grant related expenses and reimbursements for the purpose of grant administration after the student's return. Nevertheless, it needs to be said that there are many variables at stake in each EU country that impact the administrative, financial and service arrangements, which need to be carefully explored.<sup>9</sup>

The administrative burden related to this grant is not insignificant, however, it is of great benefit to the students and covers the extra costs associated with the required services abroad. This is particularly important in the context of general financial concerns which are in fact classified among the major barriers to taking part in mobilities (Beerrens, 2015, p. 8). This grant option is only available for Erasmus+ mobility programmes. Those who wish to travel with other programmes need to seek other grant opportunities, which may also be impacting the low interest rates among higher education students with special needs.

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9/ At Masaryk University, this is done in collaboration with the student interested in the study or work stay, the home and as well as the host International Relations Office and the receiving and sending Special Needs Centre and the local service providers in the host country (sign language interpreters, speech-to-text reporters etc.).

The following graph indicates the number of special needs students taking part in Erasmus+ programme with the supporting grant.



**Graph 1:** Number of grants for students with special needs in 2013–14 (Erasmus: Facts, Figures & Trends, 2015, p. 33)

**Note:** Only countries with at least one special needs grant are displayed in the chart.

The number of students who requested their special needs grant in 2009–2010 was 257 which is a percentage of 0.12% (both studies and traineeships). In 2013–14, some 401 students with special needs received additional funding to participate in Erasmus, which is a 3 % increase on the previous year (Erasmus: Facts, Figures & Trends, 2015, p. 6). However, between 2014 and 2016 there was no further increase as the numbers were oscillating between 323 and 412 for a percentage varying between 0.13% to 0.17% (Inclusive Mobility Alliance, 2019, p. 7). There is no available data<sup>10</sup> on the percentage that D/d/hh students occupy in these stats; however, given the low numbers of special needs students in general, it may be assumed that the percentage of D/d/hh students may be proportionally low.

### **1.1.3 D/d/hh students and short-term academic stays abroad**

Wit and Jones suggest that encouraging more short term mobilities is one attempt to increase the numbers of students in general (2018, p. 17). Short-term programmes, such as summer schools, work placements, internships or language courses are becoming increasingly popular with higher education students particularly thanks to their flexibility and less strict regulations (Antonova, Gurarii & Vysotskaia, 2020, p. 131). Such short stays abroad retain, although in different grades, the general positives of one or two-semester study stays abroad (Wit & Jones, 2018, p. 17): the chances to meet other young people from different countries who express themselves in different languages and have different communication preferences, the opportunity to attend stimulating lectures and workshops and to enjoy seeing the world from a different perspective.

This fact plays an important role in motivating D/d/hh students to take part in short-term mobility opportunities, considering that student motivation is the key starting point for most prospective participants (Berkens, 2015, p. 4). For many D/d/hh students the study of the English language remains bound to school or university premises; therefore, attending these events can give the D/d/hh students a taste of studying abroad in a safe and supportive environment, without the pressure of achieving credits, passing the end of course exams and the threat of losing the scholarship if they do not meet the credit requirement. This experience can instill academic confidence in the attendees as they might feel empowered to engage in longer study stays after doing well in a shorter one.

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10/ Although it is highly interesting to observe these data, they actually tell us relatively little about the real situation. Looking at the numbers, several important questions remain, such as why there are so few grant applicants in the countries that report less than ten grant applications. Is it because they have a different system of granting students with special needs the necessary service, is it because the students in these countries lack awareness about this grant possibility, or because they prefer other mobility programmes, and so on.

There are also several other factors to consider when administering mobilities of D/d/hh students; however, despite the possible difficulties, the challenge of going on a study abroad is a unique opportunity for the students to be immersed into a multilingual and multicultural setting that the language classroom alone cannot facilitate. Moreover, this experience brings an interesting comparison of the different approaches towards ensuring accessibility in the different countries as well as of the different approaches to deliver the services, which is part of the international experience of these stays for D/d/hh students.

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION TO THE *DEAFINITELY ENGLISH* RESOURCE PACK

### 1.2.1 Introducing the LangSkills project

This set of teaching resources forms part of the materials which were designed under the LangSkills project ([www.teiresias.muni.cz/langskills](http://www.teiresias.muni.cz/langskills)). The LangSkills project focuses mainly on increasing the language skills of D/d/hh learners studying at European higher education institutions to encourage their participation in international mobilities and other internationalization activities. The Teiresias Centre at Masaryk University, Czech Republic, in cooperation with Loránd Eötvös University, Hungary, the University of Central Lancashire, UK, the Service Centre GESTU at the Technical University of Vienna, Austria, and the non-profit organisation Deaf Studies Trust, UK, developed a series of activities and learning opportunities with this goal in mind.

#### The project outputs are outlined below:

The first output is an empirical research into the foreign language learning experiences, motivation and needs of Austrian, Czech, and Hungarian higher education D/d/hh students. The results of the investigations are published in leading national and international journals in English and in Hungarian (see more about Output 1 [here](#)).

The project team also produced an e-learning course titled Online English for International Mobilities which provides D/d/hh learners with an accessible English language course containing plenty of authentic materials related to studying abroad. The course is an opportunity for the learners to improve their English language skills with a focus on the academic environment and to simulate the experience of going to study at a foreign university (see more about Output 3 [here](#)). The teacher materials provide relevant background information that will be of benefit to teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to D/d/hh learners. The self-access materials are designed for individual learners interested in taking the course.

Next, the LangSkills project offers another e-learning course, designed for signing students who want to acquire basic knowledge of British Sign Language (BSL). Although there are numerous BSL online courses, they are typically addressed to course participants who express themselves in spoken language. This course meets the needs of deaf BSL learners and therefore it includes instructions in International Sign

and uses suitable teaching approaches (see Output 4 [here](#)).

Finally, the project partnership created a set of materials for teachers of English who work with D/d/hh learners to build suitable teaching resources and provide inspiration for the teachers.

## 1.2.2 About the *Deafinitely English* resource pack

The context for which the online materials were designed is post-secondary D/d/hh learners who would like to prepare for study abroad programmes such as Erasmus+ and/or to increase their English language competence.

### What does the resource pack contain?

This resource pack includes the following parts:

- **Unit One, EFL for Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners and study stays abroad: An Overview**
- **Unit Two, Teaching Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners in EFL settings**
- **Unit Three, Teachers' Guide to the Booklets for Students**
- **Unit Four, Strategies for Reading. Student's Booklet**
- **Unit Five, Strategies for Essay Writing. Student's Booklet**
- **Unit Six, Developing Study Skills. Student's Booklet**

These materials have benefitted from the data collected through the research phase, the trial runs of e-learning course of written English, and during the International Summer School in 2019<sup>11</sup>, which was held as part of the project activities. The teachers' feedback was collected and assessed, comparing the set content with their experiences and knowledge. The national meetings of teachers of EFL for D/d/hh learners held in the partner countries, in which the teachers shared their experiences and methodologies, also enhanced the quality of these materials.

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11/ Unfortunately the Summer School 2020 had to be cancelled due to the covid-19 situation in partner countries.



## Who are the resources for?

- **Unit 1, 2 and 3** are intended particularly for teachers involved in TEFL to D/d/hh learners. These units address the area of international mobilities of D/d/hh university students, particularly in connection to language skills, draw attention to some of the characteristics of TEFL to D/d/hh learners, and provide a Teacher's Guide to the Booklets for Students.
- **Units 4, 5 and 6** are designed particularly for D/d/hh university students who are planning to study abroad; however, engagement in a mobility programme is not a condition. Learners can use these resources to develop their skills in reading, studying and essay writing, either on their own or with their teacher in general English or academic English classes.

These materials focus mainly at the independent user levels, i.e. at B1 and B2 levels, and the proficient C1 level of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001). The teacher's instructions in the booklets are written predominantly at the B1 level of CEFR, as students should be capable of reading instructions at this level.

The booklets are designed to be accessible and useful to Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners in both content and form.

The universal character of the materials indicates possible differences in the approach in teaching English that may occur between partner organisations. The teachers are welcome to choose the activities and ideas that suit their teaching environment and the needs of their students.

### 1.2.3 Aims of the materials

The intention of this resource pack is to contribute to the language education of D/d/hh students in post-secondary education. In general terms, the materials provide theoretical background for teaching languages to D/d/hh students and their engagement in study stays abroad as well as practical booklets, which focus on the possibilities of teaching reading, writing and developing study skills to D/d/hh learners. In giving a variety of teaching methods in practice, the materials provide tips on teaching EFL to D/d/hh students. The materials include hints and lesson materials, lesson plans, a series of activities, teaching tips, etc.

The booklets may also be used independently by the learners who wish to improve their English language proficiency.

## 1.2.4 Related beliefs

The created materials build upon the following views of the language, learning and teaching:

- Providing a variety of teaching methods through many different communication channels (e.g., posters, interactive aids, games, synchronous chat, or discussion fora) can benefit learners' individual differences as well as motivate them to use English.
- Access to instruction and information through visual means, particularly sign language, is paramount in deaf education.
- Exchanging and sharing good practices across national borders in teaching to the learners from the target groups is of crucial importance.
- The universal character of the content is useful for teachers and learners independent of their nationality.

## 1.2.5 Format and content of the resource pack

### Unit One:

The first unit provides an introduction to the area of international mobilities of D/d/hh students, introduces the LangSkills project and the resource pack drawing the reader's attention to the aims, beliefs and principles that underlie the chosen approach in this set of materials.

### Unit Two:

Unit 2 looks at D/d/hh students as EFL learners, focusing on general characteristics of D/d/hh EFL learners, the main communication methods used in TEFL, the adaptation of teaching and learning materials, as well as some principles of culturally-relevant pedagogy. It includes tips and best practices that will be of benefit to teachers of EFL to D/d/hh students, particularly those at the beginning of their career as language teachers to D/d/hh learners.

### Unit Three:

This Teachers' Guide sets the scene for Units 4, 5 and 6 offering further information on D/d/hh EFL learners in connection to reading, writing and the area of study skills. The unit provides direction in how to use the teaching and learning booklets, including a brief introduction to each online booklet, its content and goals.

## **Unit Four:**

The Strategies for Reading booklet comprises a set of online teaching and learning materials produced through collecting good practices, experiences and ideas on methods of teaching reading skills. It brings a series of activities that the learners can use to practise the presented effective reading strategies.

## **Unit Five:**

The Strategies for Essay Writing booklet focuses on the possibilities of teaching and practising essay writing with D/d/hh learners. Using plenty of examples, the booklet encourages learners to think about how they can improve their essay writing in English, as well as to learn what the major mistakes are that students make when writing essays, and provides tips on avoiding them.

## **Unit Six:**

The Developing Study Skills Booklet aims to help learners approach academic tasks and assignments in a strategic manner, as plenty of learners fail to perform on academic tasks due to inappropriate or ineffective study strategies. This Booklet motivates them to reflect on their own study patterns, and equips them with tips to improve their time-management skills.

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# Unit 2

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**Teaching Deaf, deaf and hard of  
hearing learners in EFL settings**

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## 1.1 BACKDROP

The 21st century has witnessed many changes in Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) people's lives. Official recognition of sign languages as valid and true linguistic systems, alongside United Nations and EU policy guidelines enshrining the human rights of all groups of deaf people regarding inclusion, has led to increased self-advocacy and personal empowerment. Today, there is a new generation of mobile deaf Europeans participating in university exchange programs, graduating from European universities and entering workplaces where knowledge of English is a prerequisite.

The European dimension of education accentuates the importance of foreign language (FL) skills, which should become a part of citizens' lifelong learning and an important element of competitiveness in a multicultural environment (Varečková & Pavelková, 2018, p. 295). A strong support for foreign language learning has therefore become an intrinsic part of higher education studies, although policies in individual EU countries and universities differ. Graduates are usually required to achieve some level of proficiency in a modern foreign language, typically English.

D/d/hh individuals naturally feel the need for FL competence to successfully live in the globalized world of today, to raise their own occupational applicability, to enjoy travelling and meeting internationally, or to browse the Internet. In the majority of European countries, D/d/hh students are nowadays learning foreign languages on a par with their hearing peers and taking foreign language exams that are based on the same curriculum, but with an adapted format (Domagała-Zyśk & Podlewska, 2019, p. 157).

Historically, teaching strategies have varied depending on contemporary and national trends, together with the teacher's experience and knowledge of (deaf) learners' language acquisition processes. The predominant current methodology for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) involves active teaching strategies centred on oral conversations, interactive group exchanges and individual role play. However, D/d/hh individuals have specific educational needs in the context of learning foreign languages. If these teaching methods are not adapted to incorporate the visual, non-auditory learning strategies of D/d/hh students, the result may be a learning experience of exclusion.

This unit provides some general characteristics of D/d/hh EFL learners, the communication methods used in TEFL, the adaptation of teaching and learning materials, as well as some principles of culturally-relevant pedagogy. All these sections contain basic tips and examples that will be of benefit to teachers of EFL to D/d/hh

students, particularly those at the beginning of their career as language teachers to learners with hearing loss. Further information on D/d/hh EFL learners in connection to reading, writing and the area of study skills can be found in Unit 3. Practical teaching and learning materials dealing with reading, academic writing and study skills can be found in Units 4, 5 and 6 respectively.



## 1.2 DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNERS

It is important for a teacher of D/d/hh adult learners to understand how their learners think and how they take in new knowledge throughout the course of their education. In a study of deaf children's academic achievements, Marschark and Knoors examined cognitive functioning among deaf learners, and advised that deaf students "differ significantly from hearing learners in ways likely to affect learning" (2012, p. 136). Lang and Pagliaro also conclude that, "Instruction that takes into consideration the deaf learner's cognitive organization and development will likely increase understanding, performance, and ultimately achievement" (2007, p. 459) and this should be taken into account during the planning stage.

Moving into adult education brings further consequences for D/d/hh learners who need to access information through the visual channel due to the closure of the auditory channel. Marschark and Knoors note that deaf learners need to pay simultaneous visual attention to the teacher, to any visual aids being used, and to their own notes, and most mainstream settings cannot provide the extra time needed to enable this – they observe that one-to-one tutoring may compensate for this situation. It is crucial that this is understood in order that teachers of deaf learners can plan and deliver lessons that are conducive to "Deaf ways of knowing" (De Clerck, 2010). This not only improves the learning experience for deaf students, but also increases their chances of academic achievement.

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) to D/d/hh learners often involves the teaching of theoretical and abstract concepts and terminology. Among other strategies, these concepts should be conveyed visually to support D/d/hh learners' comprehension and ability to recall them. O'Brien and Kusters report that the visual nature of deaf sign language users is not only a sociocultural aspect of being deaf (in the sense that the visual language unites deaf people as a community), but that it is also a biological aspect of deaf ontologies, and is unique to "deaf people's visucentric way of engaging with the world" (2017, p. 266). Lang and Pagliaro note that deaf learners are more likely to recall concepts if they are taught them through imagery, and that teaching them concepts based on effective imagery enhances deaf learners' abilities to recall and understand complex concepts. They advise that, "Teachers with strong content knowledge, then, will likely facilitate the acquisition of mental imagery in their students with much more ease because they generally possess the ability themselves" (2007, p. 458). This is important for deaf learners, especially since teachers who know the academic content well have been found to be better able to express subject knowledge in sign language (Lang, McKee & Conner, 1993).

## 1.2.1 Characteristics of successful D/d/hh EFL learners

The following traits in particular seem to characterize most successful D/d/hh foreign language learners:

A good command of literacy skills in a written language familiar to the learner seems to be vital, according to the linguistic coding differences hypothesis proposed by Sparks and Ganschow (1991). These researchers believe that knowledge and skills from a learner's first language are used and reinforced, deepened, and expanded upon when the learner starts learning a second spoken language. This research was not made to reflect the situation of Deaf EFL learners, yet the idea of crucial importance of prior knowledge for subsequent learning was highlighted in a study into Deaf readers by Miller et al. The authors conclude that "Full access to language —including Sign Language — facilitates the acquisition of structural and semantic knowledge essential for the adequate processing of written language and, consequently, reduces risk of failure when prelingually deaf individuals are asked to read for meaning" (2012, p. 21–22), recognizing the key role of solid literacy skills.

