

Please Take Note

Levels

Intermediate +

Aims

Draw relevant information together from several sources

Class Time

40 minutes–1 hour

Resources

Realia on a topic (e.g., environmental issues, animal rights, euthanasia) from several sources
Essay question
Overhead projector (OHP) and supplies

This activity develops synthesis skills using a number of sources. Note-taking practice enhances the skill of choosing relevant material. Organizing these notes into a coherent response to the assigned question should result in good paragraph development. The same process can be expanded to a complete essay.

Procedure

1. Cull materials from what comes onto your doormat: handbills, periodic reports from Greenpeace, Amnesty, charities, supermarkets; arrange these as a packet for the students to read.
2. Prepare a question (or give an essay title) that can be answered from the collected texts.
3. As the students take notes, move around the class to be sure that they are learning how to take relevant notes (guard against copying or memorizing sentences).
4. When the first student has finished her paragraph ask him or her to write it on a transparency or on the board.
5. As each student completes her paragraph, ask her to write it up.
6. Everyone is invited to look at the paragraphs and offer constructive criticism (i.e., edit them). (This activity makes good use of quick students' time. Slower students may edit only one piece.) Students learn to spot and correct errors.
7. As you move around the classroom, try to glean: (a) problems with selecting relevant points; (b) grammar points widely misunderstood; (c) problems in paragraphing shared by a number of students. Following Step 6, you can take up these three points with the whole class.

Contributor

8. Clean copies of the paragraph should be handed in and a homework assignment with similar requirements should be given for further practice.

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