

Keeping writing relevant to the question is something that learners often have difficulty with. Sometimes this is because they mis-identify the key content points, sometimes it's because they write their answer for the wrong purpose.

This is the outline of a lesson I did with my CAE class the other day - I used tasks from the [Cambridge Certificate in Advanced English 1](#) practice test book - but this would be adaptable to other levels and your own materials.

The aims are:

- to familiarize learners with the language and style of exam writing questions
- to provide learners with a strategy to access key question content

### **Lead in:**

A quick discussion among the learners - which writing tasks they like, which ones they don't and why.

### **Presentation:**

Give the learners a sample Writing Part 2 question (either question 2, 3 or 4) and ask them to work in pairs to identify (a) what they have to write about; (b) why they are writing.

Feedback & input: draw a line down the middle of the board and either nominate people to come up and write their ideas in the right side of the board, or ask them to tell you and write their ideas up yourself.

On the left side of the board, write the acronym:

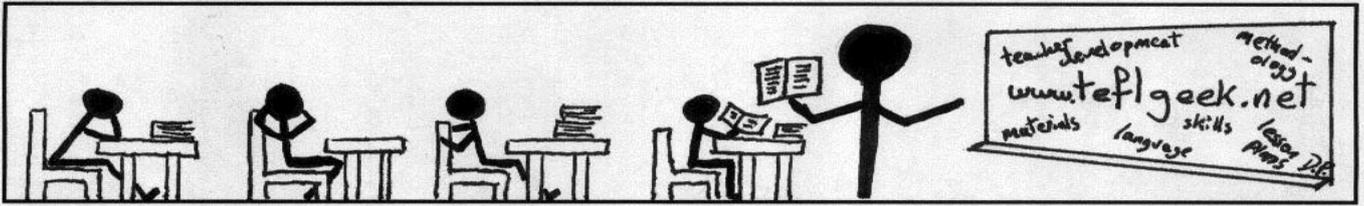
- T
- I
- P

Ask the learners what the acronym stands for: tell them it represents:

- **Theme (or Topic)**
- **Idea(s)**
- **Purpose**

The TIP is a tool to help them analyse the question and make sure they are including the relevant information in their answers.

Using the sample question you gave them earlier, lead them through an analysis. As an example, see the question below, which is reproduced here [without official permission](#) from Cambridge ESOL and which comes from the [2008 version of the handbook](#):



3 You see the following announcement in an international magazine:

**GREAT SCIENTISTS COMPETITION**

We are planning a series of TV programmes about the 10 greatest scientists of all time. Which scientist would you nominate to be included in the series? Write to us describing this person's achievements and explaining why you feel he or she should be included.

Write your **competition entry**.

Here I would suggest that the **Topic** is "a famous scientist", the **Ideas** are "their achievements" and the **Purpose** is "to convince someone to make a TV programme about them".

The TIP tool also functions as a way of determining the organisation of the text, in the above case, the **introduction** of the competition entry relates to the **topic**, while the **main body** would contain a description of the **ideas** and the **conclusion** would be the essential justification to include the chosen scientist, in other words, fulfilling **purpose**.

### **Practice:**

Ask the learners to form three groups (group A, group B, group C) and give them additional part two questions to work with. Ask them to identify the TIP for each question.

Regroup the learners so that they are working in groups of three, with each group comprising one student from the former groups A, B & C. The learners can then share and compare their analyses and you as the teacher can monitor and clarify any concerns.

### **Further Practice & Production:**

In their groups of three from the previous stage, ask the learners to write their own "CAE Writing Part 2 question". Monitor this stage and if necessary feedback on whether the questions are too broad (e.g. write a proposal for world peace), too specific or requiring specialist knowledge (e.g. what are the advantages and disadvantages of Samsung as compared to Apple) or too personal (e.g. write a letter introducing your partner to your parents) - none of which candidates need to write about in a Cambridge exam!

When they've drafted suitable questions, they swap their questions with a different group, who must (a) identify the TIP for the question they've just been given; (b) draft a suitable plan for an answer and (c) write a strong introduction for their answer. (this last one can be dropped if time is an issue).

These can then go back to the group that wrote the question for feedback, or the groups can come together to compare outcomes.

The End.

Except of course, for homework, you may want to ask them to complete a Part 2 writing task....