



Writing Skills Packet

Worksheets, Outlines, and Templates

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Writing Skills

Linguistic Specificity

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Linguistic Specificity

Specific and descriptive writing is the expressive goal. Language impaired children frequently use non-specific words in their speech and in their writing. For example, one of the most common words my students use to express emotion is “upset”. I challenge my students to replace that word with a more specific emotion, such as “disappointed”, “sullen”, “outraged”, or “frustrated”. This straightforward exercise requires students to replace underlined non-specific terms, such as “good” and “people”, with specific adjectives and nouns in sentences. This worksheet lends itself well to group sessions and the classroom, because within group contexts students can hear several variations of replacements, and can evaluate the effectiveness of each. An answer key with multiple possible replacements is included.

Name _____

Date _____

BE SPECIFIC

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff _____.
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff _____ my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things _____.
- 4) The people _____ at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling _____ makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing _____ that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset _____.
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good _____.
- 9) Being a good _____ parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad _____ that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things _____ like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things _____ from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people _____ helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff _____ is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset _____ when he saw her with his best friend.



BE SPECIFIC—Answer Key

(note: answers provided are suggestions; other answers may suffice)

In the following sentences, cross out the underlined words and replace them with more specific nouns and adjectives:

- 1) At the bakery I started drooling just looking at all the stuff (items, baked goods, pastries).
- 2) I'm getting overwhelmed at school from all the stuff (homework, assignments, work) my teachers give me to do.
- 3) On my next trip to Italy, I promise to bring you back some great things (souvenirs, gifts).
- 4) The people (coworkers, staff, workers) at my job do not make enough money.
- 5) My dad doesn't think I'm putting in enough effort, and his feeling (disappointment, frustration) makes me feel bad.
- 6) Weight Watchers is a good thing (organization, strategy) that helps a lot of people.
- 7) I can't believe she betrayed me and it makes me so upset (sad, broken-hearted).
- 8) Because my son spent so many hours practicing, his performance at the spring concert was really good (entertaining, professional, flawless).
- 9) Being a good (selfless, giving, loving, helpful) parent requires putting your child's needs ahead of your own.
- 10) The movie was so bad (boring, predictable) that I think I started snoring halfway through.
- 11) Things (Statements, Notions) like "all gay people are crazy" or "all snowboarders have a death wish" perpetuate terrible stereotypes.
- 12) My photos, postcards, train ticket stubs, and matchbooks are truly very important things (souvenirs, remembrances) from my trip to Spain.
- 13) My people (friends, family, siblings) helped me feel a lot better during my recovery.
- 14) All that stuff (information, knowledge) is crammed into my head by my tutor.
- 15) He was really upset (sad, angry, humiliated) when he saw her with his best friend.





Writing Skills

Linguistic Flexibility

Using Synonyms

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Linguistic Flexibility

Linguistic flexibility is an essential skill for effective writing. This vocabulary task improves students' lexicon while encouraging them to increase their precision when choosing words with which to express themselves. This is a straightforward worksheet requiring students to find multiple synonyms of underlined words within sentences. It provides teachers and therapists the chance to discuss slight variations of meanings across synonyms, and motivates students to use a thesaurus when writing. A sample answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

BE FLEXIBLE

Find three synonyms for each underlined word and read the sentences out loud with the replacements:

- 1) The elephant was big. _____
- 2) I loved the movie. _____
- 3) He was really upset. _____
- 4) The doctor gave us some bad news. _____

- 5) We talked for hours. _____
- 6) I can't believe how dirty your room is! _____

- 7) She displayed all the symptoms of the disease. _____

- 8) The mission was carried out with brutal efficiency. _____

- 9) He walked to the corner. _____

- 10) My rich uncle flaunted his lifestyle. (rich) _____
(flaunted) _____
- 11) That car is really beautiful. _____

- 12) You are so sweet! _____
- 13) That dessert is too sweet! _____

- 14) I don't want to argue. _____



BE FLEXIBLE—Answer Key

(note: there are more synonyms that could work)

Find three synonyms for each underlined word and read the sentences out loud with the replacements:

- 1) The elephant was big. tremendous huge gigantic
- 2) I loved the movie. adored enjoyed relished
- 3) He was really upset. disturbed angry agitated
- 4) The doctor gave us some bad news. disturbing horrific upsetting
- 5) We talked for hours. chatted conversed gossiped
- 6) I can't believe how dirty your room is! messy unkempt grungy
- 7) She displayed all the symptoms of the disease. demonstrated showed exhibited
- 8) The mission was carried out with brutal efficiency. harsh vicious severe
- 9) He walked to the corner. strolled marched sauntered
- 10) My rich uncle flaunted his lifestyle. (rich) wealthy loaded
(flaunted) broadcasted flashed
- 11) That car is really beautiful. exquisite gorgeous sublime
- 12) You are so sweet! kind endearing precious
- 13) That dessert is too sweet! sugary cloying syrupy
- 14) I don't want to argue. fight disagree quarrel





Descriptive Writing

Adjectives and Adverbs

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Descriptive Writing: Adjectives and Adverbs

Descriptiveness is essential to good writing. This four-page worksheet begins with a clear discussion of descriptive writing and the use of adjectives, followed by an exercise requiring students to insert adjectives from a given list into various sentences. It goes on to discuss the use of adverbs, followed by examples and various tasks involving the use of different types of adverbs and the flexibility of their placement within sentences. The variety and comprehensiveness of the explanations, examples, and exercises provide students with enough practice to send them on their way toward using adjectives and adverbs to significantly increase the descriptiveness of their writing!

Name _____

Date _____

Descriptive Writing: Using Adjectives and Adverbs

When you write, it's important to be descriptive. Descriptive stories, summaries, analyses, and persuasive essays are more interesting, thereby holding your reader's attention, and provide a clearer picture for your reader.

Using adjectives is a great way to be descriptive. Adjectives describe nouns and give a much more interesting and specific "picture" of people, places, animals, things, events, and concepts. Compare the two tables below:

a table

an old, worn-out, giant wooden table

Directions: Choose one or two of the following adjectives and fit them into each sentence below.

beautiful	ugly	sweet	sour	old	new
broken	shiny	tall	short	fast	slow
square	smooth	clear	interesting	boring	sharp
funny	terrible	fresh	sleek	sad	peculiar
relaxing	nutty	shy	tiny	gentle	scary

- 1) All my friends gathered at the park on the weekend.
- 2) His sister arrived at the airport after her vacation at the beach.
- 3) I like to eat ice cream when I do my homework.
- 4) Henry took the train from his house in the suburbs into the city.
- 5) The squirrel finally found the nut he had buried in the backyard.
- 6) My teacher taught us all about the War of 1812.
- 7) Her coworker read the book throughout the morning.
- 8) The girl in the sandbox played with toys yesterday afternoon.
- 9) People always surround that water fountain near the receptionist.
- 10) In July the cheetah cubs learned how to hunt their prey.



