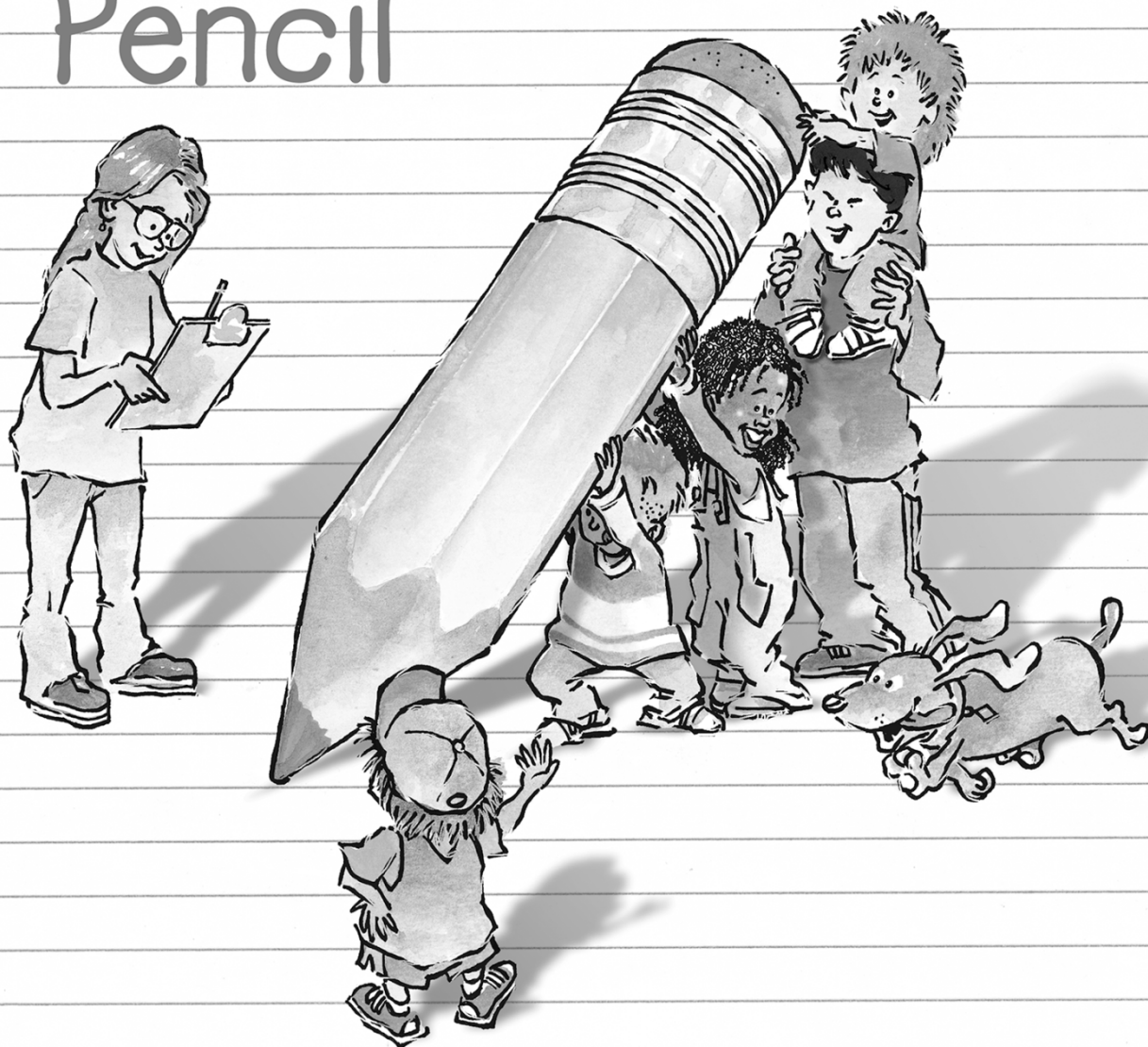


EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS'

Pushing the Pencil



Teaching Types of Writing

1 to 7

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Introduction

“Writing is many things, each of which goes to the heart of what a good education is all about. Writing is a way of learning, not just a tool to record what one already knows. Writing is a way of discovering and constructing meaning. Writing is a way of thinking.”

– Marianne Tully

The goal of *Pushing the Pencil* is to give teachers of grades one to seven a model of the writing process, information about different writing types, instructional strategies, planning tools and writing prompts, so they can help their students to become better writers and learners.

The research tell us that young writers need:

- a purpose for writing
- an audience
- models of processes and products
- grammar instruction embedded within writing instruction
- sustained time to write
- constructive feedback and criticism

Students learn to write by doing the same things that adult writers do, including choosing a topic that they know about and care about, compiling and organizing their ideas, writing a draft, revising and sharing their writing with an audience.

We have called this resource *Pushing the Pencil* because we acknowledge that the work of learning to write and the business of teaching students to write are both difficult and demanding. But writing instruction, like many journeys in life, is ultimately rewarding for both teachers and students. Giving students effective strategies and skills for writing will help them become better communicators, thinkers and learners. Achievement in writing is a worthwhile investment.



The Writing Process

1. Organizing for Instruction

The writing process

Writing is more than a product; it is a process of thinking and doing. The *process approach* to writing looks at what students need to think about and do as they write.

Stage 1: Planning — thinking about it

- choose a topic
- consider who will read it and why
- discuss ideas with others
- read and observe to get more information about the topic
- brainstorm a list of words and ideas
- think about what will be said
- plan how it will be said

Stage 2: Drafting — writing it down

- organize ideas with
 - a list of key words
 - an outline
 - a web
- write a first draft
 - skip lines (to leave room to make revisions)
 - write on one side of the paper only
 - underline doubtful spellings along the way



Stage 3: Revising — making it better

- read what has been written (both silently and aloud)
- have others read and offer suggestions
- rearrange words or ideas
 - use crossouts and other proofreading symbols to indicate changes
 - use scissors and tape to cut apart and rearrange text
 - replace overused or unclear words
 - take out repetitive or unnecessary information
 - add details

Stage 4: Proofreading — making it correct

- make sure all sentences are complete
- check
 - punctuation
 - capitalization
 - spelling
- look for words used incorrectly
- look for missing words or repeated words
- mark corrections with proofreading symbols
- have someone else check the work
- recopy it correctly and neatly

Stage 5: Publishing — sharing it

- read it aloud to another person or a group
- make a cover and bind it as a book
- display it for others to see
- illustrate it

Effective writing instruction uses a holistic approach to teaching the writing process versus a lock-step approach. Young writers need experience with the whole process, including publishing their work, and then they can begin to refine specific skills and strategies within the process.



Building skills and strategies

Mini-lessons within writers' workshops are an effective way to organize writing instruction. Mini-lessons are:

- short — ten to twenty minutes,
- focused — usually one skill or strategy per lesson, and
- take place within the context of the writing process — students have opportunities to apply the new skills and strategies in their own writing, that day.

The mini-lesson approach provides students with specific information and strategies as they write. Target lessons and strategies match the current writing activities and help students to build upon their personal repertoire of skills and strategies.

Mini-lessons can:

- introduce new skills (such as how to use quotation marks)
- introduce new information (such as how to structure a mystery story)
- teach a new strategy (such as how to use COPS for proofreading)

Mini-lessons are also vehicles for revisiting skills and strategies throughout the school year and providing target instruction on an as-needed basis.

Children need sustained time to write. Writing instruction should happen at least two to three times per week. A sample format could be:

5 to 10 minutes → Mini-lesson on selected skill, strategy or concept

30 to 40 minutes → Sustained writing (The teacher closely monitors the first 10 to 15 minutes to ensure everyone is on task and then meets with individuals or small groups of students to discuss pieces of writing.)

5 to 10 minutes → Sharing the writing

Occasionally, students will benefit from extended writing time for a major project such as a research project or a “novel” project.

Sample topics for mini-lessons

-
- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Choosing a topic• Great beginnings• Satisfying endings• Creating images• Strong verbs• Varying sentence types• Taking out unnecessary words• Run-on sentences• COPS• Point of view• Varying sentence beginnings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What to do when stuck for ideas• Creating interesting titles• Adding detail• Using the senses• Show don't tell• Using dialogue• Using precise and specific nouns• Connecting words• Writing in the present tense• Writing in the past tense• Proofreading symbols |
|---|---|

Mini-lessons can also focus on planning tools and activities, sentence construction, grammar conventions, revision strategies and types of writing. Suggestions for mini-lesson activities are included in the *Sample teaching strategies* section within each of the chapters about individual types of writing.

Mini-lessons can take a variety of formats and can be taught in short sessions over several days. A sample sequence of instruction could include:

- Step one: **Model:** Show what the new skill, strategy or type of writing looks like.
- Step two: **Analyze:** Help students to identify a key component or a new concept or skill.
- Step three: **Build motivation:** Discuss why this new skill is important and how and why it will help students become better writers.
- Step four: **Guided practice:** Work through the new strategy or skill, modeling the step-by-step process using student contributions.
- Step five: **Scaffolded practice:** Have students work in pairs or small groups to complete a structured task with the new skill.



- Step six: **Apply:** Give students opportunities to apply the new skill or strategy to their own writing.
- Step seven: **Check back:** Share and discuss examples of new writing that use the target skill or strategy. Analyze what works and identify how this skill affects a piece of writing.
- Step eight: **Extend:** Brainstorm ways to extend this skill into other areas of writing and learning.

Writing across the curriculum

Writing instruction needs to happen across the curriculum. Students need opportunities to practise their skills and apply them to new and different tasks. There are many writing opportunities within social studies, science and math that can be catalysts for meaningful writing and can enhance learning and understanding of concepts and information within those content areas.

Students need experience writing about what they know. New information from the content areas, and the questions this new information generates, are natural starting points for writing projects. Students need experience with a variety of types of writing, and cross-curricular writing creates purpose and opportunity.

Planning

There are a number of factors to consider in developing a year-long writing plan for students. To create a framework, decisions must be made about:

- types of writing to be taught
- target skills
- strategies for planning
- strategies for revision
- strategies for proofreading
- strategies for publishing
- types of written products
- integration with reading instruction (for example, writing components of a novel study)
- cross-curricular writing projects (such as observation logs in science or research projects in social studies)
- assessment



School-wide writing plans

School-wide writing plans can significantly affect the overall achievement of all the students in the school. Advantages for students include:

- focuses energy and builds motivation
- creates a context for learning
- builds a learning community
- builds on past knowledge
- provides an opportunity to revisit types of writing and target skills each year so students can enhance their current skill levels
- accommodates a wider range of student needs within one classroom
- creates common terms of reference and ways of doing things so students do not have to relearn a specific “teacher’s system” at each grade level

Advantages for teachers include:

- opportunity for collaborative planning
- opportunity to share resources
- increased motivation to improve instructional strategies
- promotes collegiality among staff
- source of informal professional development for teachers
- encourages curriculum alignment
- accommodates a greater diversity and range of student needs
- increases confidence level of teachers



The Writing Process

2. Planning Tools and Strategies

The planning stage (also called the prewriting stage) creates the framework for successful writing. Before putting pencil to paper, students need to:

- understand the writing task
- gather their thoughts and ideas for writing
- see the end product in their mind's eye so they know where they are going

Build motivation

Present an intriguing object to engage and motivate writers. A battered old sneaker could inspire a story about life as a shoe; a puppet could set the stage for a story that students might finish.

Introduce an exciting new way to publish a piece of writing. A mini-book, a flip book, a post card or a greeting card are all novel formats that can motivate students to write.

Create authentic situations for real-life communication with parents, other students and the community. Publish a class newsletter, write an invitation to a parent, or write advice for next year's class and leave it with the teacher to post on the door the first day of school the following year. Use student writing to create hallway displays, gifts to parents and text on calendars. Emphasize writing for a real purpose. Capitalize on classroom events, student interests and seasonal celebrations.

Build background knowledge

At the planning stage, it is important to provide opportunities for students to discuss and clarify the dimensions of the assignment before they begin to write. They may also need to get more information and build their background information about a topic before they begin. To build background information the class could do a brainstorming activity such as completing a K-W-L chart, or reading an article. Learning new information is part of the writing process and children can only write well about what they know and care about.



Set guidelines, give choices

As part of the planning process, set clear guidelines for each writing assignment. Assignments should be open-ended enough that students can bring their own personal experiences and knowledge to the topic. Assignments also need to be structured enough that they challenge and motivate students to try new types of writing and use new information and skills. Assigned topics and writing prompts force students to move out of their comfort zones and expand their skills as writers and communicators.

When possible, provide opportunities for students to make choices. Students could make decisions about the type of product, the materials used, the specific topic or genre. Provide a list of options to choose from. For variety, design a tic-tac-toe menu that presents options and encourages students to combine several options for one assignment.

Tic-Tac-Toe Writing Menu

Choose one of the options from each of the three rows. Use a highlighter to show your choices.

Mini-book	Flip book	Poster
Retell a favourite fairy tale	Write a different ending to a well-known fairy tale	Add a new character to an old fairy tale
Use a planning web	Draw a storyboard	Make a list of key words

If students use pencil and paper planning tools, encourage them to save the plans so they can use them as references in the revision stage of their writing.



Thinking

Thinking is the most important thing students need to do as they write, not only at the beginning of the process but throughout the work. Before having students write about a personal experience, ask them, “Think about what is important to you, what you’ve done, or what has happened to you. Think about why you want to write about this topic.” Give them quiet time to reflect.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a powerful tool for generating ideas, building confidence and motivation, and getting the writing process started. For example, individual students can brainstorm top ten reasons, partners can brainstorm all they know about a certain topic, or the whole class can brainstorm potential situations for an adventure story.

Talking

Give students time to talk with one another and bounce around ideas about their chosen topics. If students need more structure, use the Think–Pair–Share strategy; pose three key questions or have students interview one another for a few minutes.

Making lists

Lists help writers to get their ideas down quickly and then to begin to discover the ideas and identify the information that they want to include in their writing. Encourage students to make a list of key words before they begin writing.

Asking questions

Questions can be effective starting points for writing. Help students to generate a list of questions they would like to answer in their writing. Questions can also be used to begin a research project.



Webbing

A great strategy that many teachers use with their students in all subjects is webbing or making semantic webs. The simplest web is one with a topic in the centre and supporting details radiating out like spokes on a wheel. Webs give young writers a starting point and encourage them to push their thinking beyond one single idea.

Graphic organizers

There are a number of different graphic organizers that students can use to organize their ideas and information. For example, story boards can help young children to plan the beginning, middle and end of a story, t-charts can list qualities that students want to include, and a Venn diagram can help organize an essay comparing two ideas or things.

Students may need structured frameworks when they begin writing in a new genre, but the goal should always be that students internalize the structure and function of a number of graphic organizers so they can eventually create visual organizers of their own. A number of graphic organizers are included in this resource.

Drawing

Drawing pictures about an event or feeling can be a useful planning strategy for young children, and it can also be useful for older, reluctant writers. A quick sketch helps the writer to focus on the topic and can be a natural starting point for writing.

Models

Sharing samples of a certain type of writing, such as persuasive or realistic fiction, can provide students with a clearer picture of what that type of writing looks like and sounds like.



Story patterns

Young writers can learn much about writing by analyzing a piece of well-crafted literature with a distinctive pattern. They can then apply or adapt that pattern in their own writing. Favourite stories such as Judith Viorst's *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* and Mercer Mayer's *Just for You* provide wonderful models for story lines that can be adapted in imaginative and meaningful ways.

Writer's notebook

Encourage students to keep a Writer's Notebook to record topic ideas, descriptions, story ideas, and events they might use in a story. They should write in this notebook on a regular basis. Much like a painter's sketchbook, this notebook is a tool many working writers use; introducing it in the classroom will help students to think of themselves as serious writers.



The Writing Process

3. Drafting — Writing it Down

Set aside uninterrupted time for writing at least two to three times a week. Many teachers find that reserving the first ten to fifteen minutes of the writing time for the whole class works well. When students have started the task, they can continue to write independently as the teacher circulates and conferences with individual students.

Set guidelines

If this is to be a marked assignment, share the specific information about the criteria that will be used to evaluate the assignment.

Set goals for how much text students should aim to produce. Reluctant writers may need more explicit guidelines (as in “ten sentences,” “six paragraphs” or “two pages”). Capable writers can have more open-ended guidelines such as “write to the end of your story” or “write until you’ve covered all the key ideas in your planner.”

Tell students how long they have to write, and set a timer or write the start time and the finish time on the board. This will help them to develop a better sense of time so they can adjust to different kinds of assignments and timelines across the curriculum. For example, they need to pace themselves differently for a three-minute brain drain than they might for a sixty-minute essay exam.

Set guidelines for writing drafts that will making revision easier. For example:

- Write on every second line (to leave space for changes)
- Write on one side of the paper only (so, if necessary, text can be cut apart and reordered)
- Underline doubtful spellings (to keep the flow going, spelling can be checked later)



Spelling support

Spelling difficulties can discourage some students during the writing process. Provide extra support by brainstorming lists of words specific to the topic. Post on chart paper for easy reference. Remind students to use personal dictionaries and the class word walls. Encourage them to underline doubtful spellings and keep on going. If students are reluctant to do this, help them become unstuck by using post-it notes to write words for individual students. Save these notes with the draft — they can be a useful record of how independently a student writes, and with what kind of spelling words he or she is having difficulty. Before giving a student the correct spelling on a post-it note, encourage him to give it his “best try” and write the spelling on his own. This provides opportunities for teachers to see what individual students know and don’t know about words.

Mindset for writing

At this point, students need to know that writing does not flow from the pen as polished prose. Children need to know that writing is a process — that they can improve a piece of writing by adding words, by removing words, and by changing words. Encourage students to set aside their internal critic for the time being and just get their ideas down on paper.

Children need to be reassured that writing happens at different paces, depending on all sorts of factors. At times they will have a full story in their heads and can quickly tell the story aloud or write the story on paper. At other times, they may have a simple idea, image or feeling that interests them. They might write these impressions or ideas in a notebook and let them germinate for a few days before trying to develop them into a story. Let children know that professional writers experience these ebbs and flows of creativity as well. Perseverance is what pays off. Successful writers just keep writing and rewriting.

When possible, encourage students to give their writing a “cool-down time” before they begin the revision process. Coming back to a piece of writing after a few days lets the writer look at the piece with fresh eyes.



Conferencing

Once all the students are absorbed in their work, the teacher can meet informally with individual students to talk about their writing or help them solve a problem related to their writing. In *Teaching writing: balancing process and product*, Tompkins describes a number of different conference formats that teachers might use:

- **On-the-spot conferences** in which teachers visit for a minute or two at a student's desk just to check how a student is doing
- **Pre-writing conferences** in which the teacher and student discuss the plan for writing and narrow down the topic or identify additional aspects to include in the plan
- **Drafting conferences** in which a student identifies a problem spot in the first draft and the student and teacher brainstorm possible solutions
- **Revising conferences** in which a small group of students meet and give friendly feedback on a piece
- **Proofreading conferences** in which a teacher reviews a final draft and helps students correct technical errors
- **Instructional mini-lesson conferences** in which an individual student or a small group reviews a skill or strategy that they need to master
- **Assessment conferences** in which teachers ask students to reflect on their completed pieces of writing in order to identify areas of growth and areas of need for setting future goals



The Writing Process

4. Revising — Making it Better

“The essence of writing is rewriting.”

—William Zinseer, in *Writers at Work*

Model what revision looks like

Demonstrate the process of revision with the students. Think of a description of something in your life and jot it down on chart paper or on the board. Keep it brief, so it is easy to work with, and make it bare bones so there is lots of room for revision. For example:

I have a dog. The dog is brown and white. He likes to run. He is a good friend to me and my cat.

Ask students to comment on the draft. Ask them what they don't know from reading this piece. What is missing?

Have students ask questions to help flesh out the description. Then ask for volunteers to give suggestions for including this new information in the writing. Prompt them with questions such as:

- What would be a first sentence that immediately grabs the attention of the reader?
- What about setting the scene?
- What would make a good ending?

Take several answers to each question and choose the one that says it best. Try combining one or more suggestions to come up with a good sentence. This is modeling the essence of the revision process: thinking of various possibilities and choosing the one that works the best.



Show and evaluate the difference between first and second drafts

To become better writers, students need to understand that revision is a way of making a piece of writing better. Revising should make a piece of writing clearer and easier to read and understand. It should also make a piece more interesting or fun for the reader to read.

Show students a sample of a first draft and a completed second draft. Either photocopy a set for pairs of students to share or use an overhead projector so the whole class can analyze the piece together.

Read aloud the first and second drafts, Ask students what the difference is between the two drafts.

For example, a second draft might:

- have a funnier title
- be longer
- be more interesting
- be more believable
- have more detail

Write a summary of the discussion on chart paper to post in the classroom. Students can add more ideas as they revise more pieces and become more analytical writers.



Teach revision strategies in mini-lessons

Basic revision strategies include:

- Writing a beginning that grabs the reader’s interest — see sample teaching strategies in *News Story*.
- Adding details — see sample teaching strategies in *Descriptive Writing* and *Personal Narrative*.
- Using dialogue — see sample teaching strategies in *Dialogue*.
- Showing (not telling) how characters feel — see sample teaching strategies in *Descriptive Writing*.
- Using figurative language — see sample teaching strategies in *Descriptive Writing*.
- Changing some verbs to action verbs — see sample teaching strategies in *Descriptive Writing*.

Limit the first revision lessons to short pieces. One to three paragraphs will keep the learning focus clear and simple. Ask student volunteers to share rough drafts to use as teaching samples on the overhead. Model the revision process by taking suggestions from students and giving the original writers the opportunity to choose which of the suggestions works best for them. Record the revisions and then compare the two drafts.

Give students opportunities to apply the revision strategies to their own writing. Working in partners, students could compare the first and second drafts and discuss why one is more interesting to the reader.

Develop a set of editing questions for students to use with their own writing

These editing checklists can be posted in the classroom or can be typed on laminated cards for students to use. On major writing assignments, a copy of an editing checklist could be completed by the student, one peer editor, and the teacher, as part of the assessment process.



Sample questions could include:

- Who will read my work?
- Why would this audience be interested in my topic?
- Will my first sentence “grab” their attention?
- Are my ideas in the correct order? *Did I tell the first thing first and the others in a sequence as they happened?*
- Have I used interesting words that the reader will enjoy?
- Have I overused any words or phrases?
- Have I used words that are vague or tired out? *Tired-out words like “nice” and “cool” do not tell your reader anything.*
- Have I used any examples or illustrations to help explain my ideas?
- Have I left out any important details or information?
- Have I started my sentences in a variety of interesting ways?
- Have I spelled all the words correctly? *Check words you aren’t sure about. Ask a good speller to read and check your spelling for you.*
- Are periods, commas, questions marks, quotation marks and exclamation points in the right places? *Reread to check yourself, then ask a friend to double check for you.*
- Have I used correct grammar? *Does it sound right?*
- Is my printing or handwriting clear and easy to read?
- Is my ending satisfying? Does it really end the story?
- What is special about my writing that my readers will enjoy and remember?

Share work-in-progress

Encourage students to share throughout the whole writing process, not just at the end. Do a round robin of titles and invite students to think about what each title promises. Have several students read aloud their first lines and have the other students identify what each beginning does. Does it set a mood, identify a problem or introduce a character? Use informal idea breaks to have one or two students read aloud what they have written so far. This sharing helps everyone to think more creatively and provides talk time. By sharing work-in-progress students are modelling the different stages of writing for one another. Idea breaks promote involvement and encourage students to keep writing.



Peer editing

It is difficult for students to know whether their written messages are clear and whether they will be understood by readers in the same way they were meant to be. Peer editors can be helpful in pointing out discrepancies and confusions so writers can make needed changes. Student editors cannot give expert advice on style, content or format, but they can tell the writer if they understand the piece of writing and if there is something obvious missing. Give students opportunities to read their writing projects to one another. Teach students how to give positive and constructive feedback using phrases such as:

- *I was really interested when you...*
- *I wanted to hear more about...*
- *I was a little confused when you said...*

Peer editors can also do preliminary edits for capitals, punctuation, spelling and word choices. Help student editors to focus on a specific aspect of writing by providing a peer editing checklist that can be attached to the draft.

Student Editor at Work

This work is edited for:

- spelling
- complete sentences
- capitals, periods
- content
- word choice



Signed: _____

Think about the reading audience

In order for students to be motivated to revise their written work they must be motivated to improve their communication. This means they must have a purpose for their writing and they must have a real audience to read it and respond to it. Encourage students to revise with their audience in mind. Talk about:

- Who will read this piece?
- What will they be interested in?
- What else do they need to know?
- What is the best way to present this writing?



The Writing Process

5. Writing on the Computer

Research shows that elementary children generally improve their writing when they use computers for word processing. Using computers for writing appears to change students' writing permanently. Even without specific training in editing, children using word processors tend to make substantial improvements when asked to rewrite or edit their stories. Students writing with computers are also more likely to pay attention to text quality and not to worry as much about errors in spelling or punctuation. Their revisions mainly add relevant information and attempt to make stories more coherent, more interesting and linguistically more sophisticated.

Children's computer-written compositions tend to be longer and more complex than their hand-written ones. Once students have written with the computer, their hand-written pieces tend to be longer and structurally more complex, as well.

Having typing skills is a definite advantage for the young writer. Keyboarding can improve both the quantity and quality of student writing, mostly because it is easier to edit, change, rewrite and add more text using the computer. It can also improve spelling. The goal of keyboarding instruction is to have students keyboard at least as fast as they handwrite, and for them to be able to compose at the keyboard.

How writing instruction is designed is critical. Well-designed instruction can help students to think of writing as a more natural, fluid and easily alterable form of communication. But, to achieve this, instruction must explicitly encourage frequent reflection and revision of the text. Increased work efficiency is naturally motivating to all writers.



Getting started

1. List key words. Most writers will benefit from a plan. A simple handwritten plan can be used or students can begin their writing piece by typing a list of key words or phrases on the screen and using each word to write a sentence or paragraph.
2. Save the fancy stuff. Encourage students to concentrate on the text in the first draft and refrain from playing with fonts, styles and other special features. Depending on the monitor, students should work with an easy-to-read font (such as Times New Roman or Arial) at 14 point. Formatting should be done after the basic text is written and edited.
3. Start in the middle. Sometimes it's easier to start writing in the middle of your paper. Write the middle section, then put the cursor ahead of the middle part and add the introductory part. Teach young writers this trick of overcoming writer's block by beginning in the middle.
4. Be bold. Put important words in **bold** to assist in developing meaning during the revision process. Remove bold later.
5. Underline and keep going. Students can underline phrases with which they are dissatisfied and then go on with their writing. This strategy allows writers to keep the flow going but redirects them back to troublesome spots when they are ready to make revisions.



Editing and revising

To make editing easier, encourage students to use double spacing on their first draft, and to show the invisibles. When it comes time to edit, students can have a partner do a preliminary edit on the screen, but then they should print a hard copy to do the first proofreading and editing. It's too difficult to proof from the screen, and things can show up on paper that are not obvious on the screen.

Young writers need lots of opportunities to learn about and use the special editing features in the word processing programs they are using.

The spell checker is a great tool that even young children can learn to use independently. Many newer programs have an underline feature that corrects spelling as you type; this can be helpful to many writers. Spell check features actually strengthen spelling skills because they do what good teachers do — they alert the learner to an error, give them a chance to make a change, offer choices if the writer needs it, and confirm when the error is corrected.

Teach children how to manipulate the cursor so they can insert new words and sentences. This feature encourages them to write more detailed and descriptive pieces.

Give students opportunities to experiment in their writing by moving text around with the **Cut** and **Paste** editing feature. Model this on a class-generated piece of writing recorded on chart paper. Discuss possible revisions and use tape and scissors to physically reorder sentences or ideas.

Show children how to use the delete key to eliminate unnecessary words. Encourage them to use the **Find** and **Replace** feature to locate and revise overused or imprecise words.



When children are working on a longer piece of writing over a period of time, it may be helpful to mark their revisions with underlining. This allows the writer and the teacher/editor to see the changes and to assess the application and growth of revision skills.

Students with more advanced skills on the computer can learn to use split screens to **Cut** and **Paste** data from one location to another. This is especially useful in larger documents. Grammar checks and outline features can also be valuable tools for young writers.

Teacher tools

Many computer and online programs offer a variety of tools that can be valuable for the teacher/editor. If a teacher is reviewing a student's work-in-progress, she can use the comment features to write notes to the student. These features will insert the messages at appropriate places in the text but will not alter the original piece. Teachers can also make revisions using the Suggesting option in Google Docs so students can see where the changes are needed. Experiment with your program to find the features that will help your students as writers, and you as an editor. Consider using Google Docs, Google Slides and Read&Write for Google Chrome.





When you use the computer to write

1. Use key words to help you plan.
2. Double space.
4. Keep it simple. Work in a plain font, 14 point. Do the fancy stuff later.
5. Bold important words.
6. Underline unsatisfactory words or sentences.
7. Remember that you don't have to start from the beginning, you can even begin in the middle. Do what works best for you.
8. Learn to use the **Footnoting** feature to show where you found your information and ideas.

When you are ready to edit

1. Spell check your whole piece.
2. Ask a partner to proofread what you have written right on the screen. (This will save time and paper.)
3. Make the changes you and your partner agree on.
4. Optional, print a hard copy and edit and proofread on this paper copy.

To make revisions

1. Use the **cursor** to insert new words and sentences.
2. Use **Cut** and **Paste** or Highlight and Click and Drag to move sentences and paragraphs around and to improve the order and flow of your ideas.
3. Use the **delete** key to eliminate unnecessary words.
4. Use **Find and Replace/Change** to locate and change repeated or overused words.



The Writing Process

6. Proofreading — Making it Right

Proofreading is looking for mistakes and correcting them. Some beginning proofreading steps for young writers are:

- If unsure of the correct spelling of any word, underline that word. (This doesn't interrupt the flow of writing but will remind the writer to check the spelling later.)
- Make sure that every sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period, question mark, or exclamation point.
- Dialogue should be contained in quotation marks.
- Break up long, run-on sentences.
- Take out unnecessary words.
- Add missing words.

All of these strategies can be taught through mini-lessons. They can be revisited throughout the year, on an as needed basis.

Use the mini-lessons to teach grammar, usage and mechanics in relationship to students' current writing needs. Suggestions for linking the teaching of grammar and mechanics with different genres have been included in each genre section of this book.

Cool-off

Try to structure your writing workshop so that there is cooling-off time between when a piece of writing is completed and when it is proofread. This will allow students to return to their writing with fresh eyes.

Read aloud

A basic proofreading strategy that young writers can use is the Read Aloud strategy. This strategy allows students to “hear” errors their eyes may have missed.



- Step one: Students read their pieces aloud to themselves
Step two: Each student reads the piece aloud to a partner
Step three: Partner reads the piece aloud

COPS— police your writing

Another useful strategy for proofreading is COPS. This acronym reminds students of four things to consider in their writing. Students can jot the letters COPS at the top of their pages and check off each letter as they work through the proofreading list.

- Capitalization** → Capitalize the first word in each sentence. Capitalize proper names of people, places and things.
- Overall** → How does it look overall? Is your writing neat? Is spacing correct?
- Punctuation** → Do you have periods, question marks or exclamation points for each sentence?
- Spelling** → Does your spelling look correct?

Identifying spelling errors is one thing, but how can students who can't spell a specific word, find that word in the dictionary? Here's a *Smart Learning*¹ tip for just such a dilemma:

To look up the spelling of a word you don't know how to spell, use a dictionary or an online dictionary to check the entry of a word you **do** know how to spell. For instance, if you want to check the spelling of the word *intelligent* you might look up the easier word *smart*. You would likely find the spelling for *intelligent* within the *smart* entry. Unsure of how to spell *enormous*? Check the entry for *big*.









Be honest with students about how challenging it is to proofread their own writing. Most professional writers rely on another person to proofread their work. Encourage students to use expert editors (like a parent, teacher or other capable writer) at the final stage of their writing.

¹ *Smart Learning: strategies for parents, teachers and kids*, Dana Antaya-Moore and Catherine Walker



Proofreading symbols

Writers and editors use proofreading symbols to mark changes in a piece of writing. These symbols are standard and are useful tools for a young writer.

Symbol	What it means	Example
	change to lower case	My Dog is big.
	needs capital letter	My dog's name is blue. ==
	change letter or word order	A nick e n for your thoughts...
	take out word	And I love my dog.
	add letter or word	My dog's name Blue. ^{is}
	close space	My dog loves jelly beans. ○
	needs punctuation	My dog is feeling blue □
	start new paragraph	All the jellybeans were gone. ¶ The next day...



The Writing Process

7. Publishing — Sharing it

Young writers need meaningful opportunities to share their writing with others. Ensure that most writing assignments are meant to be read by readers other than the teacher.

Set up systems for feedback. Write positive notes on student's work, insert reader's response pages in special books, and encourage students to reflect on their own writing.

There are many ways to share writing:

- read it aloud to a partner
- read it aloud to the class
- have the teacher read it aloud
- read it to students in other classes
- put it in a class or school newsletter
- submit the piece to a writing contest
- contribute to a class anthology
- share it at a reading party
- share with family and invite them to make written comments
- mail it to a friend
- display it on a bulletin board
- make it into a hardcover book
- post to classroom webpage, teacher website or school website
- blogging
- online publishing platforms

The possibilities for sharing writing are endless! What publishing does, no matter what the format, is give students a purpose for writing, provide a motivation for revision, and give young writers a sense of audience. Publishing affords young writers opportunities to communicate their ideas, experiences and opinions to others. It gives them a real reason to write.



The Writing Process

8. Strategies for Assessment

There are a myriad of methods and strategies for assessing writing and measuring student growth. Balance the types of assignments you assess. For example, longer edited projects demonstrate a student's ability to follow a plan, complete a task, and meet criteria. An independent writing sample shows what students can do independently and provides a snapshot of how they apply the skills and strategies that they have been learning in class.

Set up individual student files to store all writing samples for the school year. This is not only useful for reporting student progress, it can be a valuable tool for monitoring and measuring curriculum alignment. Students can also use the collection of writing to assess their own growth, to go back to look for new ideas and information and to help them see themselves as active learners and writers.

Rubrics

Use a rubric and assess for content, skills and format. Before the teacher uses the rubric, have the students complete their own self-assessments. Students can circle the descriptors or use a specific colour of highlighter. This self-assessment gives teachers additional information for evaluating the students' thinking about writing.

Compare the rubrics from different writing samples and use this information to help students set goals. This information is also valuable for planning for instruction and for reporting student growth on report cards.

