

# Enhancing Writing Ability Through Daily Journal Activities

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh penulisan jurnal harian terhadap kemampuan menulis 30 siswa sekolah menengah pertama selama empat minggu. Para siswa menyelesaikan catatan harian untuk meningkatkan jumlah kata, aliran ide, dan kohesi kalimat. Pre-test dan post-test diberikan, dan hasilnya dianalisis menggunakan uji-t sampel berpasangan. Skor rata-rata pre-test adalah 8,37 ( $SD = 1,671$ ), sedangkan rata-rata post-test meningkat secara signifikan menjadi 13,77 ( $SD = 1,165$ ). Uji-t menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan ( $t = -36,350$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ), yang mengkonfirmasi keefektifan intervensi. Selain itu, rata-rata jumlah kata yang ditulis siswa meningkat dari sekitar 75 menjadi 140 kata. Analisis kualitatif terhadap entri jurnal menunjukkan peningkatan koherensi, kosakata yang lebih bervariasi, dan transisi kalimat yang lebih baik. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa penulisan jurnal yang konsisten dapat secara signifikan meningkatkan kefasihan menulis pada pelajar EFL.

**Kata kunci:** Kemampuan menulis, jurnal harian, pembelajar EFL, pretest posttest, intervensi kelas.

## Abstract

This study explores the effect of daily journal writing on the writing ability of 30 junior high school students over a four-week period. Students completed daily entries to improve their word count, idea flow, and sentence cohesion. A pre-test and post-test were administered, and results were analyzed using a paired sample t-test. The average pre-test score was 8.37 ( $SD = 1.671$ ), while the post-test average increased significantly to 13.77 ( $SD = 1.165$ ). The t-test showed a significant difference ( $t = -36.350$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), confirming the effectiveness of the intervention. Additionally, students' average word count rose from approximately 75 to 140 words. Qualitative analysis of journal entries indicated improved coherence, more varied vocabulary, and better sentence transitions. These findings suggest that consistent journal writing can significantly enhance writing fluency in EFL learners.

**Keywords:** Writing ability, journal writing, EFL learners, pre-test post-test, classroom intervention.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is one of the most essential productive skills to be mastered by second or foreign language learners. Unlike speaking, which allows for immediate feedback and correction, writing requires a higher level of organization, coherence, and grammatical accuracy. Among the various aspects of writing, writing fluency the ability to write quickly, smoothly, and meaningfully is considered a critical indicator of writing competence (Cremin & Locke, 2016; Merris & Sari, 2019). As noted by Broderick (2019), writing fluency involves producing a reasonable amount of text in a limited time, focusing more on the expression of meaning than on grammatical correctness. However, many EFL students struggle with fluency due to their fear of making mistakes and their tendency to over-focus on accuracy. These challenges often result in writer's block, lack of confidence, and reduced motivation to write. In EFL classrooms, where exposure to authentic writing practice is often

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limited, students rarely get the opportunity to write freely and develop fluency in a low-pressure environment (Cremin & Locke, 2016) Nejmaoui, 2019; Anggraini, 2020). Therefore, it is important to implement strategies that promote frequent and meaningful writing experiences.

One of the strategies widely recognized for improving writing fluency is the use of daily journal writing activities. Daily journal writing allows students to express their thoughts freely, without worrying too much about grammar or structure, while fostering habits of thinking in the target language. According to Clark (2020), journal writing can be a powerful tool in language learning because it enables students to engage personally with the language, develop reflective thinking, and gain fluency through regular practice. When students write daily, they gradually become more confident, improve their ability to elaborate on ideas, and expand their writing length and vocabulary (Murray, 2014; Rehman et al., 2025; Arochman et al., 2024). Journals also create a student-centered environment in which learners can take ownership of their writing process. Moreover, this kind of writing is aligned with the principles of process writing, which emphasizes writing as a recursive and developmental activity. As Hyland (2019) suggested, offering students authentic purposes and contexts for writing can significantly enhance their fluency and motivation. Daily journals, thus, provide a non-threatening space for students to develop writing as a habit.

