Writing Strategies

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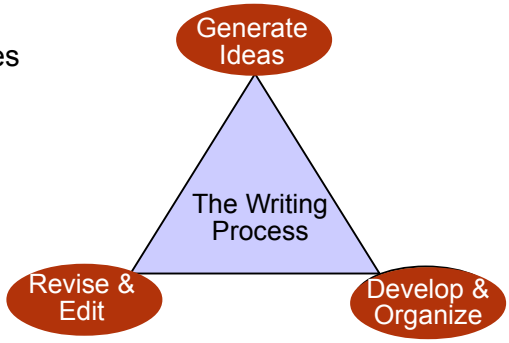
Introduction to Writing Strategies

Students learn to write by writing. They need regular opportunities at school to write in all subjects. A consistent approach to the writing process in all subject areas and explicit instruction on the writing process by the subject teacher help students become better writers. Models of good writing in the subject area, and feedback that is constructive and formative, are critical to students' growth as writers.



Struggling writers need:

- regular, meaningful opportunities to practise writing in subject-specific contexts.
- teachers who model the writing process and demonstrate its usefulness.
- opportunities to talk about their writing.
- prior knowledge about language, subject content, and the world.
- knowledge of different writing forms and their characteristics.
- expanded sight vocabularies for subject-specific writing.
- strategies to become independent writers in any context.

Promoting Consistency

Students are sometimes confused by differences in writing requirements from subject to subject within the same school. Although different subjects require different types of writing assignments, all writing can follow the same process. By adopting a consistent writing process across all subject areas, teachers ease some of the stress associated with writing, and help students build confidence and skill as writers.

The Writing Process

The writing process involves generating ideas, developing and organizing the ideas, and revising and editing them. Effective writers cycle through these stages until they are satisfied that the writing achieves its purpose.

Generating Ideas

In all subject areas, students need to develop skills for getting what they know about a topic down on paper, and generating ideas or finding additional facts. They also need skills to check whether their writing is on-topic and fulfills its purpose. Further, they need to be able to explain the writing assignment and the process they are following to effectively complete the assignment.

Developing and Organizing Ideas

Students need to know how to organize what they have learned about any topic or assignment into a well-structured whole. In longer writing assignments, they need to know how to create a strong, focused introduction that catches the reader's interest; how to link ideas in logically connected paragraphs that contain enough supporting detail; and how to conclude with a strong ending.

Revising and Editing

Students need individual and group skills to assess their own work and the work of others for content, clarity, form and style, and for errors in grammar, punctuation and spelling. Ultimately, students have individual responsibility for the accuracy of their work, but they need to know how to help each other improve.

Generating Ideas: Rapid Writing

When students engage in *rapid writing* at the beginning of a writing assignment, they access their prior knowledge, engage with content, review and reflect, and begin to set direction for writing letters, essays, and other subject-based assignments.

Purpose

- Help students to start writing and ultimately to produce more writing.
- Encourage fluency in generating ideas for writing on any topic, in any subject area.
- Help students begin organizing ideas.

Payoff

Students will:

- rapidly generate fresh ideas about topics in any subject area.
- write down ideas without self-editing.
- generate raw material for more polished work.
- complete writing activities on time, overcome writer's block, and improve test-taking skills.

Tips and Resources

- This strategy may be used in a number of ways, including: prewriting; brainstorming for a specific question; or writing for reflection, learning logs, mathematics journals, work journals, etc.
- This strategy may also be used as a pre-reading strategy, similar to a KWL.
- Use this strategy to review what students remember about classroom work.
- Use rapid writing regularly in the classroom, and have students select the day's topic. Possible topics might include analyzing a science hypothesis, discussing proof for a mathematics word problem, or developing an opinion on a history or geography topic.
- Students can apply this strategy when writing tests or examinations, by "scribbling down" information they are afraid of forgetting just before they begin responding to the questions.
- Use the rapid writing drafts to give students practice in proofreading and reviewing their writing for flow of ideas. When students use this strategy at the computer with the monitor turned off, they will be amused by how many errors in proofreading they have made. Be prepared for some laughter in the classroom when using this approach.
- See Student/Teacher Resource, *Tips for Rapid Writing*.

Further Support

- Write the topic on the board, and do not repeat it orally if a student comes in late. Instead, point at the board. This also reinforces the topic for visual learners and for students who have poor aural memory.
- Encourage students to use the rapid writing strategy to overcome anxiety for tests or assignments.
- Use timed writing for parts of a task - e.g., as many words as possible in three minutes, then as many more as possible in the next three min, etc.
- Vary criteria: some students may need to work in point form, or stop and break after three minutes.
- Save completed rapid writing samples to use later to teach writing conventions or organization of ideas.
- Vary the amount of time you give to students.
- Post the topic-related vocabulary in the classroom as an aid for struggling students.

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Generating Ideas: Rapid Writing

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Plan a topic for rapid writing or invite the students to suggest topics. • Explain that the purpose of rapid writing is to allow students to record what they know about the topic, subject, or activity, without worrying about repetition, spelling, grammar, or any other errors. • Give directions for rapid writing. See Student/Teacher Resource, *Tips for Rapid Writing*.	• (Optional) Suggest topics for rapid writing that are related to the subject of study.
During • Give directions. See Student/Teacher Resource, *Tips for Rapid Writing*. • Give the signal to begin. • Time the students. • Give the signal for students to stop writing. (You may want to give them a one-minute warning.)	• At the starting signal, write or type as quickly as possible without stopping or making any corrections.
After • Debrief. • Ask students to count the number of words they have written. • Ask who has at least ___ words, until only one or two hands remain up. • Discuss the topic, based on what the students have written. Encourage students who don't usually participate. • Focus the students' attention on how their rapid writing can be the starting point for more polished pieces. • **Alternatively,** as a follow-up direct students to begin classifying and organizing their ideas. • **Alternatively,** organize students into small groups to share their rapid writing and to compose a short collaborative paragraph on the topic.	• Count and record the number of words. • Discuss the topic by reading aloud parts of what they have written. • In pairs, explain the thinking behind the categories used. • One student from each group reads the paragraph to the class.

Notes

Tips for Rapid Writing

- **Write as fast as you can.**
- **No corrections or erasing allowed.**
- **Write until your teacher says "STOP" – do not stop before!**
- **Don't lift your pen/pencil from the paper or remove your hands from the computer.**
- **If you get stuck, jumpstart your brain by writing the topic title and extending it to a sentence.**
- **When your teacher says "STOP," count and record the number of words you have written.**
- **Be prepared to discuss your topic: use the writing you have done to start you off.**

Generating Ideas: Setting the Context (What Do My Readers Want to Know?)

Good writers anticipate the information and ideas that readers may want or need to know about the subject. Imagining and considering the possible questions that the intended audience may have about the topic help to generate possible content for the writing, suggest a writing form, and provide a direction for research.

Purpose

- Generate possible topics and subtopics for a writing task.
- Identify important ideas and information to include in the writing.
- Identify the audience and purpose for the writing.

Payoff

Students will:

- clarify the writing task (purpose, audience, form).
- consider the audience and the purpose for the writing.
- generate questions and use them to focus the writing.

Tips and Resources

- *Purpose* refers to the reason for the writing and the results that writers expect from the writing. Some writing is intended to communicate information to the reader. These purposes include *to inform*, *to explain*, *to review*, *to outline*, and *to describe*. Other purposes convince the reader of a particular viewpoint. These include *to request*, *to persuade*, *to assess*, *to recommend*, *to propose*, *to forecast,* and *to entertain*. The purpose for the writing will affect the selection of content, language, and form.
- ***Audience*** refers to the intended readers of the writing. Defining the audience is important because it will affect the content (what is said), and the form and features (how it is said). The intended audience may vary in age, background knowledge, experience and interest.

Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies for Improving Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills, pp. 64-79.
Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies for Improving Middle Level Students' Reading and Writing Skills, Grades 6-8, pp. 72-91.
Info Tasks for Successful Learning, pp. 35-36, 90-91.

Further Support

- When students are working in pairs, have each partner generate questions for the other's topic.
- To generate ideas, ask questions about the topic from the point of view of the intended audience. Provide support for asking rich questions.
- Review the 5W + H questions (who, what, when, where, why, how).

Generating Ideas: Setting the Context (What Do My Readers Want to Know?)