A positive attitude towards reading is another contributing factor. Research supports the relationship between first language (L1) reading and second language (L2) reading as well as between L1 reading attitude and L2 reading attitude. In other words, those who generally believe that L1 reading is good for them typically have positive feelings toward it and are more likely to actually read more, and they may transfer the same attitudes to the L2 reading (Day & Bamford, 1998). In the case of Deaf learners, the attitude to and motivation for reading in EFL is typically subject to transfer from the written language at which they are most proficient and usually use for reading.

Feedback and assessment are closely linked with teaching and learning. In general, it is as pleasant to accept positive feedback as it is to give such feedback. Providing and processing negative feedback is not so easy, as it may make the learners feel uncomfortable or incapable. While a stress response to negative feedback is natural, successful learners can use the teacher's feedback as a springboard for improvement and growth (Allman, 2019). As suggested by Ávila Caica, D/d/hh students particularly enjoy immediate feedback, and feel that they learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process, having the opportunity to interact and work collaboratively (2011, p. 145).

Successful learners practise frequently and regularly, not just the day before an important exam, if the learning is to have some lasting effects (which applies to all foreign language learners). Not surprisingly, learners who practise regularly perform better than those who practise sporadically. What's more, Rohrer et al. highlight the importance of distributed practice across multiple sessions over concentrating the same amount of practice into one session as the spacing effect boosts dramatically long-term retention (2005, p. 372).

In accordance with Dornyei's assumption that "motivation is the one of the main determinants of second/foreign language achievement" (1994, p. 273), a high level of motivation and personal commitment is crucial for any learner's success. Czisér and Kontra rightly point to the importance of an encouraging environment and the role of the teacher in raising and maintaining motivation in D/d/hh learners (2020). The teachers should therefore help the learners see the value of English language skills and motivate them to persevere with their English studies while they choose appropriate methods and techniques for teaching (Sedláčková & Kontra, 2020).

Access to an English learning environment, usually through travelling or studying abroad, also contributes to strengthening and developing foreign language skills in foreign language learners. In general, D/d/hh individuals are keen travellers and look for opportunities to meet internationally. Study stays abroad and other internationalization opportunities, therefore, play a major part in supporting the foreign language skills D/d/hh learners want to explore (see Unit 1). Apart from physical mobility and travelling, virtual interactions also count as extremely beneficial for practising English. While Deaf learners may have limited opportunities to interact directly in English, modern technologies and social media provide a wide range of possibilities for interacting in real time. It depends on learners' individual preferences whether they prefer to follow a famous YouTuber, play computer games, or chat with a friend over a messaging application.

## 1.2.2 'Deaf-English'

When deaf learners use a sign language as their first or preferred language, the grammar of that language may be reflected in their literacy output, as they produce the text in the sign language that is shaping their thinking at the time. This is referred to in English speaking context as 'Deaf English' and is often the way English is articulated by Deaf people who are not fully bilingual. Charrow (1975) documented this phenomenon after conducting a test on a group of deaf students:

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*An interesting result of this test was the clustering of the deaf students' errors: most of the deaf in each group committed the same errors, and the same sorts of errors, in the multiple-choice test. This result corresponded to a phenomenon that most teachers of the deaf notice among their students - "deafisms" and commonality of errors. If the deaf tend to make the same sorts of errors in their English usage (such as omission or overgeneralization of articles, certain prepositions, tense markers and other inflections), then there are grounds to suggest that the deaf have a dialect of their own - a "Deaf English" - different from Standard English.<sup>1</sup>*

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In the following example, the linear structure of American Sign Language is represented. Instead of "I'm going to lunch after I finish this report.", which may be a more natural English word order, the ASL influence might lead to the direct translation "First, report finish. I go lunch." or affect the word order.

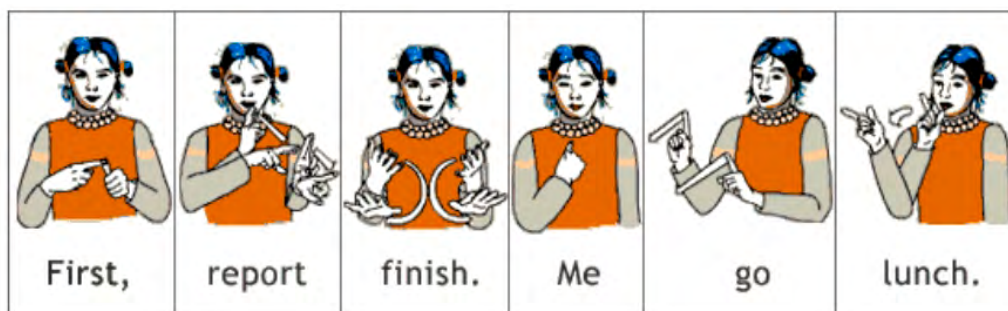


Figure 2: A sentence in Deaf-English<sup>2</sup>

Language transfer, i.e., the application of linguistic features from one language to another, is in fact a commonly discussed topic in the context of English language learning and teaching. While certain similarities between languages may help learners

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1/ (Charrow 1975, p. 140–141)

2/ Figure taken from <https://vidacff.blogspot.co.uk/p/historia-dos-surdos-gesticulando.html>

understand or apply correctly certain features (known as positive transfer), teachers are usually worried about the inverse procedure, i.e., when such transfer causes errors or misunderstandings (negative transfer). As in the acquisition of any language, mistakes that are based on interference from the first language also happen during the language instruction of deaf learners (Richards, 1985, p. 63). For instance, the written English language production of Czech Sign Language users will necessarily be affected by the structures of Czech Sign Language. Similarly, features typical of the Czech language can be observed in the written English language production of deaf and hard of hearing Czech learners.

It is therefore very helpful for teachers who are not proficient sign language users to familiarise themselves with the grammar patterns of the sign language their students use. It is very useful to compare the grammar patterns in both languages and draw learners' attention to possible differences and similarities. This knowledge is also practical when providing feedback on the learners' written assignments.

### 1.3 COMMUNICATION METHODS USED IN TEFL

Up until the 1950s, the teaching aims, methods and guiding principles of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) concentrated primarily on grammatical features and reading ability as opposed to the use of English as a practical, communicative tool for everyday life, which is achieved through the Communicative Approach. This student-centred method aims to deliver EFL through learning in context. Today, this is the most widely-used method within TEFL practice and its student-centred principles adapt favourably to addressing the learning strategies of D/d/hh learners.

D/d/hh learners acquire language primarily through the visual channel. Instruction delivered via “the oral channel only” may be inaccessible for these learners due to their having no auditory perception or limited auditory perception. This can apply to hearing aid and cochlear implant users also. The European Commission (2005) stipulated that curricular adaptations must be made for this group in the learning-teaching process of acquiring a foreign language. This would include, for example, adapted resources/texts, delivery methods and assessments. The 2005 European Language Policy document promoted and encouraged the use of visual resources, an emphasis on writing skills to utilize strong visual skills, and recommended the use of a sign language interpreter to reinforce and clarify visual input. Employing the most effective methods for the target group of learners is the most effective way for teachers to ensure that their teaching input transforms into practical output skills, thereby accelerating the rate of language acquisition.

There are many ways that D/d/hh students can be taught English, and teachers can choose different approaches. D/d/hh persons make use of various communication methods such as the national spoken language, the national sign language, the written form of the national spoken language, the signed versions of the national language, lip-reading, finger-spelling and other supporting systems, such as cued speech or Visual Phonics, that have been developed to facilitate the comprehensibility of spoken language through visual means. Each learner therefore brings a different set of communication needs, skills and preferences to the foreign language classroom, based on the nature of their hearing loss, their feeling of belonging to either the deaf or the hearing community, their family history, as well as the setting and purpose of the interaction (Sedláčková, 2016, p. 12).

Despite such scenarios being very varied, D/d/hh learners can be separated into two main target groups: Those who communicate through speechreading language practices, and those who communicate through sign language – although such a distinction is necessarily rather simplistic.

### **1.3.1 Students who communicate through speechreading language practices**

Students who are referred to as ‘deaf’ or ‘hard of hearing’ may prefer to use speechreading communication methods. That is, they may still have sufficient residual hearing and be able to hear some of the spoken language that is produced in a conducive environment by fully-informed communicators (using the principles of good practice). Having residual hearing does not imply that the deaf or hard of hearing student can function through speaking and listening in the same way that a person with full hearing capacity can, and it is important to remember this point during all teaching, learning and assessment activities.

The fact that residual hearing is limited in some ways correctly implies that the deaf or hard of hearing student will still require adaptations to be made and that predominance be given to a fully-accessible written form of text, rather than to the speech and hearing elements that present some accessibility difficulties. It is important that the teacher not rely on speech and on residual hearing, for communication purposes, as the student’s access to the oral language will still be limited. Hence, the most important aspect of the ‘show and tell’ principle is still the ‘show’ element; hard of hearing learners will benefit from access that is primarily visual, through print and text, from attention to checking their understanding, and to addressing any difficulties that result from pronunciation issues.

There may also be students in the classroom who do not have any residual hearing and who prefer to communicate through speechreading for other reasons. They will also require the teacher to use all of the principles and practices recommended in the following section, but they may require additional gestures or clues to the dialogue through fingerspelling. There are now Speech to Text Apps that can also help facilitate communication with deaf or hard of hearing learners who prefer this communication method.

### 1.3.2 Students who communicate through sign language practices

For students who prefer to communicate through a sign language, successful communication is the most paramount issue, and the teacher will need to ascertain the method of communication to be used immediately upon the commencement of the course, if not before.

In a sign-bilingual situation, the student may use either sign or speech but may need the reply to be given in sign language, either from the teacher directly or through a sign language interpreter. In this situation, predominance should again be given to visual strategies for making the teaching and the classroom conversations fully accessible.

The written form of text will be essential, and the teaching should be example-driven, as this provides the student who is a sign language user with visual explanations of the teaching content. Working through examples will enable the students to invoke visual images of the content before learning the theory that they exemplify. It is also beneficial for the teaching to involve text and videos that reflect everyday life situations that the students can connect with through their own life experiences. Access to communication and culturally relevant teaching, then, is a central aspect of this visual learning strategy.

For learning new vocabulary and sentence structures, sign language users will benefit from online multimedia platforms, such as the [Spreadthesign](#) online platform, run by the European Sign Language Centre (2018) and its accompanying mobile phone application. This allows users to select their native sign language (if it is included) and look up signed sentences and their English equivalents. There is also a quiz that enables the learner to watch a signed phrase or sentence and select the correct equivalent from a choice of four.

Some of the learners may have very little self-consciousness about interacting with English during travel and interaction in a foreign country. This is partly because D/d/hh people in general are often used to dealing with communication barriers when interacting with hearing people, and because in social contact, D/d/hh people from one country have very little difficulty in communicating with D/d/hh people from another country.



### 1.3.3 EFL classroom implications

Therefore, whilst D/d/hh students do not make up a homogenous group, there are some common traits communication-wise that have implications for the teaching of foreign languages to them:

All of the students have some level of hearing loss, though the age of onset will vary among the group. Many students will not have enough residual hearing to be able to hear the national language being spoken, and many students will struggle to hear unfamiliar English words. Also, many D/d/hh individuals gain some level of competence in speaking the national language but might require specialist teaching in order to learn to speak English.

In general, D/d/hh learners can access the teaching of English through their own listening skills, if possible, or by translating from their first language. Some students will be able to hear enough if the teacher talks slowly and clearly, while other students will require alternative interaction methods, such as communicating directly with the teacher by writing the conversation down or using a live chat application, through sign language, or using interpreters if the teacher is not a fluent sign language user.

It is worth noticing that students who are struggling to acquire their first language might struggle to learn English and will need additional teaching support, as the literacy development in one language supports literacy development in subsequent languages learned, according to the Linguistic Coding Deficit Hypothesis by Sparks and Ganschow (1991).

Some learners welcome the idea of using a sign language to support their learning EFL. Based on the research findings among Norwegian EFL learners presented by Pritchard, Deaf learners feel an affinity with other Deaf people and their languages. Learning a foreign Sign Language (in Pritchard's case, BSL) to support teaching and learning English is considered a highly motivating factor and is not seen as an overwhelming task (2013).

Increasing visual resources and offering student field trips to English-based environments will compensate for the learning shortfall and will increase D/d/hh learners' motivation and understanding (Sedláčková & Kontra, 2020, p. 348).

The small size of such a class/group, bearing in mind adequate sizing and seating, is an important consideration. Small classes have been found to be optimal in foreign language classes for D/d/hh learners, but purely individual instruction is not necessarily the most appropriate choice; while individual tutoring is undoubtedly greatly beneficial, research shows that learners appreciate group work, classroom interaction, and benefit considerably from group dynamics (Cziser & Kontra, 2020; Ávila Caica, 2011) to allow the students to learn from one another.

For these reasons, the ELF class may be composed of learners with very different communication preferences, needs and skills, and the teaching strategies may need to be as flexible and adaptable as the communication strategies being employed. However, even in more or less heterogeneous classes it is beneficial to use a wide range of different communication methods during foreign language instruction (Machová, 2014, p. 63).

Some EFL teachers use their national spoken language, or sign language, while teaching D/d/hh students, and present English through written materials only. It is very rare that teachers use spoken English in this context, as the learners cannot hear the speech, and need support from speech-to-text reporters or sign language interpreters. Nowadays, teachers make broader use of computers and teach in English using online chats or text messengers. In any case, teachers of EFL to D/d/hh learners will benefit from being multilingual, including being fluent in sign language, and deaf teachers teaching deaf learners using the local sign language may be an important approach. This also reduces the need for sign language interpreters in the classroom and enables more direct teaching and learning.

## 1.4 ADAPTING TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

There are a lot of online teaching materials currently available, but the most important consideration is how relevant they are for teaching English to D/d/hh learners. Teachers usually need to adapt the existing EFL and ESL resources, or they create their own resources, as many generic publications and online resources are not suitable. This includes adapting the main text, the learning objectives, the teaching tips for teachers, and some of the comprehension and grammar exercises for students. Available resources also contain reflective tasks for writing skills and supplementary texts in the students' native language or plain English.

In terms of teaching English to D/d/hh learners, the difference between the EFL and ESL settings is important, particularly when devising teaching and learning resources.

**The English as a Foreign Language (EFL)** classroom comprises a situation where English is taught in non-English speaking countries.

**The English as a Second Language (ESL)** classroom comprises a situation where English is taught in English-speaking countries (e.g., in the UK or USA).

An ESL learner is naturally surrounded by the target language outside the classroom and there is a plethora of naturally-occurring materials to enhance learning outside the classroom. In an EFL setting, strategies for providing extra materials and the choice of such resources need to be considered.

Whilst hearing EFL learners have access to auditory input in order to support their learning of the English language, the teaching and learning materials for D/d/hh learners who do not have access to this auditory support will need to be supplemented with videos, pictures, and other visual stimuli that compensate for their lack of access to the sounds of the language. Also, the teachers may need to seek culturally-relevant inputs and examples to respond to learners' needs and interests. That is, teachers of EFL to D/d/hh learners using ESL and EFL materials need to adapt them to create teaching and learning resources that fill the gap not just in terms of accessing an English environment or the auditory means by which hearing EFL learners progress, but also in creating culturally appropriate, meaningful materials.