Encourage students to reflect on their own writing

Use a variety of self-evaluation tools so students learn how to evaluate their work and begin to monitor their own progress. A sample checklist is included for each type of writing in this resource.



Observation checklists

Develop simple checklists to provide a focus for reviewing students' written work. Target specific skills such as descriptive words, and transitional sentences, and look for examples that indicate students have mastered these concepts.

Word counts

Compare actual word counts in successive writing samples. It can be very encouraging to see reluctant writers who are producing less than fifty words per session in September, double or triple their output by mid year.

Spelling in context

Underline misspellings and compare them to the percentage of correct spellings in a writing sample. For example if there are 12 spelling errors in an 80-word piece, spelling accuracy is 85%. (If the same word is misspelled more than once, count it only once.) As a general rule, 80% correct spelling is considered readable.

Writing samples

Independent writing samples allow teachers to step back and give students an opportunity to use their writing skills on their own.

Use a picture prompt or sentence starter. This allows you to compare student writing within your classroom. Even more powerful is a single writing prompt used school-wide. This allows teachers to work collaboratively and compare performance across the grade levels. Writing samples could be done as often as once a month but should be done a minimum of three times per school year.

You may choose to have students work in partners or small groups to brainstorm ideas as part of the planning stage. If you decide to go with a class brainstorming format, let the students take the lead in the discussion.

Discourage types of writing that you know will interfere with a student's success; for example, dream endings, violence, or a retelling of a television or movie plot.



The writing of a writing sample should take place during a specific time frame, for example:

- A. Planning time → 10 minutes (This could be done in small groups, partners or individually. When students work individually, a planning sheet could be provided.)
- B. Writing time → 30 minutes
- C. Revision → 10 minutes

Students write a first draft. Encourage them to double space and write on one side of the page only.

In the last ten minutes, students edit their own work using a coloured pen. Encourage the use of COPS and proper editing symbols. Consider setting a target for number of revisions; for example, *“Make at least five changes or additions to your first draft.”*

Use writing tools such as electronic spellcheck, dictionary, word bank, etc. during the revision time only, not during the actual thirty-minute writing time.

Have students date, title and record the number of words they have written. They could also complete a self-reflection.

Use a rubric to assess the piece of writing. Using rubrics consistently throughout the year will provide a continuous picture of students’ achievement and growth. Students can use this information for goal setting and improving their writing.

After the initial assessment you may choose to return the samples to the students so they can continue to work with them through the revision and publishing stages.



The Writing Process

9. Ideas for Encouraging Student Writers to Excel

Within the classroom

- decorate an authors' chair and schedule a few minutes each week for volunteers to share their writing with the class
- have students write stories for the class newsletter
- publish a class anthology as part of a social studies project
- submit students' letters to the editor on a particular topic or issue to a local newspaper.
- take advantage of all the practical opportunities for real writing and communication. For example, students can write invitations to their parents for "Meet the Teacher" night, or thank you notes to guest speakers.
- post writing tips and lists of words for student reference
- read quality literature to students and use specific examples to talk about how authors use language, imagery and plot to tell their stories
- model writing and revision on the board. Explain why you make certain changes and why you might choose a certain word. Model the thinking that goes into the writing.
- incorporate writers' workshop within your language arts program
- offer mini-workshops or focused tutorials to small groups of students working on one specific writing skill
- look for opportunities in the content area for purposeful writing
- give students writing assignments for home practice. Encourage them to transfer their skills from situation to situation and to develop their independent work habits.
- stock your classroom with writing tools: interesting paper, good erasers, markers and pens, efficient word processing programs and easy-to-use dictionaries
- never use writing as a punishment or consequence for negative behaviour



Within the school

- sponsor a co-curricular Writers' Club
- compile and post examples of students' written work to inspire and motivate other young writers
- publish a school anthology
- submit student writing to local publications
- share student writing at assemblies and other school events
- ask students to write poems and essays for special events and use in displays
- post writing tips in the school library
- set up a corner in the school library featuring the student writing
- take part in a visiting authors' program and ask the authors about the writing process and how they have honed their skills
- organize a school-wide authors' fair or poets' café in which all students share a piece of their own writing
- set up an in-school publishing company with parent volunteers helping with editing, copying and binding



English LA Curriculum Correlations

1. Revise and Edit

4.1 Enhance and improve

Suggestions for teaching revision and editing skills within your writing instruction.



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 1		
rephrase by adding or deleting words, ideas or information to make sense	6. Explaining	1. Personal narrative 5. Friendly letter
check for obvious spelling errors and missing words	12. Retelling	6. Explaining 7. Persuasive writing

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 2		
revise words and sentences to improve sequence or add missing information	10. News story	6. Explaining 8. Business letter
check for capital letters, punctuation at the end of sentences and errors in spelling	1. Personal narrative	12. Responding to literature — personal response



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 3		
combine and rearrange existing information to accommodate new ideas and information	13. Working with information — comparing	2. Responding to literature — personal response 7. Persuasive writing
edit for complete and incomplete sentences	4. Realistic fiction	12. Responding to literature — book reviews

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 4		
revise to ensure an understandable progression of ideas and information	6. Explaining	7. Persuasive writing 14. Mystery story
identify and reduce fragments and run-on sentences	12. Responding to literature — book reviews	10. News story
edit for subject–verb agreement	13. Working with information — summaries	8. Business letter



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 5		
revise to add and organize details that support and clarify intended meaning	7. Persuasive writing	8. Business letter 14. Mystery story
edit for appropriate use of statements, questions and exclamations	14. Mystery story	4. Realistic fiction

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 6		
revise to provide focus, expand relevant ideas and eliminate unnecessary information	14. Mystery story	9. Fantasy
edit for appropriate verb tense and for correct pronoun references	4. Realistic fiction	10. News story
use paragraph structures in expository and narrative texts	7. Persuasive writing	13. Working with information — comparing 14. Mystery story




Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 7		
revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning	13. Working with information	4. Realistic fiction 6. Explaining 8. Business letter 10. News story
revise to eliminate unnecessary repetition of words and ideas	6. Explaining	7. Persuasive writing 8. Business letter 13. Working with information
use paragraphs, appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts	1. Personal narrative	4. Realistic fiction 5. Friendly letter 7. Persuasive writing 10. News story



English LA Curriculum Correlations

2. Capitalization and Punctuation

4.2 Attend to conventions

Suggestions for teaching punctuation and capitalization within your writing instruction. 

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 1		
capitalizes the first letter of names and pronoun “I” in own writing	1. Personal narratives	4. Realistic fiction 5. Friendly letter

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 2		
use capital letters for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences in own writing	1. Personal narratives	7. Persuasive writing 9. Fantasy
use periods and question marks as end punctuation in own writing	5. Friendly letters	3. Dialogue 8. Business letter
use commas after greetings and closures in letters and to separate words in a series in own writing	5. Friendly letters	11. Reflection — journal 12. Responding to literature — retelling

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 3		
use capital letters in titles of books and stories	12. Responding to literature — book review	5. Friendly letter
use exclamation marks as end punctuation in own writing	4. Realistic fiction	3. Dialogue 8. Mystery story
use apostrophes to form common contractions and show possession in own writing	4. Realistic fiction	11. Reflections — journal 12. Responding to literature — retelling

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 4		
use capitalization to designate clubs, teams and organizations and to indicate the beginning of quotations in own writing	3. Dialogue	12. Responding to literature — personal response 14. Mystery story
use commas in addresses and after introductory words in sentences in own writing	8. Business letter	11. Reflection — journal 12. Responding to literature — retelling 13. Working with information



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 5		
use capital letters in titles, headings and subheadings in own writing	11. Reflection — learning log	12. Responding to literature — personal response 14. Mystery story
use quotation marks and separate paragraphs to indicate passages of dialogue in own writing	3. Dialogue	4. Realistic fiction 9. Fantasy
recognize various uses of apostrophes, and use them in own writing	11. Reflection — learning log	8. Business letter

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 6		
use colons before lists, to separate hours and minutes and after salutations in own writing	8. Business letter	11. Reflection — journal



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 7		
use periods and commas with quotation marks that indicate direct speech in own writing	3. Dialogue	4. Realistic fiction 9. Fantasy 14. Mystery story
use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing	1. Personal narrative	All types
use quotation marks to identify information taken from secondary sources in own writing	13. Working with information	10. News story 12. Responding to literature — book review



English LA Curriculum Correlations

3. Grammar and Usage

4.2 Attend to conventions

Suggestions for teaching grammar and usage within your writing instruction.



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 1		
write simple statements, demonstrating awareness of capital letters and periods	1. Personal narrative	5. Friendly letter

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 2		
write complete sentences, using capital letters and periods	4. Realistic fiction	7. Persuasive writing
use connecting words to join related words in a sentence	7. Persuasive writing	13. Working with information — comparing
identify nouns and verbs, and use in own writing	2. Descriptive writing	9. Fantasy 11. Reflection — observation
identify adjectives and adverbs that add interest and detail to stories	2. Descriptive writing	9. Fantasy 14. Mystery story



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 3		
identify a variety of sentence types, and use in own writing	2. Descriptive writing	8. Business letter 12. Responding to literature — book review
identify correct subject-verb agreement, and use in own writing	1. Personal narrative	12. Responding to literature — retelling 13. Working with information — summarizing
use adjectives and adverbs to add interest and detail to own writing	9. Fantasy	11. Reflection — observation 12. Responding to literature — retelling

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 4		
identify simple and compound sentence structures, and use in own writing	12. Responding to literature — retelling	10. News story
use connecting words to link ideas in sentences and paragraphs	7. Persuasive writing	3. Working with information
identify correct noun-pronoun agreement, and use in own writing	11. Reflection — observation	12. Responding to literature — personal response



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 5		
use words and phrases to modify and clarify ideas in own writing	6. Explaining	11. Reflection — observation
identify irregular verbs, and use in own writing	13. Working with information — summarizing	9. Fantasy
identify past, present and future verb tenses, and use in sentences	10. News story	11. Reflection — observation 12. Responding to literature — personal response

Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 6		
use complex sentence structures and a variety of sentence types in own writing	2. Descriptive writing	13. Working with information — summarizing 14. Mystery story
identify past, present and future verb tenses, and use throughout a piece of writing	10. News story	12. Responding to literature — retelling



Specific outcomes	Introduce through (writing style)	Review and practise through (writing style)
Grade 7		
use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing	1. Personal narrative	All forms
use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects	1. Personal narrative	All forms
distinguish between formal and informal conventions of oral and written language, and use each appropriately, depending on the context, audience and purpose	8. Business letter	13. Working with information
identify and use common subjective and objective forms of pronouns, appropriately and correctly in own writing	1. Personal narrative	4. Realistic fiction 5. Friendly letter



Types of Writing

1. Personal Narrative

What it is

A personal narrative is a true story about a personal memory. The best stories come from our most important memories.

A personal narrative could tell about something that has happened to you, for example, "The Most Unusual Day of My Life." It could also be written in the form of a letter to someone.

Generally, personal narratives:

- give background information (who, what, where, when)
- describe a series of events, in order
- use past tense

Functions

Personal narratives:

- put students in touch with themselves and with the world in which they live
- are often an excellent starting point for reluctant writers because their personal experiences provide a ready supply of subject matter
- preserve memories

Forms

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| • diary | • journal | • autobiography |
| • log | • letter | • postcard |
| • memoir | • picture book of reminiscences | • account |
| • photo essay | • essay | • story |
| • paragraph | | • narrative |



Related concepts

biography, second person, third person

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- write simple statements, demonstrating awareness of capital letters and periods (grade 1)
- rephrase by adding or deleting words, ideas or information to make sense. (grade 1)
- capitalize the first letter of names and pronoun “I” in own writing (grade 1)
- use capital letters for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences in own writing (grade 2)
- check for capital letters, punctuation of the sentences and errors in spelling (grade 2)
- identify correct subject-verb agreement, and use in own writing (grade 3)
- use paragraphs, appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)
- identify and use common subjective and objective forms of pronouns, appropriately and correctly in own writing (grade 7)

Specific terms

diary, personal narrative, memories, memoir, autobiography, account, sequence, point of view, first person, past tense



Examples from literature

- *A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams (grades K–2)
- *I Dance in My Red Pajamas* by Edith Thacher Hurd (grades K–2)
- *Watch Out for the Chicken Feet in Your Soup* by Tomie de Paola (grades K–2)
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst (grades K–3)
- *Could be Worse* and others by James Stevenson (grades K–3)
- *The Wall* by Eve Bunting (grades K–3)
- *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant (grades K–3)
- *Wilfred Gordon McDonald Partridge* by Mem Fox (grades K–3)
- *The Diary of Anne Frank* by Anne Frank (grades 4–7)
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (grades 5–7)
- *Julie of the Wolves* by J.C. George (grades 5–7)
- *Zlata’s Diary* by Zlata Filipovic (grades 5–7)

Planning tools

- Student tip sheet #1: Personal narrative
- Activity page: Recreate a happy childhood memory
- Multi-use master #1: Planning web

What students need to do

To write a personal narrative:

1. Select a subject. Think of a memorable experience that happened over a short period of time.
2. Organize thoughts and ideas on a web or a list.
3. Answer the 5Ws — Who? What? When? Where? and Why? — about the experience, and then write.



4. Start at the beginning. Students put themselves at the beginning of the experience (“I was looking out the window...” or “As I turned the corner...”) and continue to add details as they work through their stories from beginning to end.
5. Add physical details. Help the reader to see a mental picture by including details about colours, shapes and textures. For example:
As I slowly stepped into the bright light, my knees began to buckle and I had to remind myself to breathe.
6. Add sounds, tastes, smells and textures. Sounds make readers feel as if they are there, living in the adventure with the writer. Include at least one other sense that is important to the story.
7. Add dialogue. Dialogue can make a story seem real and can bring characters to life.
8. Add thoughts and feelings. Use words and actions to show what the narrator in the story is thinking and feeling.
9. Students should write the way they feel. If the subject makes them laugh, they should try to make their readers laugh. If their subject makes them feel sad or excited, they should try to make their readers feel the same way.

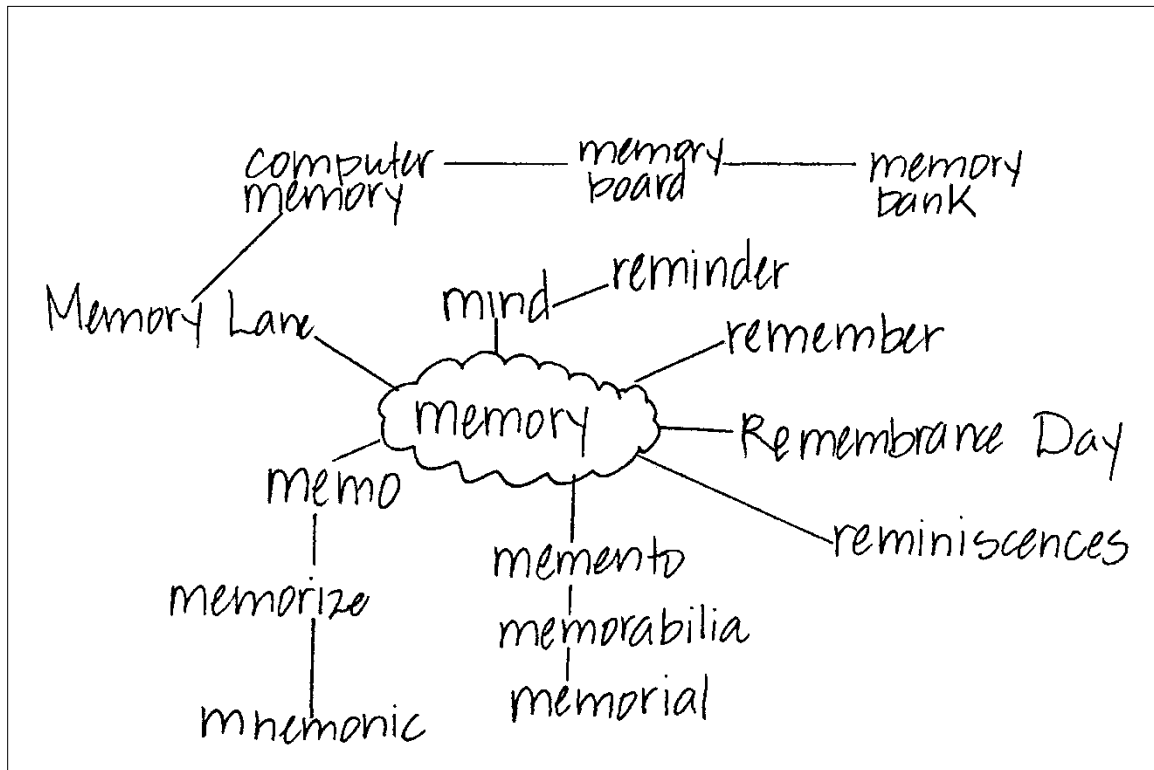
We should never run out of ideas for personal narratives. Each day brings new experiences!



Sample teaching strategies

1. Memory word map

Have students create a word web for the word *memory*. Brainstorm related words such as: *memoir*, *member*, *memo*. Discuss the meaning and context for each of these words.



2. Timeline

Demonstrate what a timeline is, and challenge students to make a timeline of their lives that they can use to write their own life stories or autobiographies. The timeline could include when and where they were born, and major events in their lives — like the first day of school, births of siblings, arrival of a new pet, etc. The timeline could also include world events that coincided with important events in their lives.

3. **Find out**

As a class, brainstorm a list of questions students can ask their parents about what they, the students, were like when they were very young. Students can use this information to write stories about their early childhoods.

4. **Idea bank**

Brainstorm exciting first lines for personal narratives and use them for journal writing topics, homework assignments or independent writing in writer's workshop. For example:

- *It wasn't really my fault but...*
- *Things were fine until I realized I had the wrong...*
- *I realized that being the older/younger/only child has its disadvantages when...*

5. **And when you were young**

Recreate a happy childhood memory. Use a planner to organize your ideas. Use the page *Recreate a Happy Childhood Memory* included in this section.

6. **Toystory**

Choose a favourite toy and write a life history for that toy.

7. **Dreams and wishes**

Writing about dreams and wishes allows students to express personal feelings and opinions about things they would like to share. Invite students to think about the wishes and dreams they have and write down as many as they can. From the list, have them pick the four or five most important wishes and dreams. Write a paragraph for each wish.

8. **Publish it**

Put together a collection of *All About Me* stories to pass on to next year's teacher.





Student Tip Sheet #1

Personal Narrative

What it is

A personal narrative is a true story about something that happened in your life. The best stories come from our most important memories.

A personal narrative could be written as a story, for example, “The Most Unusual Day of My Life.” It could also be written in the form of a letter to someone.

Generally, personal narratives:

- give background information (who, what, where, when, why)
- describe a series of events in order
- use past tense (for example: walked, talked and went)

What it can look like

- diary
- log
- memoir
- paragraph
- journal
- letter
- photo essay
- essay
- autobiography
- postcard
- poetry
- story

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #1: Planning web
- Activity page: Re-create a happy childhood memory



Plan

1. Select a subject. Think of a single memorable event that happened in your life. Look for an experience that happened over a short period of time. It could have happened in five minutes or an hour. Keep your story to a single experience that happened over no longer than one day.
2. Collect your thoughts. Use a web or a list to help organize your thoughts.
3. Answer the 5Ws — Who? What? When? Where? and Why? — about the experience.

Write

1. Start at the beginning. Put yourself at the beginning of the experience (“I was looking out the window...” or “As I turned the corner...”) and continue to add details as you work through your story from beginning to end.
2. Add physical details. Help your readers see what you saw by including details that will help them make a picture in their minds. For example:
As I slowly stepped into the bright light, my knees began to buckle and I had to remind myself to breathe.
3. Add sounds, tastes, smells and textures. Sounds make readers feel as if they are there, living in the adventure with you. Include at least one other sense that is important to your story.
4. Add dialogue. Dialogue can make a story seem more real, and can bring characters to life.
5. Add thoughts and feelings. Show what you were thinking and how you were feeling by what you make your characters say and do.



Check your writing

In this personal narrative...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My beginning sentence grabs the reader's interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I tell the story from my personal point of view.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I tell the story in 1–2–3 order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I include enough background information that the reader understands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when the story takes place • where it took place • who is involved • what happened • why it's an important memory for me 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
5. I tell the story in the past tense. (For example: <i>walked</i> , <i>talked</i> , <i>said</i> .)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

To make my story more realistic, I could add details

about... _____



Re-create a Happy Childhood Memory

What it is

A personal narrative is a true story about a personal memory. The best stories come from our most important memories.

Focus	Choose: <input type="checkbox"/> a specific event in your life <input type="checkbox"/> event lasted between five minutes and one hour
Create a context for your reader	Tell: <input type="checkbox"/> how <u>old</u> you were <input type="checkbox"/> <u>where</u> you were <input type="checkbox"/> <u>who</u> was with you
Create a picture	Include details of: <input type="checkbox"/> what you <u>saw</u> <input type="checkbox"/> what you <u>heard</u> <input type="checkbox"/> what you <u>smelled</u> <input type="checkbox"/> how your body <u>felt</u>
Create a mood	<input type="checkbox"/> Give details that let the reader know what you were <u>feeling</u> and how your feelings changed
Significance	<input type="checkbox"/> Give your reader some ideas for why this <u>memory</u> is important to you now



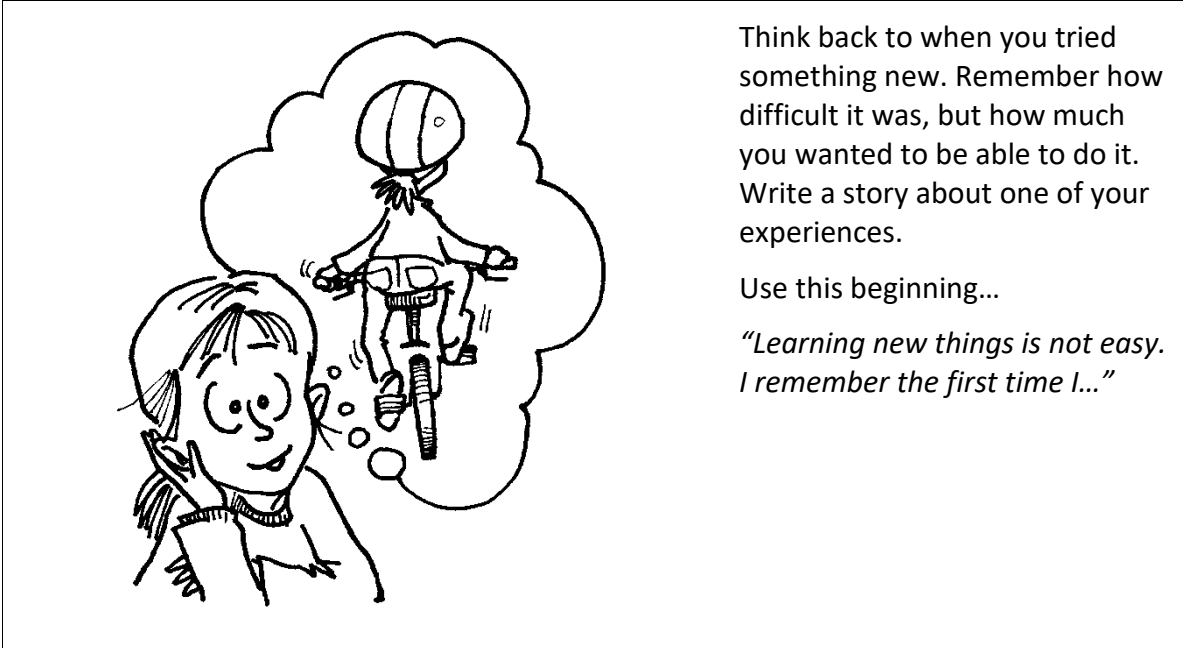
Sample writing prompts



"What a day," I thought as I fell back sleepily on my pillow. "Nobody knows that I was a hero at school today, but I really was!"

Write a story about something smart, special or kind you did at school this year.





Think back to when you tried something new. Remember how difficult it was, but how much you wanted to be able to do it. Write a story about one of your experiences.

Use this beginning...
"Learning new things is not easy. I remember the first time I..."



Additional writing prompts

<p>Your mom and dad tell you that your family must move to a faraway country.</p> <p>Tell about what you will miss most about your life here. Tell about what you would hope for in your life in the new country.</p>	<p>You are cleaning your room and you find an old toy that was a favourite when you were very small. It is too important to throw away!</p> <p>Your mom wants to pack it away in the cedar chest, but she suggests that you first write a little story to go with the toy. You can reread the story many years from now and it will help you remember why the toy was so important to you.</p> <p>Write a story of how you got this toy, what kinds of things you did with it and why it is so important to you.</p>
<p>For one day everything in your city or town will be free. Nothing will cost money.</p> <p>Where will you go? What will you do?</p> <p>Describe the choices you would make and give reasons for your choices.</p>	<p>Write a personal story beginning with the line:</p> <p><i>"The most important decision I ever made in my life was..."</i></p>
<p>Write a personal story about the funniest thing that has ever happened to you, or that you have ever seen.</p> <p>Describe it in detail. Did other people think it was funny?</p>	<p>Choose a special memory of your own. Make your story vivid to the reader by including thoughts and feelings as well as details that appeal to our senses.</p>



Rubric for Personal Narrative

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____



	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear and effective <input type="checkbox"/> events consistently fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> specific details <input type="checkbox"/> creative, original and enticing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear <input type="checkbox"/> most events fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is present <input type="checkbox"/> events are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is unclear <input type="checkbox"/> events are vague or confusing <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive, few or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> content insufficient for assessment
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> events effectively ordered <input type="checkbox"/> strong connections between events, actions and characters	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> events in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters for most of the story	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning tells about events, characters and setting <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between actions and details tenuous or missing	<input type="checkbox"/> minimal or no evidence of organization



	<input type="checkbox"/> ending ties events together	<input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to story	sometimes maintained <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not present or not connected	
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> maintains first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single significant event <input type="checkbox"/> consistent past tense <input type="checkbox"/> consistently believable	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single event <input type="checkbox"/> consistent past tense <input type="checkbox"/> generally believable	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes used first person <input type="checkbox"/> identifies single event <input type="checkbox"/> uses mostly past tense <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes believable	<input type="checkbox"/> does not use first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> target event vague <input type="checkbox"/> tense varies <input type="checkbox"/> not believable	<input type="checkbox"/> target event difficult to identify



2. Descriptive Writing



What it is

Descriptive writing techniques help writers bring their stories alive for their readers. Using description encourages writers to show students to show rather than tell. It helps writers create vivid, multi-sensory word pictures.

Functions

Descriptive writing gives students tools:

- to paint word pictures
- to make writing more concrete or vivid by adding specific information, sensory images or comparisons

Forms

- paragraph
- journal
- observation
- reflection
- story
- report
- poem

Related concepts

personification, comparison



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- identify nouns and verbs, and use in own writing (grade 2)
- identify adjectives and adverbs that add interest and detail to stories (grade 2)
- identify a variety of sentence types and use in own writing (grade 2)
- use complex sentence structures and a variety of sentence types in own writing (grade 6)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

concrete, detail, sensory, specific versus general, vivid, mood, evoke, mental picture, visualize, show rather than tell, observe, attributes, precise, synonyms

Examples from literature

- *Grandfather Twilight* by Barbara Berger (grades K–1)
- *The Napping House* by Audrey Wood (grades K–1)
- *Fish Eyes* by Lois Ehlert (grades K–2)
- *Owl Moon* by Jane Yolen (grades K–2)
- *The Tomten* by Astrid Lindgren (grades K–2)
- *Father Time and the Day Boxes* by George Lyon (grades K–3)
- *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg (grades K–6)
- *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown (grades 1–4)
- *Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs* by Judi Barrett (grades 1–6)
- *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima (grades 2–4)
- *The Best Town in the World* by Byrd Baylor (grades 2–4)
- *The Little Match Girl* by Hans Christian Anderson (grades 3–6)
- *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt (grades 4–7)



Planning tools

- Student tip sheet #2: Descriptive writing
- Multi-use master #2: Sensory wheel
- Multi-use master #3: Looks like, sounds like

Practice tools

- Activity page: Stretch-a-sentence
- Activity page: Show don't tell
- Activity page: For example
- Activity page: Choosing precise words

What students need to do

To write good description:

1. Choose strong words. Words that are vague or overused can often be replaced by synonyms that are more precise. For example:
My little sister said that I was bothering her.
My little sister complained that I was bothering her.
2. Choose words that describe. Words that describe give the reader a clear picture of ideas and make writing more interesting to read.
3. Add specific information. Make writing more descriptive by adding specific information and details. Rather than saying something is noisy, identify the specific noise: *waves crashing, a baby crying, a roaring plane engine or seven howling cats.* Each of these noisy examples conjures up a distinct mental picture.
4. Name the characters. Instead of writing about a "boy," give the character an interesting name and provide details about what the character looks like and acts like.
5. List details. Rather than writing only that "The boy walked across the playground," continue with details about that playground: *noisy seagulls flying overhead, rusty swings clanging in the wind, an empty teeter totter abandoned in the sand.* These details help the reader to visualize the boy's walk across the playground.



6. Create sensory images. Incorporate the senses into writing to create stronger images and make word pictures more vivid. Don't limit writing to just visual images. Write about how things sound, how they taste and smell and how different experiences feel.
7. Make comparisons. Use metaphors to compare things in fresh and unexpected ways. A **metaphor** is a comparison of two things. The words *like* or *as* are not used; instead, one thing is said to *be* another. For example:

My puppy is a real little clown.

Writers use metaphors to create mental pictures and reinforce what they are trying to say in a powerful or pleasing way.

If a comparison uses the word *like* or *as* — the puppy was *like* a clown, it is called a **simile**. A simile also compares one thing to another, but is introduced by the words *like* or *as*. For example:

The puppy was as silly as a clown .

or

The puppy acted like a silly little clown.

Sample teaching strategies

1. **Five-senses cluster**

Focus on the five senses by exploring an object or a concept and brainstorming words related to each sense. Record the words on a web or sensory wheel. Food is a very effective stimulus for a sensory wheel because it can evoke a response for each sense.

- Multi-use master #2: Sensory wheel

2. **Looks like, sounds like**

For young children, use the *looks like* — *sounds like* pattern to encourage descriptive writing about holidays, special activities or everyday objects.

- Multi-use master #3: Looks like, sounds like



3. **Stretch-a-sentence**

Provide bare-bone sentences and have students add words and phrases to create detail and description.

- Activity page: *Stretch-a-sentence*

4. **Show don't tell**

Give students examples of statements that tell by summarizing what has happened. Challenge students to rewrite the statements using descriptive writing which shows rather than tells.

- Activity page: *Show don't tell*

5. **For example**

Give students several sample statements and ask them to provide more description by providing an example that illustrates each statement. For example:

Sample statement — *Old playground equipment can be very dangerous.*

Illustrating statement — *Last year I cut my hand on the jagged edge of a slide and had to get a tetanus shot.*

- Activity page: *For example*

6. **Tired-out words**

Identify a number of overused word such as *nice*, *pretty*, *cool*. Print these words on cards and post them on a *Tired-out words* poster. Encourage students to replace these words in their writing with more precise and descriptive word choices.



7. **Power words**

Choose a book jacket that contains a number of evocative and powerful words. Read the cover information aloud and ask the students to raise their hands when they hear a powerful word. Record these words on a chart and encourage students to complete personal collections of power words from their reading. They can clip these lists into their writing folders and use some of the words in their independent writing.

8. **Alternate words**

Brainstorm lists of alternate words for frequently used words such as *said*, *went* and *cold*. Post them on chart paper so students can use the chart as a reference. New words can be added throughout the year.

9. **Guess what I am?**

Give each student a picture of an object and ask each to write a description of the object without naming it. Have students trade with a partner. The partner reads the written description and guesses the identity of the object.

10. **Where am I? (or Who am I?)**

Distribute pictures of different scenes or people and ask students to write descriptions of the settings. Post the written descriptions and the picture prompts randomly on a bulletin board. Challenge students to match the descriptions with the scenes or people.

11. **Ordinary to extraordinary**

Write the names of ordinary objects on single file cards and have students each choose a card. Challenge them to use their descriptive writing skills to transform the ordinary into the extraordinary by writing a descriptive paragraph about what this object looks, sounds, tastes, feels and smells like. Encourage students to make at least one comparison using a simile or a metaphor.

12. **Paint a word picture of a painting**

Have the students examine an art print and then brainstorm attribute words and phrases as they look at the print. Use the list to write poems or paragraphs describing what they see in the painting.

13. **Using wordless picture books**

Practise descriptive writing techniques with wordless story books. Brainstorm descriptive words and phrases. Write them on post-it notes and attach them to the appropriate pages in the book. Use these words and phrases in a retelling of the story.



Student Tip Sheet #2: Descriptive Writing

What it is

Descriptive writing techniques help writers bring their stories to life. Writers use description to create word pictures. Readers feel as though they are right inside the story and can see it in their heads.

What it can look like

- paragraph
- report
- reflection
- story
- observation
- journal
- poem

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #2: Sensory wheel
- Multi-use master #3: Looks like, sounds like



To write good description

1. Choose strong words. Words that are vague or overused can often be replaced by more precise words that give more detail. For example:

My mom is... nice. (weak)
kind-hearted. (stronger)

2. Choose words that describe. Words that describe give the reader a clear picture of your ideas and make your writing more interesting to read. For example:

My little sister... said that I was bothering her.
complained that I was bothering her.

3. Add specific information. Make your writing more descriptive by adding specific information and details. Rather than saying something is noisy, identify the specific noise: *waves crashing, a baby crying, a roaring plane engine or seven howling cats*. Each of these noisy examples helps your readers create pictures in their minds.
4. Name the characters. Instead of writing about a “boy,” give the character an interesting name and provide details about what the character looks like and acts like.
5. List details. Rather than writing only that “The boy walked across the playground,” try adding details about that playground: *noisy seagulls flying overhead, rusty swings clanging in the wind, an empty teeter totter abandoned in the sand*. These details help your reader visualize the boy’s walk across the playground.
6. Create sensory images. Use your five senses as you write to create stronger images and make your word pictures more vivid. Write about how things sound, how food tastes and smells, and how different experiences feel.
7. Make comparisons using metaphors or similes.

Writing tools for comparing

A metaphor is a comparison in which one thing is said to be another thing. For example:

My puppy is a real little clown.