What teachers do	What students do
Before	
• Write a topic on chart paper or the chalkboard and describe the audience and purpose for this piece of writing (e.g., to inform community members about environmental concerns related to a new manufacturing plant in the area; to explain to Grade 8 students how geometry is used in different occupations; or to promote a company's new computer network system).	• Recall what they already know about the topic.
• Model for students the process of imagining the readers and the possible questions they would ask about the topic, and record these questions under the topic heading. For example, on the topic of the music industry for a teenage audience, the reader may want to know: - What is the most popular type of music? - How many CDs do top artists sell? - How much money do they get for each CD? - What types of jobs are in the music industry? - How much do they pay?	• Imagine the questions they would ask as readers of a piece of writing on this topic. • Make connections to other students' questions, noting similarities and differences.
• Ask students to contribute questions that they think the audience would need/want answered. If needed, use prompts such as: - Who are my readers? - What background information about the topic do they need? - What do my readers need to know first? - What other things will my readers need to know?	• Imagine that they are the readers and generate possible questions.
During	
• Ask students to review their selected topics for a subject-related writing task, to identify purpose and audience. • Have students (in pairs, small groups, or individually) create possible questions that the readers may have about the topic. • Have students share and compare the questions for similar topics. Students may wish to add to or refine their list of questions.	• Recall what they already know about their topic and imagine what their reader may want to know. • Contribute to the discussion. • Work in pairs or groups, using chart paper to record questions. • Post chart pages or report on questions that the pairs or groups generated.
After	
• Model for students how to organize the questions into a possible outline for their writing, and use the questions to focus their first draft writing or research. • Ask students to use their questions to create a writing outline. • Ask students to use their writing outline questions to begin writing about their topic.	• Listen to the teacher's thinking process for organizing the questions. • Working individually, use an initial writing technique (such as rapid writing) to respond to the questions in order to get started on the writing assignment.

Notes

Generating Ideas: Adding Content (Pass It On!)

This strategy provides feedback to students *before* they start their first draft. Students exchange their *brainstorming* and *notes* for any project-paragraphs, research, process, lab reports or summaries, and develop questions designed to help them draw out more details for their first draft.

Purpose

- Identify ideas and information that may have been omitted.
- Reconsider and revise initial thinking (such as brainstorming) *before* writing the first draft.
- Teach students how to question others and themselves.

Payoff

Students will:

- ask who, what, where, when, why and how (5W+H), and predict questions while writing.
- add and support ideas, with the help of others and then on their own.

Tips and Resources

- This activity is a good follow-up to *Rapid Writing* and *What Do My Readers Want to Know?*
- This strategy may be used before and during writing, especially if students are sharing research.
- See Teacher Resource, *Adding Content – Annotated Student Sample* and Student Resource, *Instructions for Adding Content (Pass It On!)*.
- Provide stick-on notes if students find it too confusing to have other students writing on their work.

Further Support

- Teachers should model the process of asking questions about a piece of writing. Alternatively, teachers may post a piece of personal writing and invite students to ask questions about various parts of the piece.
- Students may use brainstorming or first drafts of any assignment they are working on (e.g., research/planning, paragraphs, summaries, lab reports, essays, answers to questions).

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Generating Ideas: Adding Content (Pass It On!)

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Assign a topic based on class content. • Distribute Student Resource, *Instructions for Adding Content (Pass It On!)*. • Review who, what, where, when, why and how (5W + H questions), using the handout. • Suggest other possible questions, depending on the type of assignment (narrative or informative). • Remind students about the purpose of this activity – to ask questions (based on what's already there) that they would like the writer to answer. • Create groups of 4 to 6 students.	• Individually brainstorm or make notes for the topic. • Read the instructions with the teacher.
During • Time the students – have them pass their work to the person to their left and add questions to the work that is handed to them. In 3 to 5 minutes, depending on length of the work, call "time" and have the students pass their work to the left again. • Have students continue until the work has been returned to the original author. • (Optional) Ask students to begin answering the questions or making suggestions regarding the questions they see on the papers in front them, once work has been passed to at least two others in the group.	• Within their group, pass work left and quickly skim the work handed to them. • As they read, ask questions based on the 5Ws and how. • Work silently. • Use stick-on notes and write comments and questions in margins. • (Optional) Start answering some of the questions others have written on the work, once they have questioned the work of at least two of the people in the group – even if it is not theirs.
After • Use the edited work and the answers to the questions as the basis for a written assignment.	• Try to answer as many of the questions as possible when they get their own work back. • Use the questions and answers as the basis for responding to the written assignment.

Notes

Adding Content – Annotated Student Sample

Topic: Why people are violent

-violence-- many causes

What kind of violence?

What types of violence are we talking about here?

-some violent because they have been desensitized

what does desensitize mean?

-don't have social skills

I think it means that people see so much violence that they don't notice it!

-our society fosters violence

Why do we need social skills?

-no protection for victims

Do you mean we cause it or we encourage it?

-some people excuse violence—say we make too big a deal out of it

Give me an example of this.

-some don't know laws

-low self-esteem contributes

-sometimes society blames the victim

Instructions for Adding Content (Pass It On!)

When you build a fire, you need just enough wood to get it started. Usually we start with small pieces and then add the larger ones after the fire gets going. That's what we are going to do with your initial ideas or drafts for writing your _____ assignment.

The assignment you have written is like a small flame – it's an idea, and you may need to add more ideas to it. Here's an easy way to learn the questions you need to ask in order to add fuel to your fire. You are going to trade work with people in your group and ask questions without talking.

When you are in your group, you will each pass your work to the person on your left. You will work within a time limit, so work quickly.

Don't worry if you don't finish all of the assignment you are looking at – the next person will probably deal with parts that you don't.

Here's how to add the fuel…

In your groups:

1. Pass your work to the person on your left. Quickly skim the work that *you* have received from the person to your right.

2. As you read, ask questions based on the 5W's and How. Some of your questions might be:
   - What's this all about?
   - What happened?
   - Where did this happen?
   - When did this occur?
   - Who was involved?
   - Why did this occur?
   - What happened as a result?
   - What other choices were possible?
   - How does this affect others?

3. Do not talk until you have passed around all of the work. If you can't read or understand something, don't ask the person. Just write down a question or comment, such as "I don't get this" or "I can't read this."

4. Write in the margin, or at the top of the page, or in the lines – just don't write on top of someone else's writing!

5. Once you have questioned the work of at least two of the people in your group, you may want to start answering some of the questions others have written on the work – even if the work is not yours.

6. When you finally get your own work back, try to answer as many of the questions as you can. The information you give will add to whatever you are writing.

Developing and Organizing Ideas: Webbing, Mapping and More

Effective writers use different strategies to sort the ideas and information they have gathered in order to make connections, identify relationships, and determine possible directions and forms for their writing. This strategy gives students the opportunity to reorganize, regroup, sort, categorize, classify and cluster their notes.

Purpose

- Identify relationships and make connections among ideas and information.
- Select ideas and information for possible topics and subtopics.

Payoff

Students will:

- model critical and creative thinking strategies.
- learn a variety of strategies that can be used throughout the writing process.
- reread notes, gathered information and writing that are related to a specific writing task.
- organize ideas and information to focus the writing task.

Tips and Resources

- Strategies for webbing and mapping include:
  - *Clustering* – looking for similarities among ideas, information or things, and grouping them according to characteristics.
  - *Comparing* – identifying similarities among ideas, information, or things.
  - *Contrasting* – identifying differences among ideas, information, or things.
  - *Generalizing* – describing the overall picture based on the ideas and information presented.
  - *Outlining* – organizing main ideas, information, and supporting details based on their relationship to each other.
  - *Relating* – showing how events, situations, ideas and information are connected.
  - *Sorting* – arranging or separating into types, kinds, sizes, etc.
  - *Trend-spotting* – identifying things that generally look or behave the same.
- See Student/Teacher Resource, *Webbing Ideas and Information*.

Info Tasks for Successful Learning, pp. 23-32, 87, 90, 98.

Further Support

- Provide students with sample graphic organizers that guide them in sorting and organizing their information and notes- e.g., cluster (webs), sequence (flow charts), compare (Venn diagram).
- Have students create a variety of graphic organizers that they have successfully used for different writing tasks. Create a class collection for students to refer to and use.
- Provide students with access to markers, highlighters, scissors, and glue, for marking and manipulating their gathered ideas and information.
- Select a familiar topic (perhaps a topic for review). Have students form discussion groups. Ask students to recall what they already know about the topic, and questions that they still have about the topic. Taking turns, students record one idea or question on a stick-on note and place it in the middle of the table. Encourage students to build on the ideas of others. After students have contributed everything they can recall about the topic, groups sort and organize their stick-on notes into meaningful clusters on chart paper. Ask students to discuss connections and relationships, and identify possible category labels. Provide groups with markers or highlighters to make links among the stick-on notes. Display the groups' thinking.