Using adverbs is another great way to be descriptive. Adverbs can describe adjectives or other adverbs, but most often they are used to describe verbs. They can answer the question of how something is done.

Examples: How does Sally swim? She swims quickly.
How does Tom respond to emails? He responds to emails efficiently.

Note: *Adverbs that describe verbs frequently end in “ly”, but not always.*

Also: *Adverbs can be placed in different spots in a sentence without changing the meaning of the sentence.*

Example: The boy hesitantly approached the desk.
The boy approached the desk hesitantly.

Directions: Choose adverbs from the following list and fit one into each sentence below to describe the verbs.

quickly	slowly	easily	severely	excitedly	hesitantly
rudely	kindly	sweetly	sadly	happily	angrily
patiently	impatiently	carefully	cautiously	recklessly	confidently
reluctantly	secretly	loudly	quietly	proudly	seriously
well	better	further	more	less	sometimes

- 1) All my friends gathered at the park on the weekend.
- 2) His sister arrived at the airport after her vacation at the beach.
- 3) Anthony hid his mother’s birthday present under his bed.
- 4) Her coworker read the last few pages of her beloved novel late at night.
- 5) Mark worked in the seafood department of the local store.
- 6) Brittany left Pennsylvania to be closer to her family.
- 7) Skeeter ran after the mouse that showed up in our kitchen.
- 8) The teacher worked all weekend on his lesson plans.



There are many adverbs that describe how often an action occurs. Using these adverbs is another way to be more specific, thereby providing your reader with a more detailed description.

Directions: Choose adverbs from the following list and fit one into each sentence below to give your reader an idea of the frequency of an action.

incessantly frequently always usually often regularly
sometimes rarely never infrequently occasionally
once in a blue moon at the drop of a hat hardly ever seldom

- 1) I like to eat ice cream when I do my homework.
- 2) My brother-in-law travels to Alaska in the summer to go fishing.
- 3) Jessie reads historical fiction.
- 4) The health department checks on every school in the five boroughs.
- 5) Bad things happen to good people.
- 6) In New York people are packed like sardines into subway cars.
- 7) My family watches Bob's Burgers together.
- 8) I love to walk through the haunted houses at amusement parks.
- 9) In the winter my friend Ryan and I go ice-skating at our local pond.
- 10) Henry hates to go on long car trips because he gets carsick.

Directions: Now write your own sentence using the following frequency adverbs.

- 1) (occasionally) _____

- 2) (never) _____



- 3) (rarely) _____

- 4) (frequently) _____

- 5) (incessantly) _____

Directions: After circling the frequency adverb, say the following sentences out loud, moving the adverb to a different place in the sentence.

- 1) Occasionally my little sister is able to hold her breath underwater.
- 2) Time can often heal a broken heart.
- 3) My mom can usually bring out the best in me.
- 4) Thomas, who sits next to me in math class, incessantly smacks his gum.
- 5) Frequently, I find my mind wandering during sociology class.
- 6) He never can see the forest for the trees.
- 7) The Supreme Court often makes controversial decisions.
- 8) I will rarely discover that my brother was intentionally being unkind.
- 9) Sometimes Susan spends more money at the mall than she meant to.
- 10) Once in a blue moon I'll indulge in an ice cream sundae.





Writing Skills

Redundancy

Available in the format below:



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Redundancy

Learning to avoid redundancy means learning to express yourself clearly and concisely. I've found that this straightforward worksheet involves several tasks integral to avoiding redundancy. Following a brief written discussion on redundancy, students are tasked with finding redundant components within several given sentences. Students learn to first break down and analyze meanings within each sentence. Then, after identifying the redundant elements within each sentence, they must choose which to omit and which to keep, depending upon which, if any, gives more specific information. They must also be on the lookout for self-evident information that should be omitted. This worksheet, therefore, works on the writing skill of avoiding redundancy along with the receptive language skill of breaking sentences down semantically. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

What is Redundancy?

Redundancy is when you provide information that you've already provided. You don't need to say something more than once. Examples: "My math teacher teaches us math."
(repeats form)

"My door is always open, it's never closed." (repeats meaning)

(Note: *For certain situations some repetition may be used for emphasis. This kind of repetition is more appropriate for verbal expression than for written expression.*)

Directions: The following sentences contain redundancies. Choose which redundant information to cross out.

- 1) The small, little dog ran across the street.
- 2) The small, little ladybug flew out the window into the outside.
- 3) We were surprised by the unexpected knock on the door.
- 4) I first saw him when he was an adult one-year-old dog.
- 5) Veronica and I have been friends since we were little, way back in first grade.
- 6) She is so beautiful and pretty everyone says she is stunning.
- 7) Obama, our president, spoke Tuesday night at an 8 p.m. press conference.
- 8) At Summit we're not increasing the enrollment of our school or adding more students.
- 9) Last summer Mark traveled to China and spent the entire month of July in the city of Shanghai.
- 10) Every time I sneeze people always jump because my sneezes are so loud.
- 11) Anthony was the first serious boyfriend I had in my whole life.
- 12) My global history teacher was talking yesterday about the end of World War II and how Japan had to have its constitution rewritten after the war was over.



What is Redundancy? – Answer Key

Redundancy is when you provide information that you've already provided. You don't need to say something more than once. Examples: "My math teacher teaches us math." (repeats form)

"My door is always open, it's never closed" (repeats meaning)

(Note: *For certain situations some repetition may be used for emphasis. This kind of repetition is more appropriate for verbal expression than for written expression.*)

Directions: The following sentences contain redundancies. Choose which redundant information to cross out. **Note:** *After student identifies redundant words/phrases, it is important to choose to leave in whichever words/phrases are more specific, thereby providing the most information. For examples, see sentences #4 and #5.*

- 1) The small dog ran across the street. *Since "small" and "little" have the exact same meaning, students can eliminate either.*
- 2) The ladybug flew out the window. *All ladybugs are small, so neither "small" nor "little" is needed.*
- 3) We were surprised by the knock on the door.
- 4) I first saw him when he was a one-year-old dog. *Students should keep in "one-year-old" since it provides more information than "adult".*
- 5) Veronica and I have been friends since way back in first grade. *"In first grade" is more specific than when "we were little".*
- 6) She is so beautiful everyone says she is stunning. *The adjective "beautiful" more accurately matches the adjective "stunning".*
- 7) Obama spoke Tuesday at an 8 p.m. press conference.
- 8) At Summit we're not increasing the enrollment of our school.
- 9) Last summer Mark traveled to China and spent July in Shanghai. *"Spent July" implies he spent the whole month there. It's debatable whether "traveled to China" is needed, since spending a month in Shanghai could imply that he travelled to get there.*
- 10) My sneezes are so loud they always make people jump. *This sentence benefits from rewording.*
- 11) Anthony was my first serious boyfriend.
- 12) My global history teacher was talking yesterday about how Japan had to have its constitution rewritten at the end of World War II. *Of course, if a student said this to anyone familiar with his class schedule, he could probably leave out "global history", since it would be fairly obvious which teacher made the statement.*





Writing Skills

Clarity and Simplification

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Clarity and Simplification

So many middle school and high school students struggle to express their thoughts and ideas clearly and concisely. These three worksheet pages allow students to work on simplifying sentences, thereby improving the clarity and precision of their writing. Students learn that extra words do not always add meaning. These tasks also help students improve their comprehension, since simplifying requires an analysis of meanings. Answer keys are included.

