Teaching the Writing Process to Adult Learners

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Teaching the Writing Process to Adult Learners

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*CAELA – the Center for Adult English Language Acquisition

Warm-up Activity

Readiness for Teaching Writing: KWL Chart

Fill in columns 1 and 2. Discuss your answers with the person on your right. Did you find any commonalities? Share with the group as time permits. Be prepared to return to column 3 at the end of the workshop.

1. What do I **KNOW** about teaching writing?	2. What do I **WANT TO KNOW** about teaching writing?	3. What did I **LEARN** about teaching writing?

Workshop Goal

To increase skills in teaching the process of writing to adult learners.

Workshop Objectives:

1. Understand each step of the writing process

2. Describe typical challenges occurring with adult learners at each step of the writing process.

3. Share teaching strategies and activities for each step in the writing process.

Agenda

I. Introduction and Warm up
II. Pre-writing and the first draft
- Break -
III. Revising
- Lunch -
IV. Editing & Publishing
V. Evaluation of Learner Achievement
- Break -
VI. Wrap up and Evaluation

Writing and the Adult English Language Learner

Introduction

Whether we are conscious of it or not, everything we as ESL teachers do in the classroom inevitably reflects our own understandings and beliefs of how language and the learning process work. This holds true in the writing classroom as well. Based on our own experiences as writers as well as our understandings of scholarly research on writing, we develop beliefs about how people learn to write, and these in turn affect our decisions on the types of writing tasks we assign, the guidance we provide our students as they are writing, and the kind of feedback we give. While much of this occurs without us consciously thinking about it, it is important from time to time to review the research that is being conducted on writing in the ESL classroom, and consider how we might revise our beliefs and our teaching practices accordingly.

This background information on teaching writing begins with a brief overview of ways that writing has been explored by researchers. It then focuses on the process approach to writing as a practical, appropriate model to use when helping adult English language learners improve their writing skills.

Overview of Recent Writing Research

Writing research has been grouped according to its focus on three distinct yet interrelated aspects of writing: the writing texts themselves, the composing process, and the ways that people interact with their sociocultural contexts when writing (Cumming, 1998). The following are descriptions of these three research focuses.

Focus on the writing texts: The first group refers to those studies that focus on the texts produced, for example, contrastive rhetorical analyses of how text forms differ across languages. Contrastive rhetorical analyses find their basis in an idea put forth by Kaplan (1966), who argued that writers of different language and cultural backgrounds have different expectations about the forms that texts should take. For example, while English readers expect to see the argument of a piece stated upfront and then evidenced in subsequent paragraphs, a Chinese reader would be more familiar with a text that gradually pulls together pieces of evidence and concludes with the final argument—almost like a punchline. An example of a contrastive rhetoric study would be one looking at the differences between Korean and English speakers' research paper introductions (Lee, 2001). (See Connor 1996 for general information on contrastive rhetoric and as recent examples of contrastive rhetoric studies see Levi, 2004 or Park, 2005). Other text focused studies include genre-based studies exploring the features of specific text types. A genre is basically a text type with a commonly expected structure. For example, we would all recognize the difference between a newspaper editorial, a business letter, and a book review, because these three genres have distinct formats, purposes and commonly used language forms. Genre analyses explore particular genres, such as research papers, to identify the distinguishing features and to contribute to ways of teaching students how

to write these same genres. (See Swales, 1990 as a leading theoretical work on genre analysis, and examples of such studies in journals such as *English for Specific Purposes* or *English for Academic Purposes*).

Focus on the composing process: Research studies focusing on the composing process often locate their theoretical basis in the works of Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981), and their model of what writers do when they compose in their native language. Turning to second language writers, works about the composing process can range widely, from those looking at the differences between writing in a first and second language (e.g. McDonough & McDonough, 2001), to those looking at strategy use such as using graphic organizers while composing (e.g. Tsai, 2004). Still others have focused on particular aspects of the writing process such as revising and exploring how second language writers cope with it (e.g. Williams, 2004; Takagaki, 2003).

Focus on the ways writers interact with their sociocultural contexts: The third group of studies is made up of a broad range of research that attempts to consider the ways in which sociocultural contexts affect writers, their writing processes, and the texts they produce. These studies, the volume of which has soared in recent years, reject the basic premise that we can understand writing by only looking at texts and the mechanics of how people produce them, without also considering how we are affected by social issues when we write. Social issues include our personal backgrounds (e.g. is writing a common practice in our family?), our position vis-à-vis the text's intended audience (e.g. in a workplace situation, do we 'outrank' the reader or visa versa?) and our ideas about how we want others to see us (e.g. are we trying to impress the reader with our vast knowledge of a certain topic? For more on this last aspect and similar questions of social identity, see Ullman, 1997.) Drawing on all of these issues, we see works on how writing reflects the ways students become members of or 'socialize into' various academic disciplines (e.g. Karr, 2003; Krase, 2003), works on the conflicts students face when learning to write in academic contexts (e.g. Braxley, 2005; Curry & Lillis, 2004; Mathews, 2004; Rolon, 2004), and studies on how various aspects of culture such as whether the learner's ethnic background is one that generally places more value on oral or written expression may affect writing (e.g. Dong, 2005; Harklau, 2003; Murie, Collins, & Detzner, 2004; Orr, 2005).

As with research in other specific language skills or general ESL teaching practices, this overview of the research on writing automatically highlights the need for more research to be conducted specifically with adult second language writers in different contexts. Research on second language writing is expanding rapidly, but much of still tends to focus on academic writing at the undergraduate and graduate student levels. One needs only to skim through the annotated bibliography of current writing-related research provided quarterly by the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, to see that scores of new studies are being conducted and published each year. Unfortunately, of the 80 studies listed in two recent issues of the journal—December 2004, 13(4) and March 2005, 14(1)—only three (Currie & Cray, 2004; Rahilly, 2004; Rolon, 2004) are connected with adult ESL learners. While the findings of other writing research may hold insights for

language learners in community based programs or in community colleges, it can not on its own explain or address all the needs of adult ESL writers.

Process Writing

Process writing as an approach used in the classroom draws primarily on the findings of studies in the second group -- those with a focus on the composing process --outlined above. The approach takes into consideration research showing what proficient writers do when writing, and provides a framework for guiding student writers through similar steps. These five steps involve some form of the following:

1) a *pre-writing activity* in which learners work together to generate ideas about a topic and organize those ideas, perhaps through the use of graphic organizers;

2) writing a *first draft*, in which the focus is on putting the ideas down on paper without concern for grammatical or spelling errors;

3) *revising* the draft, often done in pairs or small groups, with a focus on the appropriateness of the ideas and the clarity of their organization;

4) *editing* the draft, with a focus on grammar, spelling, punctuation, transition words (first, next), and signal words (for example, another reason is). The complexity of the concepts to be edited for should depend on the level of the students and on the elements they know or have studied, and the use of an editing checklist for students is recommended.

5) *publishing* or in some way sharing the work with a wider audience. This may mean the rest of the class, students' family or friends, the wider community, or even an internet audience. Publishing can take the form of displays on classroom walls, compilations into books, newsletters or newspapers, or websites.