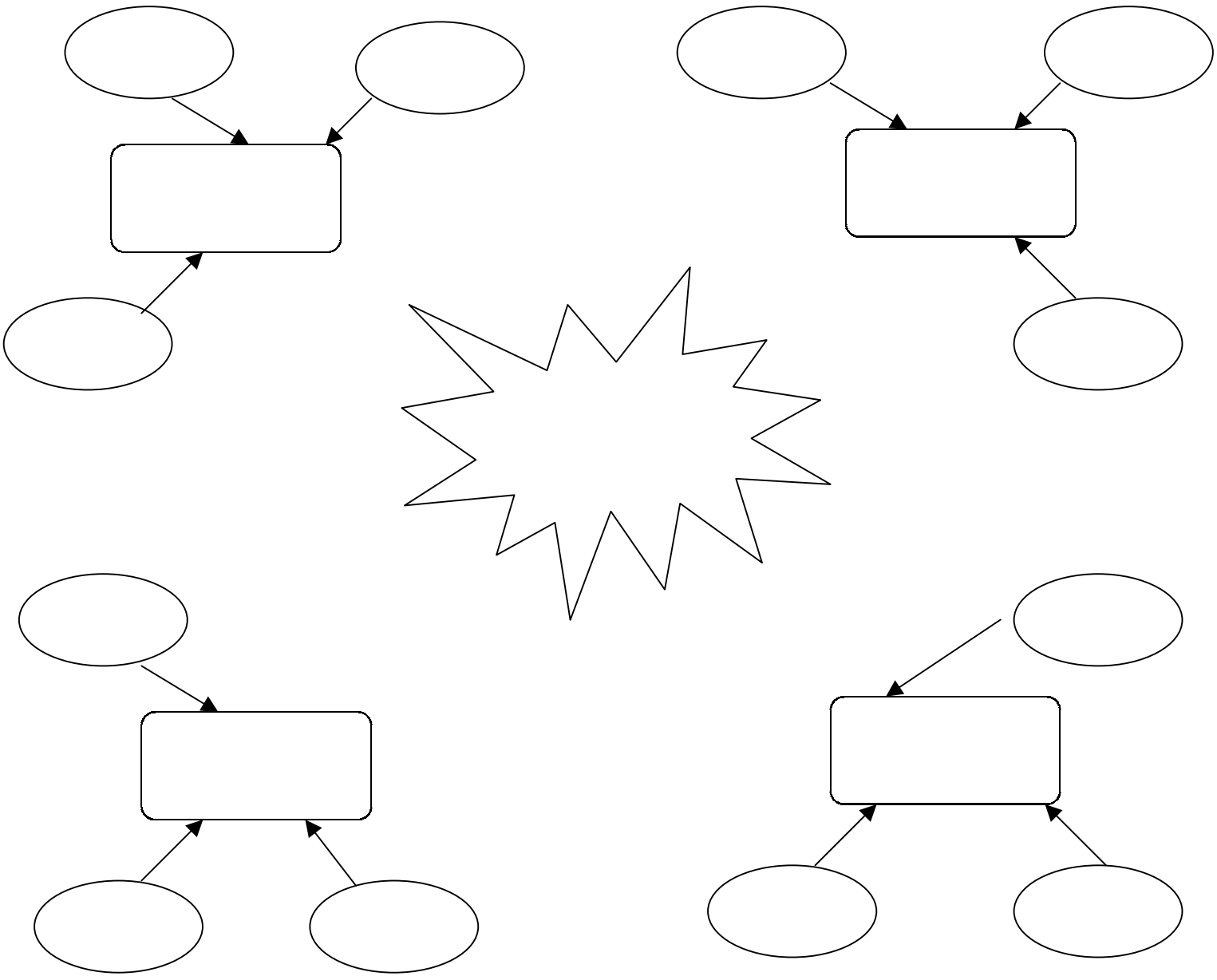
W

Developing and Organizing Ideas: Webbing, Mapping and More

What teachers do	What students do
Before	
• Select a current subject-specific writing task. • Prepare an overhead transparency sample or chart-paper sample of possible ideas and information gathered on the topic (e.g., point-form notes for a report on the uses of lasers in the medical field). • Using a marker, model for students how to make connections among the ideas and information (e.g., number, circle, colour-code, draw arrows). • Using a strategy such as webbing or map ping makes it easier to see connections and relationships. Writers often create a graphic organizer to manipulate and group their information into meaningful clusters. • Use a web to demonstrate the process of rereading notes and arranging key points to show the connections and relationships. See Student/Teacher Resource, *Webbing Ideas and Information*.	• Recall what they already know about the topic and writing task. • Make connections to own notes. • Note the links and connections that the teacher makes among ideas and information. Consider the similarities and differences of their own thinking. • Recall past use of a webbing strategy to record or organize thinking.
During	
• Ask students to contribute to the web by identifying important ideas and key information and by suggesting how to place the points to create a web. • Ask students questions to clarify the decisions. For example: - What does this mean? - Is this important? Why? - Is there another way to sort my notes? • Model for students how to use the web to create a possible outline or template for writing a first draft. Consider the generalizations and/or categories that emerge from the connections and relationships, to help identify subtopics, headings and structure.	• Contribute to the discussion. • Note the similarities and differences in responses.
After	
• Have students refer to their notes for the writing task. • Ask students to create a web by sorting and organizing their ideas and information. • If appropriate, consider having students who are writing on a similar topic work in pairs to create a web for their combined notes. Some students may prefer to use scissors to cut-and-paste their web. • Ask students to reread their webs and use them to create an outline for writing.	• Reread notes and identify important information and ideas. • Use the question prompts to re-phrase notes, identify key points, and group the ideas and information to create a web. • Share and compare webs. • Make the connection between the web and possible ways of organizing the information and ideas into a template for writing.

Notes

Webbing Ideas and Information



What are the big ideas?
Can you identify any patterns and trends?
How are the ideas and information connected?
What evidence or information is missing?
Is a particular viewpoint suggested?
Does the web suggest a writing outline?

Developing and Organizing Ideas: Supporting the Main Idea

In this strategy, students learn how to select the better of two possible main ideas to use as a topic sentence in an information paragraph, and then learn how to choose details to support it. Student samples are selected from a variety of subject areas. Samples may also be used to teach summary writing.

Purpose

- Distinguish main ideas and supporting details for a paragraph.

Payoff

Students will:

- write well-organized paragraphs for different subject areas, with supporting details.
- demonstrate a clear understanding of the topic.
- improve reading comprehension by spotting main ideas and supporting details.

Tips and Resources

- Write the sentences into a paragraph, starting with the most general and writing the remaining sentences in order of importance (most to least or least to most).
- Use this strategy in mathematics to deal with word problems, or in law and history to argue a point.
- See **Finding Organizational Patterns** for a follow-up activity.
- "Main Idea": a broad statement that includes a topic that can be expanded. It usually begins a paragraph.
  e.g. Studying mathematics organizes the mind.
  Art appreciation opens the mind.
- See the following resources:
  - Student Resource, *Finding and Supporting the Main Idea.*
  - Student/Teacher Resource, *Finding and Supporting the Main Idea – Sample Exercise*.
  - Student/Teacher Resource, *Finding and Supporting the Main Idea – Answer Key*.
- This strategy can help students to understand how to do the task on information paragraphs in the Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test.

Further Support

Alternative methods:

- Complete the activity on paper.
- Work either individually or in pairs.
- Read groups of sentences.
- Look for the best-supported general statement.
- Cross off statements that do not fit the general statement selected.

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Developing and Organizing Ideas: Supporting the Main Idea

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Use the sample *Finding and Supporting the Main Idea* to create similar sets specific to your content area. • Enlarge each set of statements and cut up into their separate statements. • Place each set of statements into a separate envelope. • Divide the class into groups of three or four and give each group one set of statements. • Model the strategy on the board or overhead using the set that was given to the students. • Teach how to find the main ideas in the statements (see Tips and Resources). • Hand out a second set of envelopes to each group for them to complete independently. • **Alternatively**, have the students complete this activity directly on paper, without cutting up the groups of statements.	• Read through the set of statements with the teacher. • Annotate statements while the teacher models.
During • Circulate through the class. • Ask students how they know which state ment is the best-supported generalization. • Point out that if students have more sentences crossed out than they have left to work with, they have probably selected the wrong generalization.	• Work individually or in pairs or small groups. • Read the group of sentences. • Look for the best-supported general state ment. (If there is more than one main idea: choose the one that has the most supporting statements.) • Place statements to the side if they do not fit the selected main idea. • Place the selected main idea or generaliza tion at the top. • Place the supporting statements directly under the generalizations.
After • Review and discuss the second set of sentences. If needed, have students move on to another set of sentences. • When work is complete, review work with students and discuss answers. • Model how to use the sentences to write a paragraph – using the paragraph template. • Demonstrate how to write a concluding sentence. The basic style is to reword the first sentence/generalization. • **Alternatively**, assign topic and have students write a generalization and supporting details.	• Review the statements with the teacher. • Write sentences into a paragraph. • **Alternatively**, write own generalization and supporting details in answer to a teacher-assigned topic (e.g., write instructions for how to find the area of a circle; explain effects of gravity; discuss the impact of a current event).