Name _____

Date _____

Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly

Simplify the following sentences:

1) School is the place where I met Sally who is my girlfriend.

2) Last week and the week before and the week before that I went surfing.

3) On the day after tomorrow I'll visit him.

4) On the top of the page, but not in the middle, on the right side, up in the corner draw a circle.

5) She hit him in the head and the blow was so hard that he fell down and she didn't mean to do it, it was just an accident.

6) My math teacher gave me a grade that was so low it was a fail.

7) My oldest brother and my second-oldest brother took me to the park.

8) I ran into the woman who babysits my little sister named Caroline.

9) Every time I always arrive on time for my job where I work.

10) Draw a small circle, very small, it's the same size as a fruit, like a cherry.



- 11)** Along the side of the street, look to the left, that's where you will see the International House of Pancakes.

- 12)** Meet me where Main Street and Maple Drive cross each other.

- 13)** Go down to the end of the block and at the corner that's where you need to make a right turn.

- 14)** After you finish that sandwich you are eating let's you and me go for a walk because it is spring and it is such a beautiful day.

- 15)** Right in the middle, not the end or the beginning, of this week I want you to call me on my phone.



Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—Answer Key

Simplify the following phrases and sentences:

- 1) I met my girlfriend Sally at school.
- 2) For the past three weeks I went surfing.
- 3) (Name the day, i.e., Wednesday) I'll visit him.
- 4) In the top right corner draw a circle.
- 5) She accidentally hit him in the head so hard that he fell down.
- 6) My math teacher gave me a failing grade.
- 7) My two oldest brothers took me to the park.
- 8) I ran into Caroline, my little sister's babysitter.
- 9) I always arrive on time for my job.
- 10) Draw a small circle the size of a cherry.
- 11) On the left side of the street you will see the International House of Pancakes.
- 12) Meet me at the corner of Main Street and Maple Drive.
- 13) Go down to the end of the block and turn right.
- 14) After you finish that sandwich let's go for a walk because it is such a beautiful spring day.
- 15) Call me in the middle of the week.



Name _____

Date _____

Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—2

Simplify the following sentences:

1) That baby kitten isn't able to find the place where his food bowl is.

2) At the time that you will be in Alaska you will then notice that there is ice that is blue.

3) When it is Monday morning, every Monday, I open my jar and fill it to the top with chocolates to give to my students.

4) I've tried and tried, but I can't figure out how to solve that puzzle.

5) The school where I was in high school at is in Alabama.

6) The character who is my favorite one is named Charlie.

7) The subject in school that I was the worst at was the history of the world.

8) I used to have a dog, but then he died, and ever since his death I'm heartbroken.

9) I've tried carrots cooked but I only like them when they're raw.

10) The teacher I have who teaches us about psychology is fantastic.



Say It Simply, Clearly, and Directly—2

Answer Key

Simplify the following sentences:

- 1) That kitten can't find his food bowl.
- 2) When you're in Alaska you'll see blue ice.
- 3) Every Monday morning I fill my jar with chocolates for my students.
- 4) I just can't solve that puzzle.
- 5) I went to high school in Alabama.
- 6) Charlie is my favorite character.
- 7) Global history was my worst subject.
- 8) Ever since my dog's death I'm heartbroken.
- 9) I like raw carrots, not cooked.
- 10) My psychology teacher is fantastic.





Writing Skills

Adding Meaning

Simplify and Elaborate

Available in the format below:



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Adding Meaning: Simplify and Elaborate

One of my favorite writing skills exercises! Your students will actually enjoy working on their language skills with this activity! Middle school and high school students learn that extra words do not always equal extra meaning, all while improving the descriptiveness and specificity of their writing. The worksheet begins with an example sentence: *I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage*, and then points out that all this means is I took my dog to the park. The next example is another long sentence about taking a dog to the park, but this one is packed with meaning, including descriptions of the dog, the park, the walk, and the day. For the writing exercise, students are tasked with simplifying other lengthy, comically complicated sentences down to the contained meanings, and then they roll a die to find out which elements (including adjectives, adverbs, places, times, more descriptive verbs, and more specific nouns) they must add to their simplified sentences. Included is an answer key that incorporates therapeutic notes.

Name _____

Date _____

Sentence Simplification and Elaboration

Directions: First, simplify the sentence.

Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

- 1) Adjective
- 2) Adverb
- 3) Descriptive verb
- 4) Specific noun
- 5) Time
- 6) Place

Example

Sentence: I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

Simplification: I took my dog to the park.

Elaboration: I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

Sentences

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die once)

Elaborate: (roll die twice more)



Sentence Simplification and Elaboration (cont.)

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die 3 times)

- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

Simplify: _____

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

Write your own simple sentence: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)



Sentence Simplification and Elaboration – Answer Key

(**Note:** will need a die) **Directions:** First, simplify the sentence. Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

- | | | |
|------------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1) Adjective | 2) Adverb | 3) Descriptive verb |
| 4) Specific noun | 5) Time | 6) Place |

Example

Sentence: I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

Simplification: I took my dog to the park.

Elaboration: I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

Note: It is very important to point out here to your students that the original sentence and the elaborated sentence are almost exactly the same length (in fact the original is slightly longer), and yet the elaborated sentence is chock full of extra meaning: how I walked, the size of the park, the location of the park, the breed of the dog, a description of the dog's personality, the weather, the season, and the time of day!

Sentences

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

Simplify: My stepfather woke me for school.

Elaborate: (roll die once)

For example, if a student rolled a one, she would need to add an adjective, and could write: My organized stepfather woke me for school.

Elaborate: (roll die two more times)

For example, if she then rolled a two and a five, she would need to add an adverb and a time, and could write: My organized stepfather gently woke me for school at a quarter to eight.

Note: Not all rolls will fit all sentences. For example, the verb “woke” is very straightforward and cannot be replaced by a more descriptive verb. In these cases, simply have the student roll again. Some rolls can be repeated. For example, a student can add more than one adjective to one sentence.

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.



Simplify: I lost my cat.

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

Simplify: My math teacher missed school yesterday because his wife had a baby.

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

Simplify: My purse was stolen on the subway.

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

Simplify: My boyfriend and I went to Hawaii for spring break.

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

Write your own simple sentence: _____

Elaborate: (roll die twice)





Written Elaboration

Answering Homework Questions

Available in the format below:



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Written Elaboration: Answering Questions

I developed this handout after the educational supervisor at my high school, for whom I have tremendous respect, shared her insight with me: perhaps some of our students are not comprehensively answering their homework questions because they don't know what amount of content is sufficient, not because they're not able to be comprehensive. This handout includes a discussion on the importance of elaborating and a rating scale for different answers to the same question. Middle school and high school students learn to distinguish between extra words and extra meaning, and learn to more fully answer homework and test questions.