Process writing can also be used in conjunction with other approaches popular among writing theorists, such as *genre theory* (see for example Spiegel, 1999). This approach to teaching writing involves exposing students to a particular genre or type of written text, for example, letters, reports, email messages or descriptive essays. Students are asked first to analyze those texts to discern the common characteristics that distinguish them as belonging to that genre, and then to produce examples of that genre themselves. When using a genre approach it is possible to apply process writing principles. For example, having analyzed the key characteristics of a genre, writers can then organize a text of their own according to these characteristics. The rewriting, editing and publishing steps of a process approach can still take place regardless of the genre being studied.

Teachers could also use process writing in combination with other types of writing, such as *free writing* in the form of dialogue journals where learners communicate regularly in writing with the teacher or a writing partner. Dialogue journals are ongoing conversations

that allow learners to express themselves in writing without being focused on accuracy (Kim, 2005; Peyton, 2000; Peyton & Staton, 1996). Other forms of free writing might include writing a reaction to a piece of music, a picture, a movie, or a field trip. While such texts are generally not corrected or shared with others, they can provide a means for exploring ideas to be later developed into more extensive writing tasks that incorporate revising, editing, and publishing elements. Similarly, teachers could choose to combine process writing with a *language experience approach* (LEA) to writing (Taylor, 1992). Applying an LEA approach generally involves having learners orally describe an experience and the teacher transcribing it. The resulting texts can then be used for subsequent activities, including process writing steps of revising, editing and publishing.

Finally, while process writing is perhaps most commonly associated with preparing students for academic writing styles from paragraphs through full essays or research papers, and as such is particularly valuable for helping adult ESL learners needing to transition to community college or other academic contexts, it need not only be focused on academic subjects. The topics selected for writing can evolve around practical issues relevant to adult ESL learners' daily lives, such as completing forms for immigration, banking, insurance, credit cards or driver's licenses, taking phone messages, and writing thank you notes, writing lists, letters, and resumes—what the authors of a recent Canadian study termed "'real world' writing" (Currie & Cray, 2004, p. 114). The topics can also reflect the personal side of the learners' daily lives and provide them an opportunity to write about their past and current experiences, ideas, and memories. Making texts and topics such as these the focus of process writing is another way of providing the language practice desired by adult learners, while also linking writing to the social aspects of their daily lives. (For more ideas on writing activities with adult ESL learners, see Bello, 1997).

Conclusion

The process writing approach has not been without its critics, generally those who note its failure to consider sociocultural issues (e.g. Kent, 1999; Trimbur, 1994 and several works in a special issue of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12(1), February 2003). Nevertheless, the steps involved in this approach provide a practical framework for teaching writing to all levels of adult ESL learners, from those with only the most basic of literacy skills to those transitioning to college level courses. Moreover, the nature of the steps of process writing can further serve our adult ESL learner population in a number of ways. Process writing can support a less stressful writing experience because of the emphasis on valuing the writer's ideas, not solely his or her knowledge of writing mechanics. It can teach life skills by practicing strategies of improving one's own writing, such as how to revise and edit one's work, and it can help build confidence by giving voice to learners' ideas and showing them that they too can ultimately produce written texts worthy of sharing with others.

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Writing and the Adult English Language Learner

Focus Questions

1. What are the primary differences between the three types of writing research that are discussed in the background reading?

2. List some examples of social factors and describe how they might affect the ways we write.

3. List the five main steps in a process writing approach and describe how each one is generally conducted.

4. Describe how a teacher might incorporate elements of the free writing, genre based, and language experience approaches into a process writing approach.

5. Based on ideas from the text as well as on your own experiences as a teacher, what are some ways that a process writing approach can benefit adult ESL learners in particular?

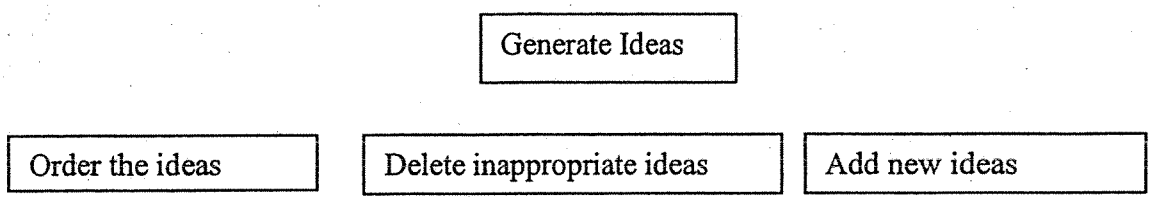
6. The reading points to a lack of research particularly focusing on adult ESL writers. Based on your own experience as teachers of adult ESL learners, what unique characteristics do adult ESL learners have that might make research focusing on other groups of learners difficult to apply?

PRESENTATION I: Prewriting and First Draft

Brainstorming

ESL students want to know what the word "brainstorming" means. A storm in the brain means many things occurring at once and a bit of chaos overall. Students take a topic and list every idea that comes into their brain without censure or evaluation. While English is preferable, an occasional word in the first language does not create a problem. All ideas are welcome at this stage.

Organizing is the second phase of brainstorming and that can be accomplished by a variety of methods. Many instructors use visual organizers to provide guided practice for learners. These charts and diagrams help students gather and divide ideas into what will eventually be specific paragraphs about the topic. Example:



Instructors can choose from a variety of visual organizers, which are available through teaching stores and online. If writers are in a testing situation, they will not have organizers to help them sort their ideas. Writers can simply generate their ideas and use numbers or letters to order their list items. At this time, the writer would delete and add new items as well.

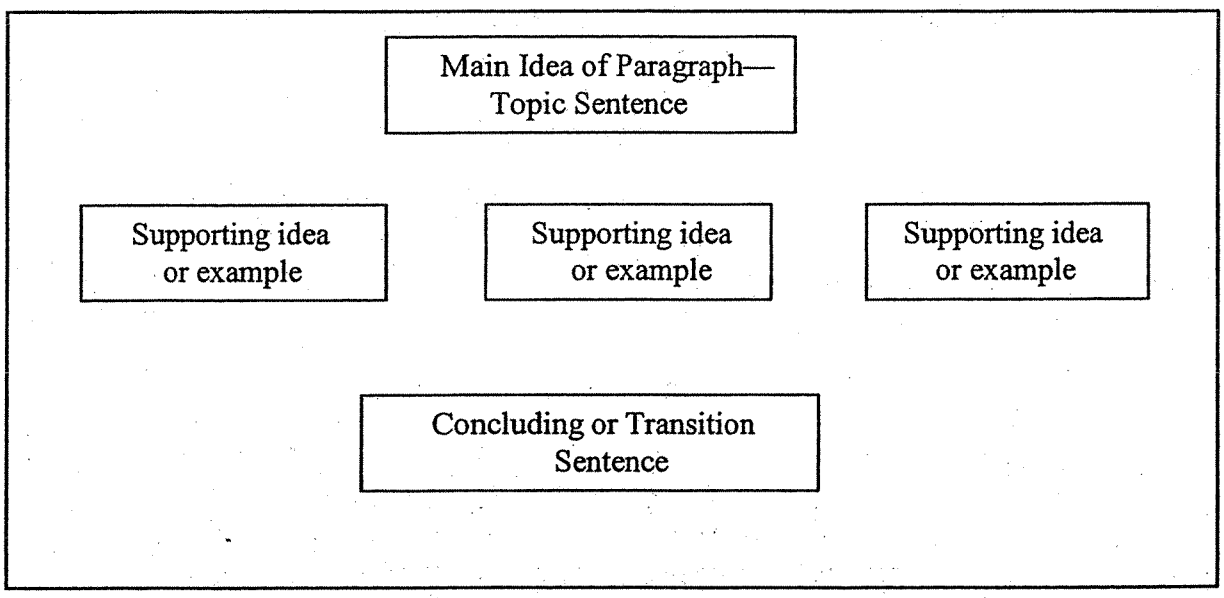
Organizing

While the nature—or genre—of the text to use can vary widely according to the students' needs and interests, the example used here is that of the paragraph, as it is a common starting focus of a process writing approach. A paragraph is a unit of writing that consists of one or more sentences focusing on a single idea or topic. A well-written paragraph often has the following structure:

> **Topic Sentence**: This sentence outlines the main idea that will be presented in the paragraph.
> **Supporting Details or Examples**: This is the part of the paragraph that presents details, facts, examples, quotes, and arguments that support the main idea.
> **Concluding Sentence**: This sentence summarizes the main idea of the paragraph. It may also lead the reader to the topic of the next paragraph.
>
> There are many different types of paragraphs, depending on what you are writing:

Descriptive Paragraph: This paragraph describes something or someone. For example, you can write a descriptive paragraph describing your best friend, including what she likes and dislikes, where she lives, what she wants for her birthday, and her favorite food.
Expository Paragraph: This paragraph explains an idea; it is also called an information paragraph. For example, you can write an expository paragraph explaining how to make chocolate chip cookies.
Persuasive Paragraph: This paragraph tries to convince the reader of something. This type of paragraph may start with a phrase like: "I think that..." The support section may include sentences that start with, "One reason is...," or "For example..." It may end with something like, "This is why I think that..." For example, you can write a persuasive paragraph telling why people should vote for you for class president.
Narrative Paragraph: This paragraph describes an event or tells a story, usually in chronological order. For example, you can write a narrative paragraph detailing what you did on your first day of school. [1]

A graphic organizer or mind map for a paragraph might look like this:



Once the brainstorming has been organized, it's time to start. Frequently the topic sentence creates the most difficulty for the writer. Writers may wish to leave space on the paper and drop down to start writing supporting sentences first. Some writers choose to write the concluding sentence first and then go back to the topic sentence. It's good to remind students to review the assignment and use language from it in the topic sentence if possible. Timed practice will assist students in preparing to write in response to standardized writing assignments.

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[1] Enchanted Learning Subscription Website Mercer Island, Washington, USA
http://www.enchantedlearning.com/graphicorganizers/paragraph

Challenges and Strategies: *Pre-writing and the first draft*

Challenges commonly encountered when teaching prewriting (brainstorming, the structure of a paragraph, paragraph genres, graphic organizers.)

Strategies for teaching prewriting (brainstorming, the structure of a paragraph, paragraph genres, graphic organizers.)

Clarifying a writing assignment

If learners are to be successful writers, they must understand each assignment. One clarification strategy is to ask learners to underline key words in the assignment. Key words can be words that describe the *topic* of the assignment (e.g. the medical system in your home country) or words that indicate the *task* or *writing genre* (e.g. compare, summarize, describe, explain).

Look at the following sample writing assignments. Underline key words that learners should notice in order to understand the writing assignment.

1. Holidays are celebrated in many different ways. Choose a holiday from your country that is important to you. Describe when it is celebrated, what people do, what they eat, and what they might make for this holiday. Explain what the holiday means to the people.

2. Write a note to your landlord. Describe a problem in your apartment that needs repairs. Ask your landlord to fix the problem.

3. Write a letter to an elected official. State the issue you are concerned about. Propose actions to be taken. Ask the elected official for their support. Ask for a reply to your letter.

4. You are going on vacation. A friend is coming each day to check on your apartment. Write instructions for your friend. Explain at least five things you need her to do while you are away.

5. Read a newspaper article. Write a summary that includes brief answers to the five question words: who, what, when, where, and why or how.

6. Describe how to make an appointment with a doctor in the U.S. Compare the process with how people visit a doctor in your home country.

Sample brainstorming

A class of adults has been asked to write a paragraph explaining why writing a paragraph is difficult. The results of their brainstorming are below. Use their brainstorming for the next activities.

Assignment: Writing a paragraph is difficult. Explain why it is difficult. Give examples.

Getting ideas. I don't know what I want to write about.

Keeping ideas focused – sometimes I have too much to say

Writing is easy for my teacher

I don't have anything to say about the topics the teacher assigns us.

Showing details and examples

Writing so the reader understands what I really mean

Spelling all the words right

Writing makes me nervous – will I be embarrassed when someone reads my writing

Being rushed – there's not enough time in class to think and write.