A simile is a comparison in which one thing is compared to another thing using the words **like** or **as**. For example:

*The puppy was **as** silly as a clown.*

or

*The puppy acted **like** a silly little clown.*



Check your writing

In my descriptive writing...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I use strong words to tell my story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I include specific information that helps readers create pictures in their minds.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I name all my characters and give clues to what that character looks like and acts like.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I use at least two senses to create an image in my story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I make at least one comparison in my story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I use words to show rather than tell my reader what is happening in the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some strong words and sensory images I could add are



Stretch-a-Sentence

1. Read each “bare bones” sentence.
2. Think — “What details does this sentence need?” Think about the questions your reader might have and try to answer them in an interesting way.
3. **Stretch** each sentence by adding at least five words to make the sentence more detailed and/or descriptive.
4. Rewrite the **new** and **improved** sentences as a paragraph.
5. Write a catchy title that expresses the main idea of the paragraph.
6. Proofread your work.

First draft: I cooked supper. They were surprised. Then we cleaned up.

Stretch the sentences...

WHEN? Last night

WHO? I cooked supper. because it was my mother's birthday. a huge pot of delicious spaghetti sauce

WHAT? WHY? They were surprised. because they've never seen me cook before. older brother and sister stunned

WHY? They were so impressed with my cooking that they actually volunteered to clean up. they even did the pots and pans!

Revised draft: *Last night I cooked a huge pot of delicious spaghetti sauce because it was my mother's birthday. My older brother and sister were stunned because they'd never seen me cook. They were so impressed with my cooking that they actually volunteered to clean up. They even did the pots and pans!*

Try these yourself:

Bare bones #1

It was dark.
I walked down the street.
I was nervous.

Bare bones #2

I dressed up.
I went trick or treating.
I got candy.

Bare bones #3

I went on a bike ride.
I went fast.
It was fun.

Bare bones #4

Lifting weights is cool.
It's good for you.
I like it.

Bare bones #5

A dog barked at me.
I barked back.
The dog ran away.



Show Don't Tell

A good writer creates a picture for the reader. Good writers don't just tell, they show the reader what is happening. For example, you could tell your reader that you missed the bus by simply writing:

I missed the bus.

Or you could show your reader what happened by including details such as:

Just as I turned the corner, the bright-yellow school bus pulled away from the curb and I could see my friend Johnny waving at me through the back window.

The bare bones sentences below **tell**, rather than **show**. Add details that show the reader what is happening. The first two sentences are started for you.

1. **I am afraid of dogs.**

When I see a dog I _____

2. **I made a delicious sandwich.**

To make my sandwich I _____

3. **It is cold outside.**



4. **The dog barked at me.**

5. **My coat is too small.**

6. **My friend is nice.**

7. **I like the colour orange.**

8. **I have a cold.**



For Example

Examples help to make our ideas clear to the reader. Below are several statements. Use your imagination to write an example that illustrates each one. Write in complete sentences. The first one has been done for you.

- A. My brother is very strange. For example, he sleeps with an open book under his pillow because he thinks it will help him to learn.
1. Big brothers can be a pain, but sometimes they are good to have around. For example, _____

2. Having a substitute teacher can be fun. For example, _____

3. My mom packs great lunches. For instance, _____

4. My friend could not live without her computer. _____

5. I love a good argument. _____

6. My dog is quite the clown. _____



Choosing Precise Words

Replace vague or overused words with synonyms that are more precise. In each sentence, cross out the word **went** and choose a better word from the box below. Use each word only once and say the sentence aloud to see which word sounds best.

marched	romped	stomped	tiptoed
lumbered	charged	sped	twirled
skipped	ran	jumped	bumped

1. The bear went toward the trembling hunter.
2. The ballerina went across the stage.
3. The soldiers went through the streets.
4. The bull went across the field.
5. The new puppy went across the field chasing the butterfly.
6. The bicycle messenger went across town with the top secret document.
7. Jay went up the stairs and loudly slammed the door.
8. The teacher went quietly across her classroom so she wouldn't wake her sleeping students.
9. The old car went along the road leaving clouds of dust and smoke in her wake.
10. My little sister was so happy she went all the way to school.

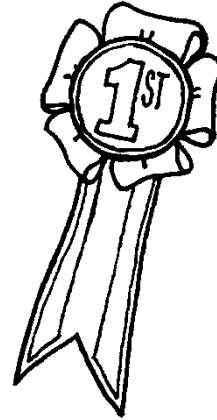


Sample writing prompts

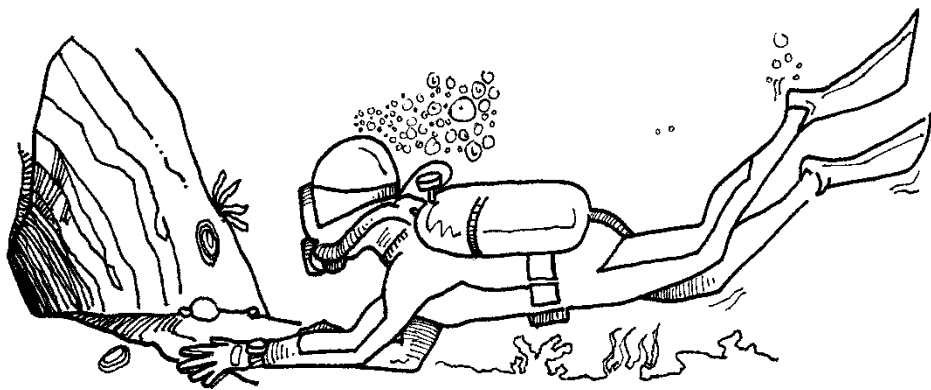
Imagine that you have won first prize in a contest you entered. What type of contest would it be?

Describe:

- what you had to do to enter
- your winning entry
- your fabulous prize
- what you will do with that prize







This diver has just uncovered the cave of a wondrous sea monster that no one has seen before.

Imagine you are that diver and describe your new discovery and its home. Be sure to include a description of how you felt as you entered the cave.



Additional writing prompts

<p>You are the first person from outer space to explore the planet Earth.</p> <p>For three days you have collected observations to send back to your home planet.</p> <p>Write a short report describing three things you saw on Earth.</p>	<p>You are an inventor. You have just invented something that will be very popular with kids the world over,</p> <p>What is the invention? How will children use it?</p> <p>Describe the invention and your plans for selling the invention.</p>
<p>Imagine that you are an artist and that you have created the most amazing one-of-a-kind masterpiece. Museums across the world want to display it.</p> <p>Describe your masterpiece and how you created it. Tell why it has become so popular.</p>	<p>The rain has not stopped for a week. The street is like a river in front of your house.</p> <p>The power has been out for three days and only the candles burn at night. You can't go outdoors.</p> <p>Describe what it is like inside your house. How do you feel? What kinds of things are you doing during the day? How is this different from other times?</p>
<p>You have entered a virtual reality world that is amazing, but beautiful.</p> <p>Describe what you see, hear, smell, touch and taste that makes this world so incredible.</p>	<p>Describe the most unusual object you have ever seen. Show rather than tell in your writing.</p> <p>Share it with a friend to see if he can identify what it is.</p>



Rubric for Descriptive Writing

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____



Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details that help readers create pictures in their minds <input type="checkbox"/> creates vivid sensory images using the five senses <input type="checkbox"/> creative, original and entices the reader	<input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details <input type="checkbox"/> uses at least three senses to create images <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> beginning to use senses in writing <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> rarely uses senses in writing <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> does not use senses in writing <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning sets basic scene <input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> some connections made between events, actions and characters	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> few connections between actions and details	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is confusing <input type="checkbox"/> sentence order does not make sense <input type="checkbox"/> no connections between actions



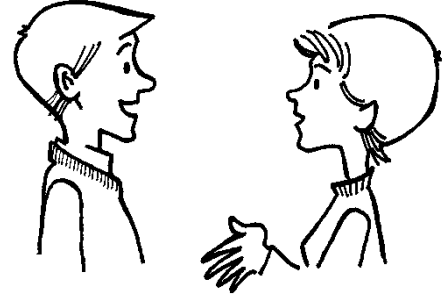
	consistently throughout the story	characters for most of the story			
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> uses words effectively and creatively to show rather than tell <input type="checkbox"/> uses specific words and expressions to enrich ideas <input type="checkbox"/> makes three or more effective and creative comparisons	<input type="checkbox"/> uses words effectively to show rather than tell <input type="checkbox"/> uses specific words and expressions to add clarity to details <input type="checkbox"/> makes two or more effective comparisons	<input type="checkbox"/> attempts to use words to show rather than tell <input type="checkbox"/> uses some general words where specific words and expressions would give more detail <input type="checkbox"/> makes two comparisons	<input type="checkbox"/> lacks words that show rather than tell <input type="checkbox"/> uses general words that create only vague meaning <input type="checkbox"/> attempts to make a comparison	<input type="checkbox"/> no words that show rather than tell <input type="checkbox"/> uses general words that are sometimes incorrect <input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of a comparison



3. Dialogue

What it is

Dialogue is conversation involving two or more people. Good dialogue adds description and colour to writing and helps the writer to show rather than tell. Dialogue can advance the plot of a story and make the story come to life for the reader.



Functions

Dialogue:

- helps define characters in stories
- provides description in stories

Forms

- story dialogue
- readers' theatre
- play script
- cartoon or comic strip
- monologue
- famous quote from history

Related concepts

formal versus informal language, monologue, footnoting and quoting sources

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- use periods and question marks as end punctuation in own writing (grade 2)
- use exclamation marks as end punctuation in own writing (grade 3)
- use capitalization to designate clubs, teams and organizations and to indicate the beginning of quotations in own writing (grade 4)
- use quotation marks and separate paragraphs to indicate passages of dialogue in own writing (grade 5)



- use periods and commas with quotation marks that indicate direct speech in own writing (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

dialogue, quotations, direct and indirect speech, characters, speakers, point of view, monologue

Examples from literature

Any story, play or book that includes interesting conversation.

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #3: Writing dialogue

What students need to do

To write successful dialogue:

1. Put quotation marks around the words the speaker is saying.
2. Put commas between the spoken and unspoken words, before quotation marks.
For example:
“I usually have porridge for breakfast,” retorted Angus, “and I like to have sugar on it!”
3. Identify the speakers so that readers understand who says what. When characters are clearly established, it should not be necessary to identify the speakers every single time they say something. As a rule of thumb, don’t write more than three dialogue lines without identifying the speaker.
4. Use alternate words for *said*, such as *whispered*, *shouted*, *answered*, etc. Make a list of these words so they are handy for reference.



5. Start a new paragraph (indent) each time the speaker changes.
6. If the speaker says more than one paragraph of dialogue, begin the additional paragraphs with opening quotation marks but only put closing quotation marks at the end of the final spoken paragraph.
7. Use dialogue that suits the characters and their situations. For example, shy people speak differently than aggressive people; really young children speak differently than older people.
8. Use dialogue to move the story along and provide details.
9. Don't make the dialogue so realistic that it bores the reader. In real life, we often repeat ourselves or use small talk just to get comfortable. In a piece of writing, avoid small talk and use the dialogue to show the reader what is happening.

Sample teaching strategies

1. **Give them words**
Have students draw a scene from a favourite story and add speech balloons for each of the characters.
2. **Talk about it**
Find several passages from favourite novels and challenge students to turn the narratives into dialogue.
3. **Another point of view**
Write a short dialogue between two six-year-old boys who are visiting a museum and looking at a display of a dinosaur. Then write another dialogue between two paleontologists looking at the same display. Note how the tone and word choice would be different.
4. **You are there**
Ask students to write an imaginary conversation between two historical characters that they are learning about.





Student Tip Sheet #3: Writing Dialogue

What it is

Dialogue is conversation between two or more people. Good dialogue adds description and colour to writing.

What it can look like

- story dialogue
- reader's theatre
- monologue
- play script
- famous quote from history
- cartoon panel of characters

What dialogue looks like

"Hi, there!" Josh exclaimed as he came into the classroom. "Guess what I found out last night?"

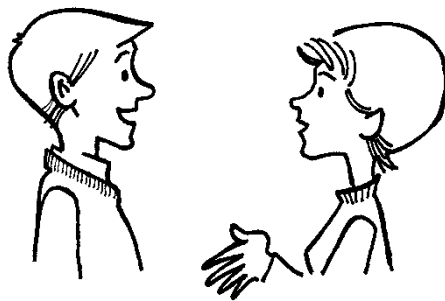
"I give up. What?" I replied.

"My parents are taking us to Mexico for a week," he replied.

"How do you get all the luck?" I asked.

"Hey, I recall that you got to go to the Smashing Pumpkins concert last November. Now it's my turn."

"Well, I still wish I could go with you!"



To write effective dialogue

1. Put quotation marks around the words the speaker is saying.

“Help!” yelled John. “Somebody call the police!”

2. If there are no other punctuation marks, commas go between the spoken and unspoken words. The commas go before the quotation marks.

“Today we’re going to learn how to use commas,” announced the teacher.

3. Identify the speakers so your readers understand who says what. When you’ve clearly established your characters, you don’t have to identify the speakers every single time they say something.

4. Use alternate words for *said* such as *whispered*, *shouted*, and *answered*. Make a list of these words to use in your writing.

5. Start a new paragraph each time the speaker changes. For example:

“What do you want?” shouted the boy.

“I want to know what you’re doing here,” replied the girl.

“It’s none of your business!” shouted the boy. “I don’t have to tell you anything!”

6. If the speaker says more than one paragraph of dialogue, begin the additional paragraphs with opening quotation marks but only put closing quotation marks at the end of the final spoken paragraph. For example:

“This is my special place,” the girl explained. “I come here every recess. It’s the only place I feel like I can be me.

“Some days I just hate coming to school. I moved here in November and I don’t really have any friends yet. Nobody even bothers to talk to me in the class. This place is the one place I don’t feel lonely.”



7. Use dialogue that suits the people you are writing about and their situation. For example, shy people speak differently than aggressive people; young children speak differently than older people.
8. Use dialogue to move the story along and provide interesting details.
9. Don't make the dialogue so realistic that it bores your reader. In real life we often repeat ourselves or use small talk just to get comfortable. In a piece of writing, leave out small talk and use the dialogue to show the reader what is happening.



Check your writing

In my dialogue...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I put quotation marks around all spoken words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I put commas between spoken and unspoken words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I identify the speakers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I change paragraphs each time the speaker changes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I use dialogue suitable to the speaker.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I use the dialogue to move the story along.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My dialogue is interesting to the reader.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some words I could use instead of "said"...





Oh! Oh! Everyone in this picture has something to say.

Include dialogue in your story about this picture.



Additional writing prompts

<p>Write a dialogue amongst three young dragons who have just come back from a flying lesson.</p>	<p>Write a dialogue of a mother reminding her son to do chores around the castle.</p>
<p>Write a dialogue between a newly-hatched baby eagle and his big brother.</p>	<p>Write a reader's theatre dialogue that is based on one scene of a book you have read in class.</p>
<p>Two friends are talking and discussing which day of school, during the year, is best. Draw and write a comic strip of their conversation.</p> <p>Make the comic strip no longer than 6 frames. The conversation should come to a conclusion at the end.</p>	<p>You are reading a story that you really enjoy. As you read, you wish that you could talk to one of the characters in the book.</p> <p>Choose a book and a character.</p> <p>If you could talk to that character, what would you say and ask? What would the character reply? Write the conversation you would have with that character.</p>



Rubric for Dialogue



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue creates mood and advances plot <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue consistently fits the story and characters <input type="checkbox"/> avoids unnecessary or repetitive dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue is creative and original	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue advances plot <input type="checkbox"/> most dialogue fits the story and characters <input type="checkbox"/> avoids unnecessary or repetitive dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue tells part of plot <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue generally fits the story and characters <input type="checkbox"/> uses some unnecessary or repetitive dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue usually holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue interferes with plot <input type="checkbox"/> unclear if text is meant to be in dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> much repetitive and uninteresting dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue is not effective, clear or meaningful
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue in logical and effective order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between dialogue, events and characters throughout the story <input type="checkbox"/> smooth and effective flow between dialogue and text	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between dialogue, events and characters throughout most of the story <input type="checkbox"/> effective flow between dialogue and text	<input type="checkbox"/> dialogue generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between dialogue, events and characters throughout some of the story <input type="checkbox"/> attempt to create flow between dialogue and text	<input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> few connections between dialogue, actions and characters <input type="checkbox"/> no flow between dialogue and text	<input type="checkbox"/> no dialogue <input type="checkbox"/> no connections made between dialogue, actions and characters <input type="checkbox"/> dialogue and text is awkward



Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> uses quotation marks correctly <input type="checkbox"/> identifies speakers effectively <input type="checkbox"/> begins new paragraph with each change of speaker <input type="checkbox"/> maintains consistent and distinctive tone for individual speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> generally uses quotation marks correctly <input type="checkbox"/> identifies speakers <input type="checkbox"/> usually begins new paragraph with each change of speaker <input type="checkbox"/> establishes distinctive tone for individual speaker	<input type="checkbox"/> attempts to use quotation marks correctly <input type="checkbox"/> generally clear as to who said what <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes begins new paragraph with each change of speaker <input type="checkbox"/> examples of distinctive tone for individual speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> incorrect use of quotation marks <input type="checkbox"/> unclear as to who said what <input type="checkbox"/> does not begin new paragraph with each change of speaker <input type="checkbox"/> no distinctive tone for individual speakers	<input type="checkbox"/> no quotation marks <input type="checkbox"/> difficult to understand <input type="checkbox"/> rarely uses paragraphs <input type="checkbox"/> no speakers identified
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4. Realistic Fiction



What it is

Realistic stories should sound like they could really have happened. Realistic stories often come from a writer's own experiences or interests, but the finished products are more fiction than fact.

Functions

Writing realistic stories helps students to:

- better understand the fiction writing process
- appreciate that ideas for writing can come from their own lives
- write from the viewpoints of others

Writing from a make-believe character's point of view:

- gives students the distance to reflect upon their own lives and times

Forms

- story
- simulated diary or journal
- reader's theatre
- cartoon
- dialogue
- monologue
- poetry

Related concepts

personal narrative



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- capitalize the first letter of names and pronoun “I” in own writing (grade 1)
- use complete sentences, using capital letters and periods (grade 2)
- edit for complete and incomplete sentences (grade 3)
- use exclamation marks as end punctuation in own writing (grade 3)
- use apostrophes to form common contractions and show possession in own writing (grade 3)
- use quotation marks and separate paragraphs to indicate passages of dialogue in own writing (grade 5)
- edit for appropriate use of statements, questions and exclamations (grade 5)
- edit for appropriate verb tense and for correct pronoun references (grade 6)
- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning (grade 7)
- use paragraphs, appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts (grade 7)
- use periods and commas with quotation marks that indicate direct speech in own writing (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)
- identify and use common subjective and objective forms of pronouns, appropriately and correctly in own writing (grade 7)

Specific terms

fiction, nonfiction, realistic, believability, suspension of disbelief, character, plot, problem, obstacles, conflict, tension, roadblocks, high point, solution, theme, mood, setting



Examples from literature

- *When I Was Young in the Mountains* by Cynthia Rylant (grades K–3)
- *Alexander and the Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst (grades 2–4)
- *Ramona Forever* by Beverly Cleary (grades 3–5)
- *The Flunking of Joshua T. Bates* by Susan Shreve (grades 3–5)
- *Stone Fox* by John R. Gardiner (grades 3–6)
- *Wayside School is Falling Down* by Louis Sachar (grades 3–6)
- *Owls in the Family* by Farley Mowat (grades 4–7)
- *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson (grades 5–7)
- *The Cay* by Theodore Taylor (grades 5–7)
- *You Can Pick Me Up at Peggy’s Cove* by Brian Doyle (grades 5–7)

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #4: Writing realistic fiction

Multi-use master #4: Story planner

Multi-use master #5: Story grid

Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram

What students need to do

To write believable realistic fiction:

1. Each student lists at least six exciting, funny or strange events that happened to him, then chooses the one that sounds the most interesting.
2. The story should have some type of problem that needs to be solved. Problems should be the types of things that happened to them or to people they know. The problem will be the first step in the plot.
3. Develop the plot. The plot is the sequence of events in a story. It has four parts:
 - A problem: This introduces conflict at the beginning of the story.
 - Roadblocks: Characters face roadblocks as they try to solve the problem during the middle of the story.
 - The high point: The high point in the action occurs when the problem is just about to be solved.
 - The solution: The problem is solved and the roadblocks are overcome at the end of the story.



4. Start the story off with a bang. Use dialogue, action, a question or a description that sets a mood.
5. Have the characters act, talk, feel, and think in ways similar to actual people.
6. Set the story in times and places that actually do or could exist.
7. Use actions words. Action words help readers to see the story in their mind's eye.
8. Create fiction by making up events and details and adding them to the realistic story.
9. Keep it believable. The story may be fiction but the reader needs to believe it could actually happen.
10. Think about how a character might change from the beginning to the end of the story. Often characters learn something from the challenges they face in the story.

Sample teaching strategies

1. **What's the difference?**

Have students make a Venn diagram comparing the characteristics of realistic fiction with those of fantasy.

- Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram

2. **Make it a habit**

Brainstorm ideas for realistic stories about something that happens to a person who has an unusual habit. Ask the questions:

- What unusual habits could people have?
- How could an unusual habit cause an interesting, exciting or funny problem for a person?

Have students chart their ideas on story grids and then write realistic stories.

- Multi-use master #5: Story grid



3. **Workit out**

Brainstorm ideas for realistic stories about something that happens to a person who has an unusual job. Ask the questions:

- What unusual jobs could people have?
- How could an unusual job cause an interesting, exciting or funny problem for a person?

Have students develop their ideas using a story planner and then write a realistic story.

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner

4. **The very first time**

Discuss what happens when people try things for the first time. Ask the questions:

- What things do you learn that seem difficult and unusual at first? (For example, riding a bike, eating with chopsticks or going down the hill on a snowboard.)
- What exciting, funny or interesting things could happen to people who try something for the first time?

Have students chart their ideas using a story grid and then write a realistic story.

- Multi-use master #5: Story grid

5. **Idea bank**

Brainstorm exciting first lines for realistic fiction and use them for journal writing topics, homework assignments or independent writing in writer's workshop. For example:

- *The most important decision I ever made in my life was...*
- *It wasn't really my fault but...*
- *Things were fine until I realized I had the wrong...*
- *I realized that being the older/younger/only child has its disadvantages when...*
- *I proved to my friends that I was a quick thinker when...*





What it is

A realistic story should sound like it could really have happened. Ideas for realistic stories often come from a writer's own experiences or interests.

What it can look like

- story
- simulated diary or journal
- readers' theatre
- cartoon
- poetry
- dialogue
- monologue

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner
- Multi-use master #5: Story grid

Plan

1. List at least six exciting, funny or strange events that happened to you. Choose the one that sounds the most interesting to you. Use this as your story starter.
2. Your story should have a problem that needs to be solved. The problem should be something that happened to you or to people you know. The problem will be the first step in your plot.



3. Develop the plot. The plot is the sequence of events in a story. It has four parts:
 - a problem
 - roadblocks (things that happen as the character tries to solve the problem)
 - the high point (the most exciting part of the action, just before the problem is about to be solved)
 - the solution (the ending, where the problem is solved and the roadblocks are overcome)
4. Set your story in times and places that actually do or could exist.

Write

1. Start your story off with a bang. Use dialogue, action, a question or a description.
2. Have the characters act, talk, feel and think in ways similar to the people you know.
3. Use action words. Action words help readers to see the story in their mind's eye.
4. Keep it believable. Your story may be fiction but your reader needs to believe it could actually happen.
5. Think about how a character might change from the beginning to the end of the story. Usually characters learn something from the challenges they face in the story.



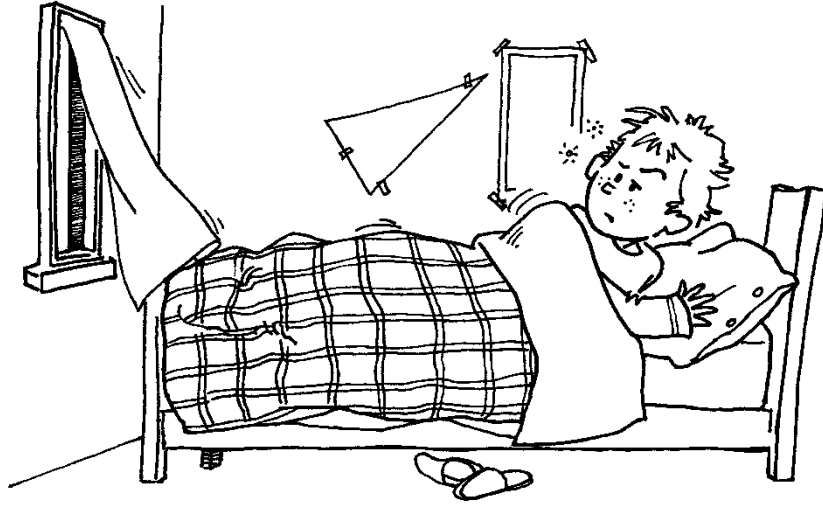
Check your writing

In this piece of realistic fiction...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I start my story off with a bang!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I clearly identify the problem to be solved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My characters run into at least one roadblock while trying to solve their problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. The problem is solved at the end of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The characters are believable. (They act, talk and think in ways similar to people I know.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I show how the main character changed (or learned something) by the end of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What details can I add to make my main character seem more real? _____



Sample writing prompts



As you are about to go to sleep, you hear a strange sound outside your window. What happens then?

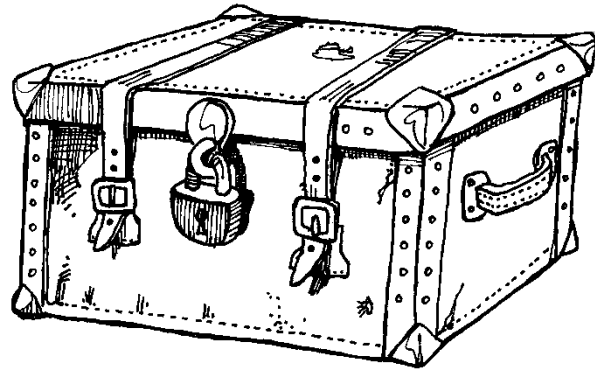
Write your story.



You have been given a chest. Inside the chest there are three objects:

1. a map
2. a key
3. a hat

Write a story that has all three objects in it. Be as creative as you can be. But remember — your reader must believe your story could really happen!





Additional writing prompts

<p>You have just had a very exciting experience at summer camp.</p> <p>You want to tell your family what happened, but there are no phones at camp.</p> <p>Write a letter telling about your experience. Be as descriptive as you can.</p>	<p>When you go to sleep one night you dream that you have gone to live in another place, far from your home.</p> <p>Write about your dream. Describe the place where you have gone to live and explain how your life changes while you are there.</p>
<p>Your grandfather comes to visit and he brings an old, battered toy with him. He explains that he has had this toy since he was a little boy and that he has a story to tell you about it.</p> <p>What is the toy? Describe it. What story does your grandfather tell you?</p> <p>Why is your grandfather sharing this story with you now?</p>	<p>Think about the kinds of unusual pets a person could have.</p> <p>Write a story about something that might happen to a person who has an unusual pet.</p> <p>How could an unusual pet cause an interesting, exciting or funny problem for that person?</p>
<p>Your main character discovers that he or she is lost downtown with no money.</p> <p>Write a realistic story about how he or she gets “unlost.”</p>	<p>Has something ever happened to you that seemed really unbelievable? Write a realistic story about it.</p>



Rubric for Realistic Fiction



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear and effective throughout <input type="checkbox"/> events consistently fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> specific details throughout <input type="checkbox"/> creative and original; actively engages the reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear for most of story <input type="checkbox"/> most events fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is present <input type="checkbox"/> events are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is unclear <input type="checkbox"/> events are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive, few or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of setting or mood <input type="checkbox"/> events are vague and confusing <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> events in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> strong connections between events, actions and characters throughout	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> events in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters most of the story	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning tells about basic scene <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters generally maintained	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between actions and details tenuous	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning confusing with little information <input type="checkbox"/> events difficult to identify and understand <input type="checkbox"/> no connections between actions



	<input type="checkbox"/> ending ties events together	<input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to story	<input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not present or not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> maintains point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single significant event <input type="checkbox"/> consistent use of tense	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single event <input type="checkbox"/> tense usually consistent	<input type="checkbox"/> point of view frequently changes <input type="checkbox"/> identifies single event <input type="checkbox"/> tense sometimes varies	<input type="checkbox"/> does not maintain point of view <input type="checkbox"/> main event vague <input type="checkbox"/> tense varies considerably	<input type="checkbox"/> point of view unclear <input type="checkbox"/> difficult to understand <input type="checkbox"/> tense errors



5. Friendly Letter



What it is

A friendly letter is a piece of writing sent from one person to another to share news, say thank you or ask a question. It involves a genuine audience of one or more persons. Not only opportunity to sharpen their writing skills through letter writing, but they also increase their awareness of audience. Because letters are written to communicate with a specific and important audience, students think more carefully about what they want to say. They are also more inclined to use speech, capitalization, and punctuation conventions correctly and to write more legibly.

Functions

Students write friendly letters to:

- sustain friendships
- express appreciation
- share information
- recount events
- persuade
- ask questions
- ask permission
- apologize
- remind
- request information

In simulated letters, students use their imaginations to:

- assume the role of another person and to reflect on their learning

Forms

- letter to family or friend
- post card
- pen pal letter
- thank you note
- invitation
- greeting card
- letter to author or illustrator

Related concepts

business letter, note and announcement, e-mail



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- write simple statements, demonstrating awareness of capital letters and periods (grade 1)
- capitalizes the first letter of names and pronoun “I” in own writing (grade 1)
- rephrase by adding or deleting words, ideas or information to make sense (grade 1)
- use periods and question marks as end punctuation in own writing (grade 2)
- use commas after greetings and closures in letters and to separate words in a series in own writing (grade 2)
- use capital letters in titles of books and stories (grade 3)
- use paragraphs, appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts (grade 7)
- uses a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

request, return address, inside address, salutation, opening, body, closing, greeting, signature, format, block style, indented style

Examples from literature

- *Dear Brother* by Frank Asch (grades K–2)
- *Arthur’s Birthday* by Marc Brown (grades 1–2)
- *Amelia Bedelia* by Peggy Parish (grades 1–2)
- *Arthur’s Pen Pal* by Lillian Hoban (grades 1–3)
- *From Far Away* by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar (grades 1–3)
- *Nate the Great and the Lost List* and other Nate books by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat (grades 1–3)
- *A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats (grades 2–3)
- *The Jolly Postman; or Other People’s Letters* by J. and A. Ahlberg (grades 2–6)
- *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan (grades 3–4)
- *Dear Mr. Henshaw* by Beverly Cleary (grades 3–6)
- *Dear Bruce Springstein* by Kevin Major (grades 6–9)



Planning tools

- Student tip sheet #5: Friendly letter
- Friendly letter sample: Block style
- Friendly letter sample: Indented style
- Addressing an envelope
- Multi-use master #1: Planning web

What students need to do

1. Write headings with their own addresses and a date at the top of the page.
2. Start the letter with “Dear” and then the person’s name, followed by comma.
3. Write their thoughts and ideas in the body of the letter.
4. Begin a new paragraph each time a new story or idea is introduced.
5. The closing can be anything from “Love” to “See you.” Follow the closing with a comma.
6. Put the signature below the closing.
7. When addressing an envelope, the post office prefers that *Canadian Addressing Standards* are used:
 - Addresses should be typed or written in upper case or block letters.
 - All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
 - Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN’S).
 - The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and should be separated from the province by two spaces.
 - The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible.
 - The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.



Ideas to get started:

- Share a good story.
- Tell what's been on your mind.
- Describe something you like to do.
- Tell about the latest book you've read.
- Share a favourite poem, or write one of your own.
- Ask a few questions for your friend to answer when he writes back. Questions also show interest in other people's lives.

Writing friendly letters gives people opportunities to think about their own lives. In this way, the person writing the letter benefits as much as the person who receives it.

Sample teaching strategies

1. Post cards

A post card offers an opportunity to learn how to address a letter and to begin to write short, friendly letters. Make post cards from eight-and-a-half by eleven-inch card stock cut in half. Students can illustrate the fronts and write their messages and addresses on the reverse side.

2. Favourite authors

Students can write letters to favourite authors and illustrators to share their ideas and feelings about the books they read. They can ask questions about how a particular character was developed or why the illustrator used a certain art medium.

Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for a reply.

Send letters to an author or an illustrator in care of the publisher. A publisher's name is listed on the book's title page and the address is usually located on the copyright page: the page following the title page. If the mailing address is not listed, check *Books in Print* or *Literary Market Place* at your public library.



When writing to favourite authors avoid these pitfalls. Do not:

- include a long list of questions to be answered.
- ask personal questions, such as how much money they earn.
- ask for advice about how to be a better writer or artist.
- send stories for the author or artwork for the illustrator to critique.
- ask for free books because the authors and illustrators do not have copies of their books to give away.

3. **Courtesy letters**

Invitations and thank you notes are two other types of friendly letters that elementary students can write. Look for real opportunities for students to use their letter-writing skills: inviting parents to open houses, thanking guest speakers or congratulating another classmate on a job well done.

4. **Pen pals**

Matching your class with another class at another school, or even a university class, can be motivating for very young writers. Research shows that when they receive genuine responses to their letters, young writers tend to write longer and better-constructed letters.

Encourage students to use a planning web to make their letters interesting.

- Multi-use master #1: Planning web

5. **Simulated letters**

Students could write letters in which they assume the identity of a historical or literary figure. They could write letters as though they are Red Riding Hood sending a get well message to her grandmother, or as Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone. Students could also write from one book character to another.

Even though these types of letters are not mailed, they give students an opportunity to focus on a specific audience as they write. After students write simulated letters, they can each exchange a letter with a classmate who assumes the role of the respondent and replies to the letter.





What it is

A letter is a piece of writing that you send to family, friends or people you admire, to tell them your news, say thank you or ask a question.

What it can look like

- letter to family and friends
- pen pal letter
- memoir
- invitation
- letter to authors and illustrators
- e-mail
- post card
- thank you note
- greeting card

What a friendly letter looks like

- Friendly letter sample: Block style
- Friendly letter sample: Indented style
- Addressing an envelope

To write a friendly letter

1. Write a heading with your address and date at the top of the page.
2. Skip a line and start your letter with "Dear" and then the person's name, followed by a comma.
3. The body of the letter contains your thoughts and ideas.
4. Start a new paragraph each time you switch to a new story or idea.



5. The closing can be anything from “Love” to “See you.” Follow the closing with a comma.
6. Put your signature below your closing. Make it easy to read.
7. When addressing an envelope, the post office prefers that *Canadian Addressing Standards* are used:
 - Addresses should be typed or written in upper case or block letters.
 - All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
 - Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN’S).
 - The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and should be separated from the province by two spaces.
 - The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible.
 - The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.