In general terms, the following should be considered when adapting EFL and ESL materials:

- **Some materials should contain deaf-related topics in order to motivate D/d/hh learners. The content of these texts would need to be related to native English speakers' cultural issues, or relevant to the Deaf world in some way.**
- **Videos need to be captioned.**
- **The teaching and learning resources should contain pictures and subtitled video materials in line with the visuality of D/d/hh learners.**
- **The materials should encourage learners to compare content in the first language with the translated versions of that content. Students may be interested to see the differences between a version produced directly in English and one that is produced in a written language familiar to the learner and then translated into English.**
- **The text of these materials should be in line with the proficiency of the D/d/hh learners and should be clearly structured.**

## 1.5 CULTURALLY RELEVANT PEDAGOGY

D/d/hh students from countries in which English is not the majority language choose to study English for exactly the same reasons that hearing people might want to undertake foreign language study. There is a dire need for language education providers to adequately inform themselves so as to address the diverse needs of this group of learners. A qualitative study conducted by Kontra, Csizér and Piniel (2014) and a survey by Csizér, Kontra and Piniel (2015) established that despite experiencing previous unfavourable learning circumstances, D/d/hh learners still have the self-efficacy and determination to learn foreign languages, especially English.

Based on years of experience with teaching English to D/d/hh higher education students, the following practices and approaches have been found to be helpful:

- **Barrier-free learning (through visibility).**
- **Teachers who are preferably sign language users.**
- **Teachers who are deaf aware and who understand a visual way of learning.**
- **Non-integrated foreign language lessons.**
- **Regular 1:1 tuition and support from the teacher.**
- **Meeting the unique learning needs of individual students.**
- **A collective attitude among students and teachers and a class ethos of encouragement, praise and positivity.**

Taking into consideration the teachers' view, there are several complementary variables at stake, such as:

- **Lack of research into and empirical evidence of appropriate course materials and methods to guide teachers.**
- **Great variation in the teaching priorities and expectations for this group of learners.**
- **No consistent standards established.**
- **Great variation in the level of teachers' deaf awareness and knowledge of the national sign language.**

Dedicated teachers in this educational field have expressed a sense of isolation in terms of research, information and support. To overcome these feelings, researchers across Europe specializing in TEFL to D/d/hh and Deaf teachers have implemented and begun to publish deaf-led, effective teaching and learning strategies.<sup>3</sup>

### 1.5.1 Environmental aspects

There is a relation between learner motivation and the learning environment, and Wlodkowski and Ginsberg suggest that we should “foster an optimal environment” for learning (2017, p. 44). According to Radovan and Makovec, the term ‘learning environment’ usually defines “the social, psychological, or psychosocial environment in which learning or, as the case may be, teaching takes place” (2015, p. 118). However, studies such as Cleveland & Fisher’s also note “the important role that physical space plays in educational settings” (2014, p. 1).

Having deaf learners, and perhaps also a sign language interpreter, in the classroom has implications for the seating arrangements, as it is important that the people accessing the information through the interpreter can see the interpreter, the lecturer and the Smartboard, while also feeling like part of the student group. For deaf learners, Pagliaro suggests that the classroom should be arranged to accommodate “maximum visual acuity”, proposing that “seating arranged in a horseshoe shape allows the Deaf student to locate the speaker easily and to be involved in group discussions” (2001, p. 175). Working in smaller oval seating of 3–4 participants is also practical as it ensures that faces, lips and hands are visible at all times. The interpreter, if present, should be placed at the front, at the other end of the Smartboard from the lecturer if the lecturer is using speech, so that the deaf learners can see the teacher, the interpreter and the Smartboard simultaneously (see picture below).

The seating arrangements, however, serve more than the purpose of making the teaching visible. Guardino and Antia studying young learners observe that there is “a functional relationship between the physical environment and both an increase in levels of academic engagement and a decrease in levels of disruptive behaviour” (2012, p. 518). In this respect, regular 1:1 instruction may also be conducive to building learners’ trust in the teaching-learning process. As Albertini and his colleagues (2012) showed, attitudes to teachers and low opinion of education in general play a negative role in D/d/hh students' academic success.

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3/ One example of these initiatives is the International Research Group on Teaching English as a Foreign Language to the Deaf and Hard/of Hearing, coordinated by Ewa Domagała-Zyśk ([https://www.kul.pl/english-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing,art\\_74431.html](https://www.kul.pl/english-for-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing,art_74431.html)). This group of dedicated teachers and researchers is active in this area, conducting research, sharing best practices, and meeting regularly.



## 1.5.2 Importance of cultural awareness for teachers without sign language proficiency

Deaf Awareness training (prioritising communication), learning basic sign communication skills, and some theoretical concepts of access to language learning should be provided for new EFL teachers who work with D/d/hh learners. There are many online resources related to the Deaf community and Deaf culture that teachers can watch and learn from, and they can then recommend appropriate resources for students, for example:

- **World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) website** [www.wfdeaf.org](http://www.wfdeaf.org)
- **European Union of the Deaf (EUD) website** [www.eud.eu](http://www.eud.eu)
- **BSL Zone website** [www.bslzone.co.uk](http://www.bslzone.co.uk)
- **The Limping Chicken (the world's most popular deaf blog)** <https://limpingchicken.com/>

Nowadays, some higher education institutions publish guidebooks and tip sheets to provide teachers with advice and tips on organizing instruction in a more deaf-friendly way, such as the guide entitled *Teaching Strategies to use with Deaf Students: Advice for Lecturers in Higher Education*, published by the University of Central Lancashire, that can be of benefit to novice teachers:

<https://ifhohyp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Teaching-Deaf-Students-Lecturers-Guide.pdf>



Teachers should be aware of and familiar with using key terminology around working with D/d/hh learners:

- **Deaf**
- **deaf**
- **Sign language users**
- **Oral deaf**
- **Fingerspelling**
- **Lip-reading**
- **Hard of hearing**
- **Cochlear Implant users**
- **Hearing aid users**
- **Deaf identity**
- **School for deaf children**
- **Mainstream education**
- **Inclusive education**
- **Sign Bilingualism**
- **Accessibility**
- **Speech to text**
- **Note-taker**
- **Subtitles (open/close caption)**

New teachers working with D/d/hh learners may also be confused as to the terms to be used when referring to deaf and hard of hearing individuals. The culturally inappropriate term 'hearing impaired' should not be used.

There are some other important factors to consider:

## **Use of sign language**

There are many advantages of bringing sign language into the EFL classroom. Using sign language as a tool for teaching English provides the teacher with the visual illustration that the visual modality of sign languages provides naturally. Some teachers therefore choose to learn (or already use) the national sign language for direct instruction, as a visual language is perfectly accessible to Deaf learners.

Teachers without sign language proficiency should consider learning to fingerspell. Fingerspelling – use of the sign language manual alphabet – is quick and easy to learn and can be a great asset in relation to teaching new words and terminology.

## Teaching equipment

- **Interactive Smartboards can allow the teacher to project the reading text/materials onto one central board for all students to view on the same visual line as the teacher, and this avoids students having to switch their gaze from a printed text on their desk up to the teacher and back continually.**
- **In a multimedia learning resource room, a teacher-controlled desktop system can be connected to the students' computers, allowing the teacher to reinforce lesson information by using the Internet to display additional visual information and send one-to-one or group feedback.**
- **A user-friendly online text messaging system, such as 'Live Chat' and WhatsApp, can be used as a form of real-time chat when practicing spontaneous utterances and role-play within context-based learning.**
- **The use of Speech to Text apps for supporting D/d/hh students' access to spoken English communication are beneficial particularly for those students who wish to communicate orally.**

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LANG  
SKILLS



**Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students

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# Unit 3

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**Teachers' Guide to the Booklets  
for Students**

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE TEACHERS' GUIDE

This Teachers' Guide sets the scene for these accompanying booklets:

- **Strategies for Reading**
- **Strategies for Essay Writing**
- **Developing Study Skills**

Together, these comprise a set of online materials for teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for Deaf, deaf, and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) students.

### 1.1.1 Adapting EFL materials for learning and teaching

There is a shortage of resources appropriate to the teaching of EFL to Deaf sign language users and to deaf or hard of hearing students at the B1–C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001). The few available 'English for the deaf' texts that focus on adult education are somewhat limited in content, being primarily aimed at a basic literacy level. It is problematic to use general EFL learning and teaching resources as they do not make any particular reference to the cultural differences between deaf and hearing learners<sup>1</sup> and may not always meet the needs of D/d/hh EFL learners. Fortunately, the topic of foreign language teaching and learning to D/d/hh learners has recently gained increasing attention. Individual publications which address research results as well as specific recommendations and examples of good practice in the field of EFL for D/d/hh learners are published<sup>2</sup>.

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1/ For further details, see, for example:

Bauman, D. H-L. (Ed.) (2008). *Open your eyes: Deaf studies talking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Ladd, P. (2003). *Understanding Deaf Culture: In search of Deafhood*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

2/ See, for example:

Domagała-Zyśk, E. (Ed.), *English as a foreign language for deaf and hard of hearing persons in Europe*. Wydawnictwo KUL.

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In response to the scarcity of teaching and learning resources for D/d/hh learners at independent user level, and particularly those studying at higher education institutions, the LangSkills project prepared a set of accessible, relevant study materials<sup>3</sup> that respond to their educational needs and interests.

Most of the resources used in the online EFL teaching booklets that accompany this teachers' guide and the booklets on reading and writing have been custom-made due to the difficulty in finding truly appropriate, already-existing materials. This is a time-consuming approach, but once the original materials have been produced, they can be reused, with amendments and adjustments according to the particular student group. Throughout the duration of this project, the EFL resources have been designed, amended, adjusted and redrafted several times. This continuous development approach is recommended, as it is not possible to be prescriptive and to take for granted that any one set of resources will be useful to or appropriate for all EFL students.

## 1.1.2 Users of the booklets

The booklets are designed particularly for D/d/hh university students who are planning to study abroad.

- **The booklets focus mainly on the independent user levels, i.e., the B1 and B2 levels according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) and the proficient C1 level.**
- **The handouts in the booklets are written predominantly at the B1 level of CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001), as most university students wishing to study abroad should be capable of reading instructions at this level.**

The booklets should, however, be of benefit to most D/d/hh learners at these proficiency levels, regardless of their engagement in a mobility programme or not, who wish to develop their skills in reading, studying and writing.

The learners can use the materials on their own or in class with their teacher.

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<sup>3</sup>/ Alongside the Strategies for Reading, Strategies for Essay Writing and Developing Study Skills booklets, these include the e-learning course 'Online English for International Mobilities' and its complementary resources that are suitable for approximately B1 - B2 (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001) higher education users of English who are D/d/hh. More information about the course and its materials can be found at <https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/en/veda-a-vyzkum/projects/languageskills/vystupy/output-3>.

### 1.1.3 Structure of the booklets

All the booklets contain

- an **INTRODUCTION** explaining what learners are going to be taught in the booklet and how it can benefit them;
- **WORKSHEETS** with short, informative texts that will help students understand the topics, using lots of practical examples;
- **ACTIVITIES** for the learners to practise what was explained in the worksheets;
- some of the activities are supplemented by **HANDOUTS**.

### 1.1.4 Activities

Practical Activities follow the input provided in the worksheets. In all the Activities, there are useful tips and hints. Frequently there is a section of further work leading to optional, independent study.

The character of the Activities gives learners the opportunity to work at their own level on various integrated tasks - integrated in that they require the learners to use reading and writing skills simultaneously. The more advanced learners will be able to expand more on their answers using more complex sentence structures and vocabulary, while the less advanced ones will still be able to do the Activities with the command of English they have, with their answers reflecting their level of English.

Most of the Activities require minimal to no resources, apart from those provided in the instructions or handouts. Typically, students will just need a blank sheet of paper, a dictionary (printed or online), a pen, and possibly a set of highlighters.

### 1.1.5 Goal of the booklets




The Strategies for Reading, Strategies for Essay Writing and Developing Study Skills booklets containing lesson topics, activities and handouts are designed to complement and supplement (online) class and individual teaching; there are also practice exercises for independent study. This serves two purposes: it helps to underpin and consolidate learning experiences, and encourages students to continue the work individually, at their own pace, and without direct teacher supervision. This last issue is paramount, as many D/d/hh students have, in the course of their past educational experience,

become very dependent upon teachers, support workers and directed learning (see the results of Output 1, e.g. Sedláčková & Kontra, 2020; Csizér & Kontra, 2020). Alongside introducing learners to autonomous ways of learning, teachers should also pay attention to developing learners' study skills, as the undertaken research suggests. One of the main aims of the online booklets is, therefore, to develop the students' autonomy as learners, and it is hoped that these resources, and the methods with which they are used, help to fulfil that aim.

### 1.1.6 Format of the booklets

All the booklets are visually appealing and written in plain – though not basic – English. They contain visual symbols and icons to make the text accessible, attractive to D/d/hh learners, and to remind them of instructions. For example, the booklets contain the symbols described in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Symbols Used and Definitions:

	<p>This is used to designate 'read this first' or 'information only' - in other words, 'don't write anything yet'. It also means 'this is important - read it!'.</p>
	<p>This is used to mark an 'Activity' or 'exercise': in other words, 'you should write something now'.</p> <p>This is because many students have the habit of skipping over the 'blurb' in order to get to the 'real' work - a habit that causes many of them to miss the point, or try to do work without adequate preparatory reading.</p>
	<p>Lesson Topic</p>

The booklets' content is designed in and of itself to train the students to look for and identify relevant items. The visual format of the materials enables them to do this with more ease.

In several places, the booklets remind the students not to start completing the activities unless they have read the explanation first. This encourages them to go through the materials before they attempt to answer the questions in the Activities.

While this may seem obvious, many D/d/hh students do tend to leap headlong into the questions in their panic to do the work quickly.

## **1.2 GUIDE TO THE STRATEGIES FOR READING BOOKLET**

The Strategies for Reading Booklet is designed to help develop D/d/hh learners' strategic reading skills seen as crucial for both D/d/hh and hearing individuals in becoming successful readers (Silvestri, 2016).

This booklet responds to the fact that low levels of reading comprehension are among the major barriers to academic and career achievement for deaf learners (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002). Some D/d/hh students are, understandably, initially rather puzzled by the notion that they cannot read effectively; some at this level can read well, but many have a tendency to approach reading mechanically: i.e., some may read the words (often with vocalisation or mouthing) but fail to grasp the full meaning of the text and all its minor details. This notion may be discussed before the students are presented with the first topic of the Reading Booklet covering skills and strategies for effective reading. Similar to many other adult learners with undeveloped literacy skills, many D/d/hh students have not acquired the reading strategies that come naturally to skilled readers who are first-language users of spoken languages, and they may try to read high-level texts in a laborious, word-by-word manner. This is fairly demotivating for the D/d/hh readers and discourages them from reading in English beyond what they are required to read for school. This trait then closely relates to the fact that D/d/hh readers may also have limited skills in selecting appropriate texts and panic-buy unsuitable, expensive books that they then find too difficult to use. The struggling D/d/hh learners then tend to read less, starting a vicious circle, which makes reading in foreign languages more difficult and less appealing to them (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002).

Differences in cognitive abilities among D/d/hh learners indicate that many students may be applying visual reading strategies that should be accounted for. For this reason, attention is paid in this booklet to organizing reading in a visually structured way, encouraging text marking and colour coding.

## 1.2.1 Topics

The [Strategies for Reading Booklet](#) covers the following topics:

- **Useful strategies and techniques for reading**
- **Making predictions**
- **Skimming**
- **Scanning**
- **Tackling unknown words**

There are four reading HANDOUTS (A, B, C, D) that complement some of the Activities. The handouts are based on two Deaf-related texts: one interview with one of the producers of an American docuseries on Netflix about a group of Deaf and hard of hearing college students who attend Gallaudet University; and one blog post written by a hard of hearing blogger about film subtitling issues.

### Introduction to reading skills and strategies

After a short introduction to the booklet for learners, the material begins with a humorous magazine-style quiz about the student's own current reading styles and strategies. The aim is to motivate them to reflect on their reading behaviour and on the possibilities for how to approach reading texts. The subsequent pages describe common reading strategies readers are typically recommended to master.

### Making predictions

This section aims to develop learners' prediction-making skills through which readers use information from a text and their own personal knowledge about the topic, as well as their experiences and expectations, to anticipate what the text is about or what happens next, for example. Learners are therefore encouraged to engage with the text and interact with it more actively. This may also increase the chances of their wanting to continue reading, because they may be naturally curious to see if their predictions were right.