In classroom settings, daily journals can be implemented as short writing activities before or after the main lesson, with topics that vary from personal experiences to opinions on specific prompts. This practice helps students become familiar with different styles of writing, increases their confidence, and reduces anxiety related to formal writing tasks (Al-Saadi & Heidari-Shahreza, 2020; Alwahoub et al., 2022; Jaja, 2024). Students are encouraged to explore their own ideas, share emotions, and make language choices without strict restrictions. Hyland (2019a) emphasized that writing development should involve authentic engagement, and journal writing offers exactly that. Furthermore, journals can serve as a diagnostic tool for teachers to monitor progress and provide formative feedback. Over time, students begin to write longer, more coherent texts with improved lexical variety and more complex sentence structures. These benefits reflect the holistic nature of writing fluency, encompassing both cognitive and linguistic development. Consequently, integrating journal writing into EFL instruction could be a practical and pedagogically sound approach to improving students' writing skills.

Previous research has shown the positive impact of journal writing on students' writing development, particularly in terms of fluency. Sholah (2019) found that students who engaged in regular journal writing significantly improved their writing fluency, as evidenced by increased word counts and better idea development. Similarly, Reed (2022) reported that daily journal writing helped EFL learners overcome psychological barriers to writing, such as fear of making mistakes and difficulty initiating ideas. These studies support the notion that fluency can be nurtured through low-stakes, meaningful writing activities. In addition, journal writing enhances metacognitive awareness, allowing students to reflect on their thoughts and language use, which in turn supports long-term improvement in writing proficiency (Crossley, 2020; Ayu et al., 2023). Despite these findings, more research is needed to explore the practical application of journal writing in diverse EFL settings, especially in secondary school contexts where writing is often treated as a rigid, accuracy-focused skill.

Based on the aforementioned rationale, this study aims to investigate the implementation of daily journal writing in EFL classrooms and its effect on students' writing fluency. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) How is daily journal writing implemented in English language learning? (2) Does daily journal writing improve students' writing fluency? and (3) Which aspects of writing fluency improve

the most through daily journal writing activities? By exploring these questions, the study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of how fluency can be fostered through meaningful, student-centered writing practices in EFL contexts. Ultimately, this research hopes to encourage educators to adopt more process-oriented and reflective approaches to teaching writing.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Reserach Design

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. The design was chosen to measure the change in students’ writing fluency before and after the treatment namely, a daily journal-writing program. Because no control group is employed, attention centers on a single cohort that completes a pretest, receives the intervention, and then takes a posttest. As Sugiyono (2021) notes, such a design is appropriate for preliminary investigations that seek to gauge the effectiveness of an instructional strategy within a specific context.

### 2.2 Participants

The participants were 30 eighth-grade students at SMP PGRI 2 Dagangan in East Java, Indonesia. They were selected through purposive sampling, with two criteria: (a) willingness to participate throughout the four-week study and (b) relatively similar baseline writing proficiency, determined by teachers’ previous assessments. Choosing a homogeneous group helps ensure that any observed improvement is more likely attributable to the journal-writing treatment rather than to large initial differences among learners.

### 2.3 Instruments

To ensure reliable and valid measurement, the following instruments were deployed:

- 1) Writing-Fluency Rubric: evaluates (a) total word count, (b) flow and development of ideas, and (c) intra-sentence and inter-sentence cohesion (Phetsangkhad & Prakai, 2022).

