

## Class newsletter creative writing project

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### Appendix 1: Newsletter Project Intro Handout

Congratulations! You are now part of an all-class newsletter team. This semester, we will create a class newsletter to be shared with each other and everyone else in SCAT. This newsletter could also be used to introduce SCAT to future students!

Basic/tentative schedule for project:

Day 1: introduce assignment and teams, sign up for teams, form teams, receive more detailed assignment sheet.

Day 2: project work

Day 3: project work, submit names for newsletter

Day 4: in-class drafting of section, vote on newsletter name

Day 5: [computer lab] submit drafts to editing teams, edit articles, and submit

Each class' newsletter will be 4 pages long. Each team will submit their materials by the end of class on Day 5 (of the project) and I will organize everything to fit the newsletter on Microsoft Publisher.

But what will you work on? We will have formal sign-ups on \_\_\_ and immediately get into our teams. Students who are absent or arrive late will be placed onto teams based on necessity and group sizes. Once you pick a team, **you are not allowed to change** (but depending on class size, you may be asked to join a different team). **Please be flexible!** Teamwork will help you work on your English!

Each team will receive a more detailed assignment sheet after sign-ups. Below is some basic information about each team to help you decide which team you'd like to sign up for.

#### There are 6 teams available:

<p><b>Do you like to read books, watch movies, and talk about them?</b></p>	<p><b>A) Movie/Book Reviewers:</b> this team will either review one movie/book together or write mini-reviews of several movies/books in English. These can be movies you've all seen recently or books you've read. What did you like or dislike? Would you recommend it to others? Why or why not? <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team B's work for the newsletter.</i></p>
<p><b>Do you like to share ideas and advice with others?</b></p>	<p><b>B) Advice Columnists:</b> this team will share advice about learning English, learning about other cultures, and/or study abroad. Each member can write their own personal advice, or everyone can create a larger article together. The advice can be based on personal experience, talking with friends, classmates, or from online or TV. The team must work closely together to avoid repeating the same ideas or coming up with too many/too few ideas. <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team C's work for the newsletter.</i></p>

<p><b>Do you like to meet new people from other countries?</b></p>	<p><b>C) Interview Team:</b> this team will decide on one or two native speakers of English to interview for the newsletter. The speaker can be a friend, an international student at Toyo, or an instructor of English. The team would create a list of appropriate questions (why are they in Japan, what do they think of Japan, hobbies, etc.), arrange a time to interview, and type up the interview. One member should be appointed as team photographer. All members should contribute to the questions. <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team D's work for the newsletter.</i></p>
<p><b>Do you like to know what others think about popular topics?</b></p>	<p><b>D) Survey Team:</b> this team will survey classmates and other students at Toyo on any topic of their choice: food, likes, dislikes, travel, study abroad, English, etc.). All members must contribute to the questions and speaking to other students (Japanese is okay when you talk to other students on campus, but the answers must be translated into English for the newsletter). All members must evaluate the responses to the survey and agree on which submissions to publish. <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team E's work for the newsletter.</i></p>
<p><b>Do you like to write or draw for fun?</b></p>	<p><b>E) Short Story/Comic Team:</b> this team is ideal for students who prefer to work alone or in pairs. Each member must create a short story/poem/song/comic about any topic, but consider topics we've covered in class for inspiration. All members must discuss ideas and brainstorm together, and helping each other out is encouraged. <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team F's work for the newsletter.</i></p>
<p><b>Do you like to be creative and funny?</b></p>	<p><b>F) Horoscope Team:</b> this team will create SCAT-related horoscopes for each of the astrological signs and blood types. Be creative! All members must share ideas for the horoscopes and help avoid repetition of ideas and fortunes. The content should be based on SCAT, class work, class topics, and/or anything else related to Toyo. One member can illustrate each horoscope if possible. <i>This team will be responsible for looking over and editing Team A's work for the newsletter.</i></p>

**Each team will also decide on a leader.** Be careful with your decision—your leader will have final say over the team's decisions and has to be able to resolve any problems. Your leader will need to have everyone's contact information.

**All materials for the newsletter are due \_\_\_\_.** Students will also evaluate themselves and their teams on that day. Email any finished work or photos before the deadline if possible. Anything sent after the deadline may not be accepted or printed.