## Skimming

As shown by research, skilled readers read selectively, not wasting their time with irrelevant passages unless they are reading for pleasure, and are used to skimming through a text to confirm whether it matches their reading goals (Banner & Wang, 2020). This section therefore offers tips on building skimming skills that can help learners select appropriate study texts and relevant sources for the assigned tasks.

## Scanning

It can be commonly observed in EFL classes - for example, when doing some of the typical Cambridge exams' reading comprehension tasks - that many D/d/hh learners do not always look for the answers in the text itself, but rather seek them outside of the text. Sedláčková, who conducted research into the EFL reading of deaf university students, observed this as well (2016, p. 121). The scan-reading techniques, and the related text-marking and colour-coding techniques presented in this section, therefore, aim to increase readers' interaction with the text itself.

## Tackling unknown words

This section focuses on some of the possibilities learners have when encountering unfamiliar words in a text. As a limited vocabulary is one of the biggest hurdles to overcome in reading achievement (Sidek & Rahim, 2015), learners need to be equipped with suitable strategies that can help them avoid diving into plenty of unfamiliar words, which often exhausts their energy for further engaging with the text. Several such strategies are shown and can be practised in the subsequent Activities.

## 1.2.2 Goals

In this booklet the learners will:

- **get to know some of the main reading strategies: prediction making, skimming, scanning, and possibilities for tackling unknown words;**
- **learn how making predictions can help improve reading comprehension;**
- **understand the role of skimming and scanning, and learn how to apply these strategies;**
- **learn how to tackle unknown words;**
- **practise these strategies in a series of Activities, the contents of which are culturally relevant to Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners.**



### **1.3 GUIDE TO THE STRATEGIES FOR ESSAY WRITING BOOKLET**

The Strategies for Essay Writing Booklet was designed with the scarcity of materials dedicated to developing D/d/hh learners' writing skills with culturally relevant materials in mind.

Academic writing is an integral part of higher education. It is a very complex area that requires knowledge of the field as well as the skills and abilities to express one's ideas through the written word, including knowledge of grammatical and syntactical structures, proper choice of vocabulary, effective planning, clear and logical organization of one's writing, and revising the final product.

Though academic writing is challenging for most students regardless of their hearing status, many D/d/hh learners find themselves particularly struggling with it, and not primarily because they lack knowledge of the field. The literature in general indicates that D/d/hh students struggle with writing (e.g. Andrews, Shaw and Lomas, 2011; Nelson & Bruce, 2020; Marschark, Lang & Albertini, 2002) and display delays in writing in comparison with their hearing classmates (Paul, 2001).

Some common traits displayed by the writing of Deaf learners are a rigid writing style, use of shorter sentences, a limited range of vocabulary, issues with syntactical structures, or difficulty using the passive voice (Nelson & Bruce, 2020, p. 102). Competent organization of one's writing is another source of possible difficulties, even in those who possess more advanced knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Antia, Reed and Kreimeyer observe that D/d/hh writers tend to resort to redundancies and use few cohesive tools to tie the text together (2020), which also negatively impacts the perceived consistency of the produced text.

Another relevant observation made by Antia, Reed & Kreimeyer is that since many D/d/hh students also experience difficulty reading, they may not have enough access to models of good writing, thus lacking relevant models to follow (2020, p. 245).

The booklet therefore encourages learners to think about how they can improve their essay writing in English, which is directly in line with the need for efficient organization of D/d/hh learners' writing, as suggested above.

## 1.3.1 Topics

The [Strategies for Essay Writing Booklet](#) contains the following topics:

- **Introduction to effective essay writing**
- **Essay preparation**
- **Improving essay structure**
- **Writing your essay**
- **Editing your essay: Avoiding common mistakes**

### Introduction to effective essay writing

Learners get acquainted with different types of essays and the importance of reading essay instructions carefully, which is something they sometimes underestimate, skipping directly to the writing without reflecting on what they are being asked to do. In the Activities, they get to think about suitable essay topics and learn some useful verbs that typically appear in essay instructions so they better understand what to do, as well as expanding their academic writing vocabulary.

### Essay preparation

This section leads learners to approach essay writing strategically, without wasting their energies producing parts they might eventually not need. The importance of planning in the first place is stressed. Learners can choose from a variety of visual outlining methods, such as using concept maps, diagrams or charts.

### Improving essay structure

Learners are invited to reflect on what makes an effective essay structure. The metaphor of a fish is used to visually explain the crucial elements of an essay: the introduction, the main body, and the conclusion. An alternative way of visualizing this is the hamburger diagram. The top and bottom hamburger buns represent the essay's introduction and the conclusion, while the filling represents the body. This approach of teaching through analogy hopes to motivate D/d/hh students to engage visually with this section.

## Writing your essay

This is a very brief section where learners are finally encouraged to actually start writing after the previous preparatory stages.

## Editing your essay: Avoiding common mistakes

The booklet includes a section based on common mistakes and how students can learn from considering such errors when writing essays. The learners are shown what the typical mistakes are and are provided with practical tips on reducing their occurrence in their own writing.

### 1.3.2 Goals

In this booklet the learners will:

- **be provided with a number of useful essay-writing tips;**
- **get to know more about the writing process in order to make it easier and better organize their writing;**
- **learn what the major mistakes are that students make when writing essays, and receive tips on avoiding them;**
- **understand when and how to reference and quote correctly.**

## **1.4 GUIDE TO THE DEVELOPING STUDY SKILLS BOOKLET**

The Developing Study Skills Booklet aims to help learners approach academic tasks and assignments in a strategic manner, as plenty of learners fail to perform on academic tasks due to inappropriate or ineffective study strategies.

All learners already possess study skills; however, having advanced study skills requires developing the skills one has, adapting them, and revising them from time to time, as the needs of every learner develop and change with new challenges and requirements. Study skills such as good time management, assignment planning, using resources, note taking, etc., are transferable. Not only do they help the learner to feel more in control of their studies, but their effective use may also positively impact their future working experience.

It cannot be expected that all learners studying at universities have entered them fully equipped with adequate skills, however. The independent learning required in higher education, let alone independent online learning, imposes quite a new set of demands on the learner. Wingate (2006) advocates for making support in the study skills area widely available to all learners, not just those traditionally deemed vulnerable.

Many universities nowadays publish their own study skills recommendations and tips addressing this very important area. However, there are several factors to consider when using these tips with D/d/hh students. As shown by recent research, including the findings made by the LangSkills team, D/d/hh learners have been found to be rather teacher-dependent, not used to actively searching on their own for resources for their studies in general. Also, these instructional texts may not be particularly suitable for D/d/hh learners because of their structure, or they may not be culturally relevant to them. What's more, Wingate (2006) finds instructional texts are not enough to encourage experiencing and reflecting. She proposes that learners should be provided with enough practical experience dealing with academic tasks, as well as feedback on this experience.

The booklet, therefore, pays attention to the visual layout of the materials. The worksheets are written in plain, though not basic, English. The booklet invites D/d/hh learners to tie the information provided in the worksheets with practical Activities that build on their personal experience and include reflective questions in order to support independent study and autonomous learning.

## 1.4.1 Topics

The [Strategies for Study Skills Booklet](#) contains the following:

- **Understanding assignment & exam questions**
- **Tips on better time-management skills**
- **Making the most of your study session**

### Understanding assignment & exam questions

Learners read a section focussed on writing assignments and answering exam questions in English in order to better understand what is required from an assignment or an examination question. The verbs used in assignment instructions are widely used in Academic English, so learners can expand their vocabulary at the same time.

### Tips on better time-management skills

All language learners and university students need to be able to manage their time, and it is an equally important skill for D/d/hh individuals for whom poor time management skills seem to play an important role in academic success (Albertini, Kelly & Matchett, 2012.) This section, therefore, provides tips on effective planning, prioritising tasks, and the possibilities for breaking down big tasks, using plenty of examples and practical activities.

### Making the most of your study session

This section invites learners to reflect on the study environment and on organizing their study space, as well as identifying and avoiding the major distractors they feel interrupt their study sessions. Importance is also given to finding the right balance between studies and well-being.

## 1.4.2 Goals

In this booklet, learners will:

- **learn how to better understand the questions in assignments and exams in English;**
- **learn some tips that will help them improve their time-management skills;**
- **be encouraged to reflect on their own study patterns so they can identify areas for improvement;**
- **be provided with tips on handling distractions.**

## **1.5 CONCLUDING NOTE**

The true measure of success for developing English skills for EU mobility is not the accuracy of students' written English upon completion of the course; rather, it is the effectiveness of their reading and writing. These materials may not enable you to elevate students' English to the 'perfect' or fully fluent level. Instead, these materials aim to give them an insight into what is required of them whilst traveling and to develop their skills at a higher level. Above all, the materials aim to enhance the teacher's ability to empower deaf learners, as well as the student's confidence and ability to tackle the reading, writing, general literacy and study skills that will be of benefit to them during their EU mobility as well as during life-long learning.

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LANG  
SKILLS



**Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students

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# Unit 4

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**Strategies for Reading.**  
**Student's Booklet**

# Table of contents

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### What is this booklet about?

This booklet was created to help you work on your reading skills. The content is adapted to suit the educational needs of Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) students and it uses lots of culturally relevant examples.

This booklet contains:

- **short informative texts that will help you understand the topics;**
- **practical Activities for you to practise what was explained;**
- **handouts you will need to do some of the Activities.**

### Who is this booklet for?

The booklet was designed for D/d/hh university students who plan to study abroad and wish to improve their English before their visit. You can use it to improve your reading comprehension in English in general.

Your English should be about B1 or B2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001), to use these materials.

### How can this booklet help you?

**Reading** is more than just looking at symbols on paper, knowing what they mean, matching them to sounds, and building the words... If you are deaf, it isn't a lot of help to know what sounds the letters make, anyway. Reading is more than just letters: **words + meaning = understanding.**

If you are a university student, you may have a lot of reading to do. Teachers will give you the titles of things they want you to read: whole books, chapters of books, articles from journals, research reports, class notes, etc. Sometimes it seems there is not enough time to read everything they give you to do...


So you need **strategies and skills for reading.** This Booklet hopes to help you develop them.

Use this booklet to:

- **get to know some of the main reading strategies that will be useful to you;**
- **learn how making predictions can help you improve your reading;**
- **understand the role of skimming and scanning and learn how to apply these strategies;**
- **learn how to cope with unknown words;**
- **practise these strategies in a series of Activities whose contents are culturally relevant to Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing learners.**

## 1.2 INTRODUCTION TO READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES



When you are a fluent reader you do not consciously pay attention to every single letter in each word. You see **groups of letters** and put them together **without thinking about it**. You also read **groups of words** automatically, without thinking about what the individual words mean. You only stop and focus on words if you don't know them, and then you think about what they mean. 

The main strategies and skills we will look at now are the ones that will help you in the first stages of reading a text. Before we do that, take this short quiz:



### Activity 1

Take a quiz. What sort of reader are you?

---

*Imagine your teacher says you need to read a book for the next class.*

---

Do you: (pick one)

- a. start at page 1 and read right through every word to the end?
  - b. read the last page and hope it helps?
  - c. try to read page 1, panic at the difficult words, and give up?
  - d. ignore it and hope nobody notices in class?
  - e. look over the whole book quickly to find the bits you need?
- 
- If you chose A you are very unusual, and you must have a lot of time to spare.
  - If you chose B, you will miss a lot of information.
  - Choosing C is a normal reaction, but it doesn't help you.
  - Choosing D is risky — you can be sure the teacher will notice if you haven't read it!
  - If you chose E, you are on your way to being a good reader.

## Useful strategies and techniques for reading

- **Predicting**
- **Skimming**
- **Scanning**
- **Tackling unknown words**
- **Reading in detail**

### Predicting

You do this before you start to read. Use the knowledge **you already have** — if the class or module is called *American History*, you know that the text will be about history in America! The title of the text should help: *Civil Rights in the 1960s* is quite clear. If you know what you are going to read about, it is easier to understand it.

The **title** will also tell you something about what's in it. Beware of titles, though: sometimes they have nothing to do with what's in the book! *Trout Fishing in America*, for example, is not a guide that gives you tips on catching fish in the United States: it's a novella. You may have to look at **more** than the title.

### Skimming

This means reading **very quickly**, just *dipping* into parts of the text to see what it says.

Skimming will help you find out:

- **if a text is worth reading, borrowing or even buying;**
- **what parts of a text you need to read and what parts you can pass by.**

You can skim-read a text by looking mainly at:

- **sub-headings (under the main title and at the top of sections);**
- **the 'abstract' or summary if there is one (this is short information at the start of the text);**
- **the first paragraph;**
- **the first, second and last sentences of the next paragraphs;**
- **the last paragraph;**
- **information about the writer can help, too.**

## Scanning

Again, you look quickly through a text or book, but this time you are looking for something. You know what you want to find, for example:

- **information about one subject (look for it in the **CONTENTS**, then go to the chapter);**
- **information about one thing (look for it in the **INDEX**, then go to the pages to find it);**
- **answers to questions the teacher asked, or you asked yourself;**
- **dates when things happened;**
- **numbers, statistics, etc.**

If you know what you want to find, then you can scan for that and not bother too much about the rest of the text. That saves time and makes you a more efficient reader. Don't waste time reading what you don't need.



## Reading in detail

After you have skimmed to see what it is about, and scanned for specific information, you can then concentrate more on understanding the main ideas. Read the whole chapter or article through to the end — don't stop if you don't understand, just move on, and then it may become clearer. Then read through again. You may need to read some paragraphs twice or three times, and at this stage you can tackle unknown words.

## Tackling unknown words

**If you see a word you don't understand**, try to guess from the context — the rest of the sentence, or the subject of the article, should help.

**If you can't guess**, use a dictionary, but be careful! Use the context to find the correct meaning. Many words have more than one meaning; make sure you find the correct one in that context.

## 1.3 MAKING PREDICTIONS



**Predicting** is a useful strategy because:

- it helps you to actively think ahead;
- it allows you to understand the text better;
- you can interact better with the text and be more motivated to learn what happens next.



Therefore, it is a valuable strategy to improve reading comprehension.

Think of what you already know about the topic.

Use information from the text, such as titles, headings or pictures, to guess what will happen.



### Activity 2

Read the first paragraph of two short stories.

#### 1 'Oh!..', by an anonymous author<sup>1</sup>

---

*Once upon a time there was a little girl. Not alone, of course – it's easy to say, – but with family: Mom-dad, grandparents, dog Tuzik, cat Murka, rabbit Vasya, fish in the aquarium ... It's not that, though, but the fact that the girl was extraordinary. She was collecting her "oh..." That is, she wrote down in her notebook, as the educated girl is supposed to, every "oops". And so many "oops" have accumulated...*

---

---

1/ (source: <https://www.shortstoryproject.com/storyf/282259/>)

- **Read the title. What do you think the story is about?**

**Hint:** The exclamation 'Oh!' can express different emotions. Use a dictionary to look it up.

- **What do you think will happen to the girl?**
- **Would you say this story is:**
  - funny?
  - serious?
  - dramatic?
  - sad?
  - a bit crazy?
  - ...?

## 2. 'Lions', by Bef<sup>2</sup>

---

*These days we flee, hiding in dark corners, shying away from daylight. But things weren't always like this. There was a time when they were just pests.*

*The lions first began to appear in public parks, moving under cover of darkness, hiding in the thick undergrowth, where the grass grew tall enough to hide them.*

*But as they ran away from us, they began to realize that we were responsible for their loss of habitat, that it was us who had taken them into a captivity that they soon outgrew.*

---

- **Take a look at the link and see the picture. How does it relate to the title?**
- **Read the text. How does it agree or disagree with your idea of lions and their behaviour?**
- **What do you think the story is about?**
- **What do you think will happen next?**
- **Is the story going to have a happy ending?**

**Hint:** Feel free to browse more stories on this site.

---

2/ (source: <https://www.shortstoryproject.com/story/lions/>)

## 1.4 PRACTISING SKIMMING



### Skimming is reading quickly to find out:

- What is the text about?
- What is in it?
- Is it useful to you?