Notes

Finding and Supporting the Main Idea

1. Look at the scrambled statements in paragraph one.

2. Identify two main ideas in paragraph one.

3. Choose which main idea is best supported by the other statements given – this will be your main idea for the paragraph.

4. Cross off or remove the statements that do not belong in the paragraph (that do not support your main idea).

5. Order the statements in the paragraph.

6. Share and compare your ideas with others.

7. Write your final paragraph.

Repeat the process for paragraphs two and three.

Finding and Supporting the Main Idea

Sample Exercise

Paragraph one:

Time capsules describe everyday life.
Make a list of items you would like to include in the capsule.
Time capsules tell us how people lived in past generations.
Time capsules tell us what was important to past generations.
People put objects from their everyday life into time capsules.
Garbage bags, videos, pictures, and diaries are some of the items that could be included in the capsule.
Decide how to make your capsule interesting.
The time capsule should be a weatherproof container**.**

Paragraph two:

Saliva is the fluid that helps us digest broken-down food.
The sticky mucous in our mouth is called saliva.
Saliva plays an important role in food digestion.
Saliva dissolves food pieces.
We can taste food because saliva allows the food to penetrate cells in our mouths.
Dry your tongue and place sugar on it.
You cannot taste the sugar until the sugar dissolves.
Food tastes good.

Paragraph three:

Always check the Internet.
Technology has improved our lives in many ways.
Computers help make it easier to communicate.
New forms of technology make new sources of fuel less expensive.
Modern technology has used science to develop new forms of transportation.
Less expensive fuel and new transportation forms make the world seem smaller.
People have more technological know-how than ever before.

Finding and Supporting the Main Idea – Answer Key

Legend:
➔main idea
✓statement belongs in the paragraph
× statement should be crossed out or removed; does not belong.

Paragraph one:

➔Time capsules tell us what was important to past generations.
✓People put objects from their everyday life into time capsules.
✓Garbage bags, videos, pictures, and diaries are some of the items that could be included in the capsule.
✓Time capsules describe everyday life.
×Make a list of items you would like to include in the capsule.
×Time capsules tell us how people lived in past generations.
×Decide how to make your capsule interesting.
×The time capsule should be a weatherproof container.

Paragraph two:

➔Saliva plays an important role in food digestion.
✓Saliva is the fluid that helps us digest broken-down food.
✓Saliva dissolves food pieces.
✓We can taste food because saliva allows the food to penetrate cells in our mouths.
×Dry your tongue and place sugar on it.
×You cannot taste the sugar until the sugar dissolves.
×Food tastes good.
×The sticky mucous in our mouth is called saliva.

Paragraph three:

➔Technology has improved our lives in many ways.
✓Computers help make it easier to communicate.
✓New forms of technology make new sources of fuel less expensive.
✓Modern technology has used science to develop new forms of transportation.
✓Less expensive fuel and new transportation forms make the world seem smaller.
×People have more technological know-how than ever before.
×Always check the Internet.

Developing and Organizing Ideas: Adding Details

In this strategy, students ask questions to support and elaborate on the main ideas from their first draft of a piece of writing. A structure for asking questions is provided.

Purpose
- Provide additional specific and supportive detail in the writing.

Payoff
Students will:
- add depth and breadth to writing by including appropriate details.

Tips and Resources
- Make sure the paragraph composed for this activity is "bare-bones," leaving out most details and many unanswered questions. (For example, see Teacher Resource, *Adding Details – Geography Sample*.)
- For an annotated sample, see Teacher Resource, *Adding Details – Spam Sample*.
- As a next step in the writing process, consider following this activity with *Peer Editing*.

Further Support
- Encourage students to use anecdotes and examples, as well as facts.

Developing and Organizing Ideas: Adding Details

What teachers do	What students do
Before	
• Compose a brief paragraph that explains or describes something you know well, but about which the students are likely to know little. This paragraph can be related to the specific subject content, or a personal anecdote.	• Bring a first draft for a writing assignment to class.
During	
• Begin by reading the paragraph to the class. (Provide them with a visual copy, either on paper or on a transparency.) • Distribute or display the *Stretching Ideas* handout. See Student/Teacher Resource. • Ask students to reread the paragraph and identify all the places where more information is needed. • Respond to student questions by adding more details, examples, or anecdotes. • Guide students in discussion to see how additional supporting detail improves the quality of the writing. • Direct students (individually or in pairs) to use the *Stretching Ideas* handout to guide revision of their own first drafts.	• Read the paragraph and the *Stretching Ideas* handout and identify places where more information is needed. • Volunteer questions from the handout for the teacher to answer. • Begin revision of own work, using questions from the handout.
After	
• (Optional) Assign revision of the first draft as homework for a subsequent class. • (Optional) Have students work with the handout and the revised draft to identify further areas for revision.	• May complete revision of the first draft as homework. • May use the handout and the revised draft (individually or in pairs) to identify further areas for revision.

Notes

Adding Details - Geography Sample

Cities are created in former natural areas. Some cities are so large and concentrated that very little which is natural remains in them. People have created totally artificial environments in cities, but some people try to make them more natural. Today, many cities are "naturalizing" their surroundings to provide animal habitat.

Adding Details – Spam Sample

What does spam look like?

Why do you start with one word sentences?

How do I know if it is spam? Do you have any examples?

Who did the studies?

Delete. Delete. Delete. Does this sound like you when you open your e-mail inbox only to find countless junk mail messages, or spam, as they are more commonly known? You are not alone if such is the case. According to studies that measure the amount of e-mail that travels through networks around the world, the amount of spam grew by 340% over a six-month period from September 2001 to April 2002-more than triple the rate for e-mail overall. Estimates suggest that 20% of all e-mail is spam, which is enough to seriously affect the efficiency of most e-mail networks due to its overwhelming volume.

When does most spam arrive in your e-mail?

So what should we do about it?

What's a network?

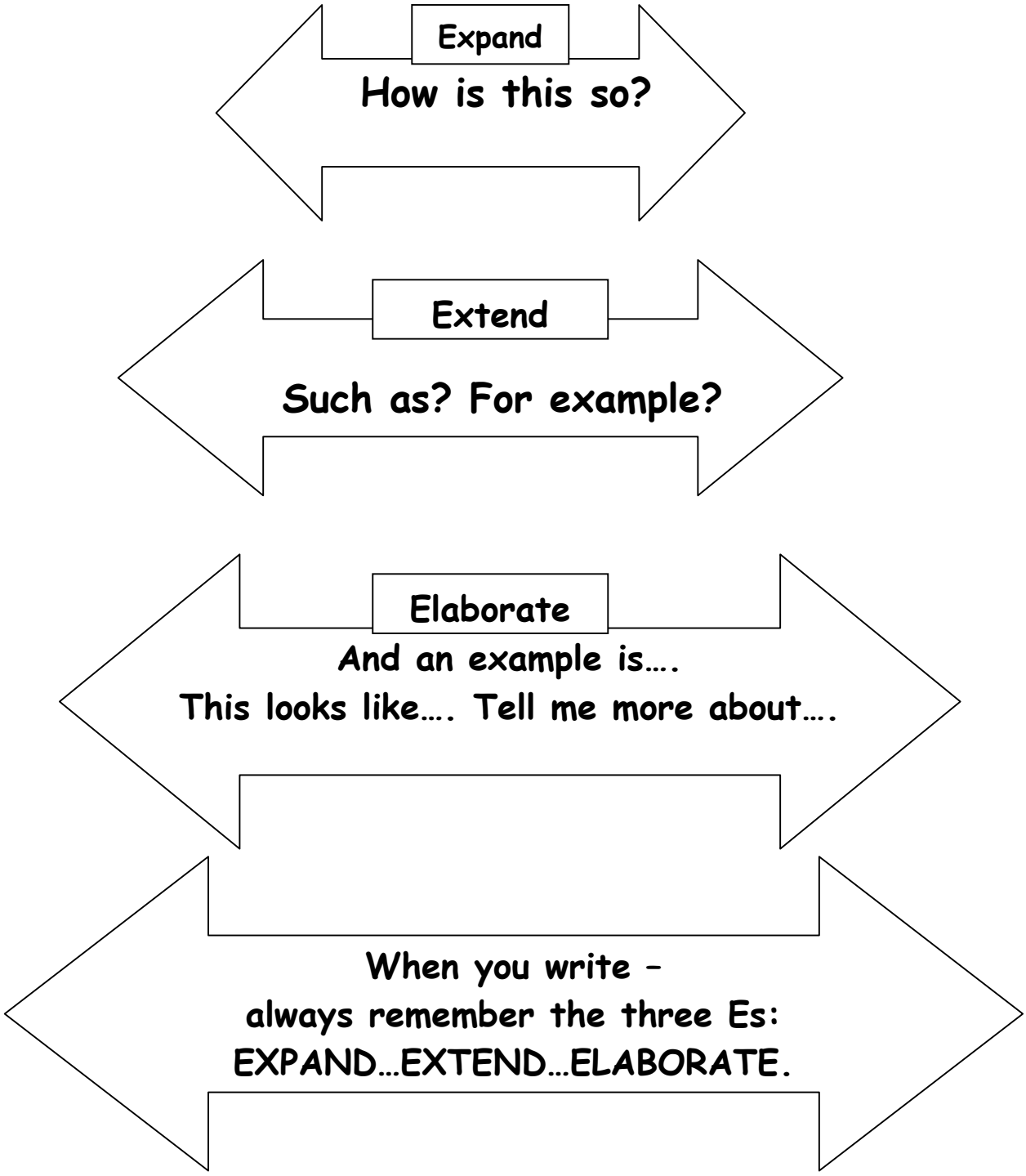
Why is it so serious?