Appendix 2: Newsletter Group Sign-Up Sheet

## Newsletter Project Sign-Up Sheet

Please sign your name under one of the groups below. The numbers indicate how many members are allowed in each group. **Once you sign up for a group, you cannot change your decision!** One member of each group will be the leader and responsible for reporting to Jamie. Choose carefully.

A: MOVIE/BOOK REVIEWERS	B: ADVICE COLUMNISTS	C: INTERVIEW GROUP	D: SURVEY GROUP	E: SHORT STORY/COMIC GROUP	F: HOROSCOPE GROUP
1)	1)	1)	1)	1)	1)
2)	2)	2)	2)	2)	2)
3)	3)	3)	3)	3)	3)
4)	4)	4)	4)	4)	4)
THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP B</b>	THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP C</b>	THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP D</b>	THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP E</b>	THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP F</b>	THIS GROUP WILL EDIT THE DRAFTS FOR <b>GROUP A</b>

## Appendix 3: Newsletter Project Group Handouts

### Team A: Movie/Book Reviewers

Congratulations! You're a movie/book reviewer for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- Talk about movies you've seen. Why did you see them? What did you enjoy about them?
- Talk about books you've read or like to read. How did they help you with English? Have you used any English textbooks? Have they been helpful?
- You will use time outside of class to work on this project too. Stay in touch with each other through email and phone.
- As a team, you can decide to review one movie/book together that you've all seen or read, or you can split the team into doing mini-reviews: some members review one movie/book, some review another.
  - For fiction novels and movies, include the following in your review:
    - Introduction & setting: What's it called? Who wrote it? Where does it take place? Who are the characters?
    - Summary: What are the major events that happened in it? DON'T give away the ending.
    - Review: How was the book? What did everyone on the team like? Did everyone agree?
    - Recommendation: Would your team recommend this book to other students? Why or why not?
  - For textbooks or study guides, include the following in your review:
    - Introduction: What's it called? Is it part of a series?
    - Purpose: What is the book mainly for? Is it for grammar, listening/speaking, test preparation, etc.?
    - Organization: How is each chapter/unit organized? What is included in each chapter/unit?
    - Review: How was the book? Did it help you when you needed it? Did you enjoy using it?
    - Recommendation: Would your team recommend this book to other students? Why or why not?
- The team will have about one page (A4 size) of the newsletter to fill. Divide this up if you decide on two mini-reviews instead of one large review.
  - Depending on the layout of the newsletter, some parts might be shortened. However, it's always a good idea to start with a lot and remove extra than to not have enough.
- Your article is due in class for Team B to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_

## Team B: Advice Columnists

Congratulations! You're an advice columnist for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- Talk about your experiences with learning English, learning about other cultures, and/or study abroad. Has anyone on the team been to another country? Has anyone ever attended (or taught) cram school for English? What do you know about other cultures?
  - Your audience is current and future students.
  - Be confident as a source of wisdom for your readers!
- The team will have about one page (A4 size) of the newsletter to fill. Decide if you want to write one large article together or divide the article up into sections (English, culture, study abroad). Whatever you decide, work together as a team so that you are not repeating ideas.
  - Depending on the layout of the newsletter, some parts might be shortened. However, it's always a good idea to start with a lot and remove extra than to not have enough.
- Make sure everyone agrees on the advice being given in the article.
  - Has anyone on the team followed the advice before? What were the results?
  - Is there more than one way to follow the advice?
- Share ideas heard from friends, classmates, professors, TV, the Internet, etc.
- Share unique ideas too! Maybe someone on the team has had some unusual experiences with learning English or study abroad.
- Use time in class to share ideas and draft sections of the article.
- You will use time outside of class to work on this project too. Stay in touch with each other through email and phone.
  
- Your article is due in class for Team C to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_

## Team C: Interview Team

Congratulations! You're an interviewer for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- Talk about international students or native speakers of English you may know. Do you know any students who live in the I-House? Do you know any English-speaking professors, teachers, or graduate students?
- Make a list of people you could interview about their experiences living in Japan or tips for mastering English. Make sure you have contact info for each person.
  - Your team is only going to interview 1-2 people total, but it's good to have more on the list.
  - Ask the person permission before beginning the interview. If the person says no, respect his wishes and choose another person on your list.
  - The interview should be done in person, not through email.
- During the interview, one or two students can ask the questions, one or two students can record the responses. One member can take a picture if possible.
- What kinds of questions? Think about questions relating to
  - living (and studying) in Japan
  - culture
  - language learning
  - hobbies, interests
- Avoid "taboo topics": religion, politics, weight, money, etc.
- How many questions? That's up to you. The team will have about one page (A4 size) of the newsletter to fill. It's better to have a lot of information and reduce it than to have too little information.
- Use time in class to draft questions and discuss people to interview. Practice interviewing each other in order to get more comfortable with the format.
- The interview will not take place during class time.
  