You don't read every word on every page! You pick out the useful bits. Another word for skimming is **surveying**: you look over the whole thing quickly.

You can skim or survey...

- shelves full of books, to pick the right ones and leave the rest.
- boxes full of journals (academic magazines) to find the right ones.
- a whole book, to find the useful bits.
- a whole journal to find out about something.

### Skimming: looking at chapters or articles

A **chapter** is one part of a book. It is part of the whole book. It is probably linked to other chapters. Perhaps you don't need to read every chapter of a book.

An **article** is one piece of writing in a magazine or journal. It is complete in itself.

Take a chapter or an article, and try this method:

**Step 1.** Read the **title**.

**Step 2.** Quickly, read the **introduction**. It will tell you what to expect in this chapter or article.

**Step 3.** Look at the **sub-headings**. These tell you what is in each part of this chapter or article. You can see what is in the whole thing, and you will know if it is useful for you.

**Step 4.** Read the first sentence of each main paragraph, if the text is short enough to do so.

**Hint:** If the text is too long to read the first sentence of each paragraph, you can read a few chosen paragraphs.

**Step 5.** Then do the same with the **last paragraph**.

**Step 6.** Now, quickly read the **summary** or conclusion, if there is any. This gives you the best idea of what the writer is saying.

Not all chapters or articles have a summary or conclusion. A lot of books or articles that are academic, or university level, will have them. They are very useful.

Sometimes there are questions to “test yourself” at the end. They are useful too — if you can already answer them, *you don't need to read the chapter or article*. If you can't answer them, then read more deeply later. At least you will know what to look for.



### Activity 3

Choose a book from your library.

Answer these questions:

- What is the **writer's name**? Is he or she a well-known and respected author (writer)?
- Look at the **date** when it was last published — is it too old?
- Pick out the **chapter headings** on the “**Contents**” page: they tell you what the book has in it — what does it say to you?
- Look over the **Index** to see if useful bits are there.
- Peek at the **Foreword** (if there is one) — sometimes it gives an outline of the whole book.
- Glance at the **Introduction** — it tells you what is in the book, and what it is about!

**Hint:** Choose another book and repeat the process. Practice makes perfect!



### Activity 4

Go to your university's library. Choose a journal that fits your study interests.

- What is the **title**? Does it suit your needs?

**Hint:** If you are a student of Deaf Studies, then “*Knitting Monthly*” is not useful, but “*Deaf Worlds*” is.

- Look at the **date**: Is it *before* or *after* the thing you want to know about?

**Hint:** If you want to know more about the history of Deaf education in the United States in the early 20th century, then “American Sign Language: Acceptance at the University Level after 2000” is not a good option for you. Put it back in its box. However, the issue on “Deaf schools

in pre-Second World War America” might help, so borrow it.

- Look at the table of **contents** — you can quickly see if anything useful is in there.
- Look at **who wrote** the articles — different writers have different points of view.

**Hint:** Remember: you are just skimming the surface. You do not need to dive deeply into the book or journal. Leave the deep stuff for later, or you may drown in all that paper.

Remember: if you read the summary or conclusion before you have read the rest in deep detail, that is fine.

- You are **not** cheating.
- You are **not** taking short-cuts.
- You **are** skimming, or skim-reading.
- You **are** reading skilfully.

**Skimming** is not a *basic* reading skill, really. Basic reading is when you learn the letters, then build them into words, and then link that to meaning. You are beyond that.

**Skimming** is a further level reading skill, it is an *advanced* reading skill, and if you can do it, you are an advanced reader.

**Skimming** will save you a lot of time. It will allow you to find out what to read, and what to leave on the shelf. If you want to buy books, it will save you money, too.



## Activity 5

Take a look at **Handout A**.

Some parts of this interview were blocked out for you. **Use the remaining parts** (the title, the introduction, the interview questions and the first sentences of the person's answers) **to pick out the options you think are correct.**

- a. **It is an interview with a producer of a TV series about students studying at Gallaudet University.**
- b. **It is about Nyle DiMarco's best moments on the "Dancing with the Stars" show.**
- c. **It explains the idea behind making the TV series.**
- d. **It is about the educational system in the US.**
- e. **It is about relationships and love in the TV series.**
- f. **It is about the capital of the United States of America, Washington, D.C., and its Deaf population.**





## Activity 6

Now have a look at **Handout B**.

This time, the text is complete. Use the same strategy and, **very quickly, skim-read the article.**

Look at the following list and pick out the options you think are correct.

- **The blog post is about the lack of subtitled films in cinemas.**
- **It is criticizing the Equality Act 2010.**
- **It provides a tip on finding accessible subtitled shows.**
- **It is about the poor quality of live TV subtitles.**
- **It uses the “Britain’s Got Talent” show as an example of a good subtitling job.**
- **It is about a specific job experience that the writer had.**

**Hint:** Read through the first paragraph. Then read the first sentence of the following paragraphs. Finally, read through the last paragraph.



## Activity 7

Discuss your views:

- **Of the two texts (in Handout A and B), which one do you find easier to skim? Why?**
- **Did you find skimming easy or difficult? Do you think it will be useful to you? Why (or why not)?**

**If you have finished the skimming activities and you are happy with what you have done, go on to the next page: Scanning.**

## 1.5 PRACTISING SCANNING



### Scanning means looking for something.

When you scan a text, look through it quickly. Unlike skimming, you are not looking for **general** information. You are looking for specific information. You know what you want to find, you just need to find it.

**You need to look for details, but you don't need to read every word.**

- You scan every time you look through a **website** for names and contact details.
- You scan when you look through a **dictionary** for words.
- You scan when you look at an **index** to find a particular subject.

You scan when you read a piece of text:

- Look for the **title** to see if it is what you need.
- Look at the **writer's name** to see if you know it and know anything about the writer.
- Look at the **graph or diagram** for statistical information.
- Look for **keywords** to find the information you want.
- Pick out **paragraph headings** to find special information.
- Look for **dates**, too, if you need them.
- Sometimes the article has more **information about the writer** at the end. This may also be useful.

**This is scanning.** You know what you are looking for, and you set out to find it. You can ignore things you don't need, and focus on what you do need. Be careful, though, because you might miss some important information. So, it is better to scan first, then go back and read more deeply after you have found your key information.

## Text marking

Text marking is very helpful. As you read, you can:

- **highlight important keywords;**
- **underline important information;**
- **circle important data;**
- **number the paragraphs;**
- **create a system of margin notations, such as ? for unclear parts, things you don't understand and need to ask the teacher about, or E.G. to mark examples, etc.**

These tips will help you navigate through the text.

Students often use highlighters, but make sure you **do not overdo it**; otherwise, it will just be the same text, all in bright pink. You can use different colours, e.g., circle important dates in red, underline definitions in yellow, etc. But be reasonable. Ten different colours are really too much.

**Hint:** Keywords you underline are usually nouns, groups of nouns, verbs, etc., not articles (a, an, the) or prepositions (at, over, in, etc.).

**Do you feel ready to have a try? Go to the Activity pages about scanning (Activity 8–10).**

You will need:

- **Handout B**
- **Handout C**
- **A4 loose-leaf lined paper (if you want to take notes)**
- **A good dictionary**
- **A highlighter pen will also be useful.**

**Tip:** Print out the texts if you can. If you can't, then copy them into a Word file so that you can use the different formatting options in MS Office (e.g., colouring parts of the text, highlighting bits of the text, crossing out or deleting the parts you don't need).



## Activity 8

Take a look at **Handout C**. Quickly, scan-read the article to find the answers to the following questions:

a. **Who's Nyle DiMarco?**

**Hint:** Look for this name in the text.

b. **Why did DiMarco want to make this TV series?**

**Hint:** Look at the interview questions – where would you expect the answer to be?

c. **How does DiMarco describe capital D deaf people?**

**Hint:** Look at the questions.

d. **What does DiMarco think about the idea of 'not being deaf enough' that one of the students was worried about?**

**Hint:** Look for the key phrase in the text.

e. **What questions does DiMarco say hearing people often had about deaf people when he was younger?**

**Hint:** Look for the key word 'hearing'.

f. **Di Marco tells a funny story about the name of the capital city of the USA. What's the joke?**

**Hint:** Look for the part of the text where Washington, D.C., is mentioned.



## Activity 9

Now look again at **Handout B**. Quickly, scan-read the article to find the answers to the following questions:

- a. Why does the blogger say she misses out on social life?
- b. Why did the school the blogger went to have to change the curriculum?
- c. Does the blogger find hearing loop systems helpful for her?
- d. What sort of modifications did the blogger like about a theatre performance she once assisted?
- e. What's the biggest problem with the "Britain's Got Talent" show, according to Deafie Blogger?
- f. How can you contact the blogger?



## Activity 10

Discuss your views:

- a. Of the two texts (in **Handout B and C**), which one do you think is easier to skim? Why?
- b. Did you find skimming easy or difficult? Do you think it will be useful to you? Why (or why not)?

## 1.6 TACKLING UNKNOWN WORDS



When you read, you usually see some words or phrases you do not know. You can sometimes find the meaning of an unknown word or phrase by:

1. **Guessing**
2. Using the **wider context** and relying on the subject that you are reading about— for example, if it is a geography book or article, there is a good chance it will be a word connected with geography.
3. Using the **immediate context**, and looking at the rest of the sentence.
4. Using a **dictionary** to look it up.



If you use a dictionary, remember that many English words have more than one meaning — it depends on the context. Be careful!

**Complete Activities 11 and 12 to practise word guessing.**

You will need:

- **Handout D**
- **A good dictionary**
- **A highlighter pen will also be useful.**



## Activity 11

**Look at Handout D.** Find the words that are highlighted, and try to find the meaning using the strategies above.

The words are:

**showing, increased, release, otherwise, curriculum, grumbling, massive, stage, outstanding, accurate**

- Write down the words and their meanings in this context (use the text to guide you).**
- For each word, write a sentence of your own, using the word and proving that you understand the meaning. Make up your own sentences—don't copy the sentences from the text!**

**Hint:** Start with the first strategy, guessing. Then look at the wider and immediate context. If this doesn't work, look the word up in a dictionary.

Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	
Word:	Meaning:
Sentence:	



## Activity 12

Imagine you need to answer the following question:

'Who's Nyle DiMarco?'

Applying the strategy discussed earlier, you scan-read the whole text and you learn that the information is contained in the following two paragraphs (underlined with a straight line):

---

*Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.*

*DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.<sup>3</sup>*

---

If you want to answer the question 'Who is Nyle DiMarco?', do you need to know the exact meaning of these words (highlighted in the text in yellow)?

1. set
2. prestigious
3. juicy
4. addictive
5. tight-knit

**Hint:** You don't really need to understand every word in the text.

---

<sup>3/</sup> Source: Lawler, K. (2020, October 12). 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>



- **The meaning of some words can be obvious from the context in which they are used.**
- **If the word is central to understanding some part, then it is important and you should look it up.**
- **It also depends on what kind of reading you are doing.**
  - If you are **reading to know what the text is about**, you don't need to know the definition of every word, so focus on the general idea.
  - If you are **reading for specific information**, you need to know the words that are linked to the answer you are looking for.
  - If you are **reading for detail**, then you actually need to know what each word means.
  - If you are **reading for pleasure**, just look up the words that are necessary for you to understand the main idea. Looking too many new words up can make the text look hard, seem less interesting, and the reading is very slow.



## Activity 13

### Can you use a dictionary?

There are a lot of things a dictionary can tell you. If you would like to know more about them and learn some tips on using a dictionary for your English language studies, register in the e-learning course Online English for International Mobilities (Tóthová et al., 2020)<sup>4</sup>.

#### **STUDY TIP no. 2:** How to use a dictionary effectively

This section of the e-learning course gives you some practical tips on using your dictionary. To access it, you only need to register (it's for free). Once you have registered into the e-learning course (see the previous footnote), you can see the tips under [this link](#).

#### **Study tip practice:** [A dictionary game 1](#)

The goal of this activity is to motivate you to look up new words in a dictionary. You can do this activity [here](#)<sup>5</sup>.

4/ You will find more information about the course here <https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/en/veda-a-vyzkum/projects/languageskills/vystupy/output-3>. You are welcome to use this course to practise your English. Open the starting page and find the "Self-access learners" group. Use this password: Lang.Skills21. If you'd like to take this course with your teacher, contact the course providers at [langskills@teiresias.muni.cz](mailto:langskills@teiresias.muni.cz).

5/ See footnote 4 to see how to register into the course and access this activity.

**Study tip practice:** [A dictionary game 2](#)

Irregular plurals or past perfect forms? Whenever in doubt, your dictionary is there for you. Open your favourite dictionary and let's play this game. You can do this activity [here](#).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>/ See footnote 4 to see how to register into the course and access this activity.

## 1.7 HANDOUT A

'DWTS'<sup>7</sup> champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'

Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.

DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.

[REDACTED]

Where did you get the idea for this series?

*Nyle DiMarco:* It goes all the way back to my college days when I was a student at Gallaudet University with my friends. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Some of the students featured have grown up in the deaf community, and some have never experienced that before they arrive at Gallaudet.

*DiMarco:* Yes. I remember when I was first introduced to the casting (department), everyone wanted to look for big D deaf people, which meant that they shared a very strong cultural deaf identity and had gone to deaf school. [REDACTED]

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<sup>7</sup>/ DWTS is an acronym for Dancing with the Stars, a widely popular dance competition TV show in the USA.

[REDACTED]

Two cast members, Daequan and Rodney, are Black men who don't come from the deaf community, and they talk about that a lot during the series. Were you looking for that experience specifically?

*DiMarco:* Once we really built the cast and I had a chance to meet with all of them, (some) were very unsure about it. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The romantic relationships on the show are so engaging, especially for anyone who really loves reality TV. Was it always going to be about romance or did it happen because the cast is made up of college kids who naturally are attracted to each other?

*DiMarco:* I always wanted a little bit of romance involved, but I wanted to make sure that we were also including LGBTQ+ representation because that's such a major part of our community. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The series brings out a side of the district D.C. you don't often see in political shows.

*DiMarco:* D.C. is an incredibly deaf-friendly city. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]<sup>8</sup>

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8/ Source: Lawler, K. (2020, October 12). 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>

## 1.8 HANDOUT B

### 'Subtitle Problems!' Deafie blogger

Being deaf has restrictions on our social lives! I can't tell you how many times my friends have said "let's go to see the new film at the cinema"... I can't, as they never have enough subtitled showings!

Normally, new films won't have a captioned showing until a week or two after the release date, so I miss out on a lot of social outings. The number of people who couldn't be bothered to wait for me is extremely frustrating! I wrote to the cinema ages ago about this. Although they said that they had increased the number of showings... it's still not enough for us deafies to go regularly, when we want to.

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/> is a brilliant website to find the subtitled or audio described cinema showings in your area. However, where I come from there's not a lot of variation, often more children's films than adult ones. D and I wanted to watch Fast and Furious 7 before he went home, but there were no showings until the day after he went! How typical. Did I mention, there were two of the same subtitled showings at different cinemas, at the same time but no other times? It's just not fair! We've now got to wait for the DVD release, but why should we wait?

"Public services need to make 'reasonable adjustments' otherwise it's classed as discrimination" – Equality Act 2010

So come on Odeon, Vue and Cineworld... You're losing out on deaf customers!

Non-subtitled films are still around... I studied Media at school and we had to watch specific films set by the exam board. Since I started the course, half of the films provided didn't have subtitles. The exam board were a right pain in the backside when it came to emailing them about requesting subtitled films. Because of this, they had to change the whole curriculum plan for me... I felt so bad, but like I said, 'reasonable adjustments' have to be made for deaf students!

New television episodes... I absolutely love MTV Catfish, who doesn't?! I get so excited when there's a new series out, waiting for the release date like everybody else! What a surprise when it's finally showed! ... There's no subtitles! The fact that I can't watch some new programmes, makes me feel like they're discriminating us deaf people, by only making the programmes accessible to the 'normal hearing' public. This puts me off TV for the rest of the night, and I go to bed grumbling at the downsides of being

deaf, whilst my family enjoy watching it!

