Pearson English International Certificate

Lesson Plan Ideas: Skill Building Activities

Short Writing Task (Describe Image)
Task Introduction

- Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks assess test takers’ writing skills.
- These tasks test understanding of sentence structure and grammar, as well as range and accuracy of vocabulary.
- Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks are included on the A1 and A2 tests.
- There are 1-2 Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks on each test.
- Test takers see a picture on the screen.
- They have 9 minutes to plan, write and proofread a description of the image.
- The image will usually present a scene of a familiar place or common situation, such as a park, people waiting at a bus stop, or a room in a family home.
- The image will contain a number of elements, including objects, people, animals etc.
- Test takers should try to write an accurate description of everything within the image.
- On screen, Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks appear like this:

  ![Example Image](image.png)

  Test takers should write at least 25 words.
Strategies for Success

Make notes of the main features. Test takers have 9 minutes in total to plan, write and proofread their descriptions. Make sure that they understand the importance of planning first. They should make a note of the key features, so that they do not need to keep looking back at the image while writing their description.

Ask yourself questions. It is important that descriptions include all the main features of the image. To avoid missing anything, test takers should prepare think about questions to ask themselves about images before taking the test. When the image is shown, test takers should ask themselves questions like ‘What can I see in the picture?’ ‘What is happening?’ ‘Who is in the picture?’ ‘What are they wearing/doing?’ They should then make notes of the answers to these questions. Once they have written their description, they should ask themselves questions like ‘Have I included everything?’ ‘Is my grammar accurate?’ ‘Have I spelt everything correctly?’ and so on. It can help test takers to produce a list of these questions before taking the test.

Use full sentences. When test takers writer a description of the picture, they should not produce a list of the picture’s features. They should try to create a paragraph containing full sentences. A test taker’s score for Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks will relate to their ability to use full sentences as well as appropriately vocabulary.

Proofread. Test takers will receive a score based on the accuracy of their writing. They should finish writing around 1 minute before the end of the available time in order to check that they have not made any mistakes and that their grammar and spelling are correct. While proofreading, test takers should also be looking for opportunities to improve their work. For example, they should look for places where they could use adjectives to make their description more detailed and to display a wider range of vocabulary.
Short Writing Task (Describe Image):
Activities for all learners

At A1 level, learners can write simple phrases and sentences about very familiar matters, such as what people are doing and where they are. At A2 level, learners can write a series of simple phrases and sentences about their common situations, living conditions and jobs. The pictures used in Short Writing Task (Describe Image) will test these abilities by presenting common places and familiar situations. Each will include a number of elements. Practise by using task below and other practice tasks to help your learners get used to describing pictures of this kind.

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. Write at least 25 words.
Short Writing Task (Describe Image): Activities for all learners

To prepare for Short Writing Task (Describe Image), all learners should be helped to understand the requirements of the task. They should all practise planning, writing and checking descriptions of images within time limits. All learners should also try to build their vocabulary so that they are able to describe the pictures in full.

Understanding the task

After introducing the format of Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks to your learners and explaining the Strategies for Success on page 1, check that they have understood by using the following true/false questions and/or gap-fill summary.

True/False Questions

1. Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks assess test takers’ speaking skills.
2. These tasks test understanding of sentence structure and grammar, as well as range and accuracy of vocabulary.
3. There are three Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks on each test.
4. Test takers are shown a picture on the screen.
5. They have 10 minutes to write a description of the picture.

Answers: 1) False – writing, not speaking skills. 2) True 3) False – one per test 4) True 5) False – 9 minutes

Gap-fill summary

Before writing a complete description, test takers should make (i) ________ of the picture's key features. They should ask themselves (ii) ________ , such as ‘What can I see in the picture?’ and ‘What is (iii) ________ ?’. After planning what to write, test takers should use full (iv) ________ in their description of the picture. When they have finished writing, test takers should spend around one minute (v) ________ their work.