- Your article is due in class for Team D to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_

## Team D: Survey Team

Congratulations! You're going to perform surveys for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- What do you think is popular or at least something you'd like to learn about from your fellow Toyo students? What drinks, movies, books, learning styles, etc. are popular or common? In the past, I've had students create surveys on fitness or things to do/see in the neighborhood. You could use these topics, or choose something else.
- Create at least 5 questions about your topic.
  - Your questions cannot be personal: do not ask for names from participants. You can ask for ages if you think it is important for your topic.
  - Your questions can be multiple-choice or open-ended.
  - As a team, aim to talk to at least 20 people about your survey. The more people you include, the more varied responses you'll get.
  - Everyone on the team must have a chance to survey people.
    - You can ask the questions in Japanese, but you must translate all responses into English for the newsletter.
- Review your survey's responses together. If you chose open-ended questions, translate the responses together. Decide which responses are the most helpful or unusual or unique for publication.
- The team will have about one page (A4 size) of the newsletter to fill. It's better to have a lot of information and reduce it than to have too little information.
- Use time in class to draft questions, and, after you've done the survey, to look over responses. Practice surveying each other in order to get more comfortable with the format.
- You cannot give the survey during class time, though during class you can include classmates if you want.
- Your article is due in class for Team E to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_

## **Team E: Short Story/Comic Team**

Congratulations! You're going to a short story/comic for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- Even though these stories can be done alone, it is a good idea to help each other for this project. Share ideas and think about maybe writing a story or producing a comic together. Each member can do his/her own story/comic, or you can do this in pairs or as an entire group. You will have about a page of the newsletter (A4 size), so divide it carefully.
- Topic: it can be about anything you want, but it must be in English.
  - Your audience is current and future students.
  - Suggested topics include studying/improving English, study abroad, and life at Toyo.
- Use your class time effectively. Draft and check each other's work during class.
  - Bring whatever supplies you will need for your story/comic to class each day.
- Your article is due in class for Team F to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_



## Team F: Horoscope Team

Congratulations! You're going to create horoscopes for your class' newsletter! Below are your responsibilities, as well as suggestions for work:

- Choose a leader. The leader must collect every member's contact information (email, phone number) so he or she can contact anyone who is missing or to share information from the teacher.
  - Make sure everyone on the team knows who the leader is. If you are absent, talk to the leader about any missed newsletter work before talking to the teacher.
- With your team members, decide which set of horoscope signs you'd like to include. You do not have to do all the different sets.
  - Western zodiac signs (in English): Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces
  - Chinese zodiac signs (in English): Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, Pig
  - Blood type: A, B, AB, O
- Be creative, but fair, with what your team writes for each sign's information. Remember, each sign's fortune should relate to learning/studying/improving English, study abroad, SCAT, or Toyo.
  - It might be helpful to read about the signs online or discuss what you know about the qualities for each one.
  - For example, Capricorn people (*yagi-za*) are very ambitious and serious. People born under the sign of the Monkey are clever. Blood type O people are responsible and organized.
- The team will have about one page of the newsletter to complete, so try to fill as much of it as you can. One member of the team can illustrate each sign.
- Use your time in class effectively. You should try to complete all parts of this section in class.
- Your article is due in class for Team A to read and edit on \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4: Sample Newsletter Check-in Sheet

### Newsletter Project Check-in, Day 4

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1) Name:

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2) Newsletter group:

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3) Explain what your group's section will look like. What is everyone doing?

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4) Up to today, I have done these things for/with my group:

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5) By the next class, I plan to have done these things for/with my group:

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6) Next class we will be finishing our drafts and editing other groups' drafts. Are you going to be ready?