Table 1. Writing Fluency Assessment Rubric

Component	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Score 4	Score 5
Word Count	Less than 45 words	45–59 words	60–74 words	75–89 words	90 words or more
Idea Flow	Very disorganized, no clear ideas	Few ideas, poorly organized	Some ideas, partially developed	Ideas mostly developed and coherent	Ideas fully developed and well organized
Sentence Cohesion	No transitions, fragmented sentences	Few transitions, limited coherence	Some logical connections	Mostly cohesive with smooth flow	Excellent cohesion and natural transitions

- 2) Observation Checklist: documents behavioural indicators such as time on task, participation, and enthusiasm during journal writing.
- 3) Student Reflection Questionnaire: a post-intervention survey that captures learners’ perceptions of the journal activity, its challenges, and its perceived benefits (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2019; Miall & Kuiken, 2019).

### 2.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were gathered through three complementary techniques:

- 1) Pre-test and Post-test Writing Tasks – timed essays administered before and after the four-week intervention to quantify changes in fluency.
- 2) Daily Journals – each student wrote a short journal entry every school day for four weeks, providing both the treatment and a longitudinal data source on fluency development.
- 3) Classroom Observation – the researcher observed each writing session, recording students' engagement, on-task behavior, and reactions to the journal activity..

## **2.5 Data Analysis**

Collected data were analyzed in three stages:

- 1) Descriptive Statistics – mean, percentage, and standard deviation were calculated to summarise pre-test and post-test scores.
- 2) Paired-Sample t-Test – conducted to determine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test writing-fluency scores is statistically significant.
- 3) Content Analysis of Journals – qualitative examination of weekly journal entries to track growth in text length, idea elaboration, lexical variety, and cohesion over time.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **3.1 Description of Daily Journal Activities**

The students participated in a journal-writing activity over a period of 20 school days, spanning four weeks, with each session lasting approximately 10 to 15 minutes. The journal writing took place at the beginning of the English lesson, serving as a pre-task warm-up to help activate students' ideas and prepare them mentally for writing. Each journal entry was written in English, and students were encouraged to write freely and reflectively, without strict grammatical constraints or concern for accuracy. The goal was to prioritize fluency over form, allowing students to express their thoughts spontaneously and build confidence in writing. The journal prompts varied throughout the program and included themes such as personal experiences, opinions on daily life, future goals, and responses to quotes or informational statements. These diverse topics were selected to keep students engaged and to stimulate a range of language use, from narrative and descriptive to expressive and argumentative writing. Teachers provided brief instructions or prompts each day but refrained from correcting grammar during journal sessions, in order to maintain a low-anxiety writing environment that fosters fluency development. The activity not only helped students become accustomed to writing regularly but also served as a means of self-expression and linguistic risk-taking.

### **3.2 Result of Pre-test and Post-test**

This section outlines the comparison between students' writing performance before and after participating in daily journal activities. The pre-test measured their initial writing fluency, while the post-test assessed improvements after four weeks of daily practice.

The assessment focused on three aspects: word count, idea flow, and sentence cohesion, each scored on a 5-point scale. The results showed a significant increase in word production and overall fluency. Statistical analysis using a paired sample t-test indicated a significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) between pre-test and post-test scores, confirming that daily journal writing positively impacted students' writing fluency.

Table 2. Pretest of Writing

No	Student Name	Word Count	Word Count	Idea Flow	Sentence Cohesion	Total Score
1	Student 1	65	3	2	2	7
2	Student 2	72	3	3	2	8
3	Student 3	80	4	3	3	10
4	Student 4	55	2	2	1	5
5	Student 5	90	4	3	3	10
6	Student 6	78	4	2	3	9
7	Student 7	60	3	2	2	7
8	Student 8	70	3	2	2	7
9	Student 9	85	4	3	3	10
10	Student 10	66	3	2	2	7
11	Student 11	74	3	3	3	9
12	Student 12	59	2	2	2	6
13	Student 13	88	4	3	3	10
14	Student 14	62	3	2	2	7
15	Student 15	68	3	3	2	8
16	Student 16	76	4	3	3	10
17	Student 17	58	2	2	1	5
18	Student 18	82	4	3	3	10
19	Student 19	71	3	2	3	8
20	Student 20	65	3	2	2	7
21	Student 21	77	4	3	3	10
22	Student 22	69	3	3	2	8
23	Student 23	80	4	3	3	10
24	Student 24	63	3	2	2	7
25	Student 25	90	4	4	3	11
26	Student 26	67	3	2	2	7
27	Student 27	75	4	3	3	10
28	Student 28	81	4	3	3	10
29	Student 29	73	3	2	3	8
30	Student 30	79	4	3	3	10