Getting stuck – just looking at the empty paper

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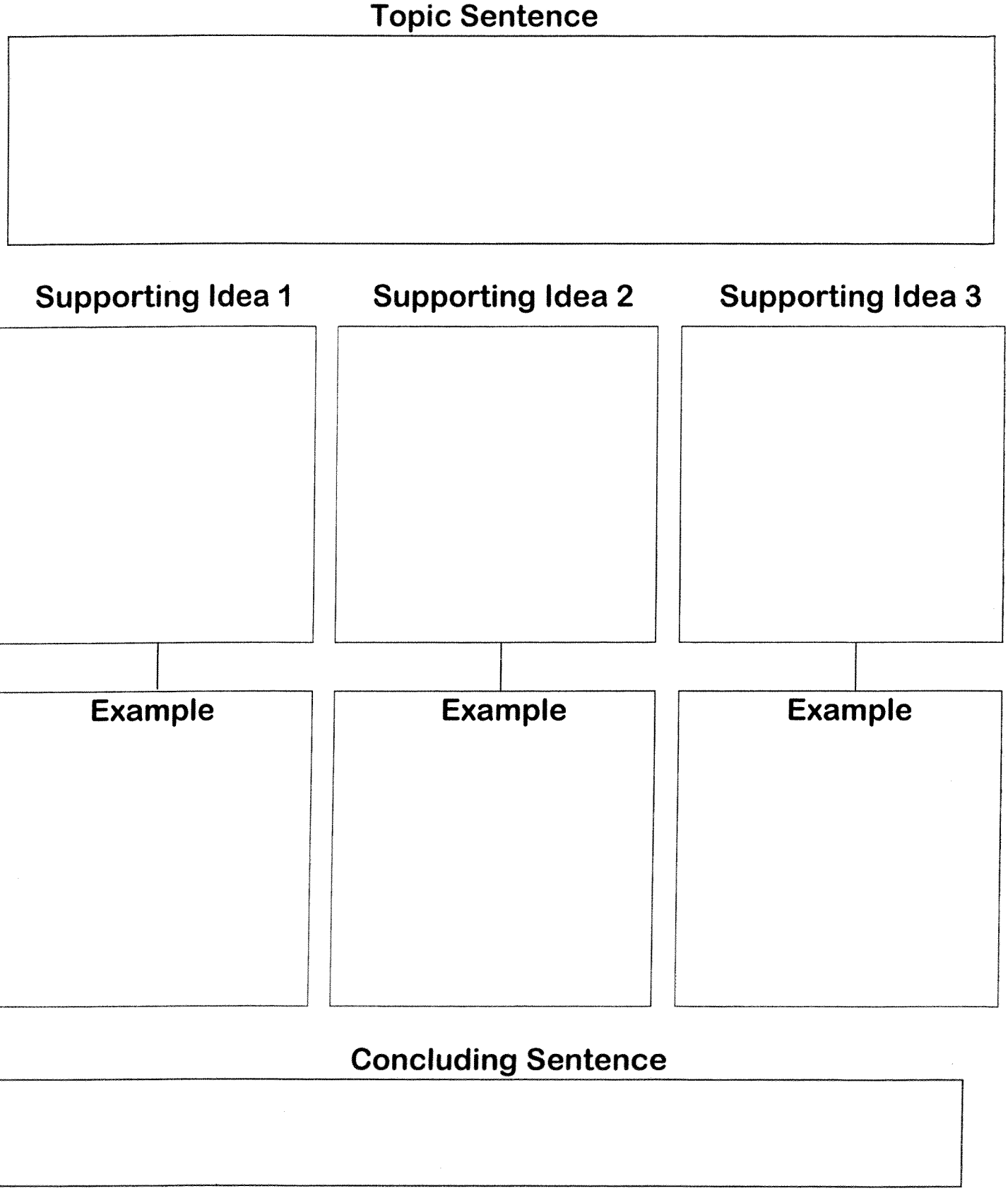
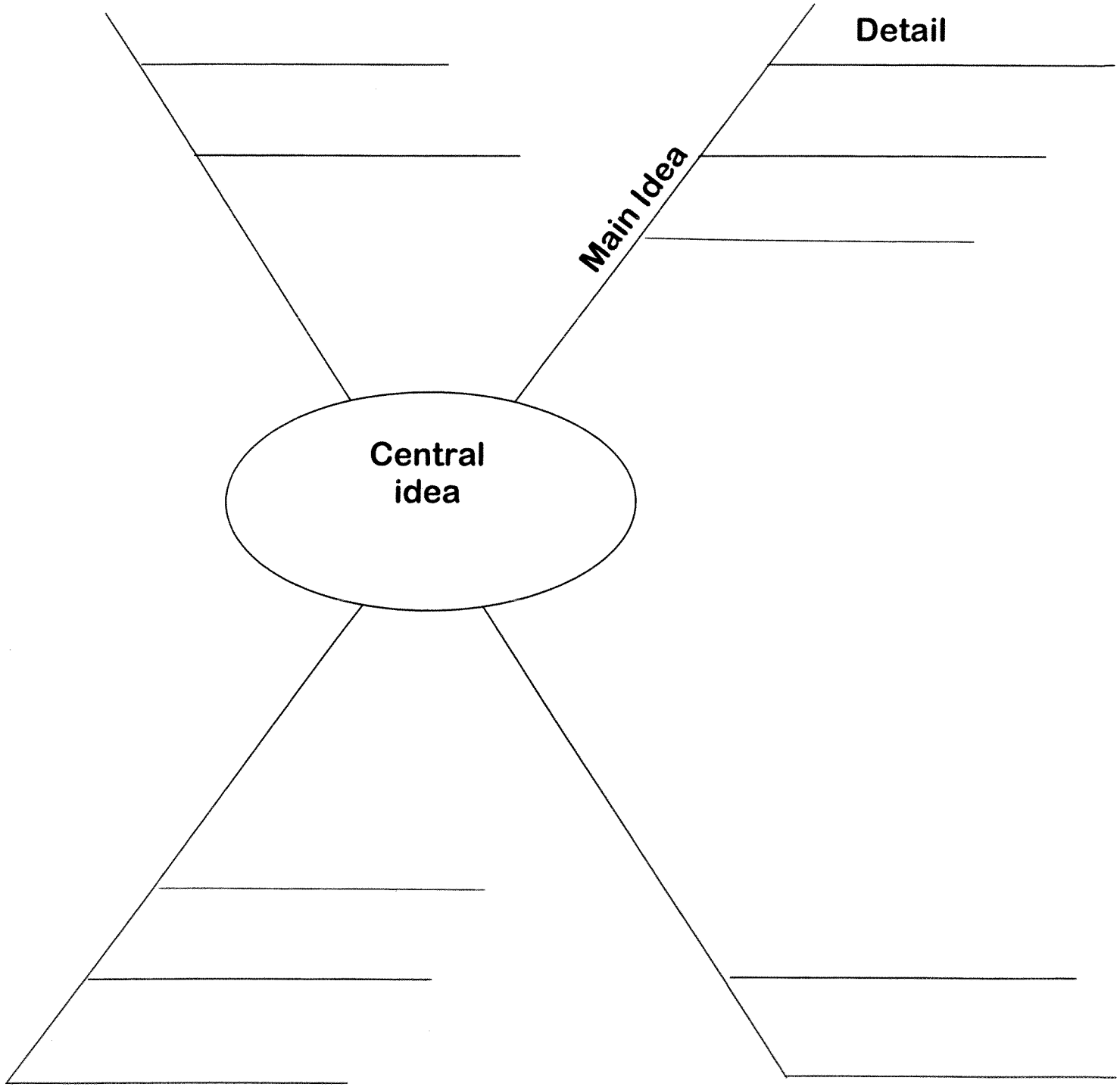
Eight-Sentence Paragraph Structure