Ideas to get you started:

- Share a good story.
- Tell what has been on your mind.
- Describe something you like to do.
- Tell about the latest book you’ve read.
- Share a favourite poem, or write one of your own.
- Ask a few questions for your friend to answer when he or she writes you back. Questions show that you are interested in your friend.



Ideas for writing to a favourite author:

- Find the publisher's address inside one of the author's books and send the letter to this address.
- Ask two or three really good questions.
- Be polite — don't ask personal questions, such as how much money they earn.
- Tell them which of their books you liked best and explain why.
- Tell how a character or story line in the author's book reminded you of something in your own life.
- Send a picture you drew or a poem you wrote that was inspired by one of the author's books.
- Say something encouraging — tell the author why you're looking forward to the next book the author writes.
- If you hope that the author will write back, include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your letter.
-



Check your writing

In my friendly letter...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. The return address and date are at the top of the page.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I share at least three interesting pieces of new information or ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My tone is friendly and polite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My envelope contains all the necessary information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Some questions I can ask my friend...



Friendly Letter Sample

Full Block Style

Return
address→
(heading)

87 Lodgepole Road,
Edmonton, AB T6C 2K4

Date→

June 23, 1999

Salutation→
(greeting)

Dear Sam,

I'm really excited that you're coming to town for Canada Day! We'll have great fun at the festival. My dad and I are going to perform on the children's stage at 2 o'clock. You can sit in the front row and cheer us on.

Body→

Don't forget to bring your rollerblades. There are great trails near our house and I intend to rollerblade every day this summer. Bring your helmet and knee pads — some of the trails are a little wild.

Only five more days left of school! With all the work our teacher made us do this year, I think I have earned a summer vacation. What about you?

I can't wait until you come. We'll be at the bus stop to pick you up on June 31, three o'clock sharp. See you then.

Closing→

Your friend,

Signature→

Robin



Friendly Letter Sample

Indented Style

Return
address→
(heading)
Date→

87 Lodgepole Road,
Edmonton, AB T6C 2K4

June 23, 1999

Salutation→
(greeting)

Dear Sam,

I'm really excited that you're coming to town for Canada Day! We'll have great fun at the festival. My dad and I are going to perform on the children's stage at 2 o'clock. You can sit in the front row and cheer us on.

Body→

Don't forget to bring your rollerblades. There are great trails near our house and I intend to rollerblade every day this summer. Bring your helmet and knee pads — some of the trails are a little wild.

Only five more days left of school. With all the work our teacher made us do this year, I think I have earned a summer vacation. What about you?

I can't wait until you come. We'll be at the bus stop to pick you up on June 30, three o'clock sharp. See you then.

Closing→

Your friend,

Signature→

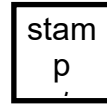
Robin



Addressing an Envelope

Sender→
Return
address→

ROBIN ABRAMS
87 LODGEPOLE ROAD
EDMONTON AB T6C 2K4



Forwarding
address→

receiver→ SAM CASKER
street address→ 124 BEACONHILL PLACE
city, province, postal code→ FORT MCMURRAY AB T9H 2S3

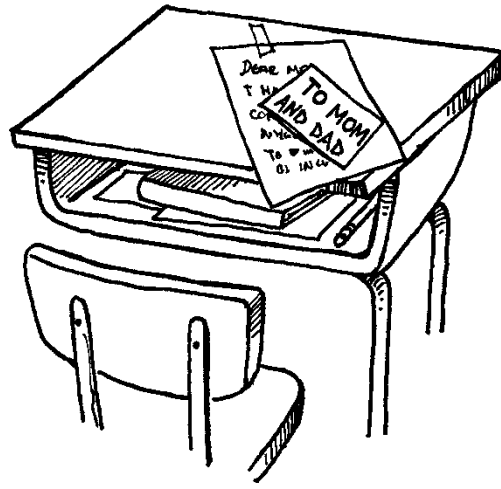
The return address and forwarding address must all be in capital letters or carefully printed in block letters.



Sample writing prompts

Your parents are coming to visit the classroom tonight. Write them a friendly letter:

- thanking them for coming
- reminding them to have a look at three things in the classroom (you choose what these things are)
- asking them a few questions about their visit to the classroom





Additional writing prompts

<p>You have a brand new pen pal. You have never written to this pen pal before.</p> <p>Write a letter to your new pen pal. Describe yourself, your family and your life.</p> <p>Think about what your pen pal would like to know about you. Think of questions you would like to ask your pen pal.</p>	<p>Pretend you are a character in one of your favourite stories. Write a friendly letter to another character in the story.</p> <p>Think about what your character would write in a letter. Would he or she:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• tell about an adventure?• talk about his/her feelings?• try to solve a problem?• ask questions?• say thank you?
<p>Write a thank you letter for a gift you have received within the last year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be sure to name the gift so the person will know what it is you are saying thank you for.• Give reasons why this gift is important to you.• Tell what you like best about the gift.• Explain what you are doing with this gift.• Tell one thing you learned from this gift.• End your letter by saying thank you again, but use different words to do it.	<p>Write a letter to your favourite author. Tell the author:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• three reasons why you like the author's books• your favourite character and why• what you think the author's special skill is• what other kind of stories you would like to read by this author



Rubric for Friendly Letter

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____



Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> shares four or more engaging pieces of information or ideas <input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details that help readers create a picture in their mind <input type="checkbox"/> chooses topics that are of special and meaningful significance to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares three or more interesting pieces of information or ideas <input type="checkbox"/> includes details that help readers better understand idea or information <input type="checkbox"/> choose topics that are of special interest to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares three pieces of information or ideas <input type="checkbox"/> includes some details to illustrate information <input type="checkbox"/> choose topics that will maintain interest of reader	<input type="checkbox"/> shares one piece of information or idea <input type="checkbox"/> information is vague <input type="checkbox"/> topic will not be of interest to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> lacks information or ideas <input type="checkbox"/> information is confusing <input type="checkbox"/> topic inappropriate for reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sets friendly tone and consistently engages reader <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties information and ideas together	<input type="checkbox"/> opening is friendly and interesting <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides satisfactory finish to letter	<input type="checkbox"/> opening is friendly <input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending is appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> opening contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> no real opening <input type="checkbox"/> specific information and ideas difficult to identify <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present

Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> maintains first person point of view throughout <input type="checkbox"/> return address and date at top of page are error-free <input type="checkbox"/> uses effective and appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> few errors in return address and date at top of page <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> uses first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> some errors in return address and date at top of page <input type="checkbox"/> uses appropriate greeting and closing	<input type="checkbox"/> inconsistently uses first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> return address and date missing from top of page <input type="checkbox"/> does not use appropriate greeting and/or closing	<input type="checkbox"/> does not maintain first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> form is not recognizable as a letter <input type="checkbox"/> lacks or uses an inappropriate greeting and/or closing
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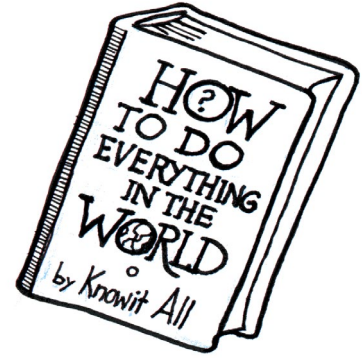


6. Explaining

What it is

Explanations tell *how* — for example, how to bake a cake. Explanations can also be called directions or instructions.

Explanations are everywhere — in cookbooks, on computer screen, on the labels of the clothes we wear.



Explanations can also explain *why* something exists or why it is important, for example, why reading can make a person a better writer or why playing a musical instrument can make someone smarter. To get more ideas about this type of explanation writing, see the section on persuasive writing.

Functions

Writing explanations helps students to:

- think logically and sequentially
- distinguish important details from unimportant ones
- write clearly and precisely
- write for a particular audience
- use immediate feedback to improve communication skills
- share their expertise
- think about and understand new rules or ways of doing something

Forms

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| • board game instructions | • card game | • directions |
| • how-to book or article | • poster | • explanation |
| • recipe | • model kit | • advice |
| • manual | • stage directions | • problem solving |
| | • rules and regulations | |
| | • definition | |



Related concepts

persuasive writing

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- rephrase by adding or deleting words, ideas or information to make sense (grade 1)
- check for obvious spelling errors and missing words (grade 1)
- revise words and sentences to improve sequence or add missing information (grade 2)
- use words and phrases to modify and clarify ideas in own writing (grade 4)
- revise to ensure an understandable progression of ideas and information (grade 4)
- use paragraph structures in expository and narrative texts (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

explanation, directions, instructions, precise, position, process, sequence, materials, time and order words

Examples from literature

- *Tractor* by Craig Brown (grades K–2)
- *The Popcorn Book* by Tomie de Paola (grades 1–2)
- *From Pictures to Words: A Book About Making a Book* by Janet Stevens (grades 1–3)
- *Volcanoes* by Franklyn M. Branley (grades 1–3)
- *Syd Hoff's How to Draw Dinosaurs* by Syd Hoff (grades 1–7)
- *Dinosaur Time* by Peggy Parish (grades 2–3)
- *Freckle Juice* by Judy Blume (grades 2–4)
- *Meet the Computer* by Seymour Simon (grades 2–4)
- *Digging Up Dinosaurs* by Alikei (grades 2–6)



- *Little House in the Big Woods* by Laura Ingalls Wilder (grades 3–5)
- *Flash, Crash, Rumble, and Roll* by Franklyn M. Branley (grades 3–6)
- *Acorn Pancakes, Dandelion Salad and 38 Other Recipes* by Jean Craighead George (grades 3–7)
- *Sugaring Time* by Kathryn Lasky (grades 4–7)
- *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen (grades 5–7)
- *The Children’s Step-by-Step Cookbook* by Angela Wilkes

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #6: Explaining
 Multi-use master #7: How-to flow chart
 Multi-use master #8: Cyclic flow chart
 Multi-use master #9: Solve it
 Activity page: Writing about a problem

Practice tools

Activity page: Know what to do

What students need to do

To explain how to do something:

1. Write out the steps. List and number all of the steps in the directions, or write the directions in a paragraph.
2. Use action words like *put*, *stand*, or *hold* to tell the reader what to do.
3. Use order or time words like *next*, *then* or *after* to help the reader follow each step.
4. Read it over to make sure each step is clear.
5. Test it out. If possible, have students try to do the tasks by following one another’s directions. This will help them to see if they have missed any important points.



Primary Students

1. Pick a subject.
2. Think about it:
 - What needs to be said in the directions?
 - What steps must be given?
3. Write the directions.
 - Use time words like *first* and *then* to make the directions clear,
 - Or use numbers before each step.
4. Check the directions.
 - Are all the steps included?
 - Are the steps in the right order?
5. Check for errors.
 - Pictures will help the directions, too.

Sample teaching strategies

1. How-to

Give students opportunities to use different graphic organizers to explore and explain how things happen. Use how-to flow charts to explain concepts from social studies and science. Use cyclic flow charts to explain how things change over a period of time.

- Multi-use master #7: How-to flow chart
- Multi-use master #8: Cyclic flow chart

2. Collect the knowledge

Ask students to bring in an example of good directions from a game or a piece of equipment they have at home. Display the different samples and discuss what makes good directions. Compile a list of ideas for students to use as reference.



3. **Draw a design**

Ask students to make designs from four to eight shapes drawn on the board. Then ask them to write clear step-by-step directions telling someone else how to draw the design. Use specific direction words and write in complete sentences. Students trade their directions with a partner and try following each other's written directions to draw the designs.

4. **Unusual uses**

Bring an empty cardboard tube to class. Mime using it as a telescope and then pass it around the room asking each student to mime using it a different way. Next, take a pencil and brainstorm all of the different and unusual ways it can be used.

For example: *to catch a fish, to play a drum, to conduct an orchestra, etc.*

Ask students to write three paragraphs describing three different uses for a pencil.

5. **Make it**

Have students brainstorm lists of things they know how to make, such as simple recipes or craft projects. Have students write directions for one of these things and pass them on to another student to try out.

6. **School travelers**

Make a list of all the rooms in the school and the special areas outside. Print each one on a file card. Have each student draw two cards and then write out step-by-step directions for how to get from one place to the other. Exchange directions and let students test out each set of directions.

7. **Scrambled directions**

Make photocopies of various sets of directions, cut them apart and mix them up. Challenge students to unscramble the directions and put them in the right order. Identify the specific words that help the reader know which step follows which.



8. **Inventing solutions**

Ask students to create a problem they might encounter during the day, and ask them to describe the problem in three or four sentences on a file card.

For example:

A snowstorm begins on your way home from school. When you arrive at your house, you discover no one is at home and you have lost your key.

Have students exchange problems and write solutions to each problem. Collect several solutions to each problem and display them on a bulletin board.

9. **Solve it**

Use a graphic organizer to work through a problem and explain the solution. Use the organizer as a plan for writing several paragraphs explaining how to solve a certain problem.

- Multi-use master #9: Solve it

10. **Know what to do**

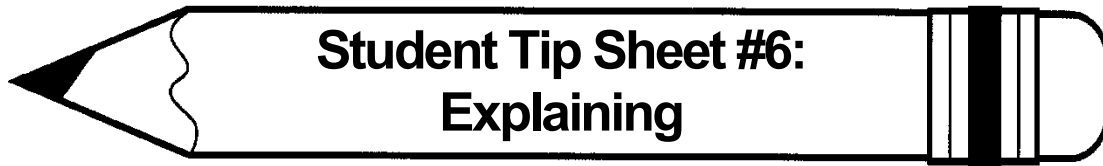
Assign an emergency plan sheet as homework. Have children work with their parents and write out the steps they should take if they are locked out of the house, if there is a fire, or if they have accidentally taken a poisonous substance.

- Activity page: *Know what to do*

11. **Play and publish**

Ask students to work in partners and write the directions for a favourite game to play at recess. Compile the directions and publish copies of *How to Have Fun at Recess* for other classes in the school.





Student Tip Sheet #6: Explaining

What it is

An explanation tells *how* — for example, how to bake a cake. Explanations can also be called directions or instructions.

Explanations are everywhere — in cookbooks, on computer screens, in Lego™ sets, even on the labels of the clothes you are wearing.

What it can look like

- board game instruction
- recipe
- card game
- model kit
- rule or regulation
- direction
- advice
- how-to book or article
- manual
- poster
- stage direction
- definition
- explanation
- problem solving

What directions could look like

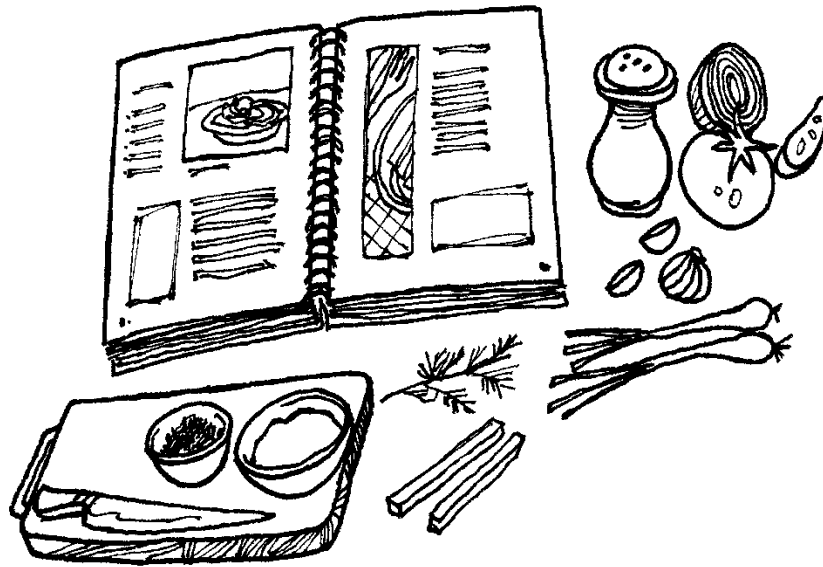
How to Make Friends With a Dog

1. Hold out your hand.
2. Let the dog sniff your hand.
3. Say, “Good dog,” in a quiet voice.
4. Slowly put your hand on its neck.
5. Pat gently.
6. Say, “Good dog,” again.



Plan

1. Write out the steps. List and number all the steps in your directions, or write your directions in a paragraph.
2. Use action words like *put*, *stand*, or *hold* to tell the reader what to do.
3. Use order or time words like *next*, *then* or *after* to help the reader follow each step.
4. Read it over to make sure each step is clear.
5. Test it. Have someone else try to do what you've explained by following your directions. This will help you to see if you have missed any important points.



Check your writing

In my directions...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My directions are in 1-2-3 order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I use action words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I give enough detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. There are no unnecessary words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I have asked another person to test out my directions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Directions need to be clear because...



Writing About a Problem

Think of a problem you would like to see solved. Then use this form to help you organize all the information you will need to write a paragraph which explains how to solve a problem.

The problem I would like to write about is _____

It's important to solve this problem because _____

It is caused by _____

As a result of this problem _____

One possible solution _____

Another solution might be _____

I think the best solution is _____



Know What To Do

Talk with your family about what you should do in an emergency and fill out the chart below.

Locked out of the house

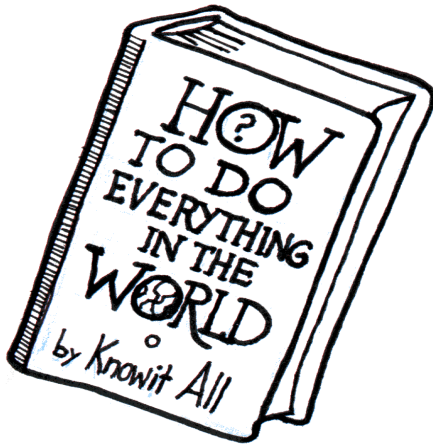
Call _____

What should I do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Fire

Call _____

What should I do?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Poisoning

Call _____

What should I do?

1. _____

2. _____

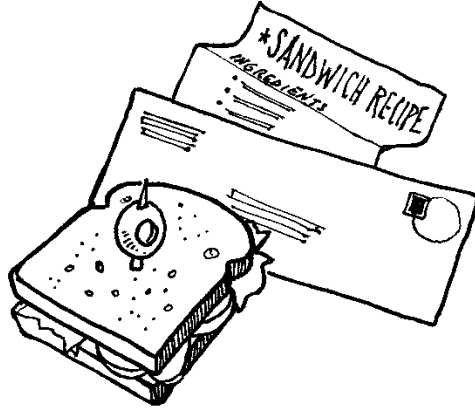
3. _____



Sample writing prompts

In his last letter to you, your cousin asked you for the recipe for your super-delicious sandwich.

Write him a letter and share your recipe for this extra-special treat.

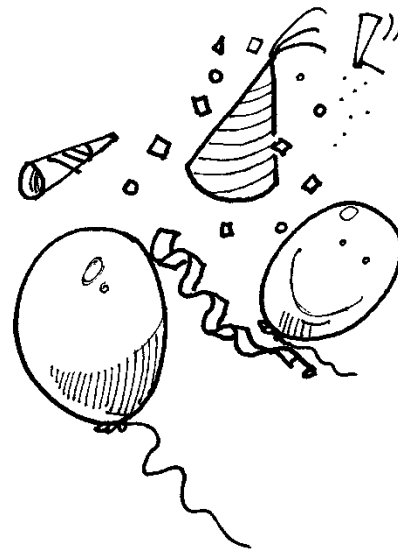




You get to plan your own party this year!

It can't cost more than \$50. or last longer than two hours. Your plans have to be in writing for your parents' approval.

Start writing.





Additional writing prompts

<p>Your class has a substitute teacher for the day.</p> <p>The principal has asked you to be the teacher's helper for the day and your first job is to explain how your class begins the day.</p> <p>Write down all of the information the substitute teacher will need to teach the class today.</p>	<p>When you were younger, you were chased by a big dog. Since then you have been terrified of all dogs.</p> <p>As you walk home from school, you see a big German Shepherd coming toward you. You look around for help, but you are the only one on the street.</p> <p>What can you do?</p>
<p>Your mother, on her way to an important business meeting, drops you off at a party. Just as she drives off, you notice that everyone is wearing a costume except you.</p> <p>What can you do?</p>	<p>A paper plate can be used in many ways. For example, you can eat food on it, draw a picture on it, or tape it together to make a musical instrument.</p> <p>Now, think of at least six uses for a coat hanger. Describe all of the interesting and unusual ways you could use a coat hanger.</p>
<p>Make a poster for your classroom, giving clear directions about what to do during one of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a fire drill• recess• walking down the hall to the gym with a class	<p>Explain how to get to your home from the school. Include a map.</p>



Rubric for Explaining

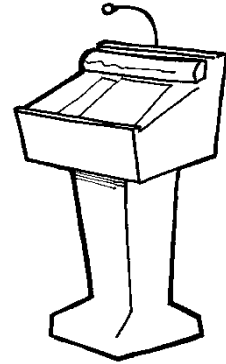


Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> tone is upbeat and friendly throughout <input type="checkbox"/> all directions fit the task <input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details throughout <input type="checkbox"/> makes reader want to try out directions	<input type="checkbox"/> tone is friendly throughout most of the piece <input type="checkbox"/> directions usually fit the task <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> attempts to establish friendly tone <input type="checkbox"/> directions are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> no attempt at friendly tone <input type="checkbox"/> directions are confusing <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or unclear details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> no specific tone <input type="checkbox"/> vague directions <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> directions in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> interesting and skillful use of connecting words	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> directions in order <input type="checkbox"/> skillful use of connecting words	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning explains task <input type="checkbox"/> directions generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> uses connecting words	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> limited use of connecting words	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> unclear order <input type="checkbox"/> individual steps of directions difficult to identify
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> step-by-step directions clearly and effectively describe how to do the task <input type="checkbox"/> there are no unnecessary words	<input type="checkbox"/> step-by-step directions clearly describe how to do the task <input type="checkbox"/> there are few unnecessary words	<input type="checkbox"/> step-by-step directions describe how to do the task <input type="checkbox"/> contains some unnecessary words	<input type="checkbox"/> basic steps are missing <input type="checkbox"/> contains many unnecessary words	<input type="checkbox"/> no step-by-step directions <input type="checkbox"/> confusing

7. Persuasive Writing



What it is

Persuasive writing presents a point of view and then defends the position by citing several supporting reasons or examples.

Functions

Writing a persuasive argument gives students opportunities to:

- communicate personal feelings about people, places and issues
- generate and arrange evidence to support opinions
- develop and refine their ideas and opinions
- distinguish personal ideas from factual information
- explore a subject from different points of view

Forms

- paragraph
- friendly letter
- book or movie review
- editorial
- panel discussion
- poetry
- essay
- letter to the editor
- advertisement
- advice column
- debate

Related concepts

distinguishing between fact and opinion, distinguishing between persuasion and propaganda



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- check for obvious spelling errors and missing words (grade 1)
- write complete sentences, using capital letters and periods (grade 2)
- use capital letters for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences in own writing (grade 2)
- use connecting words to join related words in a sentence (grade 2)
- combine and rearrange existing information to accommodate new ideas and information (grade 3)
- revise to ensure an understandable progression of ideas and information (grade 4)
- use connecting words to link ideas in sentences and paragraphs (grade 5)
- revise to add and organize details that support and clarify intended meaning (grade 5)
- use paragraph structures in expository and narrative texts (grade 6)
- revise to eliminate unnecessary repetition of words and ideas (grade 7)
- use paragraphs, appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

convince, argue, fact, opinion, debate, evidence, counter-argument, summarize, character, emotion, reason, logical, point of view, position, prediction, summary

Examples from literature

- *The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman (grades 3–5)
- *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White (grades 3–6)
- *How to Eat Fried Worms* by T. Rockwell (grades 4–6)
- *Julie of the Wolves* by Jean Craighead George (grades 5–7)



Planning tools

Student tip sheet #7: Persuasive writing

Multi-use master #10: Top ten list

Multi-use master #11: Persuasive writing paragraph planner

Multi-use master #12: Persuasive writing multi-paragraph planner

Multi-use master #13: Prove your point

Practice tools

Activity page: For example (see Descriptive Writing section)

Activity page: Triple reasons

Activity page: Wrap it up

What students need to do

To write a convincing argument:

1. Write a strong opening. The first sentence (or topic sentence) of the paragraph should clearly identify a specific issue or topic and state the writer's position on that particular issue or topic. For example:

I believe all children over the age of eight years old should have their own pets.

2. Know who the audience is. Consider what the readers know and what they may think about the topic now. Different arguments are needed for different people. For example, other students might be easier to convince than parents.

3. Use different ways to persuade.

- Use **reason** in the argument. For example:

Medical research shows that people who have pets feel less lonely.

- Try linking the argument to a **character** or person who other people admire and trust. For example:

We know pets are important to people because so many successful writers write stories and books about their relationships with their pets.



- Appealing to **emotion** can also help to build a strong case. For example:
If all children had pets, hundreds of abandoned pets would not be put to death in animal shelters each year.

4. Use facts and opinions correctly. Be specific; not general. Use provable facts. For example:

Dogs and cats are used as volunteer visitors in many hospitals.

5. Use examples to illustrate the point. When possible, use examples that will help the reader to see and feel what is being communicated. For example:

Knowing that my dog Wolfie is always glad to see me at the end of the day, no matter what kind of day I had, makes me feel good.

6. Connect ideas smoothly. Use words like *first*, *second* and *third* to put ideas in order. Use linking words such as *if* and *then* to help the reader see how the ideas connect.

7. Write a strong ending.

- Make a **personal statement** restating the ideas. For example:

I am very grateful for all of the things my dog Wolfie has taught me, and I think other kids would benefit from having a dog or cat of their own.

- Make a **prediction** about what might happen if the proposed idea came true. For example:

I believe that if all children had pets, then all children would be more responsible at home and at school.

- **Summarize** the arguments. For example:

Pets are good for children because they teach you responsibility, encourage you to exercise and get lots of fresh air, and are always happy to see you when you come home.



Sample teaching strategies

1. Create a context

Discuss how persuasion is used in everyday life. Have students brainstorm ten examples of how they have used persuasion during the past month. Have them identify ten examples of how other people persuaded them (or attempted to persuade them) to do or believe something during the past month.

2. Role-play

Make a list of several controversial statements such as:

Animals should not be allowed to perform in circuses.
Boys and girls should have separate physical education classes.
All recesses should be cancelled.

Divide students into pairs. One partner is A and the other is B. Give the topic, and on a signal, partner A has sixty seconds to argue in support of this statement. At the signal, partner B takes over and argues for sixty seconds opposing the statement. Then have partners reverse their positions and give each sixty seconds to argue the new position.

3. Top ten list

In partners or small groups, have students brainstorm a top ten list of reasons backing a controversial statement such as:

Books are better than television.
Every child should have a dog.
Cats should be banned from the city.

- Multi-use master #10: Top ten list

4. Take it apart

Collect examples of good persuasive writing and have students identify the opening, the main arguments and supporting details, and the closing.



5. **Paragraph planner**

Model the use of a persuasive paragraph planner to help students organize ideas and information. Develop the plan as a class and then have students write paragraphs on their own. Compare versions and discuss how one argument can be presented in different ways.

- Multi-use master #11: Persuasive writing paragraph planner

6. **Sell it with words**

Have students write radio commercials to sell new products, such as a tasty breakfast cereal, a new line of reversible t-shirts, or pencils that never makes mistakes.

7. **Three ways to persuade**

Brainstorm a list of position statements and ask students to come up with three arguments to support one of the statements. One argument should appeal to reason, one to emotion and one to character.

- Activity page: *Triple reasons*

8. **In conclusion**

Have students complete a persuasive paragraph three different ways: with a personal statement, a prediction and a summary.

- Activity page: *Wrap it up*

9. **Prove your point**

In addition to three supporting arguments, students can use this planner to develop counter-arguments. It encourages students to look at an issue from another point of view and to address those concerns.

- Multi-use master #13: Prove your point

10. **You are the best!**

Challenge students to plan and design a Mother's Day or Father's Day card explaining why their parent is the best parent in the world.



11. **Join us**

Writing friendly letters can help students to develop their persuasive writing skills because it helps them to identify their audience and gives them a reason to write. Writing letters to students in another grade encourages them to participate in an extracurricular activity such as running club, choir or a service club.

12. **Letter to the editor**

Look at recent letters to the editor in a local newspaper and identify how the writers build their arguments. Brainstorm relevant topics and have students write letters to the editor on topics important to them.





What it is

A persuasive piece of writing tells your opinion about something. It also tries to get your reader to agree with you, or at least try to understand your point of view. Your opinion needs to be backed up by strong reasons and interesting examples.

What it can look like

- paragraph
- friendly letter
- book and movie review
- essay
- letter to the editor
- advertisement

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #10: Top ten list
- Multi-use master #11: Persuasive writing paragraph planner
- Multi-use master #12: Persuasive writing multi-paragraph planner
- Multi-use master #13: Prove your point

What you need to do

1. Write a good opening. Tell what the topic is and what your opinion on that topic is. For example:
I believe all children over the age of eight years old should have their own pets.
2. Know who your audience is. Consider what your readers know and what they may think about the topic now. You need different arguments for different people. For example, other students might be easier to convince about some topics than your own parents.



3. Use different ways to persuade.

Writing Tools for Persuading 

- Use **reason** in your argument. For example:

Medical research shows that people who have pets feel less lonely.

- Try linking your argument to a **character** or a person who other people admire and trust. For example:

We know pets are important to people because so many successful writers write stories and books about their relationships with their pets.

- Appealing to **emotion** can also help you to build a strong case. For example:

If more children were allowed to have pets, hundreds of abandoned pets would not be put to death in animal shelters each year.

4. Use facts and opinions correctly. Be specific, not general. Use provable facts. For example:

Dogs and cats are used as volunteer visitors in many hospitals because they can make sick people feel better.

5. Use examples. When possible, use examples that will help your readers see and feel what you are trying to communicate. For example:

Knowing that my dog Wolfie is always glad to see me at the end of the day, no matter what kind of day I had, makes me feel good.

6. Connect ideas. Use words like *first*, *second* and *third* to put your ideas in order. Use linking words such as *if* and *then* to help your reader see how your ideas connect.

7. Write a strong ending.

Writing Tools for Strong Persuasive Endings 

- Make a **personal statement** restating your ideas. For example:

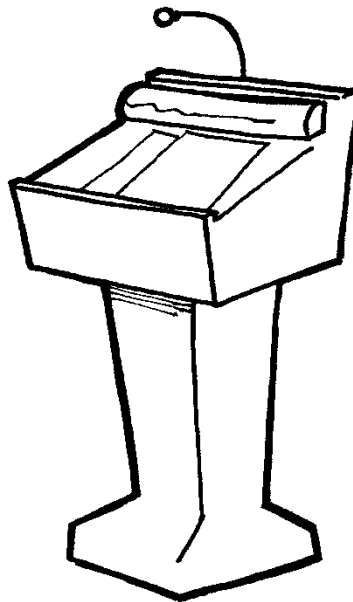
I am very grateful for all the things my dog Wolfie has taught me and I think other kids would benefit from having a dog or cat of their own.

- Make a **prediction** about what might happen if your idea came true. For example:

I believe that if all children had pets, then all children would be more responsible at home and at school.

- **Summarize** your arguments. For example:

Pets are good for kids my age because they can teach them responsibility, encourage them to exercise and get lots of fresh air, and always make them feel welcome when they come home.



Triple Reasons

A strong persuasive argument gives more than one kind of reason. A good argument builds on reason, by appealing to emotion and what other people recommend. For example:

A group of students tries to persuade the principal to put tether ball poles in the school playground. First they use **reason** – if children have more activities to do at recess there will be less fighting on the playground. Next they use **emotion** – playing tether ball is fun and it would make students happy. Finally they appeal to character or **what other people are doing** by pointing out that the school next door has a tether ball pole and the students always look like they are having fun.

Build an argument for one of the statements below and use three kinds of ways to persuade your reader.

- Children should be able to stay up as late as they wish.
- Children should not have to do homework.
- I should receive a \$5 raise in my allowance.
- Every child should cook at least one meal for the family every week.
- Pit bulls should not be allowed within the city limits.

State your position or belief: _____

Reason: _____

Emotion: _____

Other people: _____



Wrap it Up

Try three different ways to complete a persuasive paragraph.

Use a personal statement: *I believe that owning a pet is an important part of growing up.*

Or

Make a prediction: *Children who have pets will be better parents because they have experience looking after living things.*

Or

Summarize all your reasons: *Having your very own pet teaches you about responsibility, makes you a more caring person and means you always have someone to play with.*

All people should have to wear helmets when riding their bikes. There are just too many accidents! A bike helmet law would mean that we save money on ambulance and hospital costs. Just putting on a helmet would encourage bike riders to think about safety and maybe follow the safety rules a little better.

Write three different endings for the persuasive argument above. Try out all three different ways.

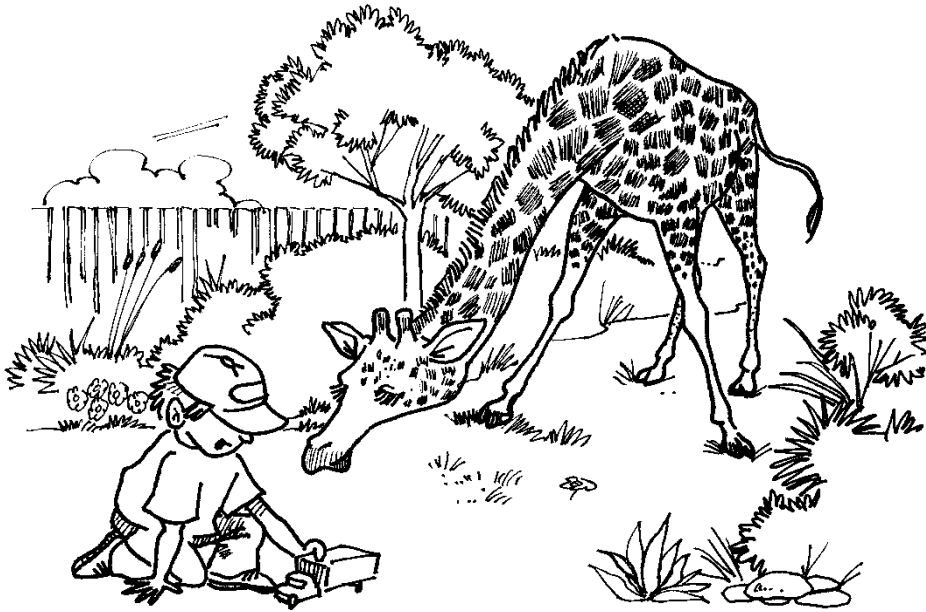
Personal statement: _____

Prediction: _____

Summary: _____



Sample writing prompts



You have found this pet in your backyard.