Name _____

Date _____

Written Elaboration

Your teachers want you to **elaborate** when you are answering homework questions. They want to make sure that you understand the material.

Your teachers want you to **elaborate** when you are writing essays. They want to hear your descriptions, listen to your arguments supporting your opinions, and understand your thoughts.

Rate the elaboration of the following responses on a scale from 1-10.

(10 is best)

Note: To elaborate does not mean to increase the number of words (the length of the response), but rather to increase the number of relevant ideas and the level of complexity of those ideas.

Given a Global History homework question: **Why did Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany become allies during World War II?**

Responses:

_____ Similar ideas.

_____ They had similar ideologies.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II because they had very similar ideologies.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during the second World War which took place during the 1940's because although their ideologies went by different names ("Fascism" in Italy, "Nazism" in Germany, and "Militarism" in Japan), they were actually very similar.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II because their ideologies were very similar, and because they wanted to preserve their nations.

_____ Italy and Germany became allies during World War II for several reasons, including the similarity of their ideologies, their sense of nationalism and desire for power, and their view that the alliance could be a means of obtaining territory.





Writing Skills

Transition Words & Phrases

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Transition Words and Phrases

This writing skills worksheet targets the abilities to both comprehend and express the semantic relationship between ideas. Understanding how two ideas are related is integral to grasping the big picture. *Transition Words and Phrases* begins with a reference sheet that reinforces students' understanding of the following conceptual relationships: time, comparison, contrast, emphasis, conclusion, addition of information, clarification, and causality, while providing sample words and phrases that express those relationships. The three-page worksheet that follows presents two tasks. First, students are given the relationship between pairs of ideas and must combine those ideas using transition words and phrases from the reference sheet. Second, students must identify the relationship between more pairs of ideas before providing transition words and phrases to combine the ideas. *Transition Words and Phrases* increases students' awareness of conceptual relationships and provides them with straightforward practice expressing those relationships.

Name _____

Date _____

Transition Words and Phrases Reference Sheet

Choose your transitions based on the relationship between two ideas presented. Figure out what the second idea is doing in relation to the first, and use a transition for that type of relationship. Here are some examples of transitions for different relationships:

Shows Time

first second third then last soon later next while after afterward
during now until meanwhile finally as soon as suddenly before

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

like likewise also as while similarly in the same way as well

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

but however still yet although otherwise in contrast nevertheless
on the other hand even though while

Emphasizes a Point

again truly especially to repeat in fact to emphasize to highlight

Concludes or Summarizes

finally lastly as shown to sum up all in all in conclusion to conclude

Adds Information

again also as well next another and besides for instance for example
moreover along with in addition additionally other plus

Clarifies

in other words for instance that is specifically to clarify

Shows Causality

therefore because consequently as a consequence so since as a result



Name _____

Date _____

Transition Words and Phrases

Examples within Sentences

Directions: Notice the relationship between each pair of ideas.
Choose your transition words and phrases from the samples.

Shows Time

- 1) In the morning I brush my teeth _____ I take a shower.
- 2) Sam saw Melanie in the coffee shop one morning. _____ she passed him by on her way to class.

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

- 1) The world is a big place; _____ a new student can get lost at school.
- 2) I love to draw _____ my brother loves to create giant oil paintings.

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

- 1) The world is a big place; _____ you can feel safe with your circle of friends.
- 2) I love to draw _____ my brother hates art classes.

Emphasizes a Point

- 1) We all experience at least some heartache mixed in with the joy in life.
_____ no one gets through life without getting hurt.
- 2) I've been looking for him my whole life; _____ he's the one!

Concludes or Summarizes

- 1) _____, these are all the reasons to support solar energy.
- 2) _____, don't leave home without your phone charger.

Adds Information

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval.
_____, historians regard the Revolution as one of the most important events in human history.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. _____ my favorite movie was on television that night.



Clarifies

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval.
_____, there were many changes occurring in both French society and government during that time.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. _____, I knew Tom would be there and I didn't want to see him until we could resolve our issues.

Shows Causality

- 1) The food truck won't be here at all this week. _____ I'm going to have to pack a bag lunch for myself every day.
- 2) Yesterday I ran into an old friend from high school, so we went out for lunch and had a great time. _____ I've decided to do a better job of keeping in touch with my old friends.

Directions: For the following, first identify the relationship between each pair of ideas, and then combine each pair of ideas using a chosen transition word or phrase.

- 1) Sara lived 500 miles away from her family. She couldn't make it home for the holidays.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 2) Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. He packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 3) When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face. My cat can't be bothered.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____



- 4) Henry needed a vacation. He booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 5) Henry needed a vacation. He had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 6) The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. When I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 7) Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. My uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____

- 8) My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. She just doesn't have a sweet tooth.
Type of relationship: _____
Combine ideas using transition: _____



Transition Words and Phrases

Examples within Sentences

Answer Key

(Note: these are sample answers – many are possible)

Directions: Notice the relationship between each pair of ideas.
Choose your transition words and phrases from the samples.

Shows Time

- 1) In the morning I brush my teeth before I take a shower.
- 2) Sam saw Melanie in the coffee shop one morning. Later she passed him by on her way to class.

Compares Ideas (how they are alike)

- 1) The world is a big place; likewise a new student can get lost at school.
- 2) I love to draw in the same way my brother loves to create giant oil paintings.

Contrasts Ideas (how they are different)

- 1) The world is a big place; however you can feel safe with your circle of friends.
- 2) I love to draw even though my brother hates art classes.

Emphasizes a Point

- 1) We all experience at least some heartache mixed in with the joy in life. In fact no one gets through life without getting hurt.
- 2) I've been looking for him my whole life; truly he's the one!

Concludes or Summarizes

- 1) Finally, these are all the reasons to support solar energy.
- 2) In conclusion, don't leave home without your phone charger.

Adds Information

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval. Moreover, historians regard the Revolution as one of the most important events in human history.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. Additionally, my favorite movie was on television that night.



Clarifies

- 1) The French Revolution was a period of social and political upheaval. In other words, there were many changes occurring in both French society and government during that time.
- 2) I didn't want to go to the party. To clarify, I knew Tom would be there and I didn't want to see him until we could resolve our issues.

Shows Causality

- 1) The food truck won't be here at all this week. Therefore I'm going to have to pack a bag lunch for myself every day.
- 2) Yesterday I ran into an old friend from high school, so we went out for lunch and had a great time. As a result, I've decided to do a better job of keeping in touch with my old friends.

Directions: For the following, first identify the relationship between each pair of ideas, and then combine each pair of ideas using a chosen transition word or phrase.