Who sends spam?

How does e-mail travel?

Spam sample excerpted from L.E. Pinto and J.L. Ellerby, *Business Connections: Information Technology in Action* (Toronto: Pearson, 2003), p.222.

Stretching Ideas



Revising and Editing: Reorganizing Ideas

Writers revisit their writing as they draft to add, delete and change ideas and information. There are specific strategies writers use to revise their writing. One strategy writers use is ARMS (add, remove, move, substitute). (Faigley and Witte, 1981)

Purpose

- Identify different strategies for reorganizing content.
- Examine and determine effectiveness of sentence and paragraph order.

Payoff

Students will:

- organize writing effectively for different purposes in different subject areas.
- organize ideas and information for clarity and emphasis.

Tips and Resources

- Revising is the process of making sure that the writing says what the writer wants it to say. Most writers look for the biggest problems first and then tackle the smaller ones. For example, a writer may begin with the completeness of the content, accuracy and depth of supporting details and evidence, and the way the writing is organized, then look at style, grammar, spelling and usage. Sometimes it is helpful to consider reviewing the writing by looking at paragraphs, then sentences, and finally words and phrases.
- See Teacher Resource, *Paragraph Compare*.

"Analysing Revision" *College Composition* 32: 400-410.

Further Support

- Have students select a section of a current writing task that they want to revise, and read it aloud to another student. The partner summarizes/paraphrases the content. The student author notes changes, misunderstandings, and omissions, and then clarifies the partner's paraphrase. The partner asks questions about the content and the elements of style to clarify the writing's content and organization. The student author uses the feedback to revise his or her writing.
- Provide students with opportunities to use the computer cut/paste/copy/delete functions to demonstrate their skills in using electronic technology to revise their writing.
- Encourage students to read their writing aloud, and then circle ideas that are confusing, put arrows where information or evidence is missing, and cross out repetitious information or words. This process can also be used to edit writing by circling words and phrases that they wish to improve or that have been overused.

W

Revising and Editing: Reorganizing Ideas

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Prepare two paragraphs on a subject-related topic (see Teacher Resource, *Paragraph Compare*). • Have groups read the paragraphs and discuss which is more effective. Ask students to share responses and justify their reasoning (each version has strengths and weaknesses). • Have students make suggestions for improving the writing (e.g., Add, Remove, Move, Substitute) and determine possible revising questions such as: - Does it make sense? - Is the topic clear? - Is the main idea clear? - Are there enough reasons/details to support the main idea? - Are there examples to support the reasons/details? - Are there details not connected to the topic and main idea? - Is there a closing sentence or conclusion? • Record the revision prompts.	• Read the paragraphs and summarize the main idea and details. • Contribute to discussion by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of each paragraph (e.g., "strong topic sentence," "supporting details are logical," "uses evidence to support main idea," "uses strong words to convince me," "not enough facts and examples"). • Reread the revision prompts and ask questions about the prompts.
During • Prepare a copy (overhead transparency, chart paper) of a draft-writing task on a current topic. Include revision notes such as cross-outs, scribbles, stick-on notes, margin notes, arrows, and inserts. • Use a revision strategy to demonstrate revising and reorganizing ideas in a piece of writing; e.g.: - Add something to the writing. - Remove something that confuses or repeats. - Move a section of the text. - Substitute a word, phrase, sentence or example. • Note that some writers reread their writing and then use numbers to indicate how they want to reorganize their writing. Other writers use scissors to cut up their draft writing to reorganize the ideas and information, then tape it together as a new draft. You may wish to demonstrate this strategy for reorganizing ideas and information.	• Recall writing that they have revised or wanted to revise. Identify the sorts of changes they wanted to make. • Make connections between their revising strategies and the strategies demonstrated by the teacher. • Decide which strategies they might try using to revise their writing.
After • Have students refer to a draft writing task that they want to revise. • Ask pairs to read their drafts aloud, and use the revision question prompts to provide feedback to their partner's writing. • Ask students to use the feedback and the ARMS or cut-and-paste strategy to revise their draft.	• Listen to partner's writing and paraphrase or summarize the content. • Note changes, misunderstandings, and omissions, and then clarify the partner's paraphrase. • Decide which revision strategies to use to improve own writing.

Notes

Paragraph Compare

Read the two paragraphs below. Identify the strengths and weaknesses in each paragraph. Which paragraph do you think is more effective? Justify your decision.

Sample Paragraph 1

Save the Sea Turtle

Sea Turtles need our protection; they are our link to the past. Although sea turtles have many natural enemies such as sharks and hurricanes, humans are their greatest threat. All five species of sea turtles found on the shores of North America are in danger of dying out and disappearing forever. Beachfront buildings are invading their nesting grounds, and the unfamiliar lights have confused their nesting instincts. Beachcombers disturb their nests. Motorboat propellers are more dangerous than sharks. As well, commercial fishers accidentally catch and kill many turtles in their nets and hooks. Volunteer organizations such as the World Wildlife Federation can educate the public about endangered species and help organize groups to patrol and protect the nesting grounds of these big prehistoric creatures.

Sample Paragraph 2

The Cry of the Sea Turtle

You can hear their cries all along the North American shoreline. They're dying. Soon they will disappear forever and only we can save them. Although sea turtles have many natural enemies such as sharks and hurricanes, humans are their greatest threat. Big beachfront homes and resorts are invading their nesting grounds, and the unfamiliar glaring lights and blaring noises have confused their nesting instincts. Beachcombers destroy their nests looking for treasures, ignoring the treasure of this endangered animal. Motorboat propellers are like dangerous sharks attacking them in supposedly safe waters. As well, commercial fishers carelessly catch and kill many turtles in their nets and hooks. Someone has to educate the public about endangered species and help organize groups to patrol and protect the nesting grounds of the Sea Turtle.

Revising and Editing: Asking Questions to Revise Writing

Students ask other students questions and provide specific feedback about other student's writing. Students gain a sense of taking personal responsibility for their writing.

Purpose

- Discuss the ideas in a piece of writing, in order to refine and revise the ideas.

Payoff

Students will:

- engage in meaningful discussion and deepen understanding about the subject content.
- develop over time into supportive writing partners for peers.
- recognize that the writer owns the writing, but that collaboration helps other students to recognize their audience and to focus their purpose in writing.

Tips and Resources

- The writer Nancie Atwell explains that "the writer owns the writing." This means that the writer should always be given the first opportunity to amend or add ideas, rather than having another person suggest a solution. When other students ask questions or provide open-ended prompts, they give the writer an opportunity to think deeply about a piece of writing and to gain a better sense of how to tailor it to meet the writing's purpose and engage the audience.
- *Revising* is a term that refers to making changes to the ideas in a piece of writing. It may involve adding details, deleting ideas, or amending the order or wording to clarify ideas and point of view.
- See the handout of suggested prompts and questions, Student Resource, *Asking Questions to Revise Writing*.

In The Middle (Second Edition)

Further Support

- Create groups of three or four that will work together to support each other. Ensure that each group has an "ideas" person, a "skills" person (who has good knowledge of organization and the conventions of writing, such as spelling and grammar), and a person who needs strong support.

