

ESP SIG Journal – Issue 42 – Book Review

How to write ESP materials by Ros Wright

Review written by Phil Wade

One of the latest study modules for aspiring ELT writers from ELT Teacher 2 Writer, this title is available as an e-book from [Amazon](#) or [Smashwords](#).

The module covers an impressive amount of ground in a short format. There are chapters devoted to methodology, using authentic texts and designing activities to enhance learner performance, regardless of discipline or profession. Ros draws on her experience as an ESP writer by incorporating examples from Medical Communications, Management and Marketing. She adds a wealth of background knowledge and advice for new writers, as well as reflective and interactive tasks.

Ros's years of experience really shine through as she is able to provide readers with effective tools for common materials-writing problems. For instance, she points out that in ESP 'finding the perfect Coursebook is virtually impossible and trainers will almost invariably be required at the very least to supplement an existing ESP Coursebook, if not write all their own materials'. Then she goes on to provide the reader with the tools to accomplish this goal.

One of the first issues Ros tackles is the infamous Needs Analysis. Her advice is to 'assume nothing'! She explains that every teaching situation is different and that even generic skills like meetings vary across disciplines. Ros then addresses the matter of using knowledge of the student's working or studying situation to create course frameworks. She recommends writers to 'try to find out as much as you can about the high-frequency tasks your learners need to carry out in English'.

Texts have long been a major source for ESP courses and one issue I have with some materials is the unnatural texts created specifically for EFL learners. Ros warns of the dangers of such fake texts and urges teachers to push themselves to delving into the subject areas of their students. She argues that 'they naturally appreciate any efforts made to ensure materials reflect a general knowledge of the key terms and concepts'.

Later Ros makes a useful distinction between non-technical, sub-technical and technical lexis and points out that most ESP texts have a relatively low percentage of technical terms. Moreover, Ros notes 'that it's not the technical words that pose the most problems for our learners, but the means of expressing these terms in a sentence and communicating effectively; hence the need to devise activities to develop learner performance'. Among her ideas are, for me, the two highlights of the e-book, namely creating 3D roleplays and how to turn unrealistic films and TV series into effective ESP materials for classroom use. Both of these are worth buying the book for.

In the last part of the module, Ros provides a framework for designing ESP materials, ten practical steps for writing ESP materials and tips for new writers. All of these are extremely valuable and come from a teacher/writer who really knows her stuff.

As an aspiring ELT writer myself, I found Ros's insights and real-world examples engrossing. She manages to provide an informative look at the problems and solutions for new writers or keen teachers who just want to be a bit creative. The interactive tasks really draw you in and by the end you are desperate for more golden tips and advice.