Write a letter to your parents, convincing them that the pet is perfect for you, and giving them reasons why you should be allowed to keep this pet.



Additional writing prompts

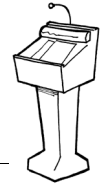
<p>Your teacher is not sure if field trips really help students learn. You want to convince your teacher that you learn a lot from field trips and that your class should go on more of them.</p> <p>Do your best to convince your teacher of the need for field trips. Give several reasons for why field trips are important for you, as a student.</p>	<p>Write a letter to a real or imaginary friend in another part of Canada. Invite the friend to visit you this summer and write all of the reasons for coming to your city or town.</p>
<p>If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be? Give reasons for your choice and explain why the world would be a better place if you could make this wish come true.</p>	<p>Write a letter to the mayor explaining why we need to build more playgrounds in our city.</p>
<p>Write a paragraph trying to convince your parents that they should pay you more weekly allowance.</p>	<p>Think about an important issue for the students in your school.</p> <p>Prepare points for a debate expressing both sides of the issue.</p>



Rubric for Persuasive Writing

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

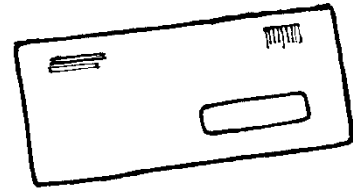


	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> presents detailed and convincing facts or ideas to support point of view <input type="checkbox"/> uses thoughtful examples and metaphors to illustrate ideas <input type="checkbox"/> creative, original and convincing for the reader	<input type="checkbox"/> presents detailed facts or ideas to support point of view <input type="checkbox"/> uses examples to illustrate ideas <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> presents facts and ideas to support point of view <input type="checkbox"/> uses examples to illustrate some ideas <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> presents some facts or ideas but fails to support point of view <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> fails to present facts or ideas to support point of view <input type="checkbox"/> irrelevant or no details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sentence explicitly states purpose or point of view and grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> organizes ideas and information to maintain a clear focus and enhance audience understanding <input type="checkbox"/> closing clearly summarizes evidence supporting argument	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sentence states purpose or point of view and attracts reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> organizes ideas and information to maintain a clear focus and sustain audience understanding <input type="checkbox"/> closing summarizes evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sentence states purpose or point of view <input type="checkbox"/> organizes ideas and information to maintain a clear focus <input type="checkbox"/> closing summarizes evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> opening sentence does not clearly state point of view <input type="checkbox"/> limited attempt to organize ideas and information; focus or main argument is vague or unclear <input type="checkbox"/> closing attempts to summarize evidence	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning not present or contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> no attempt to organize ideas and information; focus or main argument is not developed <input type="checkbox"/> no attempt to summarize evidence in

	and offers reader a new perspective on the topic	supporting argument and invites reader to think more about the topic	supporting argument		closing sentence or closing not present
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> consistently free of factual errors or illogical thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> builds convincing argument that could influence others to change their thinking or opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> generally free of factual errors or illogical thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> builds interesting argument that could influence others to consider another point of view	<input type="checkbox"/> contains some factual errors or illogical thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> builds reasonable argument	<input type="checkbox"/> contains several factual errors and/or illogical thoughts <input type="checkbox"/> fails to build reasonable case or argument	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of facts or logical thought <input type="checkbox"/> confusing



8. Business Letter



What it is

Business letters focus on one issue, are short and to the point, and are formal in style. There is a standard format for business letters.

The business letter is a real-world writing form that students can use to get action and recognition. Students usually receive serious responses when they write well-planned letters. This demonstrates the power of the written word.

Functions

Students write business letters to:

- make a request
- offer opinions
- persuade
- ask questions

Forms

- letter of request to a business, individual, non-profit group or school official
- letter to the editor of a local newspaper
- e-mail
- letter to a school or government official

Related concepts

friendly letter, persuasive writing, problem solving



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- use periods and question marks as end punctuation in own writing (grade 2)
- identify a variety of sentence types and use in own writing (grade 2)
- revise words and sentences to improve sequence or add missing information (grade 2)
- use commas in addresses and after introductory words in sentences in own writing (grade 4)
- edit for subject-verb agreement (grade 4)
- recognize various uses of apostrophes, and use them in own writing (grade 5)
- revise to add and organize details that support and clarify intended meaning (grade 5)
- use colons before lists, to separate hours and minutes and after salutations in own writing (grade 6)
- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)
- distinguish between formal and informal conventions of oral and written language, and use each appropriately, depending on the context, audience and purpose (grade 7)

Specific terms

request, return address, inside address, salutation, opening, body, heading, closing, greeting, signature, format, block style, editor, official

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #8: Business letter
Business letter formats
Sample page: Business letter — full block style
Sample page: Business letter — modified block style
Addressing an envelope

Practice tools

Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram



What students need to do

A business letter is different from a friendly letter because it is more serious, and it is about only one subject. Business letters look alike because they follow the same form.

To write an effective business letter:

1. A business letter looks and sounds more formal than a friendly letter.
2. Focus on only one subject per letter.
3. Explain the main points clearly.
3. Write short paragraphs.
4. Include the necessary facts and details.
5. Make sure the letter is neatly written or typed. Use only one side of the paper.
6. Use the business letter format which includes:
 - heading or return address (sender's address and date)
 - inside address (name and address of the person or company you are writing to)
 - salutation (Dear Ms. Shore:)
 - body (paragraphs)
 - closing (Sincerely yours,)
 - signature

See the sample *Business letter formats*.

7. In a letter of request:
 - Explain the reason for writing.
 - Ask any necessary questions.
 - Describe what action is expected and by when it is expected.
 - Thank the receiver for the help.



8. In a letter to an editor or official:
 - Describe the situation.
 - Give an opinion about the situation.
 - If there are ideas for improvement or change, explain them.
 - Support ideas with facts and examples.
 - End by asking that the situation be changed.

9. When addressing an envelope, the post office prefers that *Canadian Addressing Standards* are used:
 - Addresses should be typed or written in upper case or block letters.
 - All lines of the address must be formatted with a uniform left margin.
 - Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN'S).
 - The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and should be separated from the province by two spaces.
 - The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible.
 - The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.

Primary Students

1. Know the reason for writing the letter.
2. Find out who to write to.
3. State ideas clearly and neatly.
3. Sound polite. In most cases the letter will be written to a grown-up.
4. Follow the form for a business letter and for the address on an envelope.
5. Use best printing.
6. Check the letter for errors before sending it.



Sample teaching strategies

1. **Post-it**

Have students work in small groups to design and produce posters showing the parts of a business letter and/or how to address an envelope.

2. **Two-letter names**

Have students design a reference card for the names of Canadian provinces and territories and their two-letter abbreviations.

3. **Send for it**

Compile a list of sources for sending for free information. Have each student write a letter of request and bring in the information or sample when it arrives. You could also make photocopies of the letters and post them on the bulletin board along with a map of Canada with the different destinations flagged.

4. **The “principal” of the matter**

Brainstorm a list of ideas for improving the school. Have students write letters to the principal explaining their new ideas.

5. **Letter to the editor**

Bring in samples of recent letters to the editor and have students write their own letters to the editor on a topic of concern.

6. **What’s the difference?**

Make a Venn diagram comparing and contrasting the components and format for a friendly letter and a business letter.





What it is

A business letter looks and sounds more formal than a friendly letter. It focuses on only one subject. There is a standard way for what business letters should look like.

What it can look like

- letter of request
- letter to an editor or an official

What a business letter looks like

- Business letter formats
- Sample page: Business letter — full block style
- Sample page: Business letter — modified block style
- Addressing an envelope

To write an effective business letter

1. Write a heading (return address) with your name, address and date at the top of the page.
2. Skip a line and write the inside address which includes the name and address of the person or company that will be receiving the letter.
3. Skip a line and start your letter with *Dear* and then the person's name, followed by a colon (:).



4. State your request in the first sentence.
5. Keep your letter focused on one request or issue.
6. Write in short, to-the-point paragraphs.
7. Be polite.
8. To end your letter, use a closing such as *Sincerely* or *Yours truly*, followed by a comma.
9. Sign your name. If you are typing your letter, leave four lines between your closing and your typed name and then write your signature above your typed name.

Letter of request:

- Explain why you are writing.
- Ask any questions you have.
- Describe what you would like to receive (and when).
- Thank them for their help.

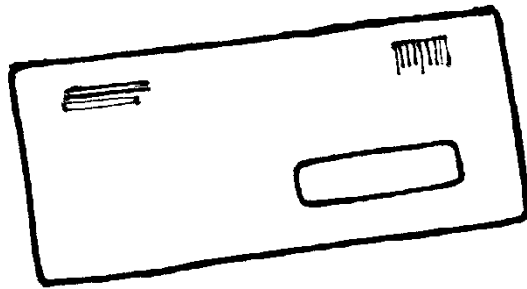
Letter to an editor or official:

- Describe the situation.
- Tell what you think about the situation.
- If you have ideas for improvement or change, explain them.
- Support your ideas with facts and examples.
- End by restating what you think about a situation.



When addressing an envelope, the post office prefers that *Canadian Addressing Standards* are used:

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- Punctuation marks (commas, periods, etc.) should not be used unless they are part of a place name (e.g., ST. JOHN'S).
- The postal code should always appear on the same line as the municipality and province name and should be separated from the province by two spaces.
- The two-letter symbol for the province name should be used wherever possible.
- The return address should be formatted in the same way as the main address.



Check your writing

In my business letter...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My return address includes all necessary information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My inside address includes all necessary information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I state my purpose in the first sentence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I focus on one subject only.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I explain main points clearly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I write in short paragraphs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I include necessary facts and details.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. My tone is polite.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. My envelope contains all the necessary information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I could make my point clearer by...



Business Letter Formats

A diagram illustrating the full block format for a business letter. It consists of seven numbered sections: 1. Heading (return address) - three lines; 2. Inside address - three lines; 3. Salutation (greeting) - one line; 4. Body - eight lines; 5. Closing - one line; 6. Signature - one line; 7. Your name (typed or printed) - one line. All text is aligned to the left margin.

The full block format

- All parts of the letter begin at the left side of the page, at the margin.
- None of the paragraphs in the body are indented.

Legend

1. Heading (return address)
2. Inside address
3. Salutation (greeting)
4. Body
5. Closing
6. Signature
7. Your name (typed or printed)

A diagram illustrating the modified block format for a business letter. It consists of seven numbered sections: 1. Heading (return address) - three lines, centered; 2. Inside address - three lines, left-aligned; 3. Salutation (greeting) - one line, left-aligned; 4. Body - eight lines, left-aligned; 5. Closing - one line, centered; 6. Signature - one line, centered; 7. Your name (typed or printed) - one line, centered.

The modified block format

- The heading (return address) and the closing and signature begin at about the mid-point across the page, and are in line with one another.
- None of the paragraphs are indented.
- The inside address, closing and signature begin close to the centre of the page.



Business Letter — Full Block

42 Straw House Road
Squealtown, AB T5C 2L1
November 1, 2011

Mr. Wolf
36 Shady Tree Lane
Apple Orchard, AB T6K 2X9

Dear Mr. Wolf:

My neighbours have reported seeing you up on the roof of our straw house. Please stop this behaviour immediately. My brothers and I work very hard and we need time to relax at home. We can't relax with wolves prowling around our property.

Please do not come huffing and puffing at our door anymore. If we see you near our house we will be forced to call in the woodcutter who helped out our friend Little Red Riding Hood.

Sincerely yours,

First L. Pig
First Little Pig



Business Letter — Modified Block

64 Coastline Drive
Sunshine Village, BC R2V 2V2
November 2, 2011

Heather Taylor
Maritime Marionettes
205 Young Street
Truro, NS B2N 3J3

Dear Ms. Taylor:

Our class really enjoyed the marionette show you brought to our school last week. After the show the teacher let us make our own marionettes in art class. I want to learn more about this kind of theatre.

Do you ever let people come and visit your studio? My family will be visiting Nova Scotia this summer and I would love to spend a day at your shop watching how you make the marionettes. We will be in your area the last week of July. Please write back and let me know if I can come.

I hope the rest of your tour goes well and that other schools enjoy your show as much as our school did.

Sincerely,

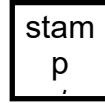
Jay Laker
Jay Laker



Addressing an Envelope

Sender →
Return
address →

FIRST LITTLE PIG
42 STRAWHOUSE ROAD
SQUEALTOWN AB T5C 2L1



Forwarding
address →

receiver → MR. WOLF
street address → 36 SHADY TREE LANE
city, province, postal code → APPLE ORCHARD AB T6K 2X9

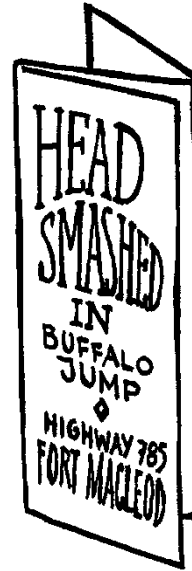
The return address and forwarding address must all be in capital letters or printed in block letters.



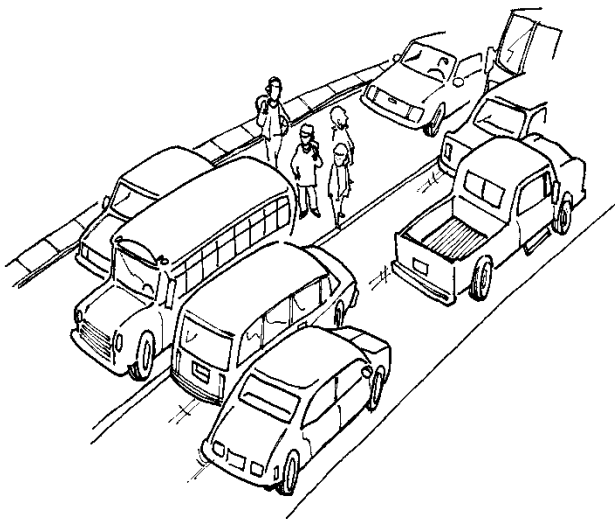
Sample writing prompts

You think a field trip to Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump would be great for your class, but you need to convince your teacher.

Write a letter of request asking for more information.







There is no crosswalk at the end of your street and it is dangerous for children crossing to the playground. How will you get the city to do something about the situation?

Begin your campaign by writing a letter to your local city councillor.

Address the letter to:

CITY HALL
234 MAIN STREET
PUMPHANDLE AB T65 3J3



Additional writing prompts

Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows:

The situation

You are TJ Green and are a member of your school's Save the Earth Club. Your club is planning special activities to be held during Environment Week May 6-12.

Each club member is responsible for giving a presentation about a particular environmental topic. As a club member, you will need to gather information about the topic that you are interested in.

Assignment

Write a letter to the director of a local environmental agency, Ray Rama, at the address listed below, requesting the specific information that you will need to do your presentation. Among other details, be sure to:

- describe the topic you have chosen
- include the purpose of your research
- include why you are interested in this topic, concept or issue
- request that the information be sent to TJ Green's address
- sign your letter TJ Green instead of your real name

Remember to follow a business letter format. Address the envelope to:

RAY RAMA, DIRECTOR
INSTITUTE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
7272 ALPINE DRIVE SUITE #23
FOREST HEIGHTS AB T65 4N7

TJ Green's address: 875 WARMLAKE ROAD
WARRENVILLE AB T64 3S8



Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows:

The situation

Pretend that you are Sam Blue and are a member of your school's Library Club. This club is planning special activities to be held during Read-in Week.

Each club member is responsible for inviting a friend of the school's to come in and read a favourite story to a group of students.

Read the information below and complete the assignment that follows:

Assignment

Write a letter to your favourite bus driver, Alex Clark, at the address listed below, requesting that she join you at 10 o'clock on October 9.

Among other details, be sure to:

- describe what you expect her to do
- include the purpose of the activity
- include why you are choosing the person to be a reader
- request that a reply be sent to Sam Blue's address.
- sign your letter Sam Blue instead of your real name

Remember to follow a business letter format. Address the envelope to:

FRIENDLY BUS COMPANY
7272 WHEELS AVENUE SUITE #23
EDMONTON AB T65 4N7

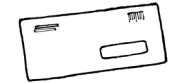
Sam Blue's address: 875 COLDLAKE ROAD
CLARKESVILLE AB T64 3S8



<p>Your school is planning a field trip to a famous historical site near your town. Your class needs four adult volunteers to drive and be tour leaders. Your uncle likes history and lives nearby and you think he might be a good tour guide.</p> <p>Write a letter to your uncle asking him if he will come on the field trip with your class. Before writing your letter, think about what you could say that would persuade him to go on the trip. Also decide what other information he should know about the trip.</p>	<p>Your school’s Career Day was a huge success. You arranged for your next door neighbour to talk about her job. She is on the police force. She did an excellent job and shared many interesting career facts.</p> <p>Write a thank-you letter to your guest. In your letter, give at least three reasons why you think students enjoyed her presentation.</p>
<p>The computer software you received for your birthday is defective.</p> <p>Write a letter to the software company asking them to replace the product.</p>	<p>The town is planning to open a new garbage dump close to the town.</p> <p>Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper explaining why this would not be a good idea. Support your arguments.</p>



Rubric for Business Letter



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> development of topic is clearly focused and effective throughout <input type="checkbox"/> complete and specific information is presented <input type="checkbox"/> information is enhanced by precise and appropriate details that effectively fulfill the purpose <input type="checkbox"/> appropriate tone is clearly and effectively maintained	<input type="checkbox"/> development of topic is generally focused and effective <input type="checkbox"/> complete information is presented <input type="checkbox"/> information is substantiated by appropriate details that fulfill the purpose <input type="checkbox"/> appropriate tone is clearly maintained	<input type="checkbox"/> development of topic is adequate <input type="checkbox"/> sufficient information is given <input type="checkbox"/> information is supported by enough detail to fulfill the purpose <input type="checkbox"/> appropriate tone is generally maintained	<input type="checkbox"/> topic is vaguely focused and ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> essential information may be missing <input type="checkbox"/> supporting details are insufficient and/or irrelevant <input type="checkbox"/> appropriate tone is not maintained	<input type="checkbox"/> development of topic is inadequate <input type="checkbox"/> essential information is inappropriate or missing <input type="checkbox"/> supporting details are inappropriate or missing <input type="checkbox"/> inappropriate tone
Content Management	<input type="checkbox"/> words and expressions are consistently accurate and effective <input type="checkbox"/> very few errors in sentence structure, punctuation,	<input type="checkbox"/> words and expressions are usually accurate and effective <input type="checkbox"/> few errors in sentence structure, punctuation,	<input type="checkbox"/> words and expressions are generally effective <input type="checkbox"/> some errors in sentence structure, punctuation,	<input type="checkbox"/> words and expressions are frequently inappropriate and/or misused <input type="checkbox"/> errors in sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization or	<input type="checkbox"/> words and expressions are inappropriate and/or misused <input type="checkbox"/> errors in sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization or

	<p>capitalization or spelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> free from format errors and/or omissions</p>	<p>capitalization or spelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> contains few format errors and/or omissions</p>	<p>capitalization or spelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> may contain occasional format errors and/or omissions</p>	<p>spelling interfere with meaning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> contains several format errors and/or omissions</p>	<p>spelling severely interfere with meaning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> format unclear or inappropriate</p>
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9. Fantasy

What it is

Fantasy stories are based on the writer's imagination. Writers are free to imagine the world and their characters any way they want, just as long as the readers believe them.

Functions

Fantasy writing gives students opportunities to:

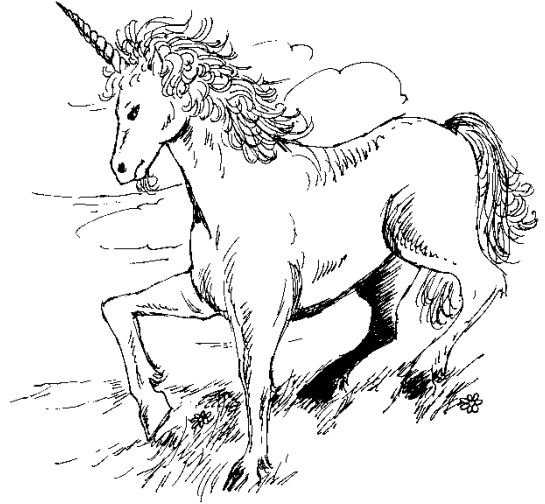
- develop characters, problems, and solutions
- develop imaginative and creative thought
- explore some of the great themes in literature: the struggle between good and evil, the ability to overcome obstacles with faith and perseverance, and the power of love and friendship
- write from the viewpoint of others

Forms

- fairy tale
- fantasy
- speculative fiction
- tall tale
- ghost story
- time travel story
- poetry

Related concepts

science fiction, legend, myth, tall tale



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- uses capital letters for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences in own writing (grade 2)
- identify nouns and verbs, and use in own writing (grade 2)
- identify adjectives and adverbs that add interest and detail to stories (grade 2)
- use adjectives and adverbs to add interest and detail to own writing (grade 3)
- use quotation marks and separate paragraphs to indicate passages of dialogue in own writing (grade 5)
- identify irregular verbs, and use in own writing (grade 5)
- revise to provide focus, expand relevant ideas and eliminate unnecessary information (grade 6)
- use periods and commas with quotation marks that indicate direct speech in own writing (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

suspense, tension, believability, character, setting, plot, problem, roadblock, obstacle

Examples from literature

- *Charlotte’s Web* by E.B. White (grades 2–5)
- *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne (grades 2–5)
- *Zoom at Sea* by Tim Wynne-Jones (grades 2–5)
- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* by C.S. Lewis (grades 3–6)
- *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* by Chris Van Allsburg (grades 4–6)
- *The Secret World of Og* by Pierre Berton (grades 4–7)
- *Babe, the Gallant Pig* by Dick King-Smith (grades 5–6)
- *The Dragon’s Boy* by Jane Yolen (grades 5–6)
- *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by Robert C. O’Brien (grades 5–6)
- *Nonstop Nonsense* by Margaret Mahy (grades 5–6)
- *Sandwriter* by Monica Hughes (grades 5–7)
- *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt (grades 5–7)
- *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L’Engle (grades 6–7)



Planning tools

Student tip sheet #9: Fantasy
Multi-use master #4: Story planner
Multi-use master #5: Story grid
Activity page: Wanted poster

What students need to do

In a fantasy story:

The main characters have magical qualities and can do things that ordinary people could never do (*such as giants who have hens that lay golden eggs and wizards who can turn princes into frogs*).

or

The stories can take place in settings where magical things can happen (*such as mountain tops where dragons fly and forests where little people dance*).

or

The characters have problems when a “good” force is struggling with an “evil” force and the “good” force wins (*such as a bandit who steals the sun and a wizard who captures the bandit and returns the sun so that people will have daylight again*).

or

The character deals with magical situations that disrupt otherwise normal lives (*such as a girl who finds a magic coat that takes her back in time, or the day it rained meatballs and spaghetti*).

To write a fantasy story:

1. Invent characters. Fantasy characters can be real people, talking animals, dragons, unicorns or creatures you invent. Think of a main character and one or two others.
2. Choose a problem to solve.



3. Develop the plot. The plot is the sequence of events in a story. It has four parts:
 - A problem: This introduces conflict at the beginning of the story.
 - Roadblocks: Characters face roadblocks as they try to solve the problem during the middle of the story.
 - The high point: The high point in the action occurs when the problem is just about to be solved.
 - The solution: The problem is solved and the roadblocks are overcome at the end of the story.
4. Find a setting. Fantasy can take place anywhere or anytime — in a neighbourhood or a magical place. Describe the setting so that readers can see it in their minds.
5. Get started. Begin the story by introducing the main character or setting. Or begin with something happening, like two characters arguing, a narrow escape or an explosion. The action should lead to the main problem in the story.
6. Build the suspense. As the story continues, try to make the main character's life more and more difficult because of the problems. The character should experience at least three roadblocks or obstacles before he finally solves his problem.
7. Make it believable. The story should be imaginary but believable. Ask, "Do my characters act in a way that fits the story? Do the actions make sense in my setting?"

Sample teaching strategies

1. **Find the elements**

Read a fantasy story to the class and then have them identify all the essential story elements by reconstructing the story using a story planner.

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner



2. **Retell**

Have students retell a version of their favourite fantasy stories.

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner

3. **Add a character**

Ask students to add one new character to a favourite fantasy story and then retell the story with that character.

4. **Change for the better**

Challenge students to take a favourite fantasy story and make the evil character (such as the wolf in the *Three Little Pigs* or the giant in *Jack and the Beanstalk*) become good.

5. **Create a problem**

Have students add a new problem to a familiar story. For example, Jack in the *Beanstalk* meets some bullies on his way to the market or Baby Bear is home when Goldilocks is trying out the beds and chairs. Students can re-write the fantasy using this new plot twist.

6. **Fantasy ending**

Have students choose one of their realistic stories and give it a fantasy ending.

7. **Wanted poster**

Use the creation of wanted posters as a form of character description. Ask students to invent a character and create a wanted poster that helps the character come alive by describing what the character looks like, what he or she wears, how he or she speaks, what other characters say about him or her, and what kinds of things he or she does.

- Activity page: *Wanted poster*





What it is

A fantasy story is created from a writer's imagination. Writers are free to imagine the world and their characters any way they want, just as long as the readers believe the story.

What it can look like

- fairy tale
- fantasy
- speculative fiction
- tall tale
- ghost story
- time travel story
- poetry

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner
- Multi-use master #5: Story grid

In a fantasy story

The main characters have magical qualities and can do things that ordinary people could never do (*such as giants who have hens that lay golden eggs, and wizards that can turn princes into frogs*).

or

The stories take place in settings where magical things can happen (*such as mountain tops where dragons fly, and forests where little people dance*).



or

The characters have problems when a “good” force is struggling with an “evil” force and the “good” force wins (*such as a bandit who steals the sun and a wizard who captures the bandit and returns the sun so that people will have sunlight again*).

or

The characters deal with magical situations that disrupt otherwise normal lives (*such as a girl who finds a magic coat that takes her back in time, or the day it rained meatballs and spaghetti*).

Plan

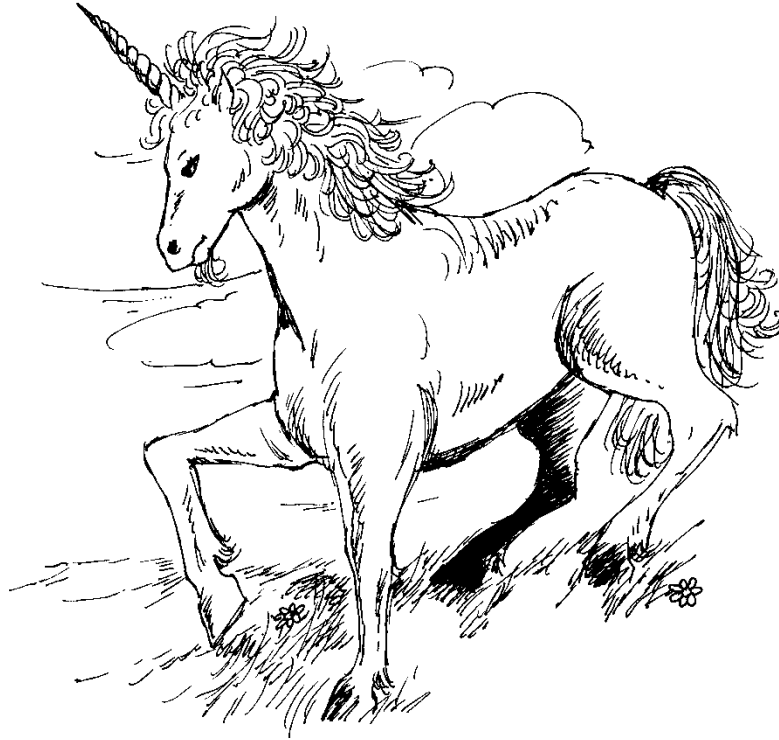
In a fantasy story:

1. Invent characters. Fantasy characters can be real people, talking animals, dragons, unicorns or creatures you invent. Think of a main character and one or two others.
2. Choose a problem to solve.
3. Develop the plot. The plot is the sequence of events in a story. It has four parts:
 - A problem: this introduces conflict at the beginning of the story.
 - Roadblocks: characters face roadblocks as they try to solve the problem during the middle of the story.
 - The high point: the high point in the action occurs when the problem is just about to be solved.
 - The solution: the problem is solved and the roadblocks are overcome at the end of the story.
4. Find a setting. Fantasy can take place anywhere or anytime — in your neighbourhood or a magical place. Describe the setting so that your readers can see it in their minds.



Write

1. Get started. Begin your story by introducing the main character or setting. Or begin with something happening, like two characters arguing, a narrow escape or an explosion. The action should lead to the main problem in the story.
2. Build the suspense right to the end. As you continue, try to make the main character's life more and more difficult because of the problems. The character should experience at least three roadblocks or obstacles before he or she finally solves his or her problem.
3. Make it believable. Your story should be imaginary but believable. Ask, "Do my characters act in a way that fits the story? Do the actions make sense in my setting?"



Check your writing

In my fantasy writing...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My characters are interesting and believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I clearly explain the problem to be solved.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My characters run into at least three roadblocks while trying to solve their problem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I create suspense throughout the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The way my characters talk, act and think is believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The problem is solved at the end of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The best thing about this piece of writing is...



Wanted
by the Association of Young Fantasy Writers of Canada (YFWC)
for the following crimes

Name of suspect _____

Front view	Side view
------------	-----------

Character Description

Height (cm) _____ Eye colour _____

Mass (kg) _____ Hair colour _____

Age _____

Distinguishing features _____

Last seen wearing _____

What the wanted person is reported to have said to others:

What the wanted person is reported to have done:

What other people are reported to have said about the wanted person:

Caution:

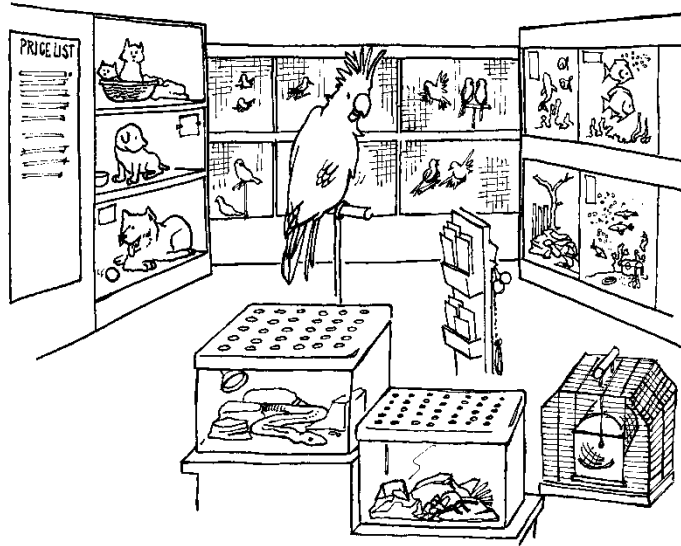
A Canada-wide warrant for the above-mentioned suspect has been issued by the YFWC. If you have any information concerning this person, please notify your local young fantasy writer.



Sample writing prompts

You are in a pet shop looking at the fish, rabbits, gerbils, cats, dogs and birds.

Just as you are about to leave the pet shop, one of the animals calls your name. You turn around. You are quite surprised. You are even more surprised when the animal starts to tell you the story of how it got into the pet shop. It is an amazing story.



Write the animal's story and include the animal's reason for telling you its story.





Something very strange happened while I was playing a game on the computer the other night. As I moved the mouse across the pad, I heard a low humming sound and the screen began to glow. I felt a tug. Suddenly I felt myself being pulled inside the monitor.

The next thing I knew...



Additional writing prompts

<p>Your friend has just built a time machine. You climb in and push a button. As you step out of the machine you realize you are back in the time of the pioneers.</p> <p>What happens when you arrive in the past? Tell your story.</p>	<p>You find a magic lamp. As you clean the lamp, a genie appears and offers you three wishes.</p> <p>Tell the story of your adventure with the magic lamp.</p>
<p>One day the world wakes up and one colour is missing!</p> <p>Tell what happens when this one colour disappears. Is there a way to get the colour back? How does the story of the disappearing colour end?</p>	<p>I could hardly believe what happened the day Mr. Moon came to our class to be the substitute teacher!</p> <p>It all started when he walked into our classroom carrying a strange-looking hat...</p>
<p>You are watching your favourite television program. Suddenly, the actors in the show begin to speak directly to you!</p> <p>Write the story of what has caused this, and what happens next.</p>	<p>It seems like just any other morning, until you realize that you have grown wings during the night.</p> <p>Write the story of your day.</p>



Rubric for Fantasy



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear throughout story <input type="checkbox"/> events consistently fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> uses specific details throughout <input type="checkbox"/> creative and original concept captivates reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear throughout most of story <input type="checkbox"/> most events fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is present <input type="checkbox"/> events are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is unclear <input type="checkbox"/> events are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of setting or mood <input type="checkbox"/> confusing events <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> paragraphs in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties events together	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> events in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout most of the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to story	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning tells about events, characters and setting <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout some of the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> events in confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> few connections between actions and details <input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> events difficult to identify <input type="checkbox"/> no connections between actions <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present

Skills and Format	<input type="checkbox"/> creates magical situations that captivate reader's interest <input type="checkbox"/> characters and events are believable	<input type="checkbox"/> creates magical situations that engage reader <input type="checkbox"/> characters and events are generally believable	<input type="checkbox"/> creates magical situations that sustain reader's interest <input type="checkbox"/> characters and events are somewhat believable	<input type="checkbox"/> situations are contrived and uninteresting <input type="checkbox"/> characters and events are not believable	<input type="checkbox"/> situations unbelievable or not fantasy <input type="checkbox"/> characters and events are confusing or not developed
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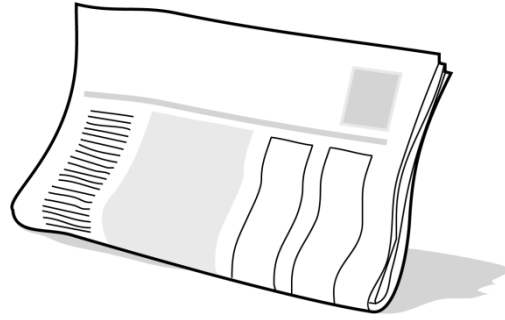
10. News Story

What it is

Writing a story for a newspaper is different from writing a fictional story. You are writing to inform, and sentences must be to the point, simple and clear.