W

Revising and Editing: Asking Questions to Revise Writing

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Prepare an overhead or a paper copy of a writing sample based on the subject-area assignment (e.g., a report, an explanation, a procedure, a letter to the editor, or an essay). Note: It may be necessary to excerpt a piece if the assignment is lengthy. • Read the sample aloud, asking students to listen carefully (to hear "how it sounds") while following with their eyes. • Ask students to identify areas of concern or confusion. • Model the use of questions and prompts to the writer, asking students to consider the purpose of these questions and prompts.	• Look and listen for areas of confusion or concern in the writing sample. • Offer suggestions for areas of concern or confusion. • Suggest the purposes or effects of the questions and prompts.
During • Give students the Student Resource, *Asking Questions to Revise Writing,* and take a few minutes to read it over with them. • Put students in conferencing groups of three or four to read each other's writing. • Ask students to share their piece of writing with at least two people in their group. • Encourage students to use one or two of the prompts or questions. • Provide 20 to 30 minutes for this exercise.	• Exchange writing drafts with another group member. Take turns reading the writing aloud to each other and asking questions or providing prompts. • Exchange writing drafts with a different group member, and repeat the procedure in the preceding point.
After • Engage students in whole-class discussion about the process. How did they feel about using the questions or prompts? How helpful was the process in helping them to set direction for revising their writing draft? • Direct students to revise their writing draft.	• Revise own writing drafts based on the prompts and questions from their partners.

Notes

Asking Questions to Revise Writing

Your job as a revising partner is a very important one. You can help the writer by:

- giving the writer a sense of how completely the task has been accomplished
- praising parts of the piece that are well expressed or well explained
- identifying areas of confusion
- targeting statements or arguments that may not be well supported with details
- suggesting new avenues of approach.

However, the writer owns the writing, and should not feel that your suggestions or ideas are being imposed as the solution. The best way to help your writing partner is to phrase your comments as open-ended prompts, as questions, or as a combination of an observation and a question. Some suggestions are below.

- Begin by using any "praise" statements that you can.
- If you can't use the "praise" suggestion, you should use the "questions."

Praise	Questions
• This work seems very complete.	• Your writing doesn't seem to be finished. What are your plans for finishing it?
• I really like the way you wrote.... [Be specific!]	• This part confuses me. What could you do to make it more clear?
• Your point of view is very clear.	• What is your point of view here?
• Your supporting details are very strong in this paragraph.	• How can you support this argument with more strength? • What is your evidence in this paragraph?
• Your introduction (or conclusion) is very strong.	• How could you make your introduction (or conclusion) stronger?
• Your introduction really gives me a clear picture of where this piece of writing is going.	• What could you add to your introduction to give me a "road map" of the direction of this piece of writing?
• You've organized your arguments in a very convincing way.	• How could you organize this piece to really persuade your reader to agree with your point of view?
• Your topic sentences state the main idea of each paragraph very clearly.	• How could you rearrange the ideas in this paragraph to have a clear topic sentence?
• Your word choices are very suitable for this assignment and topic.	• Your language may be too casual for this type of assignment. How might you change some of the words to be a bit more formal?

Revising and Editing: Peer Editing

Peer editing gives students an opportunity to engage in important conversations about how a piece of writing for an assignment in any subject area has been constructed and whether it achieves its purpose, considering the audience. By reading each other's work, asking questions about it, and identifying areas of concern, students learn a great deal about how to put information together and express ideas effectively.

Purpose

- Encourage students to look at their own and others' writing with a more knowledgeable, critical eye.

Payoff

Students will:

- have an audience for the writing, other than the teacher.
- develop skills in editing and proofreading.
- receive peer input about possible errors and areas of concern, in a "low-risk" process.
- have positive, small-group discussions.

Tips and Resources

- Peer editors should not be expected to correct all of the writer's errors, since the writer is responsible for the piece's clarity and correctness. Rather, the teacher and other students should provide support for the writer to make corrections; e.g., refer to the **Word Wall** strategy in Reading.
- Peer editing is a skill that must be built and practised over time. Begin with a single focus (such as writing an interesting and effective introduction), then add elements ***one at a time***, such as:
  - appropriate paragraphing
  - detail and support for topic sentences
  - appropriate subject-specific vocabulary
  - sentence variety
  - conventions of writing (grammar, punctuation, and spelling).
- This strategy may be used more intensively where time permits or where the writing assignment is particularly significant (e.g., an independent study essay or a major report). In these cases, student work may be edited by more than one group, so that each student receives feedback from a larger number of peers.
- This strategy can also be used within a group of three or four students (as in the *Reaching Higher* example) or with pairs of students, where each edits the other's work.
- However the time or students are organized, each student should have the opportunity to get feedback from two other students.

Reaching Higher – Making Connections Across the Curriculum, pp. 17-18.
Reading and Writing for Success, "Writing Power Tools", pp. 189-193.
Reading and Writing for Success Senior, "Writing Power Tools", pp. 303-309.

Further Support

- Consider balancing each group with students who have varying skills and knowledge to bring to the peer-editing process. More capable peer editors will act as models for the students who haven't yet consolidated the concepts or skills.
- Explain to students that you have designed the triads or groups to include a very creative person, a person with good technical skills, and one or more persons who would provide a very honest audience for the writing.
- Consider turning some of the questions into prompts (e.g., The best piece of writing is . . . ; I'd like more information about . . . ; I was confused by . . .).

W

Revising and Editing: Peer Editing

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Ask students to bring a completed draft of a writing assignment to class on a specified date. • Divide students into groups of three or four. • Distribute a peer-editing checklist (see Student Resource, *Sample Peer-Editing Checklis)*. Discuss the characteristics of good writing, modelling questions students may ask. • Make an overhead of the Teacher Resource, *Being a Good Audience for Writing*, to share the questions with students.	• Bring a completed draft of a writing assignment to class on the specified date.
During • Give directions for the peer-editing process: - One group exchanges writing pieces with another group. - Group members read the writing pieces, making notes about reactions, questions, and concerns. - One group member passes a finished piece. • Remind students that they are not responsible for correcting all the writer's errors, but that they can underline areas of concern, or circle words that should be checked for spelling or usage. • Monitor and support the group processes.	• Exchange their pieces of writing with another group. • Individually read and annotate all 3 or 4 pieces from the other group (circling, underlining, and writing questions or comments) as the pieces pass from person to person. • Remember that the writer owns the writing; therefore, the reader is not primary responsibility for correcting all the writer's errors. • *As a group*, discuss each piece and complete a peer-editing checklist, arriving at consensus (through discussion) about judgements, suggestions, and comments. • Sign or initial the peer-editing checklists when the group is done, and return the writing pieces to the original owners.
After • Give each student time to look at the peer-editing checklist that accompanies the writing pieces. • Debrief the activity with the class, asking questions such as: - What were the strengths you noticed in the best pieces of writing in various areas (e.g., in the introduction, supporting details or examples, or conclusion)? - What were some typical weaknesses? - What types of things will you have to do to improve your work? • (Optional) Assign another draft, or a completed final draft, of the same assignment. • (Optional) Provide time for each student to engage in a brief conference with a student who peer-edited his/her piece of writing, to get more complete feedback and a deeper understanding of the comments and suggestions.	• Read the peer-editing checklists that they receive with their work. • Take part in the class debriefing discussion. • Complete subsequent draft, if assigned. • Confer with one other student to provide more complete feedback and comments or suggestions.

Notes

Being a Good Audience for Writing

Ask Yourself (and the Writer) These Questions

- Was the piece interesting to read?
- Were the purpose and audience clear?
- Did the opening sentence or paragraph hook the reader?
- Were the ideas clearly expressed and logically organized?
- Were the paragraphs and sentences easy to understand and follow?
- Were there enough ideas, examples, or supporting details?
- Did the piece end in a satisfying or logical manner?
- Did the writer achieve the purpose of the assignment?

Sample Peer-Editing Checklist

Name:	Grade:

Assignment:		Yes	No	Suggestions / Concerns / Problems
1	The ideas are clearly stated, and there are enough of them.			
2	The purpose of the piece is clear.			
3	The message is clear for the intended audience.			
4	The beginning, middle, and end are clearly indicated and tied together.			
5	Details, proofs, illustrations, or examples support the main idea.			
6	The words used are appropriate and clear.			
7	The level of language is appropriate for the subject and audience.			
8	The sentences vary in length and structure.			
9	The sentences flow, moving logically from one to the next.			
10	There are only a few minor errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling.			

Other helpful comments:

Signed _____

Revising and Editing: Proofreading Without Partners

Students can build independence as writers when they develop strategies for proofreading their own work. Reading backwards one word at a time is a classic journalist's strategy for being able to see individual words and identify spelling errors. Reading backwards sentence by sentence will help students identify syntax and punctuation errors. Finally, reading from front to back slowly will help students read for meaning.

Purpose

- Help students find their own errors.
- Turn student writing into isolated ideas and sentences so that students recognize their own errors.