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## Appendix 5: Side Activity A: The Importance of Audience

In any type of writing, it is important to know who your **audience** is—that is, who the ideal reader of your work is. In university classes, your main audience is your instructor, but it may also be your classmates (think about peer reviews and workshops). In your clubs and circles, your audience may be fellow circle members or all of Toyo University. For the newsletter project, your main audience is future students.

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Depending on your audience, it's important to be aware of the words and sentence structures you use. If they're too difficult, your audience may not be able to follow your ideas or enjoy your writing.

### Practice 1: Identifying an Audience

Nicole studied science in university. Below she is describing her job<sup>1</sup>:

**“My job is fun! I make a car that will go in space and meet with a house that is in space. People and things will be able to ride in my space car. I work on the keep cool and breathe part of the space car.”**

After reading Nicole's description, answer these questions with a partner:

- 1) Describe what you think Nicole's job is.
  - 2) What do you think Nicole means by “a car that will go in space”?
  - 3) Who do you think Nicole's audience is? That is, who would be the best people to read this?
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Think about how much your audience may already know about your topic(s), too. If they already understand your topic, you may be more comfortable using advanced vocabulary or fewer descriptions. If they are not familiar with your topic, you may need more descriptions and less technical terms.

### Practice 2: Talking About Your Major

Write down your major in the space below. Then find a classmate in the same major as yourself (or a similar major, if necessary) AND a classmate from a different major and discuss the topics below.

- 1) What is your major? \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>1</sup> From the blog “Ten Hundred Words of Science”: <http://tenhundredwordsofscience.tumblr.com>

- 2) Find someone in the same (or in a similar) major as yourself.
    - a. Ask about your classmate's current schedule. Which classes are they taking in their major right now?
  
    - b. Ask about a recent homework assignment or project. Describe it here.
  
  - 3) Find someone in a DIFFERENT major than yourself.
    - a. Ask about your classmate's current schedule. Which classes are they taking in their major right now? What happens in those classes?
  
    - b. Ask about a recent homework assignment or project.
  
  - 4) After you've finished #2 and #3, answer these questions alone.
    - a. Who was it easier to talk to?
  
    - b. Whom did you talk with more? Why?
  
    - c. What are some things you said to the classmate in #2 that you DID NOT say to the classmate in #3?
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How does this help with your newsletter work? Remember, your main audience for the newsletter is FUTURE students. They are likely current first-year university students. What else is there to know about future students?

### **Practice 3: Remembering Your Audience**

Reflect on your experience studying English this year as you answer the questions below (either alone or with a partner):

- 1) What are some things you know about Toyo now that you didn't know when you started at Toyo?
- 2) What are some things you remember learning in an English course?
- 3) How comfortable did you feel using English before this course?
- 4) Imagine you are meeting a future student soon. What are three things you would explain to him or her about this course?



## Appendix 7: Group and Self-Assessment Form

**Name:** **Newsletter Group:**

**Directions:** Please fill out this form completely and honestly. WORK ALONE. Your assessment of yourself and your group members will help your instructor better grade you and your group as a whole.

*NOTE: This form will only be seen by you and your instructor. If you wish to name specific members of your group for whatever reason, rest assured whatever you say will not be made public.*

**Part 1: Your group members.** You may not need to fill in all five group member boxes.

On a scale from 0-5, rank your group members in each of the 5 categories to the right →  0=did not do at all 1=did a bad job 2=could have done a better job 3=did an okay job 4=did a good job 5=did a really good job	He/she offered ideas and suggestions for the entire group.	He/she was aware of deadlines and didn't wait until the last minute to get started.	He/she used his/her time in class wisely and stayed focused on the project.	He/she used his/her English skills every time we worked together.	I really liked having this person in the group.
Group member 1:					
Group member 2:					
Group member 3:					
Group member 4:					
Group member 5:					

**Part 2: Yourself.** Please complete the statements below. Give plenty of details. The details you provide will help towards determining your final grade.

- 1) How do you feel about your group's work on the newsletter? Why?
  
- 2) How do you feel about your contributions (what you shared with the group) to your section of the newsletter? Why?
  
- 3) Do you think everyone in your group did the same amount of work? Why?

- 4) Did the instructions (hand-outs), examples (old newsletters online), and guidance the teacher gave you help you for the newsletter? Why or why not?
  
- 5) What do you hope future students will learn from this newsletter?
  
- 6) How would you grade yourself for this project? What did you do that helped your group and the class?