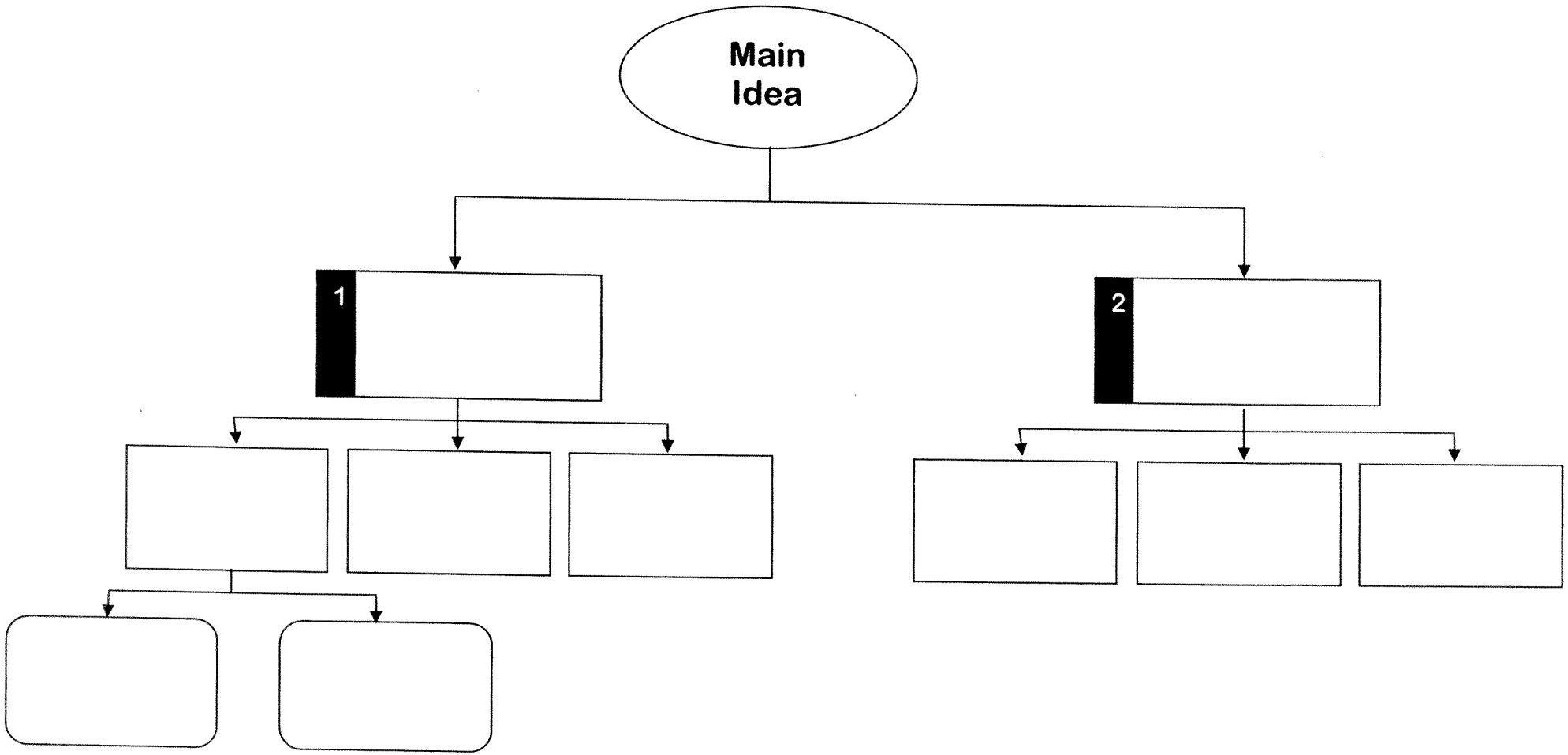


Spider Map

Used to describe a central idea:
a thing, process, concept, or proposition with support.

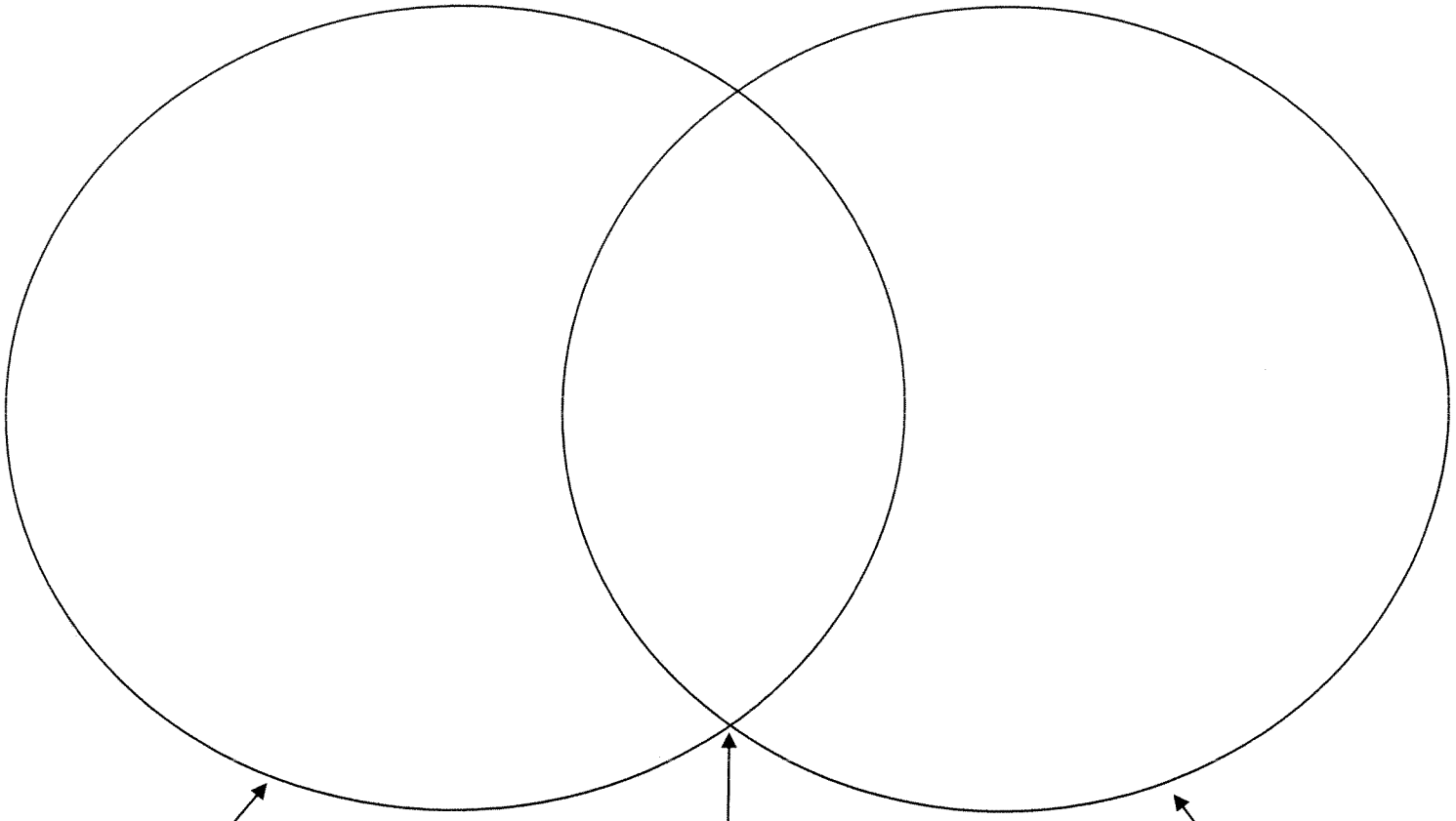


Network Tree



Venn Diagram

Used to show similarities and differences between two things.



T-Chart

Used to analyze the similarities and differences between two things.

(Item #1)	(Item #2)

Series of Events Chain

**Used to describe the stages of something,
the steps in a procedures, or a sequence of events.**

Initiating Event

Event 1:

Event 2:

Final Outcome

Event 3:

Fact and Opinion

Used to discriminate between facts on a topic and opinions about the topic.

Topic:

Fact	Opinion

Problem/Solution Outline

Used to show the problem solving process.

Problem

Who

What

Where

When

Why

How

↓

Attempted Solutions:	Results:
1.	1.
2.	2.

↓

End Results:

Tips for writing the first draft

Write some tips a teacher can share with learners before they start writing the first draft.

Writing the First Draft

Use your brainstorming and organizing. Write the first draft of your paragraph below. Follow the tips for writing a first draft.

Assignment: Writing a paragraph is difficult. Explain why it is difficult. Give examples.

Discussion Questions: Writing the First Draft

1. What were the difficulties you experienced in writing the first draft? Would your adult learners have those same difficulties? More difficulties? Different difficulties?