(Note: some of these can convey more than one type of relationship, and there are many ways to combine each pair of ideas. Sample answers are given)

- 1) Sara lived 500 miles away from her family. She couldn't make it home for the holidays.
Type of relationship: Shows Causality
Combine ideas using transition: Sara couldn't make it home for the holidays since she lived 500 miles away from her family.
- 2) Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. He packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
Type of relationship: Shows Time
Combine ideas using transition: Every Sunday night Tom chooses his clothes for work the next day. Afterward, he packs a bag lunch and puts it into the refrigerator.
- 3) When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face. My cat can't be bothered.
Type of relationship: Contrasts Ideas
Combine ideas using transition: When I get home my dog always greets me, barking and licking my face; in contrast, my cat can't be bothered.



- 4) Henry needed a vacation. He booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.

Type of relationship: Shows Time

Combine ideas using transition: Henry needed a vacation. Finally, he booked his flight to Cancun, packed his bag, and found someone who could look after his cat while he was away.

- 5) Henry needed a vacation. He had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.

Type of relationship: Shows Causality

Combine ideas using transition: Henry needed a vacation since he had been working 60-hour weeks and was so stressed that he couldn't sleep at night.

- 6) The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. When I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.

Type of relationship: Contrasts Ideas

Combine ideas using transition: The open-air market was filled with so many different sounds: the clinking of coins, children shouting, the vendors ringing bells. On the other hand, when I entered the museum, you could hear a pin drop.

- 7) Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. My uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.

Type of relationship: Compares Ideas

Combine ideas using transition: Cheetahs are typically solitary animals; while males sometimes live with their brothers, females raise cubs by themselves for one year. Similarly, my uncle Bill has lived alone his whole adult life and says he prefers to be by himself.

- 8) My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. She just doesn't have a sweet tooth.

Type of relationship: Clarifies

Combine ideas using transition: My neighbor's daughter doesn't like cake, pie, ice cream, candy, chocolate, or even sugary cereals. Specifically, she just doesn't have a sweet tooth.





Writing Skills

Perspective Consistency

Available in the format below:



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Perspective Consistency

One of the most common mistakes I see in my students' writing, especially in their persuasive essays, is perspective inconsistency. They will start off writing to the general "you", such as in "roller coasters give you a feeling of fun", and then switch to "one", such as in "because one's body releases endorphins", and may switch again to "we", as in "and that is why we love roller coasters!" This activity works directly on perspective consistency by requiring students to choose a perspective, and then stick to it by modifying a given essay. After students make their modifications in writing and we have reviewed their word choices, I like to give them extra practice by having them read the essay aloud, changing nouns, pronouns, and verbs accordingly, after choosing a second perspective.

Name _____

Date _____

Perspective Consistency

It is important to keep your perspective consistent in your writing. Switching perspectives is one of the most common writing mistakes. When writing a persuasive essay, decide which perspective you want to use. **Then stick to it.**

Directions: The following persuasive essay has inconsistent perspectives. Choose one of the perspectives below. Then cross out all nouns or pronouns inconsistent with the perspective you've chosen and replace them with consistent nouns and pronouns.

(Note: also change corresponding verbs and nouns as needed.)

(Also: keep the first two sentences intact as they provide background facts preceding any opinions.)

- I, me, my, mine, myself
- you, your, yours, yourself, (yourselves--if implying the general "you")
- teenagers, they, their, theirs, them, themselves
- teenagers, we, our, ours, us, ourselves

A new technology, Global Positioning System (GPS), which allows parents to track down their children, has caused a little controversy. Using GPS, parents would be able to pinpoint their kids' location, sometimes without the kid even knowing. This new technology has caused a controversy because teenagers may not want to have your parents tracking oneself like some escaped pet, and it may make you feel that one's parents may not completely trust you. But your parents may feel that it is by all means necessary, as the parents may think it could help them if I was lost or in some sort of danger.

There is an old saying that goes "it's better to be safe than sorry", which may apply to the use of tracking devices in teens' cell phones. You may feel like it is an invasion of privacy, but what if, for example, one was kidnapped, lost, or stuck in a bad part of a town? All of those situations are much bigger problems than just having my parents knowing where I am. Your parents will be able to help you if one finds oneself in any of those situations.



One must consider how one's parents may feel about having no idea where you are. Some may say that using a GPS to track my whereabouts is spying, and that it shows that your parents don't trust you, but one must also consider that perhaps you're not so trustworthy in the first place. I may be going to a place where my parents told me not to go, a place where you may be in danger. If one is going out and your parents are expecting you to call by a certain time, and you don't, and one isn't responding to calls or text messages, then my parents could use the tracking device to find out where I am.

Another advantage of having a tracking device in my cell phone involves peer pressure. If, for example, your friends are pressuring you to go somewhere you don't want to go to do something that one doesn't want to do, I could just say "I can't because my parents are tracking me through my cell phone". One could avoid looking "uncool" or "afraid" by using the excuse that you can't go only because your parents would find out. Teenagers will often respect the "I'll get in trouble with my parents" excuse.

Finally, if you're not going anywhere you're not supposed to be, than why would one mind one's parents knowing where one is? There are several important advantages to my parents using a GPS to track me, and my safety is chief among them. Who knows—maybe when one is an adult and has elderly parents who are at risk, you will want to track your parents using a GPS to make sure they stay safe!



Perspective Consistency—Answer Key

Answer Sample: Perspective of teenagers, they, their, theirs, them, themselves

A new technology, Global Positioning System (GPS), which allows parents to track down their children, has caused a little controversy. Using GPS, parents would be able to pinpoint their kids' location, sometimes without the kid even knowing. This new technology has caused a controversy because teenagers may not want to have **their (your)** parents tracking **them (oneself)** like some escaped pet, and it may make **them (you)** feel that **their (one's)** parents may not completely trust **them (you)**. But **their (your)** parents may feel that it is by all means necessary, as the parents may think it could help them if **their teenager (I)** was lost or in some sort of danger.

There is an old saying that goes “it’s better to be safe than sorry”, which may apply to the use of tracking devices in teens’ cell phones. **Teenagers (You)** may feel like it is an invasion of privacy, but what if, for example, **they were (one was)** kidnapped, lost, or stuck in a bad part of a town? All of those situations are much bigger problems than just having **their (my)** parents knowing where **they are (I am)**. **Their (Your)** parents will be able to help **them (you)** if they find **themselves (one finds oneself)** in any of those situations.

Teenagers (One) must consider how **their (one's)** parents may feel about having no idea where **they (you)** are. Some may say that using a GPS to track **teenagers' (my)** whereabouts is spying, and that it shows that **their (your)** parents don't trust **them (you)**, but **they (one)** must also consider that perhaps **they're (you're)** not so trustworthy in the first place. **They (I)** may be going to a place where **their (my)** parents told **them (me)** not to go, a place where **they (you)** may be in danger. If **teenagers are (one is)** going out and **their (your)** parents are expecting **them (you)** to call by a certain time, and **they (you)** don't, and **they aren't (one isn't)** responding to calls or text messages, then **their (my)** parents could use the tracking device to find out where **they are (I am)**.