Table 3. Post-test of Writing

No	Student Name	Word Count	Word Count	Idea Flow	Sentence Cohesion	Total Score
1	Student 1	132	5	4	4	13
2	Student 2	145	5	5	5	15
3	Student 3	138	5	5	4	14
4	Student 4	120	5	4	3	12
5	Student 5	155	5	5	5	15
6	Student 6	141	5	4	4	13
7	Student 7	130	5	4	4	13
8	Student 8	135	5	4	4	13
9	Student 9	142	5	5	5	15
10	Student 10	128	5	4	4	13
11	Student 11	137	5	5	5	15
12	Student 12	121	5	4	3	12

13	Student 13	144	5	5	5	15
14	Student 14	133	5	4	4	13
15	Student 15	136	5	4	4	13
16	Student 16	150	5	5	5	15
17	Student 17	119	5	4	3	12
18	Student 18	139	5	5	5	15
19	Student 19	132	5	4	4	13
20	Student 20	124	5	4	4	13
21	Student 21	143	5	5	5	15
22	Student 22	134	5	4	4	13
23	Student 23	140	5	5	5	15
24	Student 24	122	5	4	3	12
25	Student 25	151	5	5	5	15
26	Student 26	127	5	4	4	13
27	Student 27	147	5	5	5	15
28	Student 28	149	5	5	5	15
29	Student 29	138	5	4	4	13
30	Student 30	144	5	5	5	15

The results of the pre-test and post-test revealed a significant improvement in students' writing fluency after participating in daily journal writing activities for four weeks. In the pre-test, students had an average word count of around 75 words, with most scores for idea flow and sentence cohesion ranging between 2 and 3. The total pre-test scores were generally below 10, indicating moderate fluency with limited elaboration and cohesion. After the intervention, the post-test scores showed a remarkable increase. The average word count rose to approximately 140 words, with all students scoring 5 in the word count component. Additionally, scores for idea flow and sentence cohesion mostly ranged from 4 to 5, showing a higher level of logical development and smoother transitions between sentences. Most students scored 13 or above in the total score, reflecting significant improvement across all three assessed aspects. To statistically confirm this improvement, a paired sample t-test was conducted comparing the pre-test and post-test scores. The result showed a p-value less than 0.05, indicating that the difference in writing performance before and after the implementation of daily journal activities was statistically significant. This means the observed improvement is unlikely due to chance, and it can be concluded that daily journal writing had a positive and meaningful impact on the students' writing fluency.

*Table 4. Paired Sample T-test*

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pretest	8,37	30	1,671	,305
Posttest	13,77	30	1,165	,213

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	-5,400	,814	,149	-5,704	-5,096	-36,350	29	,000

Based on the results of the paired sample t-test presented in Table 4, there is a statistically significant difference between students' pretest and posttest writing scores. The mean score for the pretest was 8.37 with a standard deviation of 1.671, while the posttest mean increased to 13.77 with a standard deviation of 1.165. The mean difference between the two tests was -5.400, indicating a substantial improvement in students' writing performance after the intervention. The t-value was -36.350 with 29 degrees of freedom ( $df = 29$ ), and the significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) was 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). This result confirms that the difference is statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the implementation of daily journal writing activities over a four-week period had a positive and significant effect on enhancing students' writing fluency.