Payoff

Students will:

- check work before it is submitted for assessment.
- find mistakes without a partner.

Tips and Resources

- Reading backwards can be used as an answer-checking strategy on tests in any subject area.
- See the Teacher Resource, *Proofreading Without Partners* and Student Resource, *Proofreading Without Partners: Instructions for Reading Backwards*.

Further Support

- Start with small 2- to 3- sentence answers before moving to paragraphs and then essays.
- Put students in pairs to read each other's work backwards, matching a stronger student with a struggling student or an ESL student.

W

Revising and Editing: Proofreading Without Partners

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Explain to students that "reading backwards" is a strategy used by many journalists to enable them to look at the spelling and that reading backwards sentence by sentence helps them check punctuation in their work without getting too involved in the ideas. • Make an overhead of the top part of Teacher Resource, *Proofreading without Partners*. • Display the overhead to the students. • Model the technique of reading backwards, using the sample and a think-aloud. (Cover the top part of the sample, and move the cover sheet down as the think-aloud continues from sentence to sentence.)	• Provide a sample of own writing, double-spaced, without having used a spell-checker or grammar-checker.
During • Make an overhead of Student Resource, *Proofreading without Partners: Instructions for Reading Backwards*. • Provide directions on the overhead. • Circulate through the room, checking student progress.	• Read the last sentence of own writing from start to finish, noting any errors. • Read the second-last sentence from start to finish, and note any errors. • Continue until they have reached the first sentence. • Read from the beginning of the work to the end, checking for meaning.
After • Engage students in a whole-class discussion about some of the most common errors or problem areas they discovered. • List the most common problem areas or errors on the board or an overhead, adding a checkmark for each student reporting each particular problem or error. • Teach one correction strategy based on one of the most common problem areas- e.g., common uses of the comma, approaches for spelling or usage errors, or how to use a variety of sentence structures. • Remind students of the assignment expectations as they begin to re-draft their piece of writing.	• Contribute problem areas to the whole-class discussion. • Make corrections as needed to own draft, and double-check with assignment expectations.

Notes

Proofreading Without Partners

Sports involve people in healthy activity. sports such as swimming and tennis help you to use all of your major muscle groups the fast movements required to run across a tennis court or to swim the length of a pool increases your heart rate and improve the blood flow throughout your body. All of your muscles including your heart get stronger. You will feel better, and you will look more healthy if you exercise several times a eek through sports.

Sports involve people in healthy activities. Sports such as swimming and tennis help you to use all of your major muscle groups. The fast movements required to run across a tennis court, or to swim the length of a pool, increase your heart rate and improve the blood flow throughout your body. All of your muscles, including your heart, get stronger. You will feel better, and look healthier if you exercise several times a week through sports.

Proofreading Without Partners

Instructions for Reading Backwards

Unless directed otherwise, work quietly to proofread your own work. Follow these instructions:

1. To proof for spelling…

   - begin with the last word of your draft .
   - read backwards word by word, checking each for correct spelling.

2. To proof for sentence structure, punctuation, grammar and phrasing…

   - begin with the last sentence of your draft and read that sentence from start to finish to find any errors.
   - read the second-last sentence from start to finish and note any errors.
   - continue reading each sentence until you have reached the beginning of your piece of writing.

3. To proof for overall tone and meaning…

   - read from the beginning to the end, checking for meaning and flow.

4. Correct your errors.

   * Ask another student or the teacher for help if you have a problem you can't solve yourself.

Writing for a Purpose: Using Templates

When students can get the "picture" of a form of writing in their heads, they feel more confident about creating the final product. A *template* or framework is a skeletal structure for a writing form that allows students to organize their thoughts and researched information in order to write a first draft. Essay maps are another type of template.

Purpose

- Provide students with a template to scaffold their understanding of a form of writing and help them organize information before drafting the piece.

Payoff

Students will:

- learn the common expectations for the form and components of a particular writing assignment.
- organize their writing and ensure that it meets the requirements of the assignment.

Tips and Resources

- To help students understand how to construct a writing assignment, they may first need to deconstruct an example of that assignment. The same template that is used for structuring student writing can be used initially to analyze examples of a writing form. For instance, before having students use the template to write in a specific form, give them an example of the same kind of writing and have them use the template to identify the example's main idea, supporting details, transitional sentences, etc.. Using the template to deconstruct a piece of writing before writing their own version gives students an exemplar from which to work when they begin their own writing. This activity can also be done in pairs or in small groups.
- Use examples from the Ontario Curriculum Exemplars.
- See the explanations and templates for writing in various forms, in the following resources:
  - *Writing a Procedure*
  - *Template for Writing a Procedure*
  - *Writing a Report*
  - *Information Report Template*
  - *Information Report Template-Blank*
  - *Business-Style Report Template*
  - *Writing an Explanation*
  - *Template for Writing an Explanation*.

Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies For Improving Middle Level Students' Reading and Writing Skills, pp.72-91.
Cross-Curricular Literacy: Strategies For Improving Secondary Students' Reading and Writing Skills, pp.64-79.
Reading and Writing for Success Senior, Chapter 12.
Adolescent Literacy, Part III, Cross Curricular Connections, pp. 24-33, York Region District School Board.

Further Support

- The template for any individual writing assignment can be revised to make the modifications or accommodations necessary for students with special needs. For example, reduce the number of paragraphs or supporting details, create differing expectations for research, or for the complexity of the main idea, etc.

Writing for a Purpose: Using Templates

What teachers do	What students do
Before • Find or prepare a template appropriate to the writing assignment that students are expected to complete. (See samples of templates that accompany this strategy.) • Find an example (consider using samples from the Ontario Curriculum Exemplars) of the writing form that students can deconstruct. Make photocopies, and distribute the example to the students. • Model the method for deconstructing the piece of writing using the first paragraph or part of the example: - Tell students the name of the form of writing- e.g., a report, procedure, or opinion piece. - Ask aloud, "What happens in this paragraph/part of this piece of writing?" - Answer that question: "This first paragraph of the report is called a summary. In a few sentences, it gives me a sense of what this report is all about and provides two major recommendations." • Ask students to work in groups of four to deconstruct the rest of the example. • Engage students in a whole-class discussion following their group work, and record responses about what happens in each part or paragraph of the example.	• Read the example, following the teacher's oral deconstruction of the first paragraph or part of it. • Work in groups to determine what happens in each subsequent paragraph or part of the example by asking, "What happens in this paragraph/part of the piece of writing?" • Contribute responses to the whole-class discussion.
During • Distribute the template to students to help them consolidate their understanding of what happens in each part of the assigned piece of writing. • Share a sample of a temp*late that has been partially completed. (See Information Report Template,* with instructions and examples*)* • Direct students to use this template to organize the information they have prepared/ researched for this assignment. • Monitor students' work as they begin completing the template.	• Begin completing the template by adding (in the appropriate places) the information they have researched or prepared for it- e.g., results of data gathered through a survey, or background information searched on the Internet.
After • Assign a completion date for the template. • Use peer, self, or teacher assessment of the completed template in a subsequent class, before students begin drafting their report, procedure, etc.	• May complete the template as a homework assignment. • May participate in peer or self-assessment of completed templates in a subsequent class.

Notes

Writing a Procedure

Writing a Procedure

What is a procedure?

A procedure is a form of writing that informs the reader about how to do something. A procedure gives detailed instructions that the reader should be able to translate into action. Procedures could be written in science class to outline the steps taken in an experiment, or as a step-by-step explanation about how to play a game created in response to a language activity.

In a procedure, you can do the following:

- Begin by identifying the topic or issue and the relevance or importance of knowing how to do the thing that is being explained. For example, writing a procedure for programming a VCR will help you make full use of the various features your VCR offers.
- Proceed by identifying the intent or goal of the procedure. What is it that will be accomplished if the reader follows the steps identified?
- Make a prediction or create a hypothesis about what will happen if the steps are followed.
- Identify any equipment or materials you will need in order to complete the procedure.
- Write step-by-step instructions related to the procedure. Write in time sequence and provide as much detail as the reader will need to be able to follow the instructions and actually do what it is you are describing.
- Let your readers know how they will know if they have been successful.

How do you write a procedure?

1. Use an organizer such as a flow chart to plan the sequence you will describe. Make a list of the equipment or materials you will need.

2. When writing your instructions, think of who your audience might be. The age and interests of the audience will determine your tone and choice of language. For example, if you are writing instructions for building a cabinet for a carpenter, they would be very different from instructions you would write if the reader had never built anything before.

3. In your conclusion, provide your readers with an indication of how they will know whether or not they have been successful.