Another advantage of having a tracking device in **their (my)** cell phones involves peer pressure. If, for example, **their (your)** friends are pressuring **them (you)** to go somewhere **they (you)** don't want to go to do something that **they don't (one doesn't)** want to do, **they (I)** could just say "I can't because my parents are tracking me through my cell phone". **Teenagers (One)** could avoid looking "uncool" or "afraid" by using the excuse that **they (you)** can't go only because **their (your)** parents would find out. **Other teenagers** will often respect the "I'll get in trouble with my parents" excuse. *(Note: I have found most of my students do not understand the main idea of this paragraph. I always check to make sure they've understood the point made before moving on.)*

Finally, if **teenagers are (you're)** not going anywhere **they're (you're)** not supposed to be, than why would **they (one)** mind **their (one's)** parents knowing where **they are (one is)**? There are several important advantages to **their (my)** parents using a GPS to track **them (me)**, and **their (my)** safety is chief among them. Who knows—maybe when **they are adults (one is an adult)** and **have (has)** elderly parents who are at risk, **they (you)** will want to track **their (your)** parents using a GPS to make sure **their parents (they)** stay safe!





Writing Skills

Passive and Active Voice

Available in the format below:



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Passive and Active Voice

Using the active voice is such an important skill for strong and effective writing. Unfortunately, very few students seem to know about the difference between passive and active voice. This worksheet begins with a clear explanation and discussion of active and passive voice, and follows with two brief exercises, the first requiring the identification of voice and the second requiring the transformation of voice within sentences from passive to active while retaining all the meaning. An answer key is included.

Name _____

Date _____

Passive/Active Voice

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

The cat was chased by the dog.

The pill is swallowed by me every day.

The marathon was finished by Lucy.

Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version: “Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: write in the active voice!

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

_____ The boy was followed by the goat.

_____ The goat followed the boy.

_____ The bee stung the baby.

_____ My cat always scratches our dining room table.

_____ When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

_____ The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

_____ I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

_____ We ate every cookie in the house.

_____ Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. _____

The table was cut in half by that man. _____

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. _____

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. _____

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. _____



Passive/Active Voice—Answer Key

Sentences are characterized as being “passive” or “active”.

We say they are “in passive voice” or “in active voice”.

In active voice, something is doing something to something. Examples of active voice:

The dog chased the cat.

I swallow the pill every day.

Lucy finished the marathon.

In passive voice, something is having something done to it. Examples of passive voice:

The cat was chased by the dog.

The pill is swallowed by me every day.

The marathon was finished by Lucy.

Why is it important to identify whether a sentence is in the passive or active voice?

It's important because **most of the time you should write in the active voice! Active voice sentences make your writing sound strong.**

Of course, sometimes using passive voice sentences is the better choice. For example, the first sentence on this worksheet could be characterized as passive. The active version:

“Being passive or active characterizes sentences” sounds awkward.

But most of the time: **write in the active voice!**

Directions: Identify the following sentences as passive (P) or active (A).

 P The boy was followed by the goat.

 A The goat followed the boy.

 A The bee stung the baby.

 A My cat always scratches our dining room table.

 A When I was little, my brothers tickled me every chance they got.

 P The next song will be sung by a newcomer to our stage.

 A I finished all the homework that my teachers assigned me.

 A We ate every cookie in the house.

 P Feta cheese, pita, hummus, and pears were the foods always bought by Henry.

Directions: Change the following sentences from passive to active without losing or changing the meaning.

All the balls were thrown by the girl. The girl threw all the balls.

The table was cut in half by that man. That man cut the table in half.

My favorite book was written by Margaret Atwood. Margaret Atwood wrote my favorite book.

A little mouse was let go by the kind lion. The kind lion let a little mouse go.

My heart was broken by a smooth talker. A smooth talker broke my heart.





Writing Skills

Character Descriptions

Available in the format below:



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Character Descriptions

This writing activity is user-friendly for both students and teachers/tutors/speech language pathologists. It not only teaches students how to write a sophisticated and comprehensive character description essay, but also shows students how they can infer information about a character's personality and perspective from that character's actions and dialogue. Given a short novel excerpt, students are first tasked with attributing adjectives to one of the characters by analyzing his actions and words, and then they use those adjectives to write a character description by following a written scaffold. This strategy and scaffold can apply to almost any character analysis writing assignment. Included are extensive notes on the provided excerpt and a sample character analysis essay following the scaffold to aid in instruction.

Name _____

Date _____

Novel Excerpt from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

Background: Louisa and Patrick live in England and are girlfriend and boyfriend. Louisa has just lost her job and is looking for some sympathy from Patrick.

Excerpt:

He was down at the athletics club, as I had known he would be Mondays to Thursdays, regular as a station timetable, Patrick was there in the gym or running in circles around the floodlit track.

“Run with me,” he puffed, as he got closer. His breath came in pale clouds. “I’ve got four laps to go.”

“I wasn’t expecting you.”

“I got fed up at home. I thought maybe we could do something.”

He looked sideways at me. There was a fine film of sweat on his face. “The sooner you get another job, babe, the better.”

“It’s all of twenty-four hours since I lost the last one. Am I allowed to just be a bit miserable and floppy? You know, just for today?”

“But you’ve got to look at the positive side. You knew you couldn’t stay at that place forever. You want to move upward, onward.” Patrick had been named Stortfold Young Entrepreneur of the Year two years previously, and had not yet quite recovered from the honor. . . . “Being made redundant can change people’s lives, Lou.” He glanced at his watch, checking his lap time. “What do you want to do? You could retrain. I’m sure they do a grant for people like you.”

“People like me?”

“People looking for a new opportunity. What do you want to be? You could be a beautician. You’re pretty enough.” He nudged me as we ran, as if I should be grateful for the compliment.

“You know my beauty routine. Soap, water, the odd paper bag.”

Patrick was beginning to look exasperated.

I was starting to lag behind. I hate running. I hated him for not slowing down.



Notes for Novel Excerpt from *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes

Background: Louisa and Patrick live in England and are girlfriend and boyfriend. Louisa has just lost her job and is looking for some sympathy from Patrick. ***Here you can discuss perspective taking by examining Louisa's point of view.***

Excerpt:

He was down at the athletics club, as I had known he would be Mondays to Thursdays, regular as a station timetable, ***(discuss meaning of "regular as a station timetable")*** Patrick was there in the gym or running in circles around the floodlit track. (rigid)

"Run with me," he puffed, as he got closer. His breath came in pale clouds. "I've got four laps to go." (rigid/inflexible)

"I wasn't expecting you."

"I got fed up at home. I thought maybe we could do something."