Before reading a complete newspaper story, readers can usually get an idea

of what it's about from the headline, the subheadings and the captions of the photographs.



Functions

Writing news stories provides students with practice in:

- recording observations
- collecting data
- experimenting with precise language
- narrowing a general topic to a specific focus
- considering ways in which they can use the information of others in their work

Forms

- news story
- human interest story
- newsletter article
- magazine article

Related concepts

letter to the editor, fact versus opinion



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- revise words and sentences to improve sequence or add missing information (grade 2)
- identify simple and compound sentence structures, and use in own writing (grade 4)
- identify and reduce fragments and run-on sentences (grade 4)
- use capital letters in titles, headings and subheadings in own writing (grade 5)
- identify past, present and future verb tenses and use in sentences (grade 5)
- identify past, present and future verb tenses. and use throughout a piece of writing (grade 6)
- edit for appropriate verb tense and for correct pronoun references (grade 6)
- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning (grade 7)
- use paragraphs appropriately, to organize narrative and expository texts (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use quotation marks to identify information taken from secondary sources in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

inform, headlines, subheadings, by-lines, captions, inverted triangle or pyramid, current, strong leads

Examples from literature

- *Deadline!: From News to Newspaper* by Gail Gibbons (grades 2–3)
- *What's it Like to be a Newspaper Reporter?* by Janet Craig (grades 2–3)
- *The Furry News: How to Make a Newspaper* by Loreen Leedy (grades 2–4)
- *Extra! Extra!: The Who, What, Where, When and Why of Newspapers* by Linda Garfield (grades 3–4)
- *In the News* by Resource Development Services, Edmonton Public Schools (grades 3–7)



Planning tools

Student tip sheet #10: News story

Activity page: The five W's and one H of newspaper reporting

Practice tools

Activity page: Lead on

What students need to do

To write a good news story:

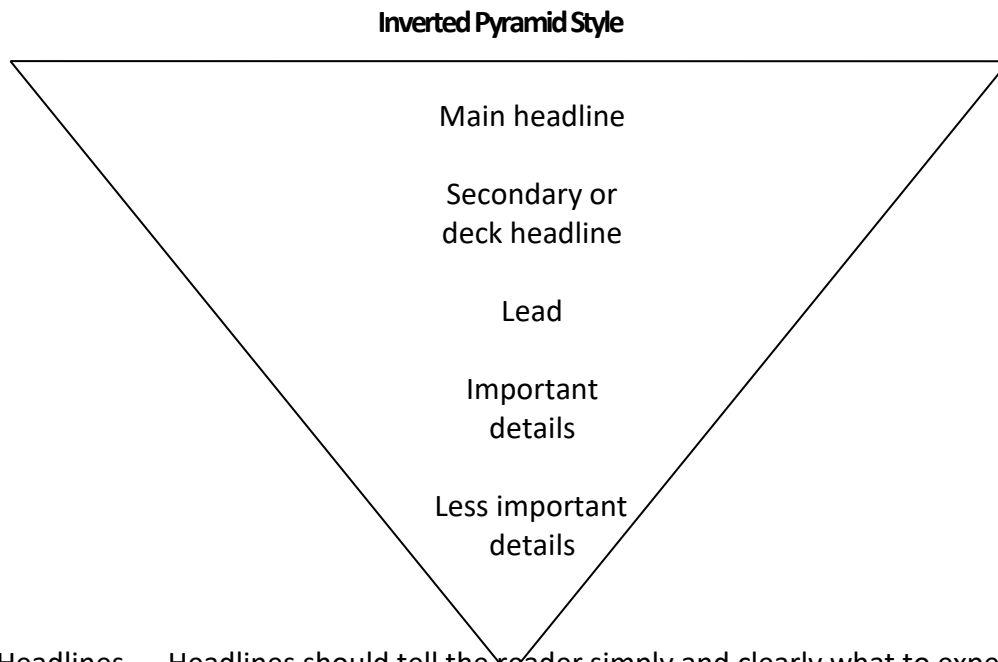
1. Choose a topic. Write about a newsworthy subject — something important, interesting, or unusual that readers will want to read about.
2. Collect information. Answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?

Get information by:

- Interviewing — Ask different people questions about the topic.
 - Observing — Study the topic very carefully and describe what you see.
 - Reading — Read about the topic to understand it better.
3. Write the lead or first paragraph. Begin with the most important or interesting detail. If possible, put a person in the lead paragraph.
 4. Write the main part of the story. The body of the report will often retell the news in more detail, beginning with the most important parts.
 5. Write the ending. It often contains less important facts. Try to leave the readers with something to think about or some detail that will help them remember this story.



6. The style for newspaper stories is called the inverted triangle or pyramid because, unlike a fictional story that leads to the climax or most important part of the story, the news story begins with the most important.



7. Headlines — Headlines should tell the reader simply and clearly what to expect. The larger the headline in a newspaper, the more important the story is considered, The average news headline has about six words in it — and often even fewer.
8. Subheadings — Longer news stories are broken by subheads, which are in a darker, larger type than the rest of the report. They highlight other interesting facts contained in the report.
9. By-line — A by-line tells the reader who wrote the report. It usually sits under the headline although it sometimes can be contained in a box in the centre of the report.
10. Captions — Captions are the words that explain a picture. They sum up what's in the photograph or illustration in very few words.



Sample teaching strategies

1. **Post-it**

Have students work in small groups to design and produce posters showing the parts of a news story.

2. **Lead on**

Give students opportunities to try out various kinds of leads for one story.

- Activity page: *Lead on*

3. **Sharing the news**

Ask students to clip and bring interesting news stories to class. Have them highlight words or phrases that make the stories interesting. Display on the bulletin board.

4. **Write a headline**

Bring in sample news stories or use student examples and cut off the headlines. Number each of the samples and rotate them around the classroom, challenging students to write a catchy headline for each one.

5. **Report and publish**

Publish a special edition one-time-only class newspaper. Brainstorm topics for news stories, assign reporters, set deadlines and lay out the copy either by cutting and pasting or by using a student-friendly word processing program such as *Student Writing Centre*.





Student Tip Sheet #10: News Story

What it is

Writing a story for a news story is different from writing a fictional story. Your sentences must be to the point, simple and clear.

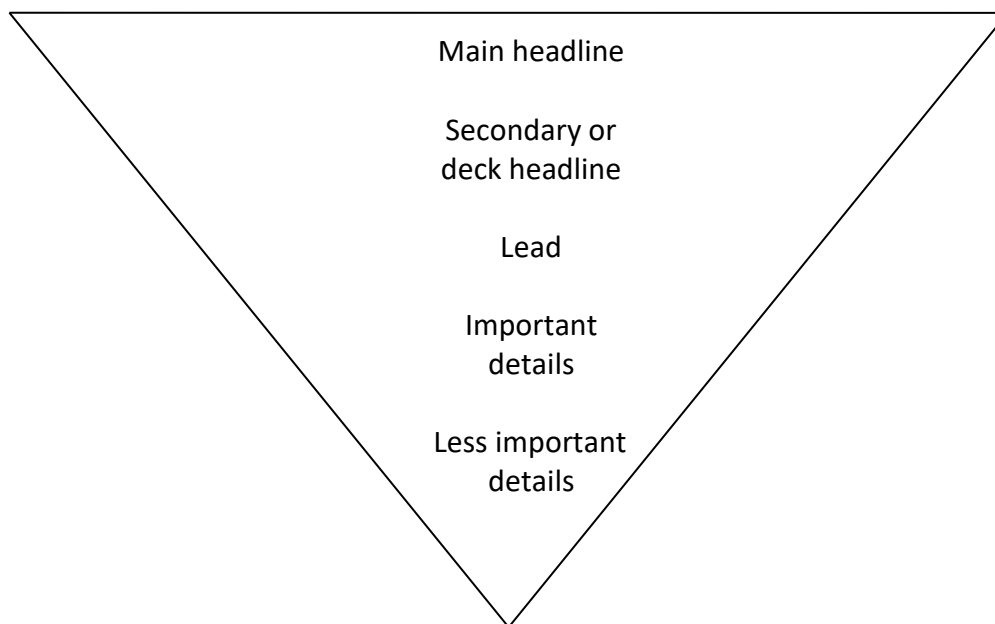
What it can look like

- news story
- newsletter article
- human interest story
- magazine article

Planning tools

- Activity page: The five W's and one H of newspaper reporting
- News story pyramid — The style for newspaper stories is called the inverted triangle or pyramid because, unlike a fictional story that leads to the climax or most important part of the story, the news story begins with the most important fact or idea.

Inverted Pyramid Style

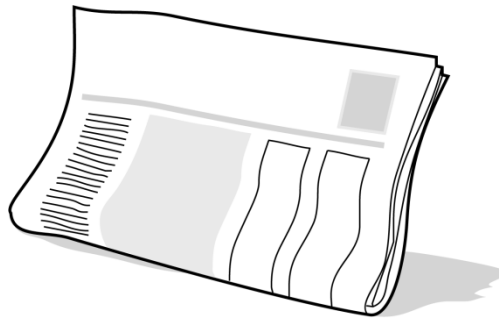


Plan

1. Choose a topic. Write about a newsworthy subject — something important, interesting, or unusual that your readers will want to read about.
2. Collect your information. Be sure you can answer the questions: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?
You can get information by:
 - Interviewing — You can ask different people questions about your topic.
 - Observing — You can study your topic very carefully and describe what you see.
 - Reading — You can read about your topic to help you understand it better.

Write

1. Write the lead or first paragraph. Begin with the most important or interesting details. If possible, put a person in the lead paragraph.
2. Write the main part of your story. The body of the report will often retell the news in more detail, beginning with the most important parts.
3. Write your ending. It often contains less important facts. Try to leave your readers with something to think about or some detail that will help them remember this story.



Check your writing

In my news story...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My lead sentence tells the most important detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The remaining part of the story adds supporting details.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I answer all five-W and one-H questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who? • What? • When? • Where? • Why? • How? 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
4. The ending leaves the reader with something to think about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What are three headlines that would fit my news story well? _____



The Five W's and One H of Newspaper Reporting

Name: _____

Date: _____



Who?

Where?

When?

What?

Why?

How?



Lead On

There are many different ways to begin a story. Try out each of these different types of leads.

Story topic: **Working in a Circus**

Question lead →	Have you ever wished you could run away and join the circus? Well, this is just what...
Suspense lead →	He is a man with no address and he moves from town to town in the middle of the night.
Surprise lead →	His roommate weighs almost a ton and likes classical music and peanut butter.
Dialogue lead →	"Tiger on the loose! Tiger on the loose!" yelled the young man.
Sensory description →	The buttery smell of popcorn, the sticky delight of a candied apple...

Story topic: _____

- Question lead: _____
- Suspense lead: _____
- Surprise lead: _____
- Dialogue lead: _____
- Sensory description: _____

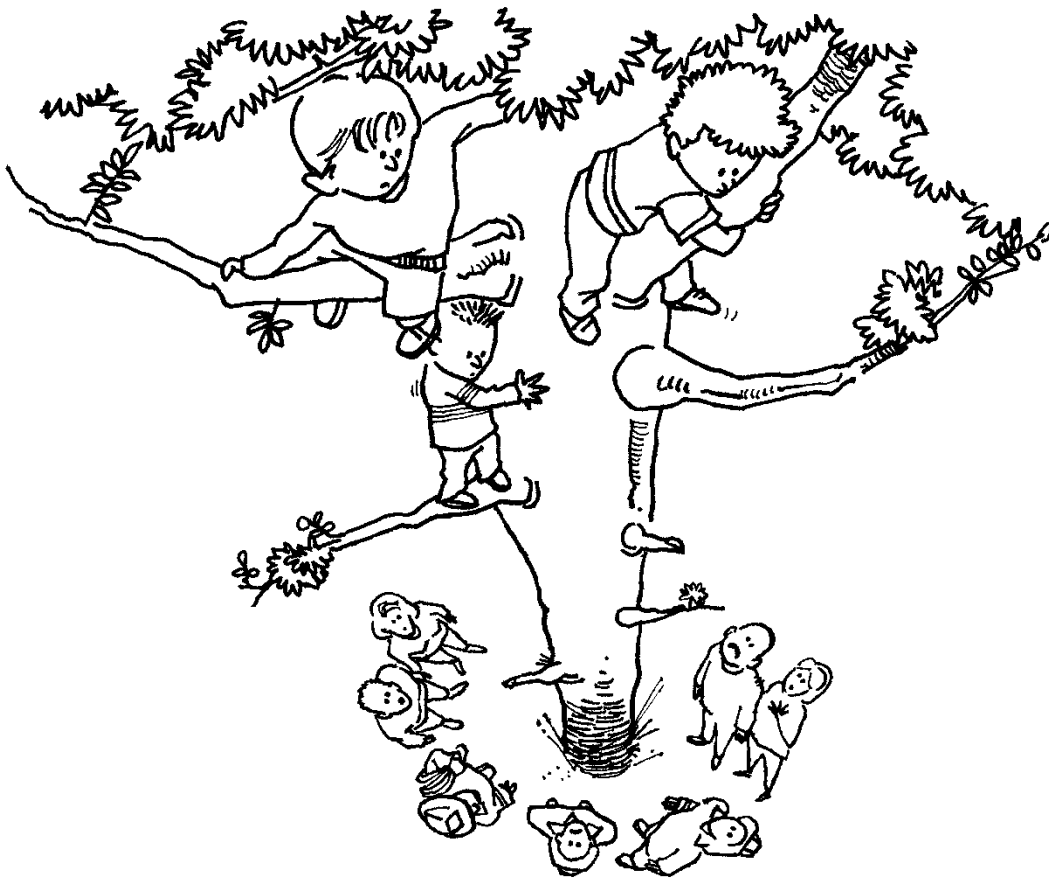


Sample writing prompts



Examine the picture above. Write a news story describing this event.





Examine the picture above. Write a news story describing this event.



Additional writing prompts

<p>You are a reporter for your school newspaper. Your assignment is to report on what children like about their pets.</p> <p>Imagine what children would say to the reporter. How would the reporter put this in writing?</p> <p>Write an article for the newspaper on children and their pets.</p>	<p>You are the editor of the school newspaper. Your ace reporter has called in sick and the paper is going to press in one hour. You can't find the reporter's typed story — all you can find is the headline:</p> <p>NO MORE PLAYING IN THE PLAYGROUND</p> <p>Write a news story to fit the headline.</p>
<p>Imagine that there was a newspaper in the forest where the three bears lived.</p> <p>Write a news story about Goldilocks' visit to the home of the three bears.</p>	<p>Choose an important event from your own life.</p> <p>Write it as a news story. Remember to answer the five W's and one H.</p>
<p>You travel back in time to an important event in history.</p> <p>Write a news story about the event as though you are part of it.</p>	<p>A favourite possession has gone missing.</p> <p>Write the news story of the incident and the investigation into its whereabouts.</p>



Rubric for News Story



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> events consistently fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> specific details throughout <input type="checkbox"/> creative and original story captivates reader	<input type="checkbox"/> most events fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> events are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> events are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> confusing events <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> lead sentence tells the most important details and grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> events in logical order throughout <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties events together and leaves reader with something to think about	<input type="checkbox"/> interesting lead sentence tells the most important details <input type="checkbox"/> events in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to story and gives reader something to think about	<input type="checkbox"/> lead sentence tells the important details <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present or not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> events difficult to identify <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> answers 5-W and 1-H questions in detail <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single significant event or story	<input type="checkbox"/> answers 5-W and 1-H questions <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single main event	<input type="checkbox"/> answers most of the 5-W and 1-H questions <input type="checkbox"/> identifies main event	<input type="checkbox"/> background information is lacking <input type="checkbox"/> main event vague	<input type="checkbox"/> no background information <input type="checkbox"/> main event not identified



<input type="checkbox"/> consistent and effective use of tense	<input type="checkbox"/> consistent use of tense	<input type="checkbox"/> minor tense errors	<input type="checkbox"/> tense errors interfere with understanding the story	<input type="checkbox"/> many tense errors
<input type="checkbox"/> paragraphs are factual, concise, clear and to-the-point	<input type="checkbox"/> paragraphs are factual and to the point	<input type="checkbox"/> sentences are factual	<input type="checkbox"/> few factual sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> no facts



11. Reflection

What it is

There are many formats for reflecting on experiences and learning.

A **journal** is a written record of events, with entries made at regular intervals. It could be an account of a trip or time spent at camp. Journals are often written for others to read, and so are less personal than diaries. Writers often keep a journal to record things that interest them — experiences, animal or plant life, daily weather patterns, conversations, or news items. They record not only what has happened, but more importantly, what they **think** about events, experiences and new ideas. They reflect on their experiences in order to better understand them.



Learning journals or **logs** are special notebooks for recording observations about learning. A person might record something learned, problems encountered, or a description of how the learning went — how well a group worked together, for example. Learning logs can be used in all subjects.

Observation reports are written records of all the sights, sounds, smells and physical feelings of an activity, event, setting or object. In science class a student may be asked to write an observation report about an investigation or project.



Functions

Journal writing gives students opportunities to:

- record personal experiences
- explore reactions and interpretations
- record and analyze information
- stimulate interest in a topic
- wonder, predict and hypothesize
- ask questions
- activate prior knowledge
- reflect on their learning
- discover gaps in their knowledge
- explore relationships between what they are learning and their past experiences

Writing **simulated journals** gives students opportunities to:

- assume the role of another person

Learning logs:

- help students chart sequential progress of an activity, as well as make predictions about what may occur
- reinforce learning through writing and questioning
- involve the students, making learning a lasting, personal experience
- compile information that can be used in reports

Observation reports give students opportunities to:

- wonder, predict and hypothesize
- reflect on their learning
- ask questions
- activate prior knowledge
- record learning experiences
- make learning a lasting, personal experience
- compile information that can be used in reports



Forms

- personal journal
- simulated journal
- learning log
- reflection sheet
- observation report
- writer's notebook/journal

Related concepts

writing to explain, responding to literature, working with information

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

Journal writing

- use commas after greetings and closures in letters and to separate words in a series in own writing (grade 2)
- use apostrophes to form common contractions and show possession in own writing (grade 3)
- recognize various uses of apostrophes, and use them in own writing (grade 5)
- identify past, present and future verb tenses. and use in sentences (grade 5)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Learning logs

- use capital letters in titles, headings and subheadings in own writing (grade 5)
- use colons before lists and separate hours and minutes in own writing (grade 6)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)



Observations

- identify nouns and verbs, and use in own writing (grade 2)
- use adjectives and adverbs to add interest and detail to own writing (grade 3)
- use words and phrases to modify and clarify ideas in own writing (grade 4)
- identify correct noun-pronoun agreement, and use in own writing (grade 4)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

wonder, observe, notice, reflect, question

Examples from literature

- *I Love Saturday* by Patricia Reilly Giff (grades 1–2)
- *Scooter* by Vera B. Williams (grades 3–4)
- *Dear Mr. Henshaw* by Beverly Cleary (grades 3–5)
- *Anastasia has the Answers* by Lois Lowry (grades 3–5)
- *Three Days on a River in a Red Canoe* by Vera B. Williams (grades 3–5)
- *Arthur, for the Very First Time* by Patricia MacLachlan (grades 3–6)
- *Harriet the Spy* by L. Fitzhugh (grades 3–6)
- *The Wretched Stone* by Chris Van Allsburg (grades 3–8)
- *Hey World, Here I Am!* by Jean Little (grades 5–6)
- *Mostly Michael* by Robert Kimmel Smith (grades 5–6)
- *Sister* by Eloise Greenfield (grades 5–6)
- *Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo* by Zlata Filipovic (grades 5–6)
- *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank (grades 6–8)

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #11A: Reflection: journal

Student tip sheet #11B: Reflection: learning log

Student tip sheet #11C: Reflection: observation



What students need to do

To write a **journal entry** or **reflection** on an event or activity:

1. Look back. Describe the activity in detail.
2. Look in.
 - Outline likes and dislikes about the event or activity. Give reasons.
 - Tell what was learned.
 - Describe emotion or reaction to the event or activity. Explain why.
 - List questions and concerns about the event or activity.
3. Look forward.
 - Tell what could be done next as a result. Explain why.
 - What kind of goal could be set?
 - Tell how the activity and what was learned might help in the future.

To write in a **learning log**:

1. Write down first thoughts.
2. Write down questions about the topic. It isn't important to answer them right away. A reference book, a teacher, a parent or another student can be consulted later to help find answers.
3. List key words. Make a list of the important words like "factor" and "multiplication," along with their definitions.
4. Write down samples that illustrate the new skill.
5. Make pictures or diagrams. Pictures can make ideas clearer.



To write an **observation report**:

1. Choose a title that describes the focus of the observation report.
2. Outline the procedure:
 - What was done
 - When it was done
 - What was used
 - Why it was done
3. Record observations. Describe what was observed. Give specific physical details such as colour, size and texture of objects under observation.
4. Share conclusions. Tell what was learned and give examples to support conclusions. Tell how this new information can be used.

Sample teaching strategies

1. **Brain starters**

Brainstorm a list of sentence starters that would be helpful in reflecting on learning in social studies or science. Edit and post the ideas so students can use them for future writing. Use the activity page *Brain starters for science* included in this section.

2. **Science observation log**

Use opportunities in science to make daily entries to track the growth of a plant or an animal. Encourage students to include labeled diagrams and measurements.

3. **Another point of view**

Ask students to assume the role of a character in a novel they are reading. Have them write journal entries from that character's point of view.



4. **Walkabout**

Have students go on an observation walk around the school. They can take clipboards, paper and pencils to record the varied sights, smells, sounds, textures and tastes of the building. Discuss the various settings and write the descriptive words on the chalkboard.

5. **Math learning log**

Use the last five minutes of math class for students to summarize the day's lesson and react to it in their learning logs. Students can write about what they have learned during class, the steps involved in solving a problem, definitions of mathematical terms and things that confuse them.





Student Tip Sheet #11A: Reflection: Journal

What it is

A journal is a written record of events. You can write in a journal a number of different times. For example, a journal could be an account of a trip or time spent at camp.

A journal records not only what has happened in your life, but more importantly, what you **think** about events, experiences and new ideas. It gives you a chance to reflect on your own experiences so you can better understand them.

What it can look like

- personal journal
- learning log
- observation report
- simulated journal
- reflection sheet
- writer's notebook/journal

What a journal entry could look like

The Education Gym

This morning we went to the U of A gym and got to play on all the equipment. My favourite thing was the big tire. Alex and I rolled around and around inside it.

The student teacher we worked with was named Jara. I picked him because he was very tall. He let me go on anything I wanted. He even held onto the rope and I climbed almost to the ceiling. It was fun going up the rope but I didn't like coming down. It made my hands sting. I think our school should have a rope that we could climb. It would help us get stronger and maybe we could even go mountain climbing.

Next time we go I will spend more time on the rope and I will see how fast I can climb up it.



Write

To write a journal entry or reflection on an event or activity:



1. Look back. Describe the activity in detail.
2. Look in.
 - Tell what you liked and disliked about it. Give reasons.
 - Tell what you learned.
 - Tell what you felt about it. Explain why.
 - What questions and concerns do you have about it?
3. Look forward.
 - Tell what you plan to do next. Explain why.
 - What kind of goal could you set?
 - Tell how what you learned from the activity might help you in the future.

Check your writing

In my journal entry...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I describe the activity or new idea in detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I tell what I liked and give reasons why.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I tell what I disliked and give reasons why.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I tell what I learned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I explain how I could use this new information, idea or skill.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Student Tip Sheet #11B: Reflection: Learning Log

What it is

A learning journal or log is a special notebook for recording observations about your own learning. You might record something you have learned, problems you had, or a description of how the learning went — how well a group worked together, for example. Learning logs can be used in all subjects.

What it can look like

- personal journal
- reflection sheet
- writer's notebook/journal
- learning log



What a learning log could look like

Calendar Patterns

A calendar is like a clock except it tells you the days instead of the hours. I wonder why all the months don't have the same number of days? That would certainly make things easier!

Why do they put Sunday at one end and Saturday at the other? I think these days go together — they are the weekend.

It's weird to have five Thursdays in a month and only four Fridays. I noticed that if the first week starts really far over on the calendar (like in the Friday or Saturday spot) the last days of the month are sometimes in smaller boxes that share the same row. I like looking at what the moon is like on each calendar day.

Special words: day, week, month, weekend



Write

To write in a learning log:

1. Write down your first thoughts. When you learn something new, write down what you think about it. This helps you to figure out what you still need to learn about a topic.
2. Write down questions you have about a topic. Don't worry about being able to answer them right away. Later you can consult a reference book, a teacher, a parent or another student to help you find answers.
3. List key words. Make a list of the important words like "factor" and "multiplication," along with their definitions.
4. Write down samples that illustrate the new skill you are learning about.
5. Make a picture or diagram. Pictures can make ideas clearer in your mind.

Check your writing

In my learning log...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I record my first thoughts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I ask at least three thinking questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I identify at least five key words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I write down at least one example of what we are learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I make a drawing or diagram to explain this new idea.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>





Student Tip Sheet #11C: Reflection: Observation Report

What it is

An observation report is a written record of all the sights, sounds, smells and physical feelings of an activity, event, setting or object. In science class, you may be asked to write an observation report on an investigation or project.

What it can look like

- learning log
- observation report
- poem
- reflection sheet
- writer's notebook/journal

What an observation report could look like

Penny Magic

Today we dropped pennies into a full glass of water and watched how the water surface changed. I predicted six pennies would make the water overflow. I was pretty surprised when it took fifteen pennies before the water spilled!

It was exciting because you were never sure which penny would make the water spill. I was surprised so many fit into the glass. I was nervous sliding the pennies in.

The water made a little hill at the top; the water level was higher than the top of the glass. Water can hold together. How come I spill my milk almost every time I pour it? Is it because I pour so quickly? We put the pennies in the glass very slowly.

I'd like to try the penny magic with a thicker liquid like chocolate milk or corn syrup. I bet the syrup could take at least five more pennies than plain water before it spills over. Knowing how all this works could help me be neater in the kitchen.



Write

To write an observation report:

1. Choose a title that describes the focus of your observation report.
2. Outline the procedure:
 - What you did
 - When you did it
 - What you used
 - Why you did it
3. Record observations. Describe what you saw. Give specific physical details such as the colour, size and texture of objects under observation. Write about anything different you heard or smelled.
4. Share your conclusions. Tell what you learned and give examples to support your conclusions. Tell how you will use this new information.



Check your writing

In my observation report...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My title describes what is observed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I describe my procedure and <ul style="list-style-type: none">• what I did• when I did it• what I used• why I did it	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
3. I describe what I saw.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I give specific physical details such as colour, size and texture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I note anything different that I heard or smelled.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I tell what I learned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I explain how I will use this new information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Brain Starters for Science

1. The most important thing about...is that...
2. This is what we did in science today...
3. When I...it helps me...
4. I like this activity because...
5. I can improve...
6. The hardest part of this activity was...
7. Here's a picture of what I had in my head when...
8. Some materials I used...
9. What would happen if...
10. This is what I did with my materials...
11. Another way to solve this problem...
12. I wonder why...
13. I saw...
14. I observed/noticed...
15. I heard...
16. I smelled...
17. I tasted...
18. I felt...
19. Another question I have...
20. I'm learning how...



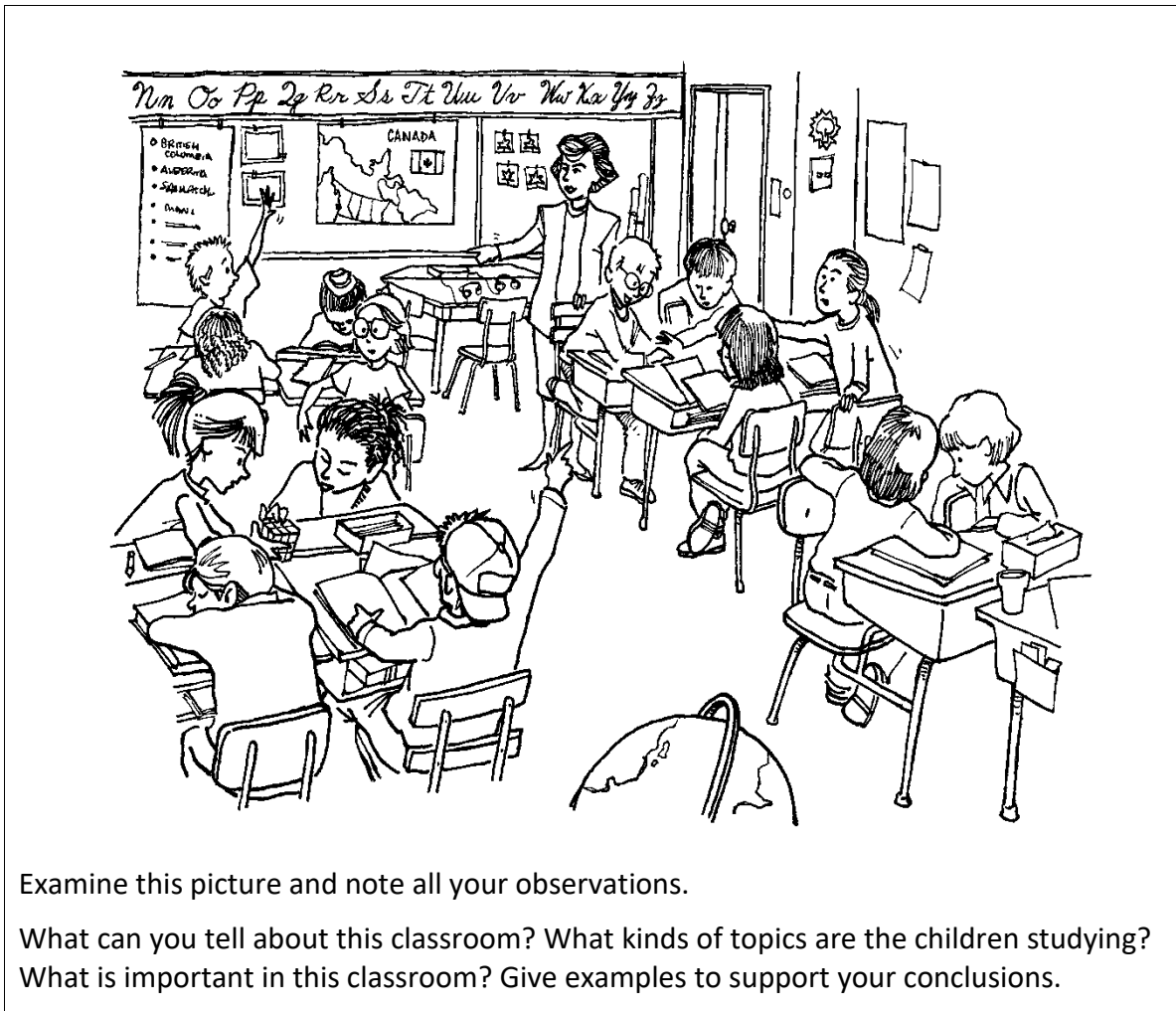
Sample writing prompts



Examine this picture and note all your observations.

What can you tell about the child that lives in this bedroom? Give examples to support your conclusions.





Examine this picture and note all your observations.

What can you tell about this classroom? What kinds of topics are the children studying? What is important in this classroom? Give examples to support your conclusions.



Additional writing prompts

<p>Think back to the best school field trip you have ever been on.</p> <p>Describe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• where your class went• why your teacher chose this trip• what you saw• what you did• what you learned, and• how you've used what you learned.	<p>Your mom is out of town on a business trip and she wants to keep up-to-date on what you are doing in school.</p> <p>Write a one-page fax reflecting on all the things you learned in school yesterday.</p>
<p>Pretend you are a character in one of your favourite stories.</p> <p>Write five journal entries for a week in that character's life.</p>	<p>Examine the pencil in your hand. Write a ten-sentence (or more) report about everything you observe about that pencil.</p> <p>End your report by telling what new thing you learned about pencils today.</p>
<p>You are the first person to land on a newly-discovered planet.</p> <p>Write an observation report for NASA on what you find there.</p>	<p>Write a journal with four entries describing your experiences working on a group report.</p> <p>What did you experience? What did you learn? Was it a good experience? What would you do differently?</p>



Rubric for Reflection: Journal



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea in specific detail <input type="checkbox"/> reflections consistently fit the topic <input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details <input type="checkbox"/> gives interesting, logical reasons to explain preferences	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea with some detail <input type="checkbox"/> most reflections fit the topic <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> gives reasons to explain preferences	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> states preferences	<input type="checkbox"/> briefly outlines topic <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> preference unclear	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of topic or focus <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are confusing or not reflections <input type="checkbox"/> few or no details <input type="checkbox"/> no expression of preference
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic and sparks reader's interest <input type="checkbox"/> sentences in logical order throughout <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties reflections together	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic <input type="checkbox"/> sentences generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to topic	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning names topic <input type="checkbox"/> sentences sometimes in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to topic	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present or not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is confusing or not present <input type="checkbox"/> no apparent order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> maintains first person point of view	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains first	<input type="checkbox"/> used first person	<input type="checkbox"/> did not maintain first person point of view	<input type="checkbox"/> no specific point of view



	<input type="checkbox"/> focus on single significant event or ideas <input type="checkbox"/> explains a variety of possibilities for using this new information or idea	<p>person point of view</p> <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single event or idea <input type="checkbox"/> outlines some possibilities for using this new information or idea	<input type="checkbox"/> identifies single event or idea <input type="checkbox"/> indicates intention to use new information or idea	<input type="checkbox"/> main event or ideas vague <input type="checkbox"/> no indication of how new information or ideas can be used	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear event or focus <input type="checkbox"/> no new information or idea mentioned
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Rubric for Reflection: Learning Log



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea with specific details <input type="checkbox"/> reflections fit the topic consistently <input type="checkbox"/> includes specific details <input type="checkbox"/> gives interesting, logical reasons to explain preferences <input type="checkbox"/> highlights key words and expands on meaning <input type="checkbox"/> drawing or diagram creatively and effectively illustrates new information <input type="checkbox"/> explains a variety of possibilities for using this new information or idea	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea with detail <input type="checkbox"/> most reflections fit the topic <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> gives reasons to explain preferences <input type="checkbox"/> highlights key words and gives definitions <input type="checkbox"/> drawing or diagram effectively illustrates new information <input type="checkbox"/> outlines some possibilities for using this new information or idea	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the activity or new idea <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> states preferences <input type="checkbox"/> identifies key words and gives simple definitions <input type="checkbox"/> drawing or diagram illustrates new information <input type="checkbox"/> indicates intention to use new information or idea	<input type="checkbox"/> briefly outlines the activity or idea <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> preference unclear <input type="checkbox"/> key words are not defined <input type="checkbox"/> drawing or illustration attempted but ineffective <input type="checkbox"/> no indication of how new information or ideas can be used	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of topic or focus <input type="checkbox"/> reflections are confusing or off topic <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> no preference stated <input type="checkbox"/> no key words <input type="checkbox"/> no drawing or illustration <input type="checkbox"/> little or no understanding of ideas



Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic and sparks reader's interest <input type="checkbox"/> sentences in logical order throughout <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties reflections together	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic <input type="checkbox"/> sentences generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to topic	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning names topic <input type="checkbox"/> sentences sometimes in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to topic	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> no particular order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
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Rubric for Reflection: Observation Report

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____



Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> describes procedure in detail <input type="checkbox"/> gives specific physical details such as colour, size and texture <input type="checkbox"/> reflects on new learning and connects it to real life	<input type="checkbox"/> describes procedure <input type="checkbox"/> gives some specific details <input type="checkbox"/> reflects on new learning	<input type="checkbox"/> briefly outlines procedure <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> states new learning	<input type="checkbox"/> procedure steps are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> unclear grasp of new learning	<input type="checkbox"/> procedure is unclear <input type="checkbox"/> lacks detail <input type="checkbox"/> no new learning identified
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning specifically describes what, where and why <input type="checkbox"/> observations are in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> ending specifically explains how this new information will be used	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning describes situation under observation <input type="checkbox"/> observations are in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending describes new information	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning outlines situation under observation <input type="checkbox"/> observations generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending identifies new information	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending does not tell what new information was learned	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> observations difficult to identify <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
Skills and Format	<input type="checkbox"/> consistently maintains first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single significant event	<input type="checkbox"/> generally maintains first person point of view <input type="checkbox"/> focus on single event	<input type="checkbox"/> sometimes uses first person <input type="checkbox"/> identifies single event	<input type="checkbox"/> does not maintain consistent point of view <input type="checkbox"/> mention of event vague	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear point of view <input type="checkbox"/> no clear event

<input type="checkbox"/> makes accurate, insightful observations	<input type="checkbox"/> makes accurate observations	<input type="checkbox"/> makes some observations	<input type="checkbox"/> makes limited observations	<input type="checkbox"/> makes inaccurate or irrelevant observations
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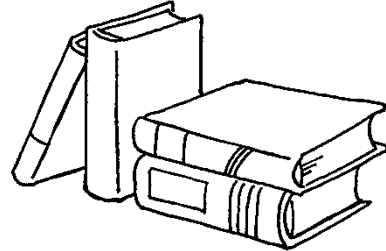


12. Responding to Literature

What it is

There are many ways to respond to literature through writing.