2. What strategies could you use to make these difficulties easier for your learners?

PRESENTATION II: Revising – Making it Clear

At this point it is important to stress keeping ALL the drafts that are written. Students often forget this and need to be reminded that they may change their minds several times and end up using text from their first draft in the final draft.

When the first draft is finished, the next step is revision. This step focuses on the writer's ideas. Focusing on clarity of ideas can often be difficult for ESL students who may be accustomed to looking only at mechanics. Respect for ideas needs to be modeled by the instructor throughout this process. That is why it is critical that only the writer makes revisions to his/her paper. There are a variety of ways that the writer may be led to revise, and the motivation for revision can come from the instructor or peer writers. The most efficient tools to stimulate revision are positive comments and questions.

The teacher can ask clarifying questions which will lead the student to think carefully about his/her writing. Student writers can also formulate questions to ask for clarity. This is a skill which requires development time. It is also important to discourage students from mixing up revision and editing. Positive comments about the ideas or order of ideas keeps the focus where it should be. The goal is to respect ideas by supporting the writer with positive feedback and asking questions in a positive way that will improve the writing.

The whole class can develop a set of questions to see if their ideas are clear and in order. The short questions for beginners is to ask the writer if s/he needs to add (+), subtract (-) or move (↔) ideas. More advanced groups may ask questions such as: Is this what you want to say? Did you say it clearly? Is that the best word to use to say it? Is that the best order for your ideas?

Peer revision is tricky and must focus on clarity. Students may look at multiple drafts of other students' work to compare clarity and order but revision must ultimately be in the hands of the writer.

"Writing is a process of discovering, and you don't always produce your best stuff when you first get started. So revision is a chance for you to look critically at what you have written to see

- if it's really worth saying,
- if it says what you wanted to say, and
- if a reader will understand what you're saying." (UNC-CH Writing Center, www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb)

Challenges and Strategies: *Revising*

Challenges commonly encountered when teaching revising.

Strategies for teaching revising.

Rubric for Scoring Writing

CATEGORY	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	ADEQUATE	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	N/A
CONTENT relevance; adequacy; clarity; support; elaboration	Ideas are developed, well-stated, clearly expressed, and supported with concrete, relevant detail. Requires no inference.	Effective, but some ideas are not well stated. Contains some relevant detail. May require minimal inference.	Adequate, but many ideas may not be well stated. Lacks appropriate or sufficient detail or clear focus. May require some inference.	May have some major gaps. May be unfocused or unclear. Little or no supporting detail. May require some inference.	Minimal amount written, and/or limited relationship to topic, or general meaning unclear. May require a large amount of inference.	Incomprehensible (more than half), or irrelevant, or no response.
ORGANIZATION	Well-organized and well-developed. Contains effective transitions.	Clear overall structure. May contain effective paragraphs. Generally cohesive.	Basic overall structure. May be organized into simple paragraphs with related sentences.	Some structure, but cohesion is limited. Contains some related sentences.	Disorganized, and/or minimal amount written. May contain unrelated phrases or sentences.	Incomprehensible (more than half), or irrelevant, or no response.
WORD CHOICE appropriate use; richness of expression	Appropriate word choice. Enough words, but not too many. Rich expressions.	Mostly appropriate word choice. Some rich expressions.	Some inappropriate and/or limited word choice. May have some variety of expression.	Some significant errors, and/or very limited word choice. May have little variety of expression.	Frequent significant errors. Extremely limited word choice and/or minimal amount written.	Incomprehensible (more than half), or irrelevant, or no response.
GRAMMAR AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE	Almost no grammatical errors. Sentences are varied, appropriate, and may be complex.	Minor errors that do not distract the reader. Some variety in sentence structure.	Some errors that distract the reader. Limited variety in sentence structure.	Many errors that my require inference. Sentence structure may be simple.	Almost no control of grammar or sentence structure and/or minimal amount written.	Incomprehensible (more than half), or irrelevant, or no response.
SPELLING CAPITALIZATION PUNCTUATION	Few or no errors.	Some minor errors.	Some errors that distract the reader.	Many errors, or some serious errors that interfere with meaning.	Almost no control of spelling, and/or capitalization, and/or punctuation, and/or minimal amount written.	Incomprehensible (more than half), or irrelevant, or no response.

Campbell County School District - Assessment Rubric

Department: Language Arts Course: Sophomore English and Honors English
Essential and Enduring Learning: Writing
Curriculum Code: LA-08-06-01, LA-10-07-01 and LA-H1-07-01
Task: Writing for Six-Trait Analytical Scoring

	Indicators		
	Level 5	Level 3	Level 1
Ideas and Content	This paper is clear, focused, and interesting. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme or story.	The paper is clear and focused, even though the overall result may not be captivating. Support is attempted, but it may be limited, insubstantial, too general, or out of balance.	The paper lacks a central idea or purpose, or forces the reader to make inferences based on very sketchy details.
Organization	The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation is compelling and moves the reader through the text.	The reader can readily follow what's being said, but the overall organization may sometimes be ineffective or too obvious.	Organization is haphazard and disjointed. The writing lacks direction, with ideas, details, or events strung together helter skelter.
Voice	The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individualistic, expressive, and engaging. Clearly, the writer is involved in the text and is writing to be read.	The writer seems sincere but not fully involved in the topic. The result is pleasant, acceptable, sometimes even personable, but not compelling.	The writer seems wholly indifferent, uninvolved, or dispassionate. As a result, the writing is flat, lifeless, stiff, or mechanical. It may be (depending on the topic) overly technical or jargonistic.
Word Choice	Words convey the intended message in an interesting, precise, and natural way. The writing is full and rich, yet concise.	The language is quite ordinary, but it does convey the message. It's functional, even if it lacks punch. Often, the writer settles for what's easy or handy, producing a sort of "generic paper" stuffed with familiar words and phrases.	The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary, groping for words to convey meaning. Often the language is so vague and abstract or so redundant and devoid of detail that only the broadest, most general sort of message comes through.
Sentence Fluency	The writing has an easy flow and rhythm when read aloud. Sentences are well built, with consistently strong and varied structure that makes expressive oral reading easy and enjoyable.	Sentences tend to be mechanical rather than fluid. The text hums along efficiently for the most part, though it may lack a certain rhythm or grace, tending to be more pleasant than musical. Occasional awkward constructions force the reader to slow down or reread.	The paper is difficult to follow or to read aloud. Sentences tend to be choppy, incomplete, rambling, irregular, or just very awkward.
Conventions	The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., grammar, capitalization, punctuation, usage, spelling, paragraphing) and uses them effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few and so minor that the reader can easily skim right over them unless specifically searching for them.	Errors in writing conventions, while not overwhelming, begin to impair readability. While errors do not block meaning, they tend to be distracting.	Numerous errors in usage, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. In fact, the severity and the frequency of errors tend to be so overwhelming that the reader finds it very difficult to focus on the message and must reread for meaning.