Live TV subtitles are so bad, agree? They're just not fast enough, they miss lines out, or get words muddled up... it can be funny at times [...].

I'm a fan of Britain's Got Talent, but I've lost count at the number of words that are spelled wrong or the amount of sentences that are late! Because of this, deaf people have delayed understanding of the programme, which results in us being left out in family and friend situations. We're asking questions like "what did they just say?", or we're the last to laugh at the jokes, how embarrassing. It wouldn't be as bad for us if the subtitle quality was improved!

My family loved to go to the theatre, we haven't been much in the last few years. Anyway, I'm not a massive fan of theatre as I don't have a clue as to what's going on! How can I possibly lip-read sitting about 10 metres from the stage, looking down from the upstairs circle, when they're all flouncing around the stage? Impossible! They have a hearing loop system, unfortunately they never work for me...

A couple of years ago, I did work experience at a small theatre and I was assisting them with access arrangements for deaf people. It was such fun, the end performance result was outstanding! They had a captioned performance, done by a palantypist, which was so accurate and detailed. I'd love if there were more of these in the big theatre. There was an up close and personal Question and Answer session where the actors were sat close to the deaf audience and there was a sign language interpreter which made us all feel so welcome!

That's all for now, I'd love to hear your stories, view the [contact page](#), Tweet me or email me at [deafieblogger@gmail.com](mailto:deafieblogger@gmail.com)!<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>/ Source: Deafie Blogger. (2015, May 20). 'Subtitle Problems!'. Deafie Blogger. Available at <https://deafieblogger.com/2015/05/20/44/#more-44>.

## 1.9 HANDOUT C

'DWTS'<sup>10</sup> champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'

Nyle DiMarco didn't see much of his own experience on TV when he was growing up. "There has never been a show that really gives a deep dive into the deaf community or the deaf cultural experience," the actor, model and activist says.

DiMarco, 31, who has won "Dancing With the Stars" and "America's Next Top Model," sets out to change how deaf people are portrayed on TV as a producer of "Deaf U," Netflix's new reality series (now streaming). Set at Gallaudet University, a prestigious Washington, D.C., college for people who are deaf and hard of hearing, the series is no afterschool special, but rather a juicy, addictive series about a tight-knit community of students from different backgrounds.

Speaking to USA TODAY on a video chat with a translator, DiMarco explained why the series is so important, how he found his magnetic young stars and his own experiences at Gallaudet.

Where did you get the idea for this series?

*Nyle DiMarco:* It goes all the way back to my college days when I was a student at Gallaudet University with my friends. We often would talk about how badly we needed our own reality TV show about the Gallaudet experience. ... When we went out on spring break one year, there was a whole audience of hearing people who were really interested and wanted to learn more about our culture and essentially how to do the sign language. They always wanted to party with us.

Some of the students featured have grown up in the deaf community, and some have never experienced that before they arrive at Gallaudet.

*DiMarco:* Yes. I remember when I was first introduced to the casting (department), everyone wanted to look for big D deaf people, which meant that they shared a very strong cultural deaf identity and had gone to deaf school. Most capital D deaf people

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10/ DWTS is an acronym for Dancing with the Stars, a widely popular dance competition TV show in the USA.



are very confident. They're very energetic, they have really interesting personalities compared to people who might identify as little "d" deaf, who aren't really a part of deaf culture. But I wanted to tell their story as well, and I wanted to see the comparisons. I wasn't by any means gauging whose experience was better. I wanted to really portray that there is no one right way to be deaf.

Two cast members, Daequan and Rodney, are Black men who don't come from the deaf community, and they talk about that a lot during the series. Were you looking for that experience specifically?

*DiMarco:* Once we really built the cast and I had a chance to meet with all of them, (some) were very unsure about it. They knew that it was going to be on Netflix, but they weren't sure if this was something that would really tell their story. ... They were worried that the show could potentially cause them some harm in the future. And then we had Daequan. Originally, he responded and said, "no, I'm not deaf enough." And when I asked him what that meant, "deaf enough," (Daequan) said, "well, you know, a lot of people would assume that you're deaf enough and that your story is a lot more important" (referring to DiMarco). But Daequan's story really was key.

The romantic relationships on the show are so engaging, especially for anyone who really loves reality TV. Was it always going to be about romance or did it happen because the cast is made up of college kids who naturally are attracted to each other?

*DiMarco:* I always wanted a little bit of romance involved, but I wanted to make sure that we were also including LGBTQ+ representation because that's such a major part of our community. Growing up, hearing people would always ask, "How do deaf people date? What does that even look like?" And I thought, all right, well, now is the time you're going to get (to see) it. We wanted to make sure that the show didn't come off (as a) public service announcement. We wanted to see people go through romantic relationships or friendships. We wanted to see that universal experience that hearing people also go through in college.

The series brings out a side of the district D.C. you don't often see in political shows.

DiMarco: D.C. is an incredibly deaf-friendly city. I always felt very normal and comfortable living there, because so many people had already met deaf people and had an experience with our community. There are a lot of people in D.C. who do know some sign language, and it feels like a city that deaf people kind of own. And funny enough, growing up in D.C., I always thought it stood for “deaf community.” The Washington Deaf Community just made sense.<sup>11</sup>

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11/ Source: Lawler, Kelly. 2020. 'DWTS' champ Nyle DiMarco brings the romance and drama of deaf culture to Netflix in reality series 'Deaf U'. USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/tv/2020/10/12/deaf-u-nyle-dimarco-brings-deaf-culture-netflix-juicy-series/3594432001/>

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12/ Source: Deafie Blogger. 2015. 'Subtitle Problems!'. May 20.  
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LANG  
SKILLS



**Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students

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# Unit 5

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**Strategies for Essay Writing.**  
**Student's Booklet**

# Table of contents

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### What is this booklet about?

This booklet was created to help you work on your writing skills. The content is adapted to suit the educational needs of Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) students and it uses lots of culturally relevant examples.

This booklet contains:

- **short informative texts that will help you understand the topics;**
- **practical Activities for you to practise what was explained;**
- **handouts you will need to do some of the Activities.**

### Who is this booklet for?

The booklet was designed for D/d/hh university students who plan to study abroad and wish to improve their English before their visit. You can use it to improve your writing skills in English in general.

**Your English should be at level B1 or B2 according to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) for you to be able to use these materials.**

### How can this booklet help you?

The goal of this booklet is to help you write better, particularly the essays required in university education. Essays are a very common form of writing assignment in courses at higher education institutions, so it is important that you learn how to write them. In fact, writing involves many things such as knowledge of words and grammar, planning, composing, editing and revising, as well as referencing and quoting correctly.

This booklet includes useful tips and practical Activities to help you be a skilled essay writer.




Use this booklet to:

- **get a number of useful essay writing tips;**
- **learn more about the writing process for better-organized, easier writing;**
- **help you understand the major mistakes students make when writing essays and try to avoid them;**
- **understand when and how to reference and quote sources correctly.**

## 1.2 EFFECTIVE ESSAY WRITING: INTRODUCTION



Essays are a typical university assignment. This section gets you ready for essay writing. You will learn about the stages of writing essays in English. We will look at different ways of planning, things that can help you, how to understand essay titles, and important information about the stages of essay writing. 

### Types of essay

There is not just one type of essay that teachers will ask you to write. Make sure you know what type of essay you need to write before you start writing.

Some typical essays are:

- **Argumentative essay** – you want to prove to the reader that your opinion about something is correct. You give a lot of evidence.
- **Opinion essay** – you give your opinion about something.
- **Compare and contrast essay** – you analyse two things to see how similar or different they are.
- **Descriptive essay** – you describe something so that the reader can picture or imagine it.
- **Explanatory essay** – you want to inform, explain, or describe something, rather than argue or persuade somebody.
- and others...



## Activity 1

Read these five essay topics.

Write an **A** next to the ones that could be good topics for argumentative essays, a **D** next to those you think could be good topics for descriptive essays and an **O** for opinion essays.

1. **The first time I visited Gallaudet University**
2. **Deaf students should be mainstreamed rather than taught in Deaf schools**
3. **Why everyone should learn to sign**
4. **The ways I deal with procrastination**
5. **The influence of Instagram on modern teenagers**

**Hint:** It may be difficult to say if a topic is more suitable for an argumentative or an opinion essay. That is because some topics can be both. Whether the essay is argumentative or an opinion depends on the arguments and evidence you use.

**It is very important to read carefully the essay instructions. They tell you what to do.**

## Words used in essay instructions and their meanings

<b>Account for</b>	means give reasons for, explain
<b>Contrast</b>	means look for differences between things
<b>Criticize</b>	means look at good & bad, both sides
<b>Distinguish between</b>	means look for differences (also differentiate between)
<b>Illustrate</b>	means make it clear and obvious; you may need to use examples
<b>Compare</b>	means look for similarities between things
<b>Summarize</b>	means say the main ideas in a few words
<b>Justify</b>	means give an evidence

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There are at least **three steps** for essay writing – means three things you have to do. You will learn these three steps during the activities for this section.

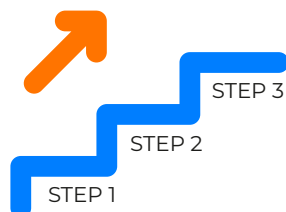
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## 1.3 ESSAY PREPARATION



### Planning your essay

There are several steps for essay writing – this means there are several things you have to do. You will learn these steps when doing the Activities for this section.



Let's look at your planning. So, *why* is it so important to plan and to brainstorm?

OK – planning will help you avoid writing a weak essay. One big weakness in a lot of essays is that they are not balanced: they are too much about one part, or go off the point, or waffle too much about one thing.

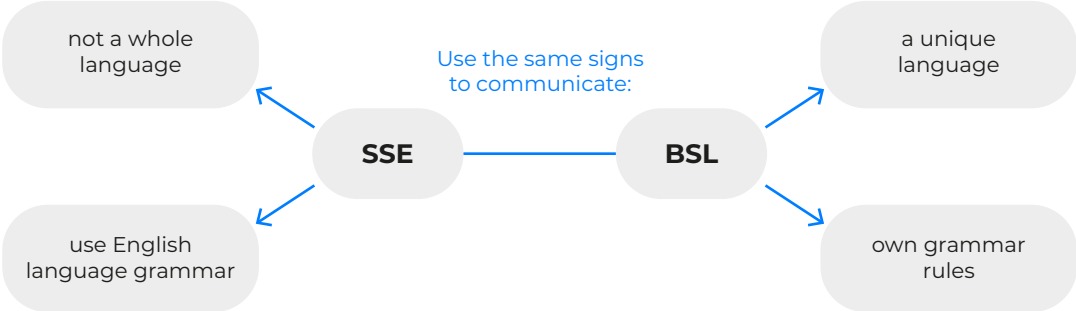
**Planning will help you to produce a balanced essay.**

The structure of an essay is important. Like a house – if the structure is bad, the house falls down! So your essay must have lots of points in it, be organised well, and must have an Introduction and a Conclusion. 👁

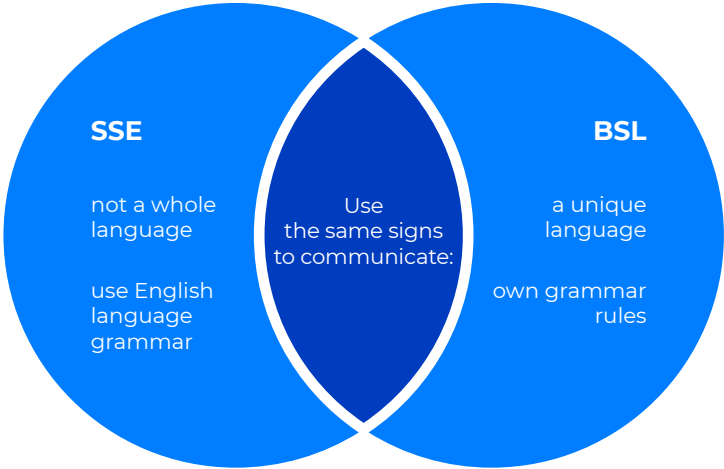
How do we plan an essay? Different people like to plan essays in different ways. The outline also depends on the type of essay you need to write.

For example, for a compare and contrast essay about Sign Supported English and BSL, you can use these methods:

**Concept maps – mind maps, etc.**



**Diagrams**



**Charts**

Different	Same	Different
<b>SSE</b> not a whole language uses English language grammar	use the same signs to communicate	<b>BSL</b> a unique language own grammatical rules

## Linear outline

### SSE:

- not a whole language
- uses English language grammar

### BSL:

- a unique language

### BOTH:

- use the same signs to communicate



## Activity 2

Choose an essay topic and create an outline plan for a 300-word essay

- **Find information: look for books and online resources**
- **Get organised**
- **Talk to others**
- **Use the outline plan you like best, e.g. a mind map, hamburger method<sup>1</sup>, etc.**

**DO NOT „start writing“ – you are not ready to start writing yet!**

**Hint:** Your outline plan should contain headings for each section of your essay and a rough word count for each section.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 12 to learn more about this method.

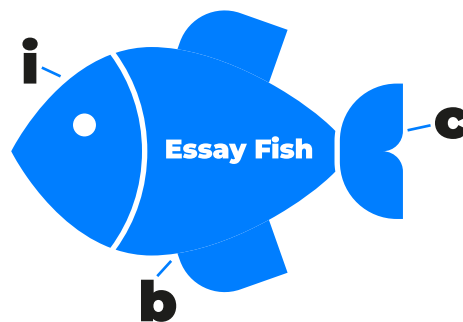
## 1.4 IMPROVING ESSAY STRUCTURE



This section helps you think about how to improve your essay structure. You will learn about the body of an essay in English. We'll consider the different elements of an essay and things that can help you understand the importance of essay structure. 👁️

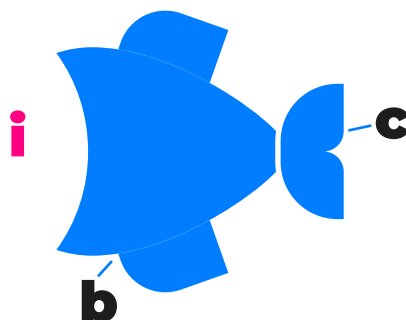
You can achieve an effective essay structure by paying attention to the following three parts of an essay:

- **Introduction**
- **Main body**
- **Conclusion**



Think of an essay as being like a fish, with a head (introduction), with a body (main body), with a tail (conclusion).

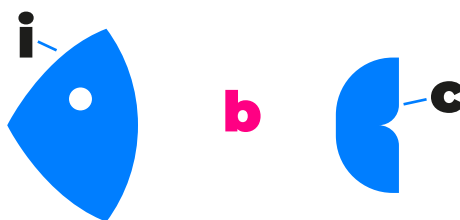
### Introduction



- This is the **beginning** of your essay.
- Show clearly that you know what the title/question is about and how you are going to respond.
- Tell what *areas* you will write about.
- What made you decide to write about these specific areas & aspects?

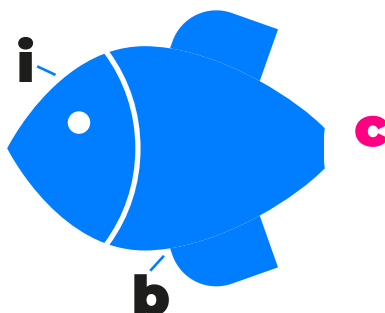


## Body



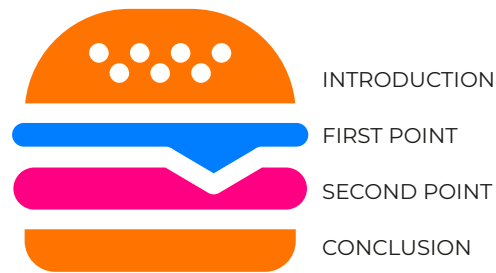
- This is the **main part** of your essay.
- Each paragraph should raise a new topic or issue.
- Support the points you make with references.
- Make the transitions from one paragraph to the next smooth and clear.

