

PSLE English Composition Strategies

As was implied in last month's article one of the objectives of the English PSLE is to measure how well your child can express himself in writing. The **Situational Writing** component tests his ability to respond to a practical scenario, the purpose being to synthesize and convey the information provided effectively. Since this type of writing is most common I'm sure many situations will arise at home that your child can take advantage of for practice. Does someone need detailed directions? Do you need to send an explanatory e-mail or fax? Get your kid to write it! (And don't forget to look it over and offer any necessary improvements as well as encouragement.)

In **Continuous Writing** your child will be expected to construct a story based on a picture or verbal description. Narrative guidelines will be provided; still, a dash of originality and imaginative detail might make his writing stand out. Show him photographs and drawings with people or animals in them that he can spin a story around. Write down a brief description of something happening—then let him take it from there. (This component carries more marks than Situational, so he should proportion his time and preparation accordingly.)

But whatever the context or subject, writing well and clearly involves good vocabulary, knowledge of grammar, and the ability to organise your thoughts. Examiners look for evidence of a **strong vocabulary** and its appropriate use. I would advise students against mindlessly repeating the words given in the assignment; instead they should try substituting synonyms and using their own phrasing. How do you equip your child to do this? By encouraging him to **read widely**, both fiction and nonfiction, even poetry! This is the quickest and surest way to build one's vocabulary.

Help your kid improve the **organisation and coherence** in his writing by reading stories and articles with him and helping him analyse how the authors have structured each piece. What information is provided first and why? Is there cause and effect at work? What are the plot elements and how are they developed? Remember, **good reading begets good writing**.

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Coming next month:

Taking your kid's comprehension skills to the next level



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Ask Elly anything regarding your child's English language challenges. Email her at elly@jan-elly.com