He looked sideways at me. There was a fine film of sweat on his face. "The sooner you get another job, babe, the better." (unsympathetic/pushy)

"It's all of twenty-four hours since I lost the last one. Am I allowed to just be a bit miserable and floppy? You know, just for today?" ***(Discuss how she's looking for a little sympathy, how she's asking for a little time to feel sorry for herself.)***

(unsympathetic/insensitive) "But you've got to look at the positive side. You knew you couldn't stay at that place forever. You want to move upward, onward." Patrick had been named Stortfold Young Entrepreneur ***(define "entrepreneur")*** of the Year two years previously, and had not yet quite recovered from the honor. ***(Discuss what "not yet quite recovered from the honor" means)*** (egotistical/conceited) ... "Being made redundant can change people's lives, Lou." He glanced at his watch, checking his lap time. (rigid) "What do you want to do? You could retrain. I'm sure they do a grant for people like you." (condescending)

"People like me?"

"People looking for a new opportunity. What do you want to be? You could be a beautician. You're pretty enough." He nudged me as we ran, as if I should be grateful for the compliment. (condescending)

"You know my beauty routine. Soap, water, the odd paper bag." ***(Discuss what Louisa means by this, and what it reveals about her character.)***

Patrick was beginning to look exasperated. (impatient/unsympathetic)

I was starting to lag behind. I hate running. I hated him for not slowing down. (rigid/unchanging/uncaring)



Name _____

Date _____

Analyzing Literature: Character Description

Directions: Write a paragraph in which you comprehensively describe a literary character (Note: Being “comprehensive” means giving a good amount of information. Go into some depth with your analysis.)

Start with:

“In the excerpt from the novel _____ by _____,
(title) (author)
_____ is depicted as _____,
(character’s name) (adjective) (adjective)
and _____.”
(adjective)

Continue with:

“One example of _____’s _____ is when/how ... ”
(name) (adjective turned into noun)
(be comprehensive!)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ... ” *(be comprehensive)*

“An example of his/her _____ is when/how ... ”
(adjective turned into noun)
(be comprehensive)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ... ” *(be comprehensive)*

“Lastly, an example of his/her _____ is when/how”
(adjective turned into noun)
(be you-know-what)

“This demonstrates/reveals/shows ... ” *(you know the drill!)*



Analyzing Literature: Character Description Sample

Write a paragraph in which you comprehensively describe a literary character.

Start with:

In the excerpt from the novel *Me Before You* by Jojo Moyes, Patrick is depicted as rigid, egotistical, and condescending.

Continue with:

One example of Patrick's rigidity is when his girlfriend goes to find him at the athletics club and knew that he would be there because his schedule was as "regular as a station timetable". **This demonstrates** how Patrick sticks to his schedule so consistently that his girlfriend knew exactly where he would be at a certain time. The phrase "regular as a station timetable" shows how the author compares Patrick to a printed schedule that follows arrival and departure times to the minute, thereby emphasizing Patrick's predictability and rigidity.

An example of his egotistical nature is when it is revealed that he won an award for his town's Entrepreneur of the Year two years earlier and "had not yet quite recovered from the honor", meaning his head was still swelled from receiving the award. **This shows** how his response to winning an award is to feel like he is so great. In fact, during Patrick's conversation with his girlfriend Louisa around the running track, each time he gives her advice it seems that he thinks he knows best, and feels that since he is successful in his business ventures he is superior to her.

Lastly, an example of his condescension is how Patrick talks to Louisa about getting a new job. He says, "you could retrain. I'm sure they do a grant for people like you", making it sound as though he knows better than she does, and also as though she belongs to an inferior class. He also states, "you could be a beautician. You're pretty enough." Telling your girlfriend she's "pretty enough" is not much of a compliment, and **this shows** Patrick's condescending attitude toward Louisa, since he appears to think she would be grateful for the lukewarm compliment!





Writing Skills

Movie Reviews

Available in the format below:



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Movie Reviews

Writing a movie review is often a motivating task for students since they get to choose a movie for which they have strong feelings, whether positive or negative. At one of my students' insistence, I actually watched *Sharknado* (don't do it!) This straightforward, easy-to-follow outline provides students with a scaffold from which they can write their own movie reviews. An introduction paragraph, a plot summary and characters paragraph, a critique paragraph, and a conclusion paragraph are outlined and broken down. The framework includes examples of phrasing used to convey opinions, begin plot summaries, and provide recommendations. For their critique, students choose which film aspects to discuss from a list that includes musical score, character development, special effects, realism, cinematography, and more. Includes therapeutic notes.

Name _____

Date _____

Movie Review of _____

*Give one to five stars/popcorn bags/soda cups/smiley faces

Outline

1) Intro

a) your like/dislike

(ex: *"this is my favorite movie of all time ..."* or *"I can't believe I sat through the whole thing ..."*)

b) background info

include genre, release date, director, main actors

may include popularity, box office info (i.e. \$\$\$), and/or other detail

2) Basic info

a) plot summary (keep it super brief!!)

(ex: *"the movie tells the story of ..."* or *"the film follows ..."*)

b) characters

3) Your critique

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

(Choose from: character relationships, character development, character transformation, inspirational story, thought-provoking story, writing quality, dialogue, humor, action, horror, acting quality, cinematography, pacing, special effects, animation, musical score, songs, bad taste, gore, realism)

4) Conclusion

a) summary

b) recommendation (who would like/dislike it)

(ex: *"horror fans will ..."* or *"if you like sappy romances you ..."*)



Therapeutic Notes

When I do this activity with my students, we often start by analyzing one or two movie reviews together, noting the underlying structure of each. Many reviews follow the basic organization of this outline.

Also, students typically require definitions and explanations for some of the features from which they will choose for their critique discussion. In particular, I always need to explain “pacing”, “musical score”, and the difference between “character development” (how the director lets the audience learn more about a particular character) and “character transformation” (how a character changes throughout the film). I like to give lots of examples to accompany definitions. To demonstrate an example of good cinematography, I show a trailer for the movie *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Check it out and you’ll see what I mean!

Lastly, I encourage my students to choose a film they are passionate about: one they either loved or hated.





Writing Skills

Reader Presupposition

Complaint Letters

Available in the format below:



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Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

This activity is unlike any I've found available for perspective taking and is one of my very favorites! It addresses the intricacies of writing while keeping your reader in mind, and the all-important skill of modifying your wording to give another person a targeted impression of you, all while working on a practical high-level life skill. It also combines writing skills and social skills. It begins with an actual complaint letter email requesting monetary compensation, extensive therapy notes on how to conduct the activity (including sentence by sentence interpretation of the effectiveness of the sample complaint letter's wording), and novel situations from which students must write their own complaint letters. When writing their complaint letters, students are tasked with choosing both semantic content and wording that will give their readers two targeted impressions of them: honest and reasonable. I have watched many of my students notably improve their perspective taking skills to a more sophisticated level from this activity. (Plus teenagers love being given not only permission, but also the expectation, to complain!)

Name _____

Date _____

Sample Letter

To Whom It May Concern,

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price.

I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. And, it was your staff's mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother's daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkin



Therapeutic Notes

Reader Presupposition: Complaint Letters

I use this activity to work on listener/reader presupposition. In earlier therapy sessions, I've discussed with my students the importance of always considering your communicative partner's perspective and adjusting your words and behaviors accordingly for two reasons. I explain that it's important to be altruistic and be kind to others, and it's also important to look out for yourself by giving others the best possible impression of you. This activity focuses on the latter.