Report Rubric

	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Topic	Totally unrelated	Remotely related	Somewhat relevant	Directly relevant	
Organization	Not organized, events make no sense	Some organization, events jump around, start and end are unclear	Organized, events are somewhat jumpy	Good organization, events are logically ordered, sharp sense of beginning and end	
Quality of Information	Unable to find specific details	Details are somewhat sketchy	Some details are non-supporting to the subject	supporting details specific to subject	
Grammar & Spelling	Very frequent grammar and/or spelling errors	More than two errors	Only one or two errors	All grammar and spelling are correct	
Interest Level	Needs descriptive words	Vocabulary is constant, details lack "color"	Vocabulary is varied, supporting details need work	Vocabulary varied, supporting details vivid	
Neatness	Illegible writing, loose pages	Legible writing, some ill-formed letters, print too small or too large, papers stapled together	Legible writing, well-formed characters, clean and neatly bound in a report cover, illustrations provided	Word processed or typed, clean and neatly bound in a report cover, illustrations provided	
Timeliness	Report handed in more than one week late	Up to one week late	Up to two days late	Report handed in on time	
				Total	

Figure 6.8 **Self-Assessment of Writing Dimensions**

Author's Name _____ Date _____

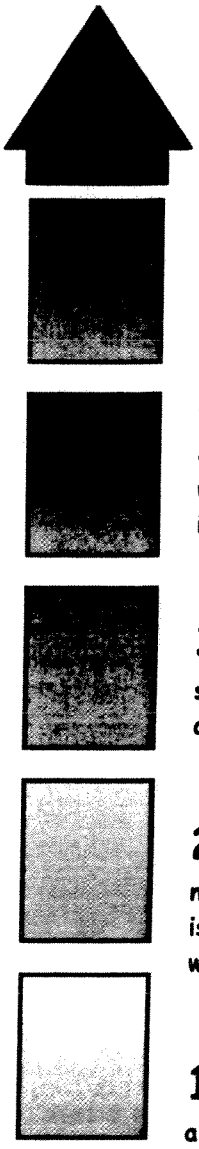
Title of Work: _____

Genre: **Fiction** **Non-Fiction** **Biography** **Autobiography**

Purpose and Organization	Yes	No
1. I stated my purpose clearly.	❑	❑
2. I organized my thoughts.	❑	❑
3. My work has a beginning, middle, and end.	❑	❑
4. I chose words that helped make my point.	❑	❑
Word/Sentence Use		
5. I used some new vocabulary.	❑	❑
6. I wrote complete sentences.	❑	❑
7. I used correct subject-verb agreement.	❑	❑
8. I used the past tense correctly.	❑	❑
Mechanics/Format		
9. I spelled words correctly.	❑	❑
10. I used capitals to start sentences.	❑	❑
11. I used periods and question marks correctly.	❑	❑
12. I indented paragraphs.	❑	❑
Editing		
13. I read my paper aloud to a partner.	❑	❑
14. I asked a partner to read my paper.	❑	❑

6+1 Trait® Writing

Scoring Continuum



WOW!
Exceeds expectations

5 STRONG:
shows control and skill in this trait; many strengths present

4 EFFECTIVE:
on balance, the strengths outweigh the weaknesses; a small amount of revision is needed

3 DEVELOPING:
strengths and need for revision are about equal; about half-way home

2 EMERGING:
need for revision outweighs strengths; isolated moments hint at what the writer has in mind

1 NOT YET:
a bare beginning; writer not yet showing any control

- IDEAS
- ORGANIZATION
- VOICE
- WORD CHOICE
- SENTENCE FLUENCY
- CONVENTIONS
- PRESENTATION

IDEAS

5 ***This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention. Relevant anecdotes and details enrich the central theme.***

A. The topic is **narrow** and **manageable.**
B. **Relevant, telling, quality details** give the reader important information that goes **beyond the obvious** or predictable.
C. Reasonably **accurate details** are present to support the main ideas.
D. The writer seems to be writing from **knowledge** or **experience;** the ideas are **fresh** and **original.**
E. The reader's questions are **anticipated and answered.**
F. **Insight**—an understanding of life and a knack for picking out what is significant—is an indicator of high level performance, though not required.

3 ***The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general.***

A. The topic is fairly broad; however, you can see where the writer is headed.
B. Support is attempted, but doesn't go far enough yet in fleshing out the key issues or story line.
C. Ideas are reasonably clear, though they may not be detailed, personalized, accurate, or expanded enough to show indepth understanding or a strong sense of purpose.
D. The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but has difficulty going from general observations to specifics.
E. The reader is left with questions. More information is needed to "fill in the blanks."
F. The writer generally stays on the topic but does not develop a clear theme. The writer has not yet focused the topic past the obvious.

1 ***As yet, the paper has no clear sense of purpose or central theme. To extract meaning from the text, the reader must make inferences based on sketchy or missing details. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:***

A. The writer is **still in search of a topic,** brainstorming, or has not yet decided what the main idea of the piece will be.
B. Information is **limited** or **unclear** or the **length is not adequate** for development.
C. The idea is a **simple restatement** of the topic or an **answer** to the question with little or no attention to detail.
D. The writer has **not begun to define the topic** in a meaningful, personal way.
E. **Everything seems as important as everything else**; the reader has a hard time sifting out what is important.
F. The text may be **repetitious**, or may read like a collection of **disconnected, random thoughts** with no discernable point.

ORGANIZATION

5 ***The organization enhances and showcases the central idea or theme. The order, structure, or presentation of information is compelling and moves the reader through the text.***

- **A.** An **inviting introduction** draws the reader in; a **satisfying conclusion** leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
- **B.** **Thoughtful transitions** clearly show how ideas connect.
- **C.** Details seem to fit where they're placed; **sequencing is logical** and **effective**.
- **D.** **Pacing is well controlled**; the writer knows when to slow down and elaborate, and when to pick up the pace and move on.
- **E.** The **title,** if desired, is **original** and captures the central theme of the piece.
- **F.** The choice of structure matches the **purpose** and **audience**, with effective paragraph breaks.

3 ***The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without too much confusion.***

- **A.** The paper has a **recognizable introduction and conclusion**. The introduction may not create a strong sense of anticipation; the conclusion may not tie-up all loose ends.
- **B.** **Transitions sometimes work**; at other times, connections between ideas are unclear.
- **C.** **Sequencing** shows **some logic**, but not under control enough that it consistently supports the development of ideas. The structure may be predictable and **taking attention away from the content.**
- **D.** **Pacing is fairly well controlled,** though the writer sometimes lunges ahead too quickly or spends too much time on details that do not matter.
- **E.** A **title (if desired) is present,** although it may be uninspired or an obvious restatement of the prompt or topic.
- **F.** The **organization sometimes supports the main point or story line**, with an attempt at paragraphing.

1 ***The writing lacks a clear sense of direction. Ideas, details, or events seem strung together in a loose or random fashion; there is no identifiable internal structure. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:***

- **A.** There is **no real lead** to set-up what follows, **no real conclusion** to wrap things up.
- **B.** Connections between ideas are **confusing** or absent.
- **C.** **Sequencing is random** and needs lots of **work.**
- **D.** **Pacing feels awkward;** the writer slows to a crawl when the reader wants to move on, and vice versa.
- **E.** **No title is present** (if requested) or, if present, does not reflect the content.
- **F.** Problems with organization make it **hard for the reader to understand** the main point or story line, with little or no attempt at paragraph breaks.