## Conclusion



- This is the last part of your essay – it is important. It must link to the rest, and give a final statement.
- Make a final conclusion from your points in the essay – what does it all mean? What are the **implications**?
- Don't be afraid to take sides, but you must deal effectively with a full range of arguments and views.

Another visualization method is the hamburger writing method. Use the layers to guide you. Put your notes next to the parts of the hamburger.



And remember, you can add more „filling“ if you need more paragraphs.

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Imagine you need to write an essay about Deaf culture in the Czech Republic. Using the hamburger diagram, we can start planning our essay like this:

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**Essay topic:** Analysis of Deaf culture in the Czech Republic

**Introduction:** Importance of Deaf culture

**Paragraph 1:** Czech Sign Language

**Paragraph 2:** Humour

**Paragraph 3:** Arts

**Conclusion:** Deaf culture in the Czech Republic today is vibrant.



### Activity 3

**A. Write a short paragraph about how a student can improve the structure of an essay.**

- begin with the importance of reading and understanding the question
- consider what the whole essay should contain overall
- refer to the importance of the word count

**B. Explain why an introduction is so important and what information it should contain.**

**C. Describe the main features of the body of an essay.**

**D. Explain why a conclusion is so important and what information it should contain.**

## 1.5 WRITING YOUR ESSAY



Now you are ready to write your essay. Let's do it.



### Activity 4

**Write your 300-word essay.**

Take your plan, plus any notes you have made from books and websites, plus any quotes you found in books – then what?

Put it all together and write your essay!

**Hint:** Stay organised, follow your plan structure, make sure your writing makes sense and keeps to the point, and stay on track!

## 1.6 EDIT YOUR ESSAY: HOW TO AVOID COMMON MISTAKES



This section helps you to improve the contents of your essay writing in English. You will read about the various problems that can occur when writing essays, and you will learn how to avoid making common mistakes.

This will lead you to achieve the following:

1. You will have a clear idea about common mistakes in assignments.
2. You will be able to write more accurately and efficiently.

**Students frequently make mistakes in these areas when they write English essays and assignments:**

- Grammar, spelling and punctuation
- Addressing the questions in the essay instructions
- Essay formatting
- Conclusion
- Referencing and quoting

**Proper grammar saves lives.**

~~Let's eat Grandpa.~~

Let's eat, Grandpa.

### **Common mistake #1: Grammar, spelling and punctuation**

- Mistakes in grammar, spelling and punctuation that can be reduced by using spell-checking tools.

The use of (spell-checking) tools can help you avoid some grammar, spelling and punctuation mistakes. You should use these tools to check all your school assignments.

**The most common spelling and grammar checkers are MS Word and Grammarly** but there are many others. If you're not sure how to set them correctly, you can find many instructional videos on YouTube.

**Spell-checkers are great, but not perfect.** For example, spell-checkers often cannot recognize when words like 'their', 'there' or 'they're' have been used incorrectly. Also, they don't recognize if the tense of a verb (past, present or future) is in the right form. This means your writing will not be completely error-free if you use spell-checkers, but they can help eliminate the biggest issues.



## Activity 5

### Do you use spell checking tools?

You'll find a practical task on text editing using the MS Word spell-checker in the e-learning course Online English for International Mobilities (Tóthová et al., 2020)<sup>2</sup>. There are also practical tips and hints for you.

**STUDY TIP no. 1: How to check spelling and grammar in your assignments. In this section, you will learn why you should use spell checking tools and get to know some useful tips for better spell checking. To access it, you only need to register (it's for free). Once you have registered into the e-learning course (see the previous footnote), you can see the tips under [this link](#).**

**Hint:** Ask yourself these questions:

- » Have you checked the text for grammar mistakes?
- » Have you used a spellchecker?
- » Have you checked the spelling and punctuation on your own?

<sup>2</sup> You are welcome to use this course to practise your English. First, register into OpenMoodle – it is free of charge. Then open the starting page (<https://openmoodle.phil.muni.cz/course/view.php?id=37>) and find the “Self-access learners” group. Use this password: Lang.Skills21. This video (<https://youtu.be/GVGHJzXE0N4>) will help you. The Technical Guide ([https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/TeiresiasMU/media/content/Projekty/LangSkills/langskills\\_technical\\_guide-self-access-users.pdf](https://www.teiresias.muni.cz/TeiresiasMU/media/content/Projekty/LangSkills/langskills_technical_guide-self-access-users.pdf)) can be useful, too.

## Common mistake #2: (Not) addressing the questions in the essay instructions

- **Giving answers that are not relevant to the questions.**
- **Giving made up answers.**

It is very important to read the instructions for each task carefully. It may be a good idea to use a highlighter to mark the key words.

Imagine that the instructions say this: Your task is to write an opinion essay. Choose between these topics:

- A. „One thing to improve foreign language education of Deaf students“**
- B. „One thing to improve foreign language education of hard of hearing students“**

In your essay, explain what you think needs to be improved, and how this change can benefit the students. Use your personal observations, experience, and knowledge to support your essay.

This means you need to make sure you:

- **say clearly what „one thing“ you want to write about;**
- **explain how this change could in your opinion help the students;**
- **include your own experiences and observations.**

**Hint:** Before you submit your essay, ask yourself these questions:

- » Have you included all the points from the question in the assignment instructions?
- » Have you included relevant facts, examples, or personal experiences to support your point?
- » Is the evidence relevant to the topic?

## Common mistake #3: Essay formatting

- **Missing assignment title, course name & code – this information should be on every page (use the ‘Header’).**
- **Missing page numbers – they should be on every page (use the ‘Footer’).**
- **Little attention paid to the organisation of the text into paragraphs, to the fonts used, to spacing and alignment.**

Essay formatting and structure are very important. There are several things to care about:

- **Division of the text into paragraphs** – The text should be divided into clear paragraphs. You should have a separate paragraph for the introduction and the conclusion. The body of the essay is also divided into paragraphs. The number of paragraphs depends on the number of main ideas.
- **Font** – You can use a plain serif font, such as Times New Roman, or a sans serif font, e.g., Arial. The suggested sizes are 12 for the text and 14 for headings. Use just one font for the entire essay.
- **Title** – If your essay has a title, use it.
- **Spacing** – Essays should use at least 1.5 line spacing, and double spacing is often welcome.
- **Header** – You can insert your name there.
- **Page numbers** – It is nice to include numbers in texts that are longer than one page.
- **Indentation** – Typically, the first line of every paragraph should be indented, but make sure to ask what the teacher prefers.
- **Align** – We align texts to the left.



**Hint:** Look at your essay and think:

- » Is your text organised into clear paragraphs?
- » Is your name on it?
- » Have you chosen a suitable font? Do you use this font for the whole text?
- » Is the spacing the same in the whole essay?
- » Have you indented the first line of each paragraph?
- » How long is your essay? Is your writing too long/short?

### **Common mistake #4: Poor conclusion**

- **No conclusion**
- **Poor conclusion**
- **Strange conclusion**

Ending with a strong conclusion is very important. You basically sum up your arguments and send a clear message to the reader.



## Activity 6

Read these concluding paragraphs. Compare them. Which do you find more suitable?

### A.

To summarise my point, I agree that face masks play a part in controlling the spread of Covid-19; however, deaf people's communication needs should be considered as well. I believe that where this protection is necessary, see-through masks and see-through face shields should be freely available in healthcare and education settings.

### B.

I agree that face masks play an important part in stopping the Covid-19 pandemic but they cover the mouth and it is hard to communicate. For instance, those who lipread cannot do so. Also facial expressions cannot be seen. Face masks can be also unhygienic. For example, children cannot take proper care of their face masks. And then they can have breathing problems, because people often wear dirty masks. So see-through masks and see-through face shields are better.

**Hint:** Think of the use of expressions such as *To summarise, to conclude, in conclusion, etc.* Has the writer used them? Does the writer go to the point? Is the takeaway message clear for the reader?

**Hint:** Always make sure you:

- » Use some of the concluding phrases such as „in conclusion“, „finally“, or „all in all“.
- » Restate your thesis, but don't use the exact same words.
- » Don't introduce any new ideas.
- » Stick to the point.

## Common mistake #5: Referencing and quoting

### Quotations

When writing academic assignments you often need to make reference to or quote the work of other authors. A **quotation** is a line or a couple of lines copied directly from your source. Quotations match the original source word for word. For all quoted material you must include an **in-text citation**, and you must reference the source in the References section at the end of your essay.

Citing sources requires some practice. Students often make mistakes in this area, but you should try to avoid these mistakes because otherwise it may be plagiarism. So be careful.



### Activity 7

Think of the following:

#### A.

Do you have to cite when...

- you copy other person's text word-for-word into your essay?
- you summarize or paraphrase facts or ideas from a source?
- you include a graph or a chart from another source into your essay?

#### B.

And do you have to cite when...

- you say something that is generally known?
- you tell your opinion?
- you describe your own findings?

**Hint:** Any time you use someone else's work, you need to acknowledge the sources.

If you want to include in your essay an idea from a text you read, you may also summarize or rephrase the idea.

- **A paraphrase is retelling the same idea using your own words.**
- **A summary is a short version of the idea. You focus on the most important parts of a long passage.**

In both cases you must again cite the source using an in-text citation and then add the source to the References.



## Activity 8

Look at the source text and try to rephrase it **(A)** and summarise it **(B)**.

**A.**

‘It is important to realise, however, that many countries in the Southern hemisphere and elsewhere do not yet provide anywhere near universal Deaf education’ (Ladd, 2003: 43).

**B.**

‘As explained earlier, Deaf communities differ from other linguistic minorities in one crucial aspect – their language and culture can be transmitted down the generations only by the 5–10% with Deaf parents. For the other 90% of Deaf children, born to hearing parents, access to a sophisticated language and its traditions can only be gained by attending Deaf schools. As Chapter 2 describes, Deaf schools socialised newly entering Deaf children, enabling Deaf norms, values and traditions to develop and be passed down from generation to generation’ (Ladd, 2003: 43).

Source: Ladd, Paddy. 2003. *Understanding Deaf Culture*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

## Common mistake #6: Incorrect referencing

- **No reference**
- **Poor reference**
- **Poor information**

## Referencing

There are three major referencing styles used in academic writing:

- **Modern Language Association (MLA)**
- **American Psychological Association (APA)**
- **Chicago**

There are also several others. The differences among them are not big, but you should not mix these styles.

Compare the citations of the following book using these different styles:

### **MLA**

Ladd, P. *Understanding Deaf Culture*. Clevedon, Multilingual Matters, 2003.

### **APA**

Ladd, P. (2003). *Understanding deaf culture*. Multilingual Matters.

### **Chicago**

Ladd, Paddy. 2003. *Understanding Deaf Culture*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.

Poor referencing is a common mistake the students make in their assignments. You should always reference your sources and make sure you do it the right way. There are different referencing styles. Make sure you ask which style you are expected to use. Don't mix them.



## Activity 9

Do some quick research to explain the following question:

---

What is the difference between a Bibliography and References?

---



## Activity 10

Choose a couple of books from your library. Your task is to reference them correctly. Focus on:

- **The author(s), or editor(s)**
- **The title**
- **The edition other than the first (if applicable)**
- **The publisher's name.**
- **The place of publication**
- **The year of publication.**

Use one of the major referencing styles, MLA, APA or Chicago. To check your work, you can use one of the online referencing sites such as <https://www.citethisforme.com/>. You will find many similar sites on the internet.

**Hint:** Before you submit your essay, make sure of the following:

- » Cite your work and give credit. **Do not plagiarize.**
- » Use the referencing style assigned by your instructor.
- » Use citation software if you need.

## Finally, remember these things:

- **Check your work.**
- **Ask for advice.**
- **Follow the rules.**
- **Keep to the point.**
- **Show you are interested.**
- **Take responsibility for yourself and your work.**

## 1.7 REFERENCES

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LANG  
SKILLS



**Deafinitely English:**

Online materials for teachers of English  
as a Foreign Language for Deaf, deaf and  
hard of hearing students

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# Unit 6

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**Developing Study Skills.**  
**Student's Booklet**

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

### What is this booklet about?

This booklet was created to help you **develop your study skills**. The content is adapted to suit the educational needs of Deaf, deaf and hard of hearing (D/d/hh) learners and it uses lots of culturally relevant examples.

This booklet contains:

- **short informative texts that will help you understand the topics;**
- **practical activities for you to practise what was explained;**
- **handouts you will need to do some of the activities.**

### Who is this booklet for?

The booklet was designed for D/d/hh university students who plan to study abroad and wish to improve their English before their visit. You can use it to improve your study skills in general.

Your English should be about B1 or B2 level, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2001), to use these materials.

### How can this booklet help you?


In this booklet, you will get to know more about study skills and learning strategies and how to apply them. Study skills are skills that will help you learn more effectively. By developing effective study skills, you may be able to cut down on the number of hours you spend studying, reduce anxiety about tests and deadlines, and increase your self-confidence. So, mastering these skills will not only improve your performance at university, but also your ability to learn in general – that is something you can benefit from your whole life!

Use this booklet to:

- **learn how to better understand questions in assignments and exams in English;**
- **learn some tips that will help you improve your time management skills;**
- **be encouraged to reflect on your study patterns so you can identify areas for improvement;**
- **get tips on handling distractions.**

## 1.2 UNDERSTANDING ASSIGNMENT & EXAM QUESTIONS



This section helps you to be better able to answer questions in assignments and exams in English. You will learn about the differences among questions and about how assessments work, including what is expected of you in relation to writing your answers. 

### Assessment in post-secondary education

It is important for you to know what assessment you can expect at university level.

Some of the typical methods of assessment are:

- **Assignments:**

- These are usually written pieces of work required by your course tutor.
- They can count towards your final mark or grade.
- Lecturers give you assignment titles/questions, usually at the start of the course.
- The same assignment titles/questions may be in the coursebook, if there is one, or in the syllabus.

- **In-class tests:**

- These are the tests that you do in class.
- You usually get the questions at the time of the exam/test.
- Sometimes you get the questions a little before the test.

**It is critical to know how to prepare for them.**

## Assignments

### Hint: Make sure:

- **you understand what you have to do, when the deadline is, how many words your assignment needs to be, etc.**
  - talk to the teacher
  - ask your classmates
- **you understand the questions**
  - select the key words and focus on them
  - answer the questions you are asked, not those you would prefer to answer
  - use colour coding
- **you start your research, if you need to do any, in time**
- **you always make an outline**
- **you proofread the text**
- **you respect the deadline**
  - If you can't meet the deadline, ask for an extension before the deadline.

## Exams and in-class tests


### Hint: Make sure:

- **you understand what you have to do (how many questions there will be on the test, what is going to be tested, when the test will be, can it be taken more than once, etc.)**
  - talk to the teacher
  - ask your classmates
- **you understand the questions**
  - select the key words and focus on them
  - answer the questions you are asked, not those you would prefer to answer
  - use colour coding
- **you manage your time**
  - wear a watch – phones might not be allowed
  - skim the test first
  - start with the easy questions you can answer quickly.

## Analysing exam questions

You can do better in answering exam questions by focussing on:

- the verb used in the question
- the concepts used in the question.

**Colour coding** can be very helpful, as it helps you focus on the key words and concepts. You can choose one colour to mark the **key verbs** and a different colour to mark the **key concepts**. 

### List of the most common verbs used in essay questions.

Verbs	Meaning
state, define, <b>list</b> , name, write, recall, recognise, label, reproduce, recount, describe	Show you <b>KNOW</b>
<b>Example:</b> <b>List</b> the main causes of <b>deafblindness</b> .	
<b>Hint:</b> Write the main ideas briefly, without any lengthy discussion or too specific details.	