A book review is someone's written or spoken opinion of a book.



A personal response is a written record of a reader's reaction, personal connections, predictions and questions about a certain piece of literary text.

Written retellings of favourite stories help children extend their understanding and appreciation of the text and of story structure. Using a story structure to write the retelling (versus simply drawing parts of the story) increases comprehension and makes it more likely that children will transfer this awareness of story structure and literary language to the writing of their own original stories.

Functions

Book reviews give students opportunities to:

- think and write about books they care about
- write persuasively
- demonstrate comprehension and appreciation of a certain book
- share their ideas
- make decisions about the next books they will read

Reading logs and responses give students opportunities to:

- explore personal feelings and opinions
- demonstrate comprehension and appreciation of literary texts
- relate the literature to parallels in their own lives



Retelling stories helps children:

- learn about story structure
- understand stories better
- grow in their language ability
- demonstrate comprehension and appreciation of a certain book
- use their story knowledge as they write original stories

Forms

- book report
- book review
- book talk
- story summary
- response journal
- retelling of story

Related concepts

story elements, persuasive writing

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

Book reviews

- identify a variety of sentence types and use in own writing (grade 2)
- edit for complete and incomplete sentences (grade 3)
- use capital letters in titles of books and stories (grade 3)
- identify and reduce fragments and run-on sentences (grade 4)
- use commas in addresses and after introductory words in sentences in own writing (grade 4)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use quotation marks to identify information taken from secondary sources in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)



Personal response

- use capital letters for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences in own writing (grade 2)
- combine and rearrange existing information to accommodate new ideas and information (grade 3)
- identify correct noun-pronoun agreement, and use in own writing (grade 4)
- use capitalization to designate clubs, teams and organizations and to indicate the beginning of quotations in own writing (grade 4)
- identify past, present and future verb tenses. and use in sentences (grade 5)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Retelling

- check for obvious spelling errors and missing words (grade 1)
- use commas after greetings and closures in letters and to separate words in a series in own writing (grade 2)
- use apostrophes to form common contractions and show possession in own writing (grade 3)
- identify correct subject-verb agreement, and use in own writing (grade 3)
- use adjectives and adverbs to add interest and detail to own writing (grade 3)
- identify simple and compound sentence structures, and use in own writing (grade 4)
- identify past, present and future verb tenses. and use throughout a piece of writing (grade 6)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

title, author, genre, theme, character, setting, opening, plot, problem, conflict, action, event, obstacle, roadblock, high point, resolution, ending, dialogue, fiction, nonfiction, moral, narrator, point of view



Examples from literature

Students can respond to any piece of literature.

Planning tools

Student tip sheet # 12A: Book review

Student tip sheet # 12B: Personal response

Student tip sheet # 12C: Retelling a story

Multi-use master #4: Story planner

Practice tools

Activity page: Novel response

What students need to do

Book reviews usually answer three questions:

- What is the book about?
- Why do I like this book?
- What main ideas did the author share?

To write an interesting **book review**:

1. At the beginning of the review include the title, author's name, number of pages in the book and whether or not it is illustrated.
2. In the introduction give the reader an idea of what the book is about. Briefly describe the main characters and comment on the theme of the story.
3. In the main body of the review give reasons for the comments made. Draw evidence from the text to support these opinions.
4. Quote one or two favourite passages from the book. Explain how these quotations illustrate the flavour and tone of the book.
5. Compare the book to a similar story or with other books written by the same author.
6. If it was enjoyable, give reasons why others might enjoy it, too.



7. If the book was not enjoyable, say why.
8. Describe any exceptions to your general viewpoint.
9. Conclude the review with a sentence that leaves the reader no doubt about the writer's opinion.

To write a **personal response** to a piece of text:

1. Describe one thing noticed about the story or character.
2. Describe one thing this part of the story makes the reader think about — such as another story, a personal experience or a movie. Be specific and explain why the connection was made.
3. Make a prediction of what will happen in the next chapter or in the rest of the story.
4. Write a question about something the reader might wonder about in the story.
5. Quote a favourite line or phrase and explain why it was a favourite.

To **retell a story** that has been read or listened to:

1. Describe the setting.
2. Introduce the main characters.
3. Was there a problem in the story? If so, how did the characters try to solve it?
4. List the major events of the story.
5. Describe the high point of the story — when it was the most exciting, just before the problem was solved.
6. Describe the ending and how the characters changed by the end of the story.



Sample teaching strategies

1. **A different point of view**

Demonstrate the impact of different viewpoints by retelling a familiar story, such as *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* from different viewpoints — through the eyes of Goldilocks, Baby Bear, Mama Bear or Goldilocks' mother.

2. **Organize it**

Provide graphic organizers for students to record the story elements of stories they have read or listened to. These can become planning tools for writing story summaries in their own words.

- Multi-use master #1: Planning web
- Multi-use master #4: Story planner

3. **Design a response**

Challenge students to design a template for a novel response. Show examples of different formats. Photocopy the templates and students can complete one response at the end of each chapter of their novel study.

4. **Chapter by chapter**

Post a completed reading response as each chapter of the class' novel study is completed. Choose a different student each day. Students can read over the other posted responses to refresh their memories, increase their own understanding and appreciation of the text, and catch up if they miss a day.

5. **Contributions accepted**

Make student book reviews a regular column in class and school newsletters.

6. **Review and publish**

Compile a collection of book reviews and display on a bulletin board in the school library.



Student Tip Sheet #12A: Book Review

What it is

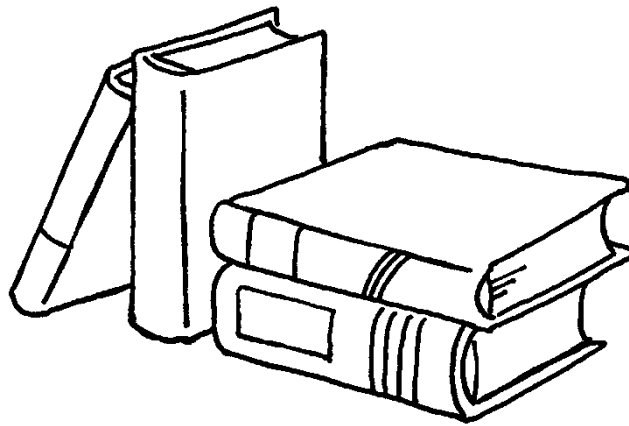
A book review is your written or spoken opinion of a book.

Book reviews usually answer three questions:

- What is the book about?
- What main ideas did the author share?
- Why do I like this book?

What it can look like

- book report
- book talk
- response journal
- book review
- story summary



Sample Book Review

If you like dolphins, you will like *Dolphin Alert!* by Norma Charles. This book has 143 pages. Almost every chapter has a black and white drawing of the kids in the story.

The main character is a young girl named Sam who just moved to a village on the coast of British Columbia. She didn't want to move there because it's so far from the city and all her friends.

At first Sam hates the village and is really bored. But then she makes friends with Marie and they go out in Marie's father's boat. There are lots of dolphins around the village and the two girls get to know some of them from their boat trips. They meet a kid that Sam used to know and his father is a dolphin hunter. The girls have to figure out how to save one of their favourite dolphins from a fisherman's net.

The most exciting part of the book is when the two girls have to decide whether or not they will tell their parents what is happening. The author does a good job of building the suspense. You also learn new things about the ocean. In the book Sam is afraid of deadheads. She knows deadheads are unexpected rocks but she scares herself thinking, "What if some real major deadheads of real dead people were floating around in that inky water?"

I like this book because it was about girls that do exciting things. It reminded me of the Nancy Drew books but these girls were more my age. The book made me want to visit this part of Canada for summer vacation. This book would be a good one to read on a vacation. It has lots of adventure and excitement and teaches you lots about boats and dolphins. I think it is important that more people do things to help save dolphins from fishing nets. What do you think?



Write

To write an interesting book review:

1. At the beginning of the review, include the title, author's name, how many pages are in the book and whether or not it is illustrated.
2. In your introduction, give the reader an idea of what the book is about. Briefly describe the main characters and comment on the theme of the story.
3. In the main body of your review, give reasons for your comments. Use examples from the book to support your opinions.
4. Quote one or two of your favourite passages from the book. Explain how these quotations illustrate the flavour and tone of the book.
5. You could compare the book with a similar story you have read or with other books written by the same author.
6. If you enjoyed the book, give reasons why others might enjoy it, too.
7. If you did not enjoy the book, say why.
8. End your review with a sentence that gives the reader something to think about, or a special way to remember the book.



Check your writing

In my book report...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I begin by giving the title and author of the book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I briefly describe the main characters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I explain the main idea or theme of the book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I use lines from the story to back up my comments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I share some of my favourite passages in the book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I compare this book to a similar book I have read.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I give my reasons for enjoying the book.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I leave the reader with something interesting to think about.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I was first attracted to this book because



Student Tip Sheet #12B: Personal Response

What it is

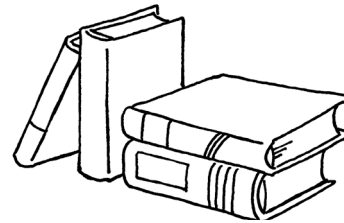
A personal response is a written record of a reader's reaction, personal connections, predictions and questions about a story or book they have read.

What it can look like

- book report
- book talk
- response journal
- poetry
- book review
- story summary
- retelling a story

Planning tools

- Activity page: Novel response



Write

To write a personal response to a story or chapter:

1. Describe one interesting new thing that you noticed about the story or character.
2. Describe one thing this part of the story made you think about — such as another story, a movie or something that has happened in your own life. Be specific and explain why you made the connection.
3. Make a prediction about what will happen in the next chapter or in the rest of the story.
4. Write a question about something you wonder about.
5. Quote your favourite line or phrase and explain why you like it.



Check your writing

In my response...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I make an observation about what is happening in the story or how a character is acting or feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I explain how this story or chapter reminds me of something from my own life or something from another book or movie.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I predict what might happen next.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I ask a question about something that I don't understand or that doesn't make sense to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I quote my favourite line and tell why I like it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The character in this book is like/unlike me in this way...



Student Tip Sheet #12C: Retelling a Story

What it is

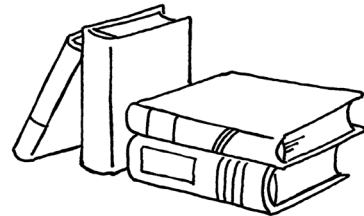
To retell a story, rewrite a story you have read in your own words. This will help you learn more about writing stories.

What it can look like

- book report
- book talk
- response journal
- story summary
- retelling a story

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner



Write

To retell a story that you have read or listened to:

1. Describe the setting.
2. Introduce the main characters.
3. Was there a problem in the story? If so, how did the characters try to solve it?
4. List the major events in the story.
5. Describe the high point of the story—when it was the most exciting.
6. Describe the ending and how the characters changed by the end of the story.



Check your writing

In my retelling...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I describe the setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I describe the main characters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I explain the problem or the main goal of the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I tell the events in 1-2-3 order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I explain how the story ends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

When writing this retelling, I noticed... _____



Novel Response

Title _____

Chapter # _____ pages _____ to _____

My favourite passage is _____

_____ on page _____

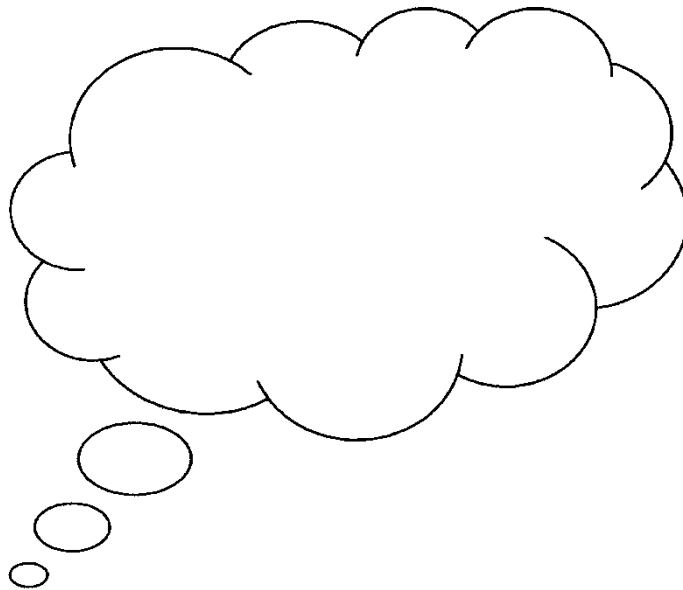
Interesting and evocative words:

a. _____ page _____ d. _____ page _____

b. _____ page _____ e. _____ page _____

c. _____ page _____ f. _____ page _____

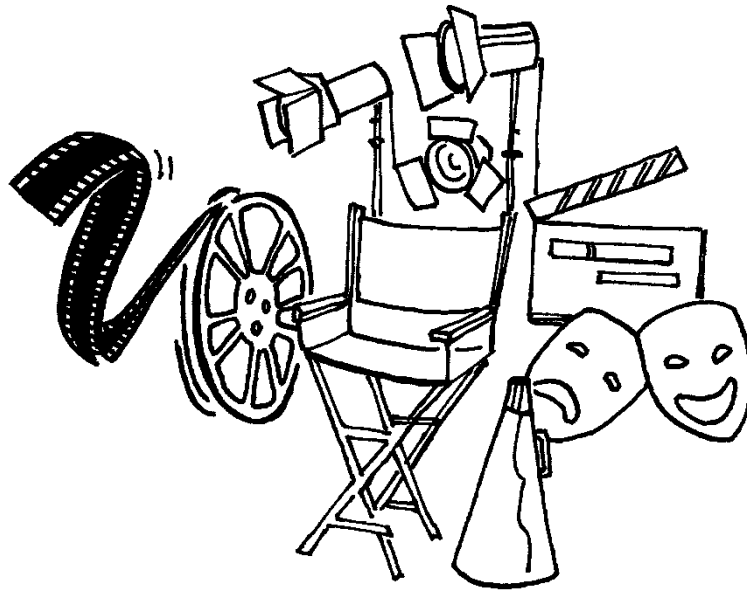
As I read this story, the picture in my mind is:



My prediction for what will happen next is _____



Sample writing prompts



You have an opportunity to be in a movie! And you can be the star. Choose a character you would like to play from a story. Explain why you are choosing this character and this book.

How is the character like you? How is the character different from you?

What scene would be the most difficult to play? What scene would be the most fun? What would be the most important scene in the movie of this book? Explain why.



Write a letter to a friend telling about a “must-read” book. Give at least three reasons why your friend will like the book.

Describe your favourite character. Describe your favourite scene in the book. (But don’t give away the whole story!)

Share any information you know about the author and the author’s other books. Explain to your friend what this book makes you think of. Tell your friend what you learned from reading this book.



Additional writing prompts

<p>What if your favourite book character came to life for a day?</p> <p>Who would you like it to be? How would you spend the day together? Where would you go? What would you talk about.</p> <p>Describe an imaginary day with that character.</p>	<p>You have just read one of your favourite stories. Now, think about an object in the story and tell the story from that object's point of view.</p> <p>Try to make the object talk and sound like a real person. It will have feelings, opinions, and likes and dislikes.</p>
<p>Compare two stories that you know very well.</p> <p>How are the stories alike? How are the stories different? What do you like or dislike about the stories? How would you change the stories if you were writing them?</p>	<p>What if you were given the power to change places with any character in one of your favourite books?</p> <p>Which one would you be and why? How would you act? Would you change your part in the story?</p> <p>Tell how you would change the beginning, middle or the end of the story if you were in it.</p>
<p>What story character have you found most irritating?</p> <p>What was irritating about him/her? Why do you suppose the author made the character this way? How would the story change if you made the character more likeable?</p>	<p>How would a different setting change a story or book?</p> <p>Retell part of a story using a different setting. Be sure to make the setting clear to the reader. Share your retelling and the original story with a classmate.</p>



Rubric for Book Review



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> main idea or theme of the book is clearly and insightfully described <input type="checkbox"/> briefly but effectively describes main characters <input type="checkbox"/> uses text from the book to expand on comments and observations <input type="checkbox"/> makes insightful and meaningful connections between book and own life or personality <input type="checkbox"/> makes insightful and meaningful comparisons with other books <input type="checkbox"/> gives several detailed reasons for enjoying (or not enjoying) the book	<input type="checkbox"/> main idea or theme of the book is clearly described <input type="checkbox"/> briefly describes main characters <input type="checkbox"/> uses text from book to illustrate comments and observations <input type="checkbox"/> makes meaningful connections between book and own life or personality <input type="checkbox"/> makes specific comparisons to other books <input type="checkbox"/> gives several reasons for (or not enjoying) the book	<input type="checkbox"/> main idea or theme of the book is identified <input type="checkbox"/> names main characters <input type="checkbox"/> mentions specific events or ideas from book <input type="checkbox"/> makes general connections between book and own life or personality <input type="checkbox"/> makes general comparisons to other books <input type="checkbox"/> gives general reasons for enjoying (or not enjoying) the book	<input type="checkbox"/> main ideas or theme of the book is not clear <input type="checkbox"/> main characters are not clearly identified <input type="checkbox"/> does not identify events or themes from book as such <input type="checkbox"/> vague reference to a connection <input type="checkbox"/> reference to other books unclear <input type="checkbox"/> gives no explanation for enjoying (or not enjoying) the book	<input type="checkbox"/> no mention or understanding of main idea or theme of book <input type="checkbox"/> no particular main character <input type="checkbox"/> no direct references to text <input type="checkbox"/> no connections made <input type="checkbox"/> no references <input type="checkbox"/> no mention of enjoying (or not enjoying) the book

Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical order and flow smoothly from one to the next <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties ideas together and leaves the reader with something new to think about	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides summary or opinion of book	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning gives basic information <input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present or not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> ideas difficult to understand <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
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Rubric for Personal Response



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> observes something insightful about the story or character <input type="checkbox"/> makes an insightful connection between the story and something from own life <input type="checkbox"/> makes an innovative and insightful prediction of what might happen next <input type="checkbox"/> asks a thoughtful question that shows appreciation of story <input type="checkbox"/> chooses a memorable piece of text and explains choice	<input type="checkbox"/> observes something interesting about the story or character <input type="checkbox"/> makes a connection between the story and something from life <input type="checkbox"/> makes an interesting prediction of what might happen next <input type="checkbox"/> asks an interesting question that shows understanding of story structure <input type="checkbox"/> chooses a piece of text and explains choice	<input type="checkbox"/> makes a general observation about the story or character <input type="checkbox"/> makes a connection between the story and another book or movie <input type="checkbox"/> makes a general prediction of what might happen next <input type="checkbox"/> asks a question about the story or characters <input type="checkbox"/> chooses a favourite piece of text	<input type="checkbox"/> makes a vague observation about the story or character <input type="checkbox"/> makes a vague connection between the story and another book or movie <input type="checkbox"/> prediction of what might happen does not make sense <input type="checkbox"/> asks a “yes–no” question about the story or characters <input type="checkbox"/> piece of story vaguely referred to	<input type="checkbox"/> no observations <input type="checkbox"/> no connections made <input type="checkbox"/> states the obvious as a prediction <input type="checkbox"/> asks no question or a question that is unrelated <input type="checkbox"/> text is not identified
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical order throughout	<input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order	<input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order	<input type="checkbox"/> order is sometimes confusing	<input type="checkbox"/> lacks order

	<input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending effectively ties events together	<input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters of the story usually maintained <input type="checkbox"/> ending provides finish to story	<input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters most of the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> few connections between actions and details <input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no connections between actions <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
--	--	---	--	---	--



Rubric for Retelling



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> uses vivid descriptions to create a picture of the setting <input type="checkbox"/> briefly describes key qualities of main characters <input type="checkbox"/> describes the problem or main goal of the story <input type="checkbox"/> includes significant events of story <input type="checkbox"/> consistently includes relevant story details	<input type="checkbox"/> describes the setting <input type="checkbox"/> briefly describes main characters <input type="checkbox"/> explains the main problem or goal of the story <input type="checkbox"/> includes main events of story <input type="checkbox"/> includes most relevant story details	<input type="checkbox"/> identifies the setting <input type="checkbox"/> names main characters <input type="checkbox"/> identifies the main problem or goal of the story <input type="checkbox"/> includes most events of the story <input type="checkbox"/> includes many relevant events	<input type="checkbox"/> makes a general reference to the setting <input type="checkbox"/> main characters are not clearly identified <input type="checkbox"/> main problem or goal of the story is not clearly identified <input type="checkbox"/> some key events of the story are missing <input type="checkbox"/> includes some irrelevant details	<input type="checkbox"/> no reference to setting <input type="checkbox"/> no mention of main character <input type="checkbox"/> main problem or goal of the story is missing or incorrect <input type="checkbox"/> many significant events are missing or retold incorrectly <input type="checkbox"/> includes irrelevant or inaccurate details
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> events in logical order and flow smoothly from one to the next	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> events in order	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning gives basic information <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> events of the story are difficult to understand



	<input type="checkbox"/> ending ties themes and events of the story together	<input type="checkbox"/> ending provides summary of story provides summary of opinion of book	<input type="checkbox"/> ending related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
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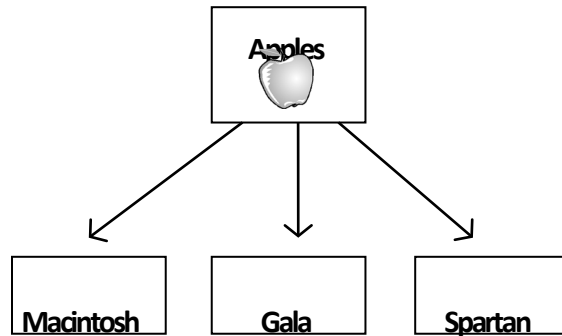


13. Working With Information

What it is

Two ways of working with information are to summarize and to compare.

A summary identifies the main points of a longer story or piece of information. Learning how to express these ideas succinctly in one's own words is a powerful tool for understanding and remembering information.



To make a comparison, a writer explains how two or more things are alike or how they are different.

Functions

Summarizing:

- helps students process information
- helps students develop longer pieces of writing, including book reviews, reports and news stories
- promotes higher-level thinking skills

Comparing and contrasting gives students opportunities to:

- process information
- organize new information

Forms

- story summary
- book summary
- research summary
- Venn diagram
- comparison chart
- mini-report
- comparative paragraph or essay

Related concepts

writing to explain, writing to inform

Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

Summarizing

- identify correct subject-verb agreement, and use in own writing (grade 3)
- use commas in addresses and after introductory words in sentences in own writing (grade 4)
- edit for subject-verb agreement (grade 4)
- identify irregular verbs, and use in own writing (grade 5)
- use complex sentence structures and a variety of sentence types in own writing (grade 6)
- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use quotation marks to identify information taken from secondary sources in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)
- distinguish between formal and informal conventions of oral and written language, and use each appropriately, depending on the context, audience and purpose (grade 7)

Comparing and contrasting

- use connecting words to join related words in a sentence (grade 2)
- combine and rearrange existing information to accommodate new ideas and information (grade 3)
- use capital letters in titles, headings and subheadings in own writing (grade 5)
- use paragraph structures in expository and narrative texts (grade 6)
- revise introductions, conclusions and the order of ideas and information to add coherence and clarify meaning (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)



- use quotation marks to identify information taken from secondary sources in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)
- distinguish between formal and informal conventions of oral and written language, and use each appropriately, depending on the context, audience and purpose (grade 7)

Specific terms

summary, main ideas, supporting details, compare, contrast, italics, boldface

Planning tools

Student tip sheet #13A: Summary

Student tip sheet #13B: Comparison

Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram

Multi-use master #14: Comparison chart

What students need to do

When writing a summary, select only the most important ideas from the text. Combine these ideas into a clear and simple mini-report. Writing a summary demonstrates how well something read is understood. It is a valuable learning tool, one that will be used again and again by students.

How to write a **summary**:

1. Read the complete information to get the general meaning.
2. Then read it again, more closely. Study key words in *italics* or **boldface**.
3. Next, find the main ideas and list them on paper. To find main idea:
 - Check the title. The most important idea is often there.
 - Look at the first and last sentences of every paragraph.
 - Watch for key words in *italics* or **boldface**.



Additional hint — To find the main idea ask:

- What is the biggest or most important idea in this reading material?
 - What do I want to remember about this material in a month from now?
4. Summarizing means putting information in your own words.
 5. Include only the most important information in the rest of the summary. Do not get too detailed.
 6. Arrange ideas in the most logical order.
 7. Review by asking:
 - Have I included all the important ideas?
 - Are the ideas in the best order?
 - Have I put in too many details?
 - Have I stated these ideas clearly and in my own words?
 - Could another person get the main ideas of the selection by reading my summary?

To make a **comparison**:

1. Find three ways that two things or ideas are the same.
2. Find three ways that two things or ideas are different. Be specific.
3. Use linking words such as *different from*, *in contrast*, *alike*, *same as*, *on the other hand*, to tie your paragraph or essay together.



Sample teaching strategies

1. **Answer the big question**

Give the students a list of all the stories and novels you have read in class so far this year. Ask them to write a sentence for each title telling one important thing they remember from the story. Share the responses and discuss what the main idea of each selection was. Challenge the students to pool their responses and summarize each title in three sentences.

2. **Bookmarks**

Have students design bookmarks for novels they have read. Print the title and author on one side and a three to five sentence book summary on the other side.

3. **Research and summarize**

Have students write summaries of their research findings on single file cards. Use these cards to decide on a sequence for the final project.

4. **Venn diagram**

Have students complete Venn diagrams for new concepts in social studies and science. The organizers can become planners for writing paragraphs or longer essays.

- Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram

5. **Compare this**

Have students brainstorm a list of everyday contrasting items that they can compare. For example:

- *dogs and cats*
- *chairs and tables*
- *books and televisions*

Challenge students to write an essay comparing two everyday items in unexpected ways.





What it is

A summary gives the main points of a longer story or piece of information.

When you write a summary, you select only the most important ideas from something you have read. You then combine these ideas into a clear and simple mini-report. Writing a summary demonstrates how well you understand something you have read. It is a valuable learning tool, one that you will use again and again as a student.

What it can look like

- story summary
- research summary
- mini-reports
- poster or display board
- book summary
- web

What a summary could look like

A Matter of Survival (entire text)

It is too cold in Canada's far north to grow crops or raise animals. The Inuit people must rely on hunting for their food. They must be skilled hunters if they want to feed their families. The seal is the main animal hunted in remote villages.

Seals live in the water but they must come up to the surface to breathe air. The hunters find a hole in the ice and then wait for the seal to come up for air. They may have to wait many hours. The hunters must trick the seal into thinking the air hole is safe. Often two hunters will work together and one will walk away from the hole. The seal hears the footsteps moving away and thinks it is safe to come up for air.

Summary: To survive, the Inuit people of Canada's far north must hunt seals. Hunters find holes in the ice and wait for many hours until the seal comes up to breathe air. It often takes two skilled hunters to catch a seal.

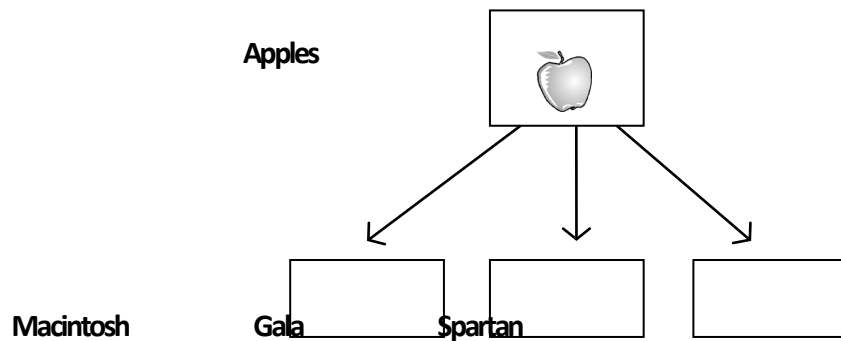


How to write a summary

1. Read the material or information over to get the general meaning.
2. Then read it again, more closely. Study key words in *italics* or **boldface**.
3. Next, find the main ideas and list them on paper. To find the main idea:
 - Check the title. The most important idea is often there.
 - Look at the first and last sentences of every paragraph.
 - Watch for key words in *italics* or **boldface**.

Additional hint — To find the main idea ask yourself:

- What are the biggest or most important ideas in this reading material?
 - What do I want to remember about this material in a month from now?
4. The first sentence should tell the most important ideas. Use your own words, except for key words.
 5. Include only the most important information in the rest of your summary. Leave out unnecessary details.
 6. Arrange your ideas in the most logical order.



Check your writing

In my summary...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I include all important ideas.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The ideas are in the best order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I leave out unnecessary details.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I state these ideas clearly and in my own words.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Another person could get the main ideas of the selection by reading my summary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The strategy that I found most useful is



Student Tip Sheet #13B: Comparison

What it is

To make a comparison, a writer explains how two or more things are alike or how they are different.

What it can look like

- research summary
- comparison chart
- mini-report
- Venn diagram
- comparative paragraph or essay

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #6: Venn diagram
- Multi-use master #14: Comparison chart



To make a comparison

1. Introduce the two things or ideas you are going to compare.
2. Find three ways that two things or ideas are similar to one another.
3. Find three ways that two things or ideas are different from one another. Be specific.
4. Use linking words such as *different from*, *in contrast*, *alike*, *same as*, *on the other hand* to tie your paragraph or essay together.
5. In your ending, summarize how these two things or ideas are alike and different.



Check your writing

In my comparison...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. I introduce the two things or ideas I am comparing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I explain three or more ways that two things are similar.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I explain three or more ways that two things are different.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I give specific details and/or examples for each.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I use linking words to tie my ideas together.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I summarize how these two things or ideas are alike and different.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

In a comparison, it is important to...

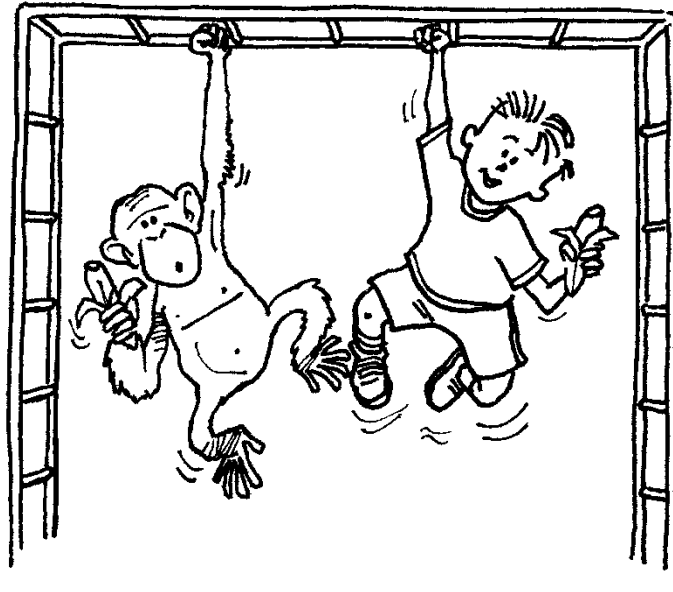


Sample writing prompts



Write a summary of your school year so far. Include at least six key points.





Write a humorous piece comparing and contrasting monkeys and children. Describe at least three things they have in common. Describe at least three ways they are different.