### 3.3 Analysis of Fluency in Students' Journals

The analysis of students' journal entries over the four-week period revealed clear improvement in various aspects of writing fluency. First, there was a noticeable increase in idea fluency. Students began to express their thoughts in a more coherent and organized manner, indicating that they were becoming more confident in structuring their ideas logically and staying focused on the given topic. Early entries tended to be fragmented or vague, while later entries showed clearer development of themes and arguments. Second, the length of the journal entries consistently increased from week to week. Most students began with shorter texts ranging between 60–80 words, but by the final week, many were able to produce entries of over 130 words. This growth demonstrates a reduction in writing anxiety and an improvement in their ability to sustain written expression over time.

Third, the analysis showed an expansion in vocabulary use, especially in the use of adjectives, adverbs, and idiomatic expressions. Students increasingly incorporated more descriptive language, signaling not just fluency in word production but also growing lexical richness. Some learners also began to take creative risks by experimenting with figurative language, further indicating development in writing fluency. The daily journal activities played a crucial role in fostering fluency by helping students write more freely, consistently, and expressively. The reflective and low-pressure nature of journaling enabled them to internalize language structures and build fluency naturally through practice.

## Discussion

The results of this study clearly indicate that daily journal writing is an effective tool for improving students' writing fluency. This is evidenced by the significant increase in word count, idea flow, and sentence cohesion between the pre-test and post-test. The average writing score improved from 8.37 to 13.77, with a statistically significant p-value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting that the observed improvement was not due to chance, but rather a result of the writing intervention. These findings support previous research that highlights the effectiveness of free writing and journaling in developing writing fluency. [Bailey and Bizzaro \(2019\)](#) argue that consistent writing practice, such as journal writing, helps students "develop the ability to produce text more rapidly and with greater ease," as it reduces cognitive load during composition. Similarly, [Mohammadzadeh et al. \(2020\)](#) emphasizes that fluency writing activities improve the automatization of language production, allowing learners to focus more on meaning and less on form.

The weekly journals also contributed to learners' ideational fluency, as students gradually began producing more coherent and organized writing. As observed in the journal analysis, early entries were often brief and disjointed, while later entries demonstrated clear topic development, better logical sequencing, and smoother transitions. This aligns with

Knapp and Watkins (2019), who explains that regular low-stakes writing encourages students to take risks, reflect on their thoughts, and experiment with language, all of which contribute to fluency and confidence. Furthermore, vocabulary development was evident through the increasing use of adjectives, adverbs, and idiomatic expressions. This linguistic richness may stem from the freedom and authenticity journaling provides. According to Aida, Siti, Nur, and Widiyati (2020), extensive writing practice in a meaningful context helps students "expand their lexical repertoire and deepen their syntactic control," which is critical for fluent writing.

The improvement in sentence cohesion is also worth noting. Students began to use more linking devices, pronoun references, and conjunctions, which helped connect ideas within and across sentences. As Cameron (2021) explains, fluency is not just about speed or word count, but also about "creating connected text that flows smoothly and logically," a feature that became more apparent in the post-test results and final journal entries. In terms of classroom practice, these findings imply that daily journal writing is a pedagogically sound strategy that not only improves fluency but also fosters learner autonomy and motivation. Because journals are personal and reflective, students often feel less pressure and more freedom to express themselves. Bell (2019) notes that when learners are not preoccupied with correctness, they can engage more meaningfully with content and language, leading to greater fluency. The research confirms that daily journal writing positively impacts EFL learners' writing fluency. The combination of structured yet flexible writing practice enables learners to develop their skills in a low-anxiety environment. Future research could further investigate how journaling influences other areas of writing, such as accuracy or genre awareness..

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that daily journal writing significantly enhances students' writing fluency, as demonstrated by notable improvements in word count, idea flow, and sentence cohesion. The findings confirm that consistent low-stakes writing practice fosters confidence, coherence, and lexical development in learners. These results imply that journal writing can be an effective tool in language classrooms to support students' fluency and motivation. For future research, it is recommended to explore the long-term effects of journal writing on other writing components, such as grammar accuracy or organization, and to examine its impact across different proficiency levels or educational settings.

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