Template for Writing a Procedure

Topic: _____

Introduction:
- Topic/issue
- Relevance/importance/real-world connections

Aim/Goal (be brief - one sentence):
- What do you intend to do?
- What will you accomplish?

Hypothesis: A suggested answer or reason why one variable affects another in a certain way – useful for scientific investigations. You make a prediction based on past observations, logic, and some elements of scientific theory. (*Science 9*, Nelson Canada, 1999.)

Materials/Equipment/Ingredients:
What do you need to perform this task?

Procedure/Method:
What steps must you follow? What is the appropriate order for these steps?

Analysis/Confirmation/Testing:
Did your process work? What did you learn from your procedure?

Writing a Report

What is a report?

A report is a form of writing that provides information. There are different types of reports, and they can be organized in different ways depending on the purpose and audience. However, a report is usually based on **researched facts** or on **accurate details** of a situation or event, not just on the writer's own knowledge. You might write a report for Health class on the effects of second-hand cigarette smoke, or you might write a report for Science class on the increasing uses of lasers as tools in industry and medicine. You might also write a report detailing the organization, costs, participation, and success of a certain event such as a concert or banquet. In business situations, or in science or medical journals, reports are organized with a summary (or abstract) at the beginning. The purpose of this summary is to give the person reading the report a sense of the main content. The rest of the report fills in the background information, the process by which the information was obtained, and makes recommendations.

How do you write a report?

1. Research your information, finding it in several different sources - e.g., books, magazines, the Internet.

2. Take notes from your sources of the key details that you need. Be sure to record which information comes from which source so that you can give credit to your sources.

3. Use an organizer such as a chart, web, or sub-topic boxes to sort and classify your information into different areas for sub-topics.

4. When writing your introduction, think of who your audience might be. If your report is to be made orally to your classmates, you will want to catch their interest somehow, perhaps by referring to some personal experiences. If your report is for the teacher or for an "expert" on your topic, you should be more formal and to the point, avoiding the use of "I" and being more objective.

5. Develop each sub-topic paragraph with an appropriate topic sentence that shows how the sub-topic links to the topic.

6. Make sure that your sub-topic paragraphs have a logical order and that they flow smoothly. Use sub-headings to guide your reader through a lengthy report with many sub-topics.

7. Write a conclusion that summarizes two or three of the main points you wish to make about your topic. Depending on the type of report, write several recommendations.

8. Give credit to your sources by acknowledging them. List the sources alphabetically by the author's surname, following the pattern below:

   Bentley, George. *Laser Technology*. Toronto: Porter Books, 1998.
   Lawrence, Anita. "The Laser Revolution." *Maclean's*. March 6, 2000: 52-57.

Information Report Sample

Introduction: Introduce topic and classify it or put it in a category - e.g., “Lasers are an exciting new tool in industry and medicine.”

In two or three sentences, give the reader a “map” of what you plan to do with the topic. Essentially you are naming your sub-topics; - e.g., “In industry and manufacturing, lasers are revolutionizing both the design process and the production of goods. In medicine, lasers are changing surgical procedures with some remarkable results. The future possible uses for lasers are very exciting.”

First sub-topic: Define your topic and give some general information about it -e.g., say what a laser is, and give some brief history. You may also choose to provide this information in your introduction.

Make several key points with information from your research.

Write a transitional sentence or question - e.g. “While lasers may be a marvel of physics, they have some very practical applications.”

Second sub-topic-e.g., “Lasers in industry and manufacturing”

Make key points from your research.

Write a transitional sentence.

Third sub-topic- e.g., “Lasers in medicine”

Make key points from your research.

Write a transitional sentence.

Conclusion: Re-state some of your key points - e.g., key use of lasers in manufacturing, or key use in medicine, such as reducing blood loss in surgery.

Write an emphatic concluding sentence - e.g., “It is likely that many more uses will be found for lasers as we learn the capabilities of this powerful tool.”

Information Report Template

Introduction:

First sub-topic:

Key points from your research:

Transitional sentence:

Second sub-topic:

Key points from your research:

Transitional sentence:

Third sub-topic:

Key points from your research:

Transitional sentence:

Conclusion: Re-state some of your key points.

Write an emphatic concluding sentence.

Student Resource

Business-Style Report Template

Summary:
Provide a three- to five- sentence summary of the facts and findings of your report.

Key recommendation:

Introduction:
Summarize the background to the situation investigated.

First subtitle:
Explain the investigative process: How did you find the facts and information?

Second subtitle:
What key information and facts were discovered?

Third subtitle:
Compare the situation under investigation to similar situations and explain the solutions in the comparisons that may work in this situation.

Conclusion:

Write several recommendations.
1.

2.

3.

Writing an Explanation

What is an explanation?

An explanation is a form of writing that explains how things are or why things are. The focus is on general processes involving non-human participants. Explanations often provide information in a cause-and-effect format.

How do you write an explanation?

Prepare a plan. Notes and diagrams will help to organize the necessary information. In the plan, consider the following elements:

- definition of what is being explained
- description of the component parts, if applicable
- explanation of the operation in a cause-and-effect sequence
- description of the application
- interesting comments, special features or evaluation.

Template for Writing an Explanation

Topic: _____

Introduction:
- What is the topic? Why is it of interest to us?

Definition:
- What is it?

How it works:
- causes and effects

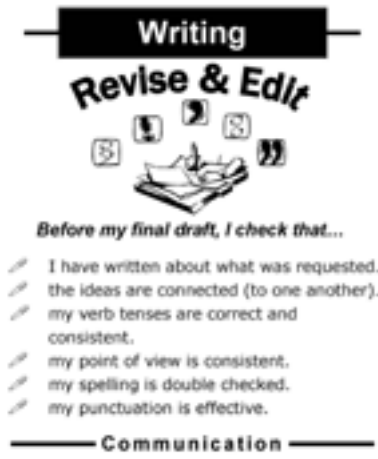
Applications:
- other examples/illustrations
- variations

Comments/Evaluation of topic/issue/problem:

Posters for Instruction: Writing

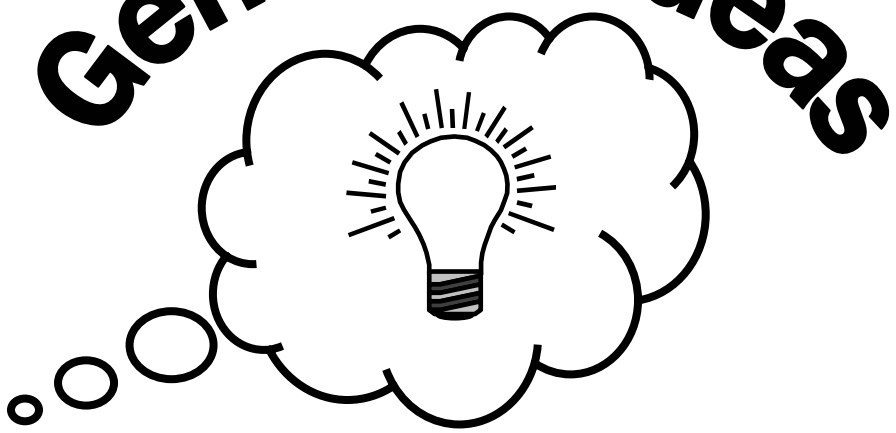
A series of communication posters is included in this resource document. They are intended to provide reminders for students when they are reading, writing or engaged in discussion in class. These posters can be displayed during instructional time or when students are practising the skills. While the posters appear as 8 ½ x 11" size in this document, they can be enlarged to legal or ledger size paper using a commercial photocopier.

In writing, the posters focus on generating ideas, organizing writing, and revising and editing.



Writing

Generate Ideas

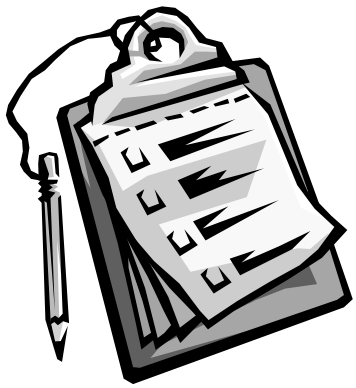


Before I begin to write, I…?

- jot down everything I know about this topic.
- look at other texts and resources.
- ensure that I understand everything I'm supposed to do.
- add additional details or supporting ideas.
- check to see if everything is on topic.

Writing

Organize Writing



To make sure my writing makes sense I check that…

- my introduction and conclusion make sense.
- each paragraph stays on topic.
- the connections between sentences and paragraphs are clear.
- my choice of words suits the audience and the topic.

Writing

Revise & Edit

Before my final draft, I check that…

- I have written about what was requested.
- the ideas are connected (to one another).
- my verb tenses are correct and consistent.
- my point of view is consistent.
- my spelling is double checked.
- my punctuation is effective.

Communication