Additional writing prompts

<p>You and your class are going to study animals.</p> <p>You are really interested in one animal. Summarize what you know about that animal.</p> <p>List what you want to learn about the animal and how you are going to find out about it.</p>	<p>Think of two books you really enjoyed this year. Compare the two.</p> <p>What did they have in common? How were they different from one another?</p>
<p>In ten minutes: Write down all you know about being a friend.</p> <p>Now summarize what you know: List the three most important things about being a good friend.</p>	<p>Write at least five paragraphs comparing life today with life one hundred years ago.</p> <p>Use a comparison chart as your planning tool.</p>
<p>Think about your favourite movie.</p> <p>Summarize what you liked best about it. Include at least three main points.</p>	<p>Think about what you are like this year.</p> <p>Compare it to what you were like last year.</p> <p>How are you the same? How are you different?</p>



Rubric for Summary



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> includes most significant and important ideas <input type="checkbox"/> leaves out unnecessary detail <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are stated clearly and concisely <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are rewritten in own words and show strong understanding of new information <input type="checkbox"/> intent is consistently clear	<input type="checkbox"/> includes most important ideas <input type="checkbox"/> leaves out most unnecessary detail <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are stated clearly <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are rewritten in own words and show good understanding of new information <input type="checkbox"/> intent is usually clear	<input type="checkbox"/> includes several important ideas <input type="checkbox"/> includes some unnecessary detail <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are identified <input type="checkbox"/> some attempt to put new information in own words <input type="checkbox"/> intent is generally clear	<input type="checkbox"/> information is vague <input type="checkbox"/> includes repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> ideas are too general <input type="checkbox"/> no attempt to put information in own words <input type="checkbox"/> intent is confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> important information is missing <input type="checkbox"/> leaves out most detail <input type="checkbox"/> no real ideas <input type="checkbox"/> little written <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic succinctly <input type="checkbox"/> information in logical order with smooth transitions <input type="checkbox"/> makes logical connections between facts and ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces topic <input type="checkbox"/> events in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> makes connections between facts and information	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning names main topic <input type="checkbox"/> information generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections generally made	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> little evidence of connections	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> information limited and no order <input type="checkbox"/> no connections



	<input type="checkbox"/> ending ties ideas and information together	<input type="checkbox"/> ending summarizes information	<input type="checkbox"/> ending related to information	<input type="checkbox"/> ending unrelated to information	<input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
--	---	--	--	--	---




Rubric for Comparison



Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____

	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content and Skills	<input type="checkbox"/> clearly identifies four or more ways that two things are similar <input type="checkbox"/> describes four or more ways that two things are different <input type="checkbox"/> gives specific details and/or examples for each <input type="checkbox"/> chooses attributes or ideas to compare and contrast that are specific, relevant and interesting <input type="checkbox"/> comparisons show insightful, analytical and creative thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> clearly identifies three ways that two things are similar <input type="checkbox"/> describes three ways that two things are different <input type="checkbox"/> gives details and/or examples for each <input type="checkbox"/> chooses attributes or ideas to compare and contrast that are specific and relevant <input type="checkbox"/> comparisons show evidence of analytical and creative thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> generally identifies two ways that two things are similar <input type="checkbox"/> describes two ways that two things are different <input type="checkbox"/> gives general details for each <input type="checkbox"/> chooses attributes or ideas to compare and contrast that are relevant <input type="checkbox"/> comparisons show some evidence of analytical thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> similarities may not be relevant <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> provides few details for each <input type="checkbox"/> chooses attributes or ideas to compare and contrast that are irrelevant <input type="checkbox"/> comparisons show lack of analytic thinking	<input type="checkbox"/> one or no similarities identified <input type="checkbox"/> lack of detail <input type="checkbox"/> no details provided <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader <input type="checkbox"/> comparisons not made
Organization and Format	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning uses description to introduce two ideas	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning introduces two ideas or things	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning names two ideas or things that will be compared	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information 	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning

	<p>or things that will be compared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in logical and organized order throughout <input type="checkbox"/> uses linking words effectively to connect ideas <input type="checkbox"/> ending ties ideas and information together 	<p>that will be compared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ideas in order throughout <input type="checkbox"/> uses linking words to connect ideas <input type="checkbox"/> ending summarizes how two things or ideas are alike and different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ideas generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> attempts to use linking words to connect ideas <input type="checkbox"/> ending attempts to summarize information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> connections unclear <input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected or ineffective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> no clear order <input type="checkbox"/> no linking words <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present
--	--	---	---	--	---



14. Mystery Story



What it is

A mystery is a fictional story about a puzzling event that cannot be easily solved. It promises excitement and adventure.

A good mystery story is imaginative, entertaining, mysterious, and fun. It creates an atmosphere of suspense; the air of uncertainty that runs throughout a story and keeps the reader wondering what is going to happen next. As the plot unfolds, the characters track down clues, in spite of all obstacles or dangers, to solve the mystery.

Functions

Reading and writing mysteries:

- invites students to make predictions
- can improve reading skills, as students choose to take more time to comprehend and enjoy this story form
- helps students refine their powers of observation

Forms

- short story
- chapter book

Related concepts

realistic fiction



Teaching grammar and usage in this writing context

- identify adjectives and adverbs that add interest and detail to stories (grade 2)
- revise to ensure an understandable progression of ideas and information (grade 4)
- use capitalization to designate clubs, teams and organizations and to indicate the beginning of quotations in own writing (grade 4)
- revise to add and organize details that support and clarify intended meaning (grade 5)
- use capital letters in titles, headings and subheadings in own writing (grade 5)
- revise to provide focus, expand relevant ideas and eliminate unnecessary information (grade 6)
- use paragraph structures in expository and narrative texts (grade 6)
- use complex sentence structures and a variety of sentence types in own writing (grade 6)
- use periods and commas with quotation marks that indicate direct speech in own writing (grade 7)
- use commas to separate phrases and clauses in own writing (grade 7)
- use a variety of subordinate clauses, correctly and appropriately, in own writing (grade 7)
- use correct subject–verb agreement in sentences with compound subjects (grade 7)

Specific terms

mystery, suspense, tension, problem, puzzle, clues, characters, setting, mood, believable, narrative fiction, whodunit, riddle, red herring

Examples from literature

- *Maggie and the Pirate* by Ezra Jack Keats (grades K–2)
- *Piggins* by Jane Yolen (grades K–3)
- *Cam Jansen* series by David Adler (grades 1–3)
- *Nate the Great* series by Marjorie Sharmat (grades 1–3)
- *The ABC Mystery* by Doug Cushman (grades 1–3)
- *Encyclopedia Brown* series by Donald Sobol (grades 2–5)
- *Bunnica: A Rabbit Tale Mystery* by D. Howe (grades 3–6)
- *The 11th Hour* by Graeme Base (grades 3–6)



- *Windcatcher* by Avi (grades 4–7)
- *Liars* by P.J. Petersen (grades 5–6)
- *Curse of the Blue Figurine* and others by John Belairs (grades 5–7)
- *Double Spell* by Janet Lunn (grades 5–7)
- *The Ghost Dance Caper* by Monica Hughes (grades 5–7)
- *Mystery in the Frozen Lands* by Martyn Godfrey (grades 5–8)

Planning tools

- Student tip sheet #14: Mystery story
- Multi-use master #6: Story planner
- Mystery planner

What students need to do

To write a good a mystery story:

Encourage students to use their imaginations to create suspense and excitement. A mystery is not a horror story — it’s a puzzle that challenges people to **think**. Set clear guidelines about no violence and gore.

1. Establish a problem or puzzle. A good mystery has an intriguing problem or puzzle to be solved.
2. Introduce the main character and tell about the problem early in the story.
3. Choose an interesting setting.
4. Make the main character seem real to the reader. The mystery should be solved through this one character.
5. Introduce minor characters. Limit the cast of characters to not more than five people.



6. Build the plot step-by-step. The climax comes near the end of the story when the mystery is about to be solved. The plot must be logical and be supported by carefully-chosen details. The characters may overcome several obstacles to solve the mystery.
7. Give the readers clues. The clues must help the reader discover the mystery's solution.
8. Write a satisfying ending.

Sample teaching strategies

1. **Write an ending**

Read the first part of a mystery story to the class and have the students write their own endings.

2. **Real help**

There are many books — such as the *Encyclopedia Brown* series and the *Nancy Drew* series — that portray children helping police and detectives to solve crimes. Discuss positive, realistic ways in which children can assist in police and detective work today.

3. **Idea bank**

Brainstorm exciting titles for mystery stories and use them in writer's workshop. Focus the mysteries on a certain theme or setting. For example stories about school mysteries could include:

- *The Disappearing Lunch Bags*
- *The Case of the Missing Math Book*
- *The Music Room Mystery*
- *The Noise in the Gym*
- *The Mysterious Ms. Magpie*

4. **Map it out**

Have students draw detailed maps or floor plans showing the setting of a mystery story. They can use the maps as planning tools and also as illustrations for their completed stories.





Student Tip Sheet #14: Mystery Story

What it is

A mystery story is a puzzle that cannot be easily solved. Characters track down clues and solve the puzzle.

What it can look like

- short story
- chapter book

Planning tools

- Multi-use master #4: Story planner
- Mystery planner

Write

To write a good mystery story:

1. Establish a problem or puzzle. A good mystery has an intriguing problem or puzzle to be solved.
2. Introduce the main character and tell about the problem early in the story.
3. Choose an interesting setting.
4. Make your main character seem real to your reader. The mystery should be solved through this one character.



5. Introduce minor characters. Limit your cast of characters to not more than five people.
6. Build your plot step-by-step. The climax comes near the end of the story when the mystery is about to be solved. The plot must be logical and be supported by carefully-chosen details. The characters may overcome several obstacles to solve the mystery.
7. Give the readers clues. The clues must help the reader to discover the mystery's solution.
8. Write a satisfying ending.

Remember: Use your imagination to create suspense and excitement. A mystery is not a horror story — it's a puzzle that challenges people to think. Respect your teacher's guidelines about no violence or gore.



Mystery Planner

Setting



Main characters	Minor characters
-----------------	------------------



Problem or mystery to be solved

Action to solve the mystery

Clue #1	What happens or what character finds out
----------------	--



Clue #2	What happens or what character finds out
----------------	--



Clue #3	What happens or what character finds out
----------------	--



How mystery is solved



Check your writing

In my mystery story...	Excellent	Okay	Needs work
1. My setting is interesting..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I introduce the main character and tell about the problem or mystery early in the story.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. My mystery is believable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I create suspense and readers want to know what will happen next.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. The clues help the reader to discover the mystery's solution.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My ending is satisfying and the solution makes sense.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Suspenseful words I could use...



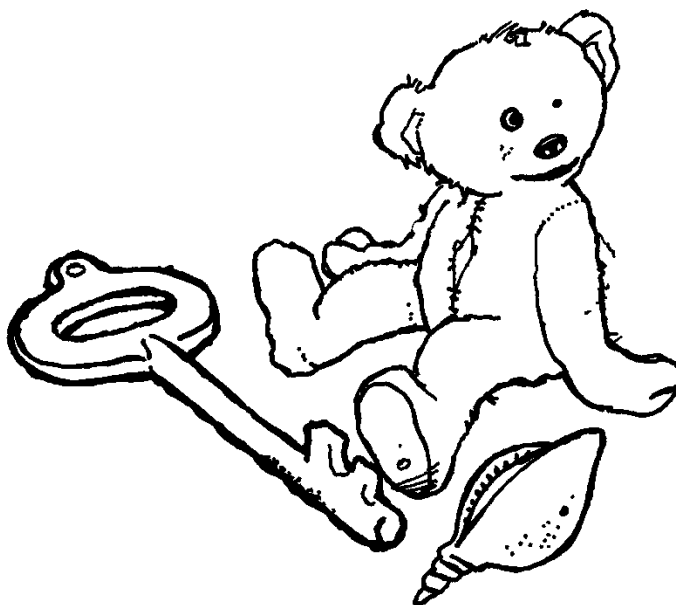


This was the address all right. But what a strange-looking house! I slowly walked up the creaky steps and...



Write a mystery story
with these three
objects:

- a rusty key
- a sea shell
- an old teddy bear





Additional writing prompts

<p>It's your turn to feed the class gerbil.</p> <p>As you pour fresh pellets into his food dish you gently move around the wood shavings looking for your little rodent friend.</p> <p>He is nowhere to be found...</p>	<p>That sister of yours has been on the phone for almost an hour! You pick up the extension in your parent's room and get ready to demand that she hang up — you were supposed to call Robin an hour ago.</p> <p>As you pick up the receiver you hear the voice of a stranger.</p> <p>Just as you are about to let your sister know that you're on the line you hear her say the strangest thing...</p>
<p>Imagine that Goldilocks did not fall asleep in the three bears' house. She left before they got home.</p> <p>How would the three bears go about solving the mystery of who tasted their porridge, sat in their chairs and tried out their beds?</p>	<p>Write a mystery story beginning with the line:</p> <p><i>"I opened my lunch bag and you'd never guess what I found inside..."</i></p>
<p>You wake up one morning and discover that you appear to have a different set of parents.</p> <p>What could be happening? What will you do to solve this mystery?</p>	<p>Write a story that begins with this line:</p> <p><i>"I didn't know then that finding my missing homework would be so much trouble."</i></p>



Rubric for Mystery Writing

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing assignment: _____



	4—Standard of excellence	3—Exceeds acceptable standard	2—Meets acceptable standard	1—Needs improvement to meet acceptable standard	0—Not acceptable
Content	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear throughout story <input type="checkbox"/> events consistently fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> specific details throughout <input type="checkbox"/> creative and original mystery captivates reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is clear throughout most of story <input type="checkbox"/> events usually fit the story <input type="checkbox"/> most details are specific <input type="checkbox"/> engages reader	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is present <input type="checkbox"/> events are general <input type="checkbox"/> details are general <input type="checkbox"/> holds reader's attention	<input type="checkbox"/> setting and mood is not clear <input type="checkbox"/> events are vague <input type="checkbox"/> repetitive or vague details <input type="checkbox"/> confusing to reader	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of setting or mood <input type="checkbox"/> confusing or only one event <input type="checkbox"/> few details <input type="checkbox"/> frustrating to reader
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning grabs reader's attention <input type="checkbox"/> paragraphs and events in logical order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout the story <input type="checkbox"/> unexpected but satisfying ending ties events together	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning is interesting <input type="checkbox"/> events in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters throughout most of the story <input type="checkbox"/> satisfying ending provides finish to story	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning sets basic scene <input type="checkbox"/> events generally in order <input type="checkbox"/> connections between events, actions and characters through some sections of the story <input type="checkbox"/> ending contrived but related to events	<input type="checkbox"/> beginning contains little information <input type="checkbox"/> confusing order <input type="checkbox"/> few connections between actions and details <input type="checkbox"/> ending not connected	<input type="checkbox"/> no clear beginning <input type="checkbox"/> events difficult to identify or no order <input type="checkbox"/> no connections between actions <input type="checkbox"/> ending not present

Skills and Formats	<input type="checkbox"/> intriguing problem or mystery clearly established at the beginning of the story <input type="checkbox"/> effective clues build suspense throughout story <input type="checkbox"/> mystery is believable	<input type="checkbox"/> problem or mystery clearly established at the beginning of the story <input type="checkbox"/> clues build suspense throughout the story <input type="checkbox"/> mystery is generally believable	<input type="checkbox"/> problem or mystery established at the beginning of the story <input type="checkbox"/> clues build some suspense in story <input type="checkbox"/> mystery is somewhat believable	<input type="checkbox"/> unclear what the problem or mystery is <input type="checkbox"/> few clues <input type="checkbox"/> mystery is not believable	<input type="checkbox"/> no evidence of problems or mystery <input type="checkbox"/> no clues <input type="checkbox"/> no mystery
---------------------------	--	---	---	---	---



References for Parents

Dear Parents:

Learning to write is an on-going process that will take your child many years. At the beginning stages, it is important to offer young writers as much encouragement and support as possible.

Most writing will not be word perfect the first time around. Give your child room to take risks and make mistakes. Be as supportive as you can be.

Consider how professional writers work — they rely on other people to discuss ideas, to provide consultation during their research and to edit their final work. As a parent, you can do some of these things for your child.

Talking about ideas can be very helpful to the young writer. We need to help children get their imaginations kick-started. Guide them in the research process as they gather information to use in their writing. Help them develop plans that will assist them in their writing. Be an interested listener and reader. Offer constructive feedback and be actively involved in the editing and proofreading stages of the writing they do at home.

Most importantly, we should let children know that we support their efforts. Learning to write is hard work and is a long process. Children need different things at different stages in their writing development. Be sensitive to their changing needs and use a variety of resources to help you in your all-important role as your child's expert editor, writing coach and cheerleader.

Please make use of the student tip sheets and other information sheets that your child's teacher provides. As parents, you can make a real difference in your child's learning.



The Writing Process

Writing is more than a product; it is a process of thinking and doing. The *process approach* to writing looks at what students need to think about and do as they write.

Stage 1: Planning — thinking about it

- choose a topic
- consider who will read it and why
- discuss ideas with others
- read and observe to get more information about the topic
- brainstorm a list of words and ideas
- think about what will be said
- plan how it will be said

Stage 2: Drafting — writing it down

- organize ideas with
 - a list of key words
 - an outline
 - a web
- write a first draft
 - skip lines (to leave room to make revisions)
 - write on one side of the paper only
 - underline doubtful spellings along the way

Stage 3: Revising — making it better

- read what has been written (aloud and silently)
- have others read and offer suggestions
- rearrange words or ideas
 - use crossouts and other proofreading symbols to indicate changes
 - use scissors and tape to cut apart and rearrange text
 - replace overused or unclear words
 - take out repetitious or unnecessary information
 - add details



Stage 4: Proofreading — making it correct

- make sure all sentences are complete
- check
 - punctuation
 - capitalization
 - spelling
- look for words used incorrectly
- look for missing words or repeated words
- mark corrections with proofreading symbols
- have someone else check your work
- recopy it correctly and neatly

Stage 5: Publishing — sharing it

- read it aloud to another person or a group
- make a cover and bind it as a book
- display it for others to see
- illustrate it

Effective writing instruction uses a holistic approach to teaching the writing process versus a lock-step approach. Young writers need experience with the whole process and then they can begin to refine specific skills and strategies within the process.



COPS – Police Your Writing

Another useful strategy for proofreading is COPS. This acronym reminds students of four things to consider in their writing. Students can jot the letters COPS at the top of their pages and check off each letter as they work through the proofreading list.

- Capitalization** → Capitalize the first word in each sentence. Capitalize proper names of people, places and things.
- Overall** → How does it look overall? Is your writing neat? Is spacing correct?
- Punctuation** → Do you have periods, question marks or exclamation points for each sentence?
- Spelling** → Does your spelling look correct?

Identifying spelling errors is one thing, but how can students who can't spell a specific word, find that word in the dictionary? Here's a *Smart Learning*¹ tip for just such a dilemma:




To look up the spelling of a word you don't know how to spell, use your dictionary to check the entry of a word you **do** know how to spell. For instance, if you want to check the spelling of the word *intelligent* you might look up the easier word *smart*. You would likely find the spelling for *intelligent* within the *smart* entry. Unsure of how to spell *enormous*? Check the entry for *big*.

¹ *Smart Learning, strategies for parents, teachers and kids*, Catherine Walker and Dana Antaya-Moore



Proofreading Symbols

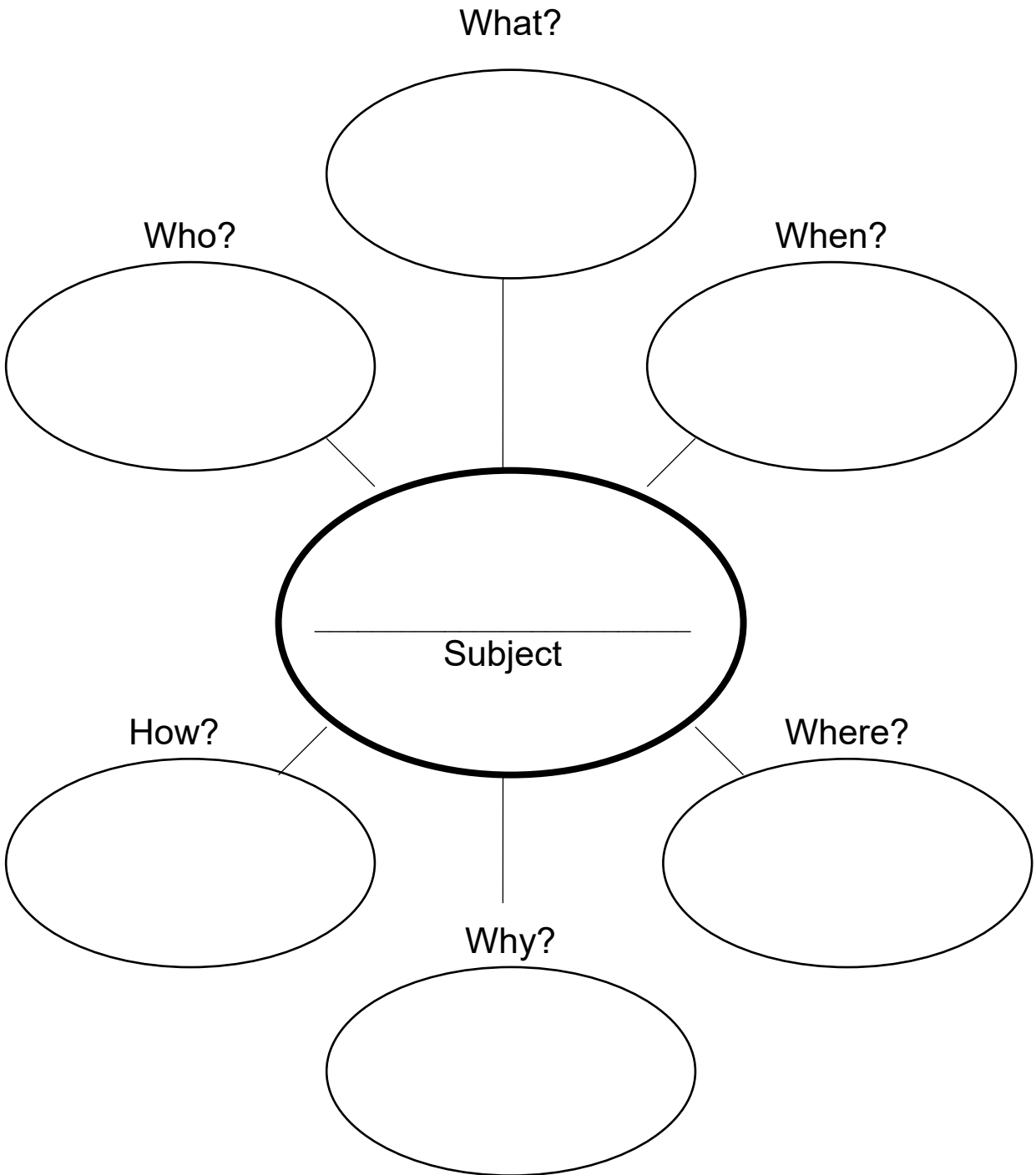
Writers and editors use proofreading symbols to mark changes in a piece of writing. These symbols are standard and are useful tools for a young writer.

Symbol	What it means	Example
/	change to lower case	My D og is big.
≡	needs capital letter	My dog's name is blue. ≡
	change letter or word order	A nick e  for your thoughts...
++	take out word	And I love my dog.
^	add letter or word	My dog's name Blue. ^{is} ^
○	close space	My dog loves jelly  beans.
□	needs punctuation	My dog is feeling blue □
¶	start new paragraph	All the jellybeans were gone. ¶ The next day...

Multi-Use Master s

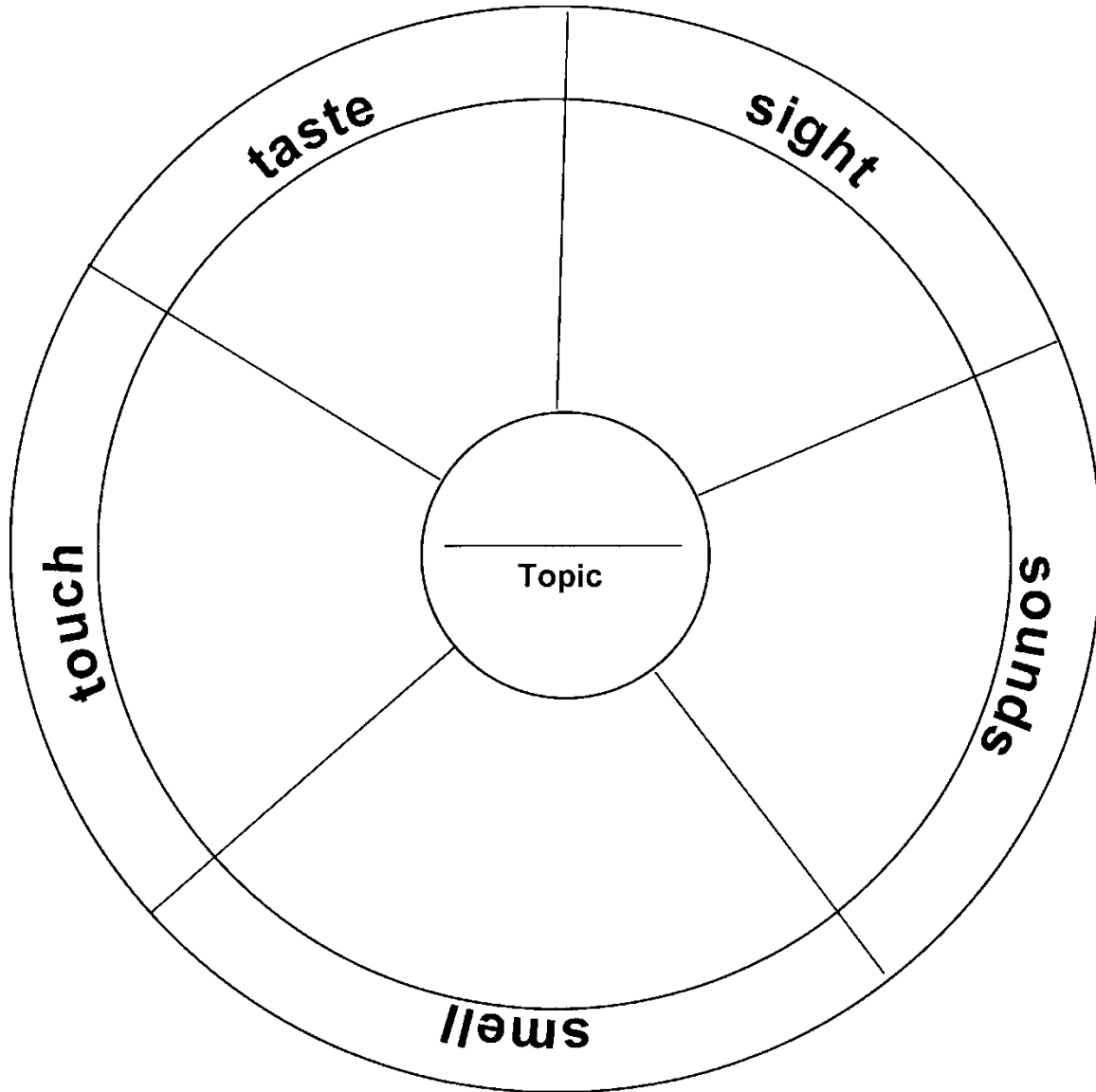
Multi-Use #1: Planning Web

Name: _____ Date: _____



Multi-Use Master #2: Sensory Wheel

Name: _____ Date: _____



Multi-Use Master #3: Looks Like, Sounds Like

Name: _____ Date: _____

Title/Topic: _____

Looks like	Sounds like



Multi-Use Master #4: Story Planner

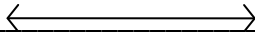
Name: _____ Date: _____

Title

Setting	Characters
---------	------------

The problem or challenge facing the main characters:
--



Events
1. _____
2. _____
3.  _____
4. _____
5. _____



Ending (How did the main character(s) solve the problem or meet their goal?)
--



Multi-Use Master #5: Story Grid

Name: _____ Date: _____

Name of story:

Character	Setting	Problem to be Solved

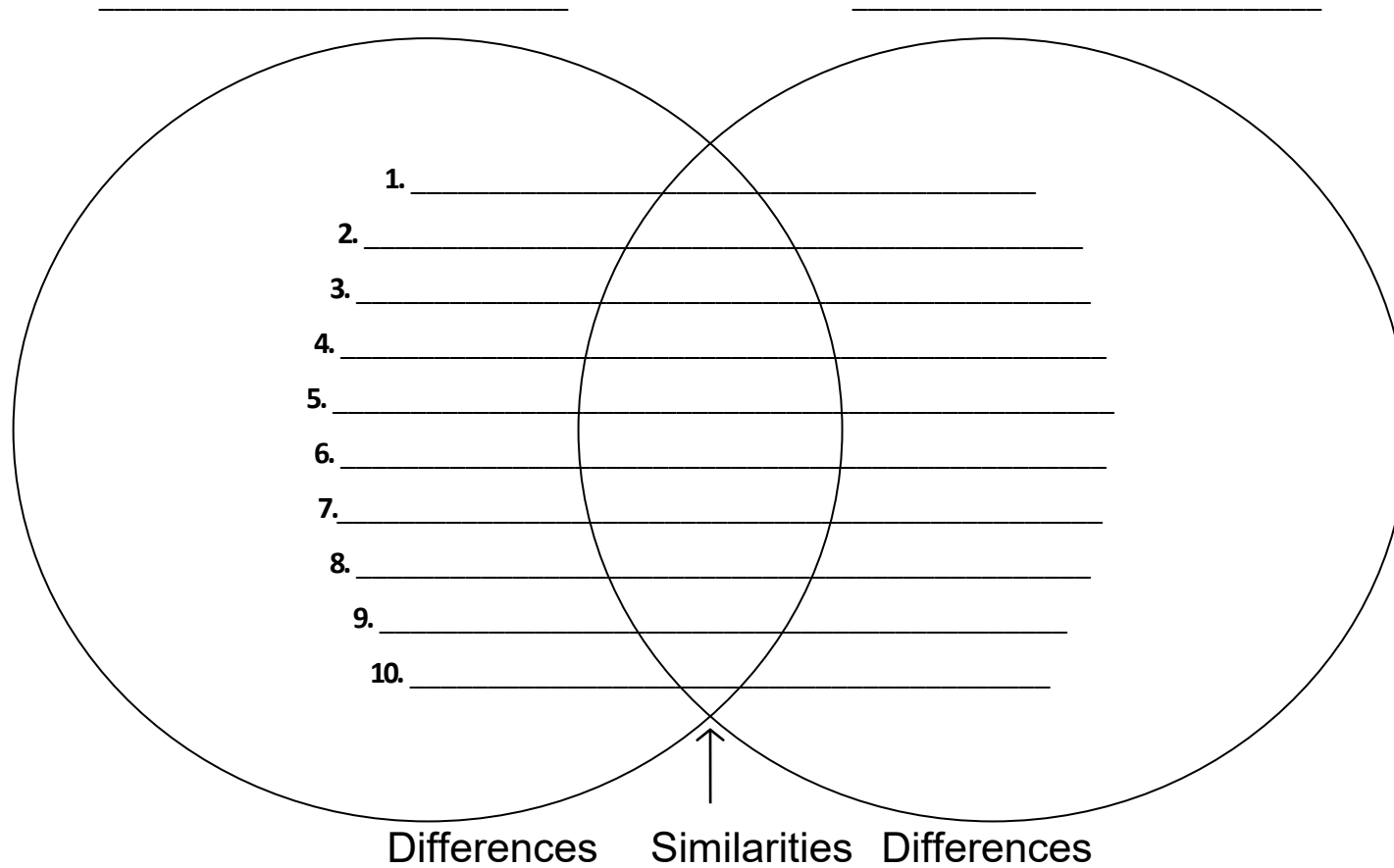
Additional comments: _____



Multi-Use Master #6: Venn Diagram

Name: _____

Date: _____



Multi-Use Master #7: How-To Chart

Name: _____

Date: _____

Title: _____



Multi-Use Master #8: Cyclic Flow Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

1.

4.

2.

3.

Multi-Use Master #9: Solve It

Name: _____ Date: _____

What is my problem?



What are my choices?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



What choice would best solve the problem?



Action plan:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



How will I know if I've solved the problem successfully?

Multi-Use Master #10: Top Ten List

Name: _____ Date: _____

Top Ten List of:

--

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

Multi-Use Master #11: Persuasive Writing Paragraph Planner

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

State your position or opinion:

Reason 1

Reason 2

Reason 3

Explain your conclusion using a personal statement, a prediction or a summary.

Multi-Use Master #12: Persuasive Writing Multi-Paragraph Planner

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

State your position or opinion:



Reason 1



Reason 2



Reason 3

↓
Details

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

↓
Details

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

↓
Details

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

↓ ↓ ↓
Explain your conclusion using a personal statement, a prediction or a summary.

Multi-Use Master #13: Prove Your Point

Name: _____ Date: _____

State your position or opinion:



Reason 1

[Empty box for Reason 1]



Reason 2

[Empty box for Reason 2]



Reason 3

[Empty box for Reason 3]

[Empty box for Counter arguments]

Counter arguments



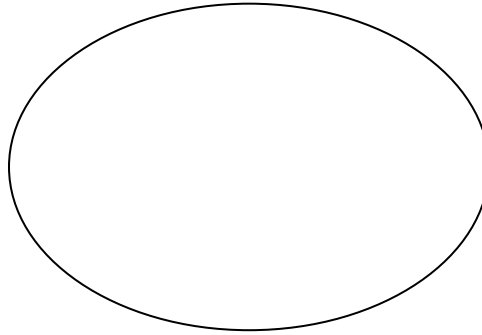
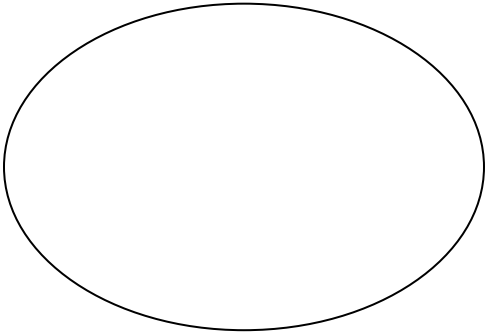
Some people might say...
But I say...

Others might say...
However...

Explain your conclusion using a personal statement, a prediction or a summary.

Multi-Use Master #14: Comparison Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____



Similarities

Differences

_____	↔	_____
_____	↔	_____
_____	↔	_____
_____	↔	_____
_____	↔	_____

Multi-Use Master #15: K-W-L Chart

Name: _____ Date: _____

What I Think I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Multi-Use Master #16: Peer Editing

Student Editor at Work

This work is edited for:

- spelling
- complete sentences
- capitals, periods
- content
- word choice



Signed: _____

Student Editor

Student editor has checked for:

- capitals, periods
- spelling — underlined words to check
- _____

Student: _____

Date: _____

Work in Progress

- checked for content

Proofread:

- for capitals, periods
- for spelling
- for word choice
- read by another student,
name _____
- read to teacher (initial) _____
- _____

Please Check

Please check for...

Please:

- re-read
- read to a partner
- read with me



Signed: _____

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