Word options

a) sentences  b) happening  c) questions  d) proofreading  e) notes

Answers: (i) e – notes (ii) c – questions (iii) b – happening (iv) a – sentences (v) d – proofreading
**Short Writing Task (Describe Image): Activities for all learners**

**Vocabulary sketches**

Learners can sometimes get bored of writing definitions of new words, especially A1 and A2 learners, who encounter a large amount of new vocabulary, and especially visual learners, who find it harder to learn through just the written word. Creating vocabulary sketchbooks can be an engaging way to build your learners’ vocabulary range while also getting them ready for Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks by creating clear and direct associations between written words and their graphic representation. Present students with a list of words used for describing objects or actions in a particular context. Then, ask them to draw a sketch in their notebook to represent each word. Emphasise that this activity requires no artistic talent at all! It is simply about learning common nouns and verbs.

**Class blog**

At A1 and A2 level, it is important that learners are given a variety of tasks that provide opportunities for them to recycle their limited existing vocabulary while also learning new words and structures. Creating a class blog can do this in a fun and engaging way. Using your institution’s online learning platform or a suitable social media site, ask learners to take it in turns to post photos of something they like or somewhere they have recently been. Ask them to label the photo when posting. Then, ask other members of the class to make comments about the image; e.g. ‘That is a huge building!’ or ‘I like that green jacket!’ Tell students that they should comment before reading each other’s comments. After commenting themselves, each learner should respond to a comment posted by one of their classmates; e.g. ‘Yeah, I agree’ or ‘Actually, I think it is more blue than green’. As your learners’ ability improves, ask them to describe every element of the photos using full sentences in the way they will need to do for Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks.
Short Writing Task (Describe Image):
Activities for all learners

Be your own spell check

These days, English users, including people whose first language is English, often rely too much on their digital devices to check their spelling. When doing Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks, test takers need to ensure that their spelling is accurate so you should use activities in class that promote accurate spelling and give your learners a chance to practise their proofreading skills. One way to do this is writing a list of words – some containing spelling errors, others spelt perfectly. Ask your learners to identify the words that contain errors and correct them. You can turn this into a fun competition by awarding points to the learners or groups who identify and correct all of the errors most quickly. Alternatively, for stronger learners, you could provide them with a short text and ask them to read each sentence to identify the errors, before then correcting them. Here is an example text describing the practice image above. It contains 7 spelling errors.

An elderly woman with grey hair is sitting on a bed where a boy with blonde hair is lying under a duvet. She is reading a book about an elephant to him. He is holding a stuffed tiger toy and we can also see a rabbit and monkey on the bed. Next to the bed, there is a table with a lamp and a glass of water. In front of the lamp, there is a clock, which says the time is 7:30.

Key: An elderly woman with grey hair is sitting on a bed where a boy with blonde hair is lying under a duvet. She is reading a book about an elephant to him. He is holding a stuffed tiger toy and we can also see a rabbit and monkey on the bed. Next to the bed, there is a table with a lamp and a glass of water. In front of the lamp, there is a clock, which says the time is 7:30.
**Short Writing Task (Describe Image):**

Activities for all learners

---

**Where is it? Matching activity**

Short Writing Task (Describe Image) tasks often require test takers to describe the position of elements within the image in relation to each other using language such as ‘above’ ‘next to’ ‘in the background’. Help your learners become familiar with positional language using matching activities and illustrations.

For example, you could ask them to match these sentences (a–c) to the correct picture (i–iii):

a) The ball is beneath the cupboard.  
b) The ball is on top of the cupboard.  
c) The ball is inside the cupboard.

Key: a) iii  
b) i  
c) ii

For learners with some artistic talent, it can also be fun, as well as useful, to get them to draw their own sketches to represent the meaning of different positional words/phrases. Useful vocabulary for them to focus on includes: ‘above’ ‘before’ ‘behind’ ‘below’ ‘beside’ ‘between’ ‘by’ ‘close (to)’ ‘down’ ‘far (from)’ ‘in’ ‘near’ ‘next to’ ‘outside’ ‘over’ ‘through’ and ‘under’.
**Short Writing Task (Describe Image): Practice Tasks**

A2

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. Write at least 25 words.

![Image of people in a cafe](image1.png)

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. Write at least 25 words.

![Image of a backyard party](image2.png)
Short Writing Task (Describe Image): Practice Tasks

A2

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. Write at least 25 words.

Look at the picture. You have 9 minutes to write about the picture. Write at least 25 words.
Be yourself in English.