Verbs	Meaning
identify, <b>justify</b> , select, indicate, illustrate, represent, reformulate, explain, contrast, classify	Show you <b>UNDERSTAND</b>
<b>Example:</b> <b>Justify</b> the use of cloning to save <b>endangered animals</b> .	
<b>Hint:</b> Give reasons and supporting evidence for your point.	

**Verbs****Meaning**

predict, **demonstrate**, instruct, use, perform, solve

Show you **CAN DO**

**Example:** **Demonstrate** an example of how to **cite information** taken from a **book** in an essay.

**Hint:** Show how you cite information. Focus only on citing books as stated in the instructions.

**Verbs****Meaning**

analyse, identify, differentiate, separate, **compare**, contrast, distinguish between

Show you can **ANALYSE** (take apart)

Example: **Compare** the **deaf and hearing culture** focusing on **space and proximity**.

**Hint:** Show that you can look for similarities, and possibly also differences.

**Verbs****Meaning**

Combine, **summarise**, argue, discuss, design, organise, relate, generalise, conclude, debate, formulate, propose

Show you can **SYNTHESISE** (build up)

Example: Consider the **factors** impacting upon the **interpreting profession**, with particular reference to **ethics, minority rights and access**. **Summarise** your research results.

**Hint:** Think about all the things that have an impact on the interpreting job. Focus on ethics, on minority rights, and on access. Think about them and write about them.



## Verbs

## Meaning

Judge, evaluate, determine, support, **defend, criticise**, select, appraise

Show you can **DECIDE** and make judgements

**Example:** There are schools where the students receive regular **written and oral evaluations** of their work instead of grades. Some people believe that this is more effective for learning than the grading system. How do you feel about this issue? Use specific reasons and examples to either **defend** or **criticise** this system.

**Hint:** Show that you can take a point. If you decide to support this point, provide evidence to support your opinion. If you disagree with this idea, point out why this is not such a good idea in your opinion.



## Activity 1

Look at the following essay instructions:

**A.**

More and more people are deciding to stop eating meat and become vegetarians. Do you agree with this idea? Argue for or against becoming a vegetarian. Support your positions with examples.

**B.**

Describe, in detail, why it is important to develop sign language dictionaries. Use the article reviewed in class as a reference.

**Explain what they want you to do.**

## 1.3 TIPS ON BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT SKILLS



Being a good time manager is a very important life skill. With so many things to do over the semester, you may easily feel overwhelmed and confused, so it is important to know how to plan and to prioritise your tasks. This section gives you a lot of useful, practical tips you can start using right away. 👁

Good planning is essential. It is a good idea to prepare a **semester plan**, to plan over a longer-term perspective. **Weekly plans** will help you manage more immediate tasks.

### 1.3.1 Effective planning 1: Prepare your semester plan

It is a good idea to prepare your semester plan at the beginning of each semester. A semester plan clearly shows your due dates all in one place so it is easier to have control over them. It should include all the important due dates, exams, field trips and other relevant activities. 👁

Make sure you include the following:

- **The schedule of your classes**
- **All assignments with their due dates**
- **Any other important school activities**

## Here are a few tips that can help you plan for the semester more easily:

You can create your own calendar or try googling for 'semester planner' templates. No matter what format you choose, remember that **a single-page format** is the most effective. It allows you to visualize the big picture of what needs to be completed by the end of the semester.

**Highlight** the 'big' dates you really must not miss, or you need to do your best on.

**Update** the plan as soon as anything changes, a field trip gets cancelled, a due date is postponed, and so on, to keep track of the latest changes.

**Display** your Semester Plan somewhere where you can look at it frequently.

**Tick off** the assignments you have already completed.

**Start in advance.** During your 'busy weeks', when you have multiple assignments or exams due, you need to start preparing yourself in advance to make sure you can handle everything on time and have enough time for revising.




### Activity 2

Prepare your own semester plan.

Use a blank sheet of paper to start your plan, or use a freely-available online planner (Google for it). Put in all the important things you need to get done by the end of the semester. Highlight the most important ones.

**Does it seem helpful for you to have such a plan?**

### 1.3.2 Effective planning 2: Prepare your weekly plan

Now you have your semester plan and you can see the bigger picture of your duties. That is great, but you will also need a more immediate plan to help you tackle the tasks. 

Each Sunday take a sheet of paper (or Google a weekly planner) and write down things you need to get done each day of the upcoming week.

Include the following:

- **Write down each class you have for each day of the week.**
- **Write down all the assignments, events, projects that need to be completed or are occurring that week.**
- **Check your semester plan and the notes from the previous classes to see if you need to include anything else.**
- **Add to your weekly plan any out-of-school activities you'll be taking part in during that week.**

**Again, the tips that were given for the semester planning are relevant for your weekly planning, too:**

| **A single-page format** is the most effective because you can see everything in one place.

| **Highlight** the most important items.

| Be ready to **update** the plan as the week progresses and new items appear or get cancelled.

| Keep the weekly plan **visible**.

| **Tick off** the assignments you have already completed.

If there are some fairly busy days, consider if you can **reschedule** some of the activities.



### Activity 3

Prepare the weekly plan for the upcoming week.

Create your own plan or use a freely-available planner. Put in all the important things you need to do. Highlight the most important ones.

**Do you find this strategy helpful? Why, or why not?**

**Hint:** Make sure you leave enough time for relaxing and out-of-school activities. You can't work all the time.

### 1.3.3 Effective planning 3: Other useful time management strategies

Once you have finished your semester calendar and your weekly schedule, there are several other strategies that will help you accomplish more and make effective use of your time. 👁

These include:

- **Prioritising tasks**
- **Breaking down big tasks**

#### A **Prioritising tasks**

You might sometimes get the feeling that there just isn't enough time in the day to do everything. To reduce these feelings, focus on what you need to do first and consider whether there is anything you can leave out. When you have a lot of work, it is important to prioritise. 👁

#### **Step 1. Write a list of things you need to do**

It is always a good idea to write things down, because it is hard to focus on them when they are just swimming around your head. You need to pin them down. Lists or bullet points are very useful for this purpose, because they tell you in a structured way what the tasks are.

Imagine that this is your to-do list for today:

1. **Sign up for a date and time of my presentation on Deaf culture**
2. **Finish the assignment that is due in two days**
3. **Shop for birthday cake ingredients**
4. **Borrow the book on conference interpreting I want to use for my essay**
5. **Hard of hearing club meeting**
6. **Buy a new set of highlighters**

You also need to go to your Academic Writing (9:00-10:30) and Spanish classes (11:00-12:30) in the morning, so you know you can start working at 13:30 when you get back from university, after you have had your lunch. You really need to use the remaining time wisely and effectively.

## Step 2. Put the tasks in priority order

Make a plan to tackle your tasks in the time you have available.

There are different methods of prioritising commitments. One is the following chart (called the Eisenhower Matrix) that sorts the tasks and projects into four categories:

- **Urgent and important:** You need to do these tasks as soon as possible
- **Important, but not urgent:** Think of when you will do these and put it in your semester calendar.
- **Urgent, but not important:** Delegate these tasks to someone else.
- **Neither urgent nor important:** Drop these from your schedule.

First, you need to write down all the tasks and to-dos that you need to do (see Step 1). Then, using the chart, you sort these tasks into four categories.

To give you an example, your list of to-dos might look like this:

<b>Urgent &amp; important</b>	<b>Important but not urgent</b>
Sign up for a date and time of my presentation on Deaf culture Finish assignment (due in two days).	Borrow the book on sign language conference interpreting I want to use for my essay (due in two months) Hard of hearing club meeting today at 18:00.
<b>Not important but urgent</b>	<b>Not important and not urgent</b>
Shop for birthday cake ingredients	Buying a new set of highlighters

### Step 3. Follow the order

OK, the chart is ready. Now the important thing is to stick to your prioritised list. Try to avoid distractions and get the urgent and important issues done as soon as you can.

Start with the most urgent tasks and projects that are listed in the 'urgent and important' box.

Make sure you don't forget about the 'important but not urgent' activities, but consider postponing or rescheduling them.

Things that are 'not important but urgent' can sometimes be delivered by someone else. Perhaps a friend or your brother can give a hand?

To-dos that are neither important nor urgent can wait till you have spare time on your hands. Take note, but don't worry about them now.

In the example used above, the strategy would be as follows. Your priority would be to:

- 1. Sign up for your presentation date before the slots get taken.**
- 2. Finish the essay or at least the bigger part of it right after you sign up for the presentation date. Complete or edit it tomorrow.**
- 3. Ask your sister to buy the ingredients, as she goes shopping for food.**
- 4. Then think about rescheduling or rearranging plans:**
  - Skip going to the meeting this week to save time and ask a friend for an update.
  - You know the essay is due in two months, so it is ok to borrow the book next week.
  - Buy the highlighters next week when you are less busy.





## Activity 4

Create your own to-do chart.

- **Think of the activities that you need to tackle today or in the next two days. Include all your classes, job commitments, etc.**
- **Then draw an Eisenhower chart. Sort all the activities and duties into the chart.**

**Do you find this method helpful? Why, or why not?**

**What other strategies do you use?**

## B Breaking down big tasks

A good way to deal with a complex study task is to break it up into small sections. Assignments are less overwhelming if you only need to deal with smaller pieces at a time. It is nice to see individual tasks being ticked off, which gives you the motivation to continue your work. 👁

How do you break down complex projects into small tasks?

Start brainstorming. Think of the different steps you will need to take. For example, if you need to write a 500-word essay about 'Analysing the Deaf culture in the Czech Republic', you can break it into these subprojects:



Now, these subprojects may still seem too big. So you can keep breaking them down. For example:

Write a chapter on Czech Sign Language:

- a. **Look for sources (library, Internet);**
- b. **Mention briefly the number of users, the year of emergence, and the most pertinent laws;**
- c. **Explain the basic differences from the Czech language;**
- d. **Mention some of the institutions that are involved in researching, protecting and spreading Czech Sign Language;**
- e. **Compile the notes into one solid paragraph of about 150 words.**

Deadline: 20 March

You don't have to do all these subtasks in one sitting. You can split them up even more:

Write a chapter on Czech Sign Language:

- a. Look for sources (library, Internet) – ongoing.
- b. Mention briefly the number of users, the year of emergence and the most pertinent laws – by Wednesday 5 March.
- c. Explain the basic differences from the Czech language – by Monday 10 March.
- d. Mention some institutions involved in researching, protecting and spreading Czech Sign Language – by Friday 14 March.
- e. Compile the notes into one solid paragraph of about 150 words. – when b, c, and d are done, by 19 March.
- f. Revise – when a, b, c, d, e done, by 20 March.

To apply this strategy, you can try the following:

- Write down all the **action steps** you can think you will need to take.

**Hint:** If you can't think of all the steps in advance, just write out the next two or three steps. After doing them, you will be able to foresee the next steps.

- Set a **timeline** for completing your tasks.
- Think about the **logical order** of doing the individual tasks. What should you do first, second, next, etc.?
- Complete your project early enough to have some time left for a **final review**.




## Activity 5

Take a piece of paper. Think of one project you need to do. Try to break it into smaller sessions.


**Do you find this method useful? Why, or why not?**

## 1.4 MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR STUDY SESSION



In this section, you will find some tips on organising your study sessions effectively. From organizing your study space, to reflecting on your study habits and handling distractions, to getting enough sleep, these tips can help you sail through the busy exam period more smoothly. 

### 1.4.1 Reflecting on your study patterns

Do you ever spend time reflecting on your study habits? This is very useful to do from time to time: 

- **It helps you realise what usually works for you.**
- **It tells you if there is anything you need to change about your study habits.**
- **It indicates which study places are the best for you.**

Ask yourself the following questions:

- **What time of day are you most productive? In the morning, afternoon or night?**

**Hint:** If you can, always try to study during your productive hours. Use the less productive hours for rest, food or doing smaller, mechanical things you don't need to focus much on.

- **What kinds of distractions disrupt your concentration most?**

**Hint:** Make sure you know what the major distractors are for you and then, try to avoid them (see the next section for some tips).

- **How often do you need to take breaks?**

**Hint:** Naturally, it is impossible to concentrate fully for five hours in a row. We need to take breaks. Try setting time-framed study sessions, and then take a break. How long should the break be? You need to figure out on your own what works best for you. Start with 30 minutes and see if that was too long or too short for you to stay focused on the task.

- **Do you work well under pressure?**

**Hint:** If not, then you should never leave revising for an important exam until the night before it.

- **How often do you review your school work? Do you revise weekly, before the next class, or do you leave everything until the exams?**

**Hint:** Are you happy with your revision system? Do you need to do anything to improve it?

- **Do you learn well in a group?**

**Hint:** If so, finding a friend who can study with you could work well for you.



## Activity 6

Answer the questions above in writing to describe your study behaviour.

Think about the following questions:

- **Do you think your study habits bring you good results at school?**
- **Would you like to change your study habits somehow? How can you do that?**

## 1.4.2 Handling distractions

You know the situation: You need to be working on your thesis, but there are so many things to deal with. You are browsing the web for sources, but at the same time you find so many interesting things you want to watch and read that are unrelated to the thesis writing. Checking your social media seems very attractive and necessary. Then you start thinking about the upcoming holidays and plan the things you can do. It is your sister's birthday and you want to get her a present, so you start shopping online...



Distractions are everywhere, unfortunately, and saying 'try to avoid distractions' is not really helpful.

Internal study distractions include thoughts and emotions that are making you lose focus on your studies. For instance, you might be wishing to be with friends, enjoying yourself instead of revising for a test. Or you might be so worried and anxious about the test that you can't focus and actually study.

External study distractions include technology, social media, your study environment, and other people. Some of your external distractors might be friends who are asking you out, YouTube videos you are eager to watch, or a chair that is too hard to sit on.

So, what can you do about distractions?

- **Put your phone out of reach and set it on do not disturb mode.**
- **Set yourself a clear objective that you want to achieve in each study session.**
- **Work in manageable blocks of time (see the section on 'Breaking down the big tasks').**
- **Allow yourself frequent breaks.**
- **Start well in advance so you don't become stressed and pressured for time if you hate working under pressure.**
- **Schedule time to check your email and social media.**



## Activity 7

Take a piece of paper. Write down the things that usually distract you the most when you need to do schoolwork. Be honest with yourself.

Now think what you can do to eliminate these distractions. Take note of that, too.

**Hint:** Next time you need to do some important schoolwork and you notice that you are again letting yourself get distracted, have a look at your answers.

### 1.4.3 Finding a suitable study space

You have probably noticed that you do better in some environments and worse in others. This is because different people learn better in different places. Some love studying in a library surrounded by other people who concentrate and enjoy the atmosphere, while others may dislike it because they can't use their favourite chair. Finding a comfortable study space that works for you and allows you to concentrate on your studies is key. Once you've found such a place, do stick with it whenever possible. 👁

**Regardless of the place you feel most comfortable studying in, make sure the area is well-lit.**

Maybe you have already found your ideal study spot. If not, try answering these questions:

- **Do you prefer to study in public places or at home?**
  - Do you like some buzz around you, or do you prefer a calm, quiet environment?
- **What room is best for homework and studying?**
- **What position is the best?**
  - Do you always sit behind your desk, or do you feel that walking helps you?

- **What things you like to keep in easy reach?**

→ Do you need a mug of tea at your desk? A set of highlighters? Spare sheets of paper? Anything else?




## Activity 8

What is your favourite study place?

Answer the questions above to find out.

### 1.4.4 Finding balance

Let's be real. You can't be studying, note-taking, or revising all the time. You need to find the right balance between your studies and social life. Eating right, getting sleep, getting exercise and having a social life are very important, too. 

If you are struggling, approach your loved ones and also be sure to ask for help from the relevant person at your university.



## Activity 9

Take a piece of paper.

1. **What do you do when you feel overwhelmed with school work? What helps you to relax? List what helps you most.**
2. **With whom do you discuss these feelings?**



One last important piece of advice for you is to stay open and flexible, because despite making every effort, one can't plan for everything. You will need to stay flexible and adapt your plans to the changing situation. Just make sure you get back to your responsibilities as soon as you can.

Good luck!

## 1.5 REFERENCES

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