I start this activity off by telling my students that this is an actual complaint email I sent (I've used pseudonyms here). I explain that whenever we speak or write to someone, we need to consider how our words affect them, and in cases where we are making a request we need to particularly consider how everything we say gives the other person an impression of us. In this situation, where I am requesting compensation, there are two impressions of myself I want to give: honest and reasonable.

To Whom It May Concern, (I explain to my students that since the Rolling Thunder Inn is a hotel chain, I looked up an email address on their website for customer service. Also "To Whom It May Concern" is the appropriate opening to use when you don't know the name of the person you are addressing.)

I stayed at the Rolling Thunder Inn South in Boise, Idaho last week, from April 16–21. My brother and sister-in-law stayed in the room next to mine for the same five nights. My bill may be under my brother's name: William Stevens. *(I explain that I provide these specific pieces of information because the first thing the person who receives this email will do is check Rolling Thunder Inn's records to verify my stay there.)* When we checked in Sunday night, April 16, we were quoted a price of \$79.99. All three of us remember that quote. I specifically remember thinking, "okay, my total will be \$400 for the five nights". *(The previous two sentences help make me seem **honest**; by discovering these details about my thought process, the reader can now relate to my story.)* The morning we checked out, our bills reflected the price of \$89.99 per night. We brought this discrepancy *(I make sure my students know this word and see how it makes note of the staff's mistake)* to the attention of the hotel's staff, but were told that since we had signed a paper the night we arrived that had the \$89.99 price on it, we were responsible for that price. *(I explain that the first paragraph should give all the background information, and must be clear while providing specific information.)*



I am asking that we receive a refund for the difference between our quoted price and the price we were charged for two reasons. *(I emphasize that the second paragraph begins with my request.)* First, although I understand that a signature is legally binding, (I ask my students why they think I provided evidence here against my position. We connect this technique to writing a persuasive essay where you choose to mention an argument your opposition would propose and then dispute it. But, much more importantly, I explain that admitting evidence against my position makes me come across as **reasonable**.) I would like you to consider that we arrived at the hotel close to midnight after driving for fourteen hours, and were extremely motivated to finish the check-in process quickly since we were all exhausted, and did not notice the small printed price on the form we signed. *(I tell my students that here is where I try the “pity approach”, and I often read the preceding lines in a pitiful tone for their amusement. I also point out that I made sure to mention the small size of the printed price.)* And, it was your staff’s mistake to print a different price on that form than the price they quoted to us seconds earlier. *(I note that I made sure to point out the error the hotel staff made.)* Second, my brother, sister-in-law, and I have all stayed at your hotel previously. My brother’s daughter (my niece) lives two miles from your hotel, and so we planned to continue staying at your hotel every time we visit her in Boise. If we do not receive a refund of \$50 each (one refund for me and one for my brother and sister-in-law) we will not stay at your hotel again. Your hotel will essentially lose hundreds or thousands of dollars over time if you choose not to honor the price you quoted us the night we arrived. *(I explain to my students that here is where I threaten the hotel chain, and that it’s okay to make this type of threat, that usually a monetary threat is the type of threat a company will respond to, and that it’s important to word it politely. I also discuss that my use of the word “honor” is a psychological strategy that could make the receiver of this email feel dishonorable if he or she doesn’t grant me the refund.)*

Thank you for your consideration of my request. *(Again, I emphasize the importance of being polite: because it’s good to be kind to others [altruism], and because it makes me come across as **reasonable** which would make the email’s receiver more likely to give me a refund [self-interest]).*

Sincerely,

Lisa Thompkins



When we finish I ask my students if they think I received the refund. (I did!) One of my students was clever enough to deduce that I had received the refund because, as he put it, “if you hadn’t, you wouldn’t have had us do this activity.”

The next activity is to have students write their own letters, keeping in mind their goals: to describe the given situations clearly, and to come across as **honest** and **reasonable**. Included are two given situations.

Notes for California Pizza Kitchen complaint letter:

Students must choose whether they want to ask for \$200 to replace the boots or \$35 to have them cleaned. We discuss the advantage and disadvantage of each choice:

Asking for \$200 — The restaurant chain would be less likely to proffer the higher sum of money, but then you would be able to replace the boots.

Asking for \$35 — The restaurant chain would be more likely to proffer this small sum of money, but your boots may not end up salvaged.

Notes for Green Valley movie theater complaint letter:

Students must choose what kind of compensation they want to request.

Since it’s implied in the situation that the student and his/her friend do not plan to return to Green Valley anytime soon, I emphasize the importance of including in the complaint letter the fact that the town of Green Valley is a four-hour car ride away and its local movie theater is not part of a chain near their hometown; hence, movie coupons would be valueless.



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your family celebrated your mom's birthday at the California Pizza Kitchen in Westbury, Long Island this past Saturday night. During the meal, your waiter accidentally spilled a glass of Coke on you, soaking your shirt and pants. He apologized profusely, and the manager came over. She offered to pay to have your clothes dry cleaned, but you declined since you were wearing a "run-of-the-mill" flannel top and old jeans. Also, you thought the Coke would come out when you washed your clothes, and it did. So instead the manager gave you and your family free desserts at the end of the meal.

However, what you didn't realize until you got home later that evening was that you were wearing your new suede boots, and the Coke that spilled onto your boots ruined the suede. You feel you should be compensated, because it was the waiter's fault, not yours, that the suede got ruined. Your boots cost \$200 and you still have the receipt. You called two different dry cleaners and were told by both that it would cost \$35 to have your boots cleaned, but there was no guarantee that the suede could be salvaged.

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)



Name _____

Date _____

Directions: Write a two-paragraph letter of complaint/request.

Your situation:

You and your friend took a weekend trip to the small town of Green Valley. You left Friday evening and drove four hours to get to the Green Valley Motel. You had a good time, visiting shops and eating out, until Sunday afternoon when you and your friend went to the local movie theater and bought two overpriced tickets (\$21 each!) to see the latest action movie. For the first five minutes of the movie the sound wasn't working, and then for the next twenty minutes, although the sound was on, there was a vertical line going down the middle of the screen. By then you both felt the movie experience had been ruined, and you went to the box office to get a refund. The teenager in the box office said that he could not give you a refund, and that you would have to speak to the manager who was currently at another movie theater, a fifteen-minute drive away.

You drove to the other theater to speak to the manager, but much to your surprise he said he wouldn't give you a refund, and would only offer you each a coupon to see a different movie. He wouldn't give in, even after you and your friend explained that you had already seen every other movie playing at the two small theaters, and you couldn't use the coupon another day since you were leaving Green Valley that evening and lived four hours away!

Write the letter:

The first paragraph should describe the events. (*what happened*)

The second paragraph should start with your request for compensation, and then should include the reasons why you believe your request should be granted. (*why they should give you what you are requesting*)