VOICE

5 ***The writer speaks directly to the reader in a way that is individual, compelling, and engaging. The writer crafts the writing with an awareness and respect for the audience and the purpose for writing.***

A. The writer connects strongly with the **audience** through the intriguing focus of the topic, selection of relevant details, and the use of natural, engaging language.
B. The **purpose** of the writing is accurately reflected in the writer's choice of individual and compelling content, and the arrangement of ideas.
C. The writer takes a **risk** by the inclusion of personal details that reveal the person behind the words.
D. **Expository or persuasive** writing reflects a strong commitment to the topic by the careful selection of ideas that show why the reader needs to know this.
E. **Narrative** writing is personal and engaging, and makes you think about the author's ideas or point of view.

3 ***The writer seems sincere, but not fully engaged or involved. The writing has discernable purpose, but is not compelling.***

A. The writing attempts to connect with the **audience** in an earnest, pleasing, but impersonal manner
B. The writer seems aware of a **purpose**, and attempts to select content and structures that reflect it.
C. The writer occasionally reveals personal details, but primarily avoids **risk**.
D. **Expository or persuasive** writing lacks consistent engagement with the topic, and fails to use ideas to build credibility.
E. **Narrative** writing is sincere, but does not reflect a unique or individual perspective on the topic.

1 ***The writer seems indifferent to the topic and the content. The writing lacks purpose and audience engagement.***

A. The writer's ideas and language fail to connect with the **audience**.
B. The writer has no clear **purpose**, and the chosen style does not match the content or ideas.
C. The writing is **risk** free, and reveals nothing about the author.
D. **Expository or persuasive** writing is lifeless and mechanical, or lacks accurate information.
E. **Narrative**: The development of the topic is so limited that no point of view is discernable.

WORD CHOICE

5 ***Words convey the intended message in a precise, interesting, and natural way. The words are powerful and engaging.***

- **A.** Words are **specific** and **accurate**. It is easy to understand just what the writer means.
- **B.** **Striking words and phrases** often catch the reader's eye and linger in the reader's mind.
- **C.** Language and phrasing are **natural**, **effective**, and **appropriate** for the audience.
- **D.** **Lively verbs** add energy while **specific nouns** and **modifiers** add depth.
- **E.** Choices in language **enhance** the **meaning** and **clarify** understanding.
- **F.** **Precision** is obvious. The writer has taken care to put just the right word or phrase in just the right spot.

3 ***The language is functional, even if it lacks much energy. It is easy to figure out the writer's meaning on a general level.***

- **A.** Words are **adequate and correct in a general sense**, and they support the meaning by not getting in the way.
- **B.** Familiar **words and phrases communicate** but rarely capture the reader's imagination.
- **C.** **Attempts at colorful language** show a willingness to stretch and grow but sometimes reach beyond the audience (thesaurus overload!).
- **D.** Despite a **few successes**, the writing is marked by **passive verbs**, **everyday nouns**, and **mundane modifiers.**
- **E.** The words and phrases are **functional** with only **one or two fine moments**.
- **F.** The words may be **refined in a couple of places**, but the language looks more like **the first thing that popped into the writer's mind**.

1 ***The writer demonstrates a limited vocabulary or has not searched for words to convey specific meaning.***

- **A.** Words are so **nonspecific and distracting** that only a **very limited meaning** comes through.
- **B.** Problems with language **leave** the **reader wondering**. Many of the **words** just **don't work** in this piece.
- **C.** Audience has not been considered. **Language is used incorrectly** making the message secondary to the misfires with the words.
- **D.** **Limited vocabulary** and/or **misused parts of speech** seriously impair understanding.
- **E.** Words and phrases are so **unimaginative** and **lifeless** that they detract from the meaning.
- **F.** **Jargon or clichés** distract or mislead. **Redundancy** may distract the reader.

SENTENCE FLUENCY

5 ***The writing has an easy flow, rhythm, and cadence. Sentences are well built, with strong and varied structure that invites expressive oral reading.***

A. Sentences are constructed in a way that underscores and enhances the **meaning**.
B. Sentences **vary in length as well as structure.** Fragments, if used, add style. Dialogue, if present, sounds natural.
C. **Purposeful** and **varied sentence beginnings** add variety and energy.
D. The use of **creative and appropriate connectives** between sentences and thoughts shows how each relates to, and builds upon, the one before it.
E. The writing has **cadence;** the writer has thought about the sound of the words as well as the meaning. The first time you read it aloud is a breeze.

3 ***The text hums along with a steady beat, but tends to be more pleasant or businesslike than musical, more mechanical than fluid.***

A. Although sentences may not seem artfully crafted or musical, **they get the job done in a routine fashion.**
B. Sentences are **usually constructed correctly;** they **hang together**; they are **sound**.
C. **Sentence beginnings** are not ALL alike; **some variety is attempted.**
D. The reader sometimes has to **hunt for clues** (e.g., connecting words and phrases like *however, therefore, naturally, after a while, on the other hand, to be specific, for example, next, first of all, later, but as it turned out, although,* etc.) that show how sentences interrelate.
E. **Parts** of the text **invite expressive oral reading;** others may be stiff, awkward, choppy, or gangly.

1 ***The reader has to practice quite a bit in order to give this paper a fair interpretive reading. The writing reflects more than one of the following problems:***

A. Sentences are **choppy, incomplete, rambling or awkward**; they need work. **Phrasing does not sound natural**. The patterns may create a sing-song rhythm, or a chop-chop cadence that lulls the reader to sleep.
B. There is little to **no "sentence sense"** present. Even if this piece was flawlessly edited, the sentences would not hang together.
C. Many **sentences begin the same way**—and may follow the same patterns (e.g., *subject-verb-object*) in a monotonous pattern.
D. **Endless connectives** (*and, and so, but then, because, and then,* etc.) or a **complete lack of connectives** create a massive jumble of language.
E. The text **does not invite expressive oral reading.**

CONVENTIONS

5 ***The writer demonstrates a good grasp of standard writing conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, usage, paragraphing) and uses conventions effectively to enhance readability. Errors tend to be so few that just minor touch-ups would get this piece ready to publish.***

A. **Spelling is generally correct**, even on more difficult words.
B. The **punctuation is accurate**, even creative, and guides the reader through the text.
C. A thorough understanding and consistent application of **capitalization** skills are present.
D. **Grammar and usage are correct** and contribute to clarity and style.
E. **Paragraphing tends to be sound** and reinforces the organizational structure.
F. The writer **may manipulate conventions** for stylistic effect—and it works! The piece is very close to being **ready to publish.**

GRADES 7 AND UP ONLY: The writing is sufficiently complex to allow the writer to show skill in using a wide range of conventions. For writers at younger ages, the writing shows control over those conventions that are grade/age appropriate.

3 ***The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of standard writing conventions. Conventions are sometimes handled well and enhance readability; at other times, errors are distracting and impair readability.***

A. **Spelling** is usually **correct or reasonably phonetic on common words,** but more difficult words are problematic.
B. **End punctuation is usually correct**; internal punctuation *(commas, apostrophes, semicolons, dashes, colons, parentheses)* is sometimes missing/wrong.
C. **Most words are capitalized correctly**; control over more sophisticated capitalization skills may be spotty.
D. **Problems with grammar or usage are not serious** enough to distort meaning but may not be correct or accurately applied all of the time.
E. **Paragraphing is attempted** but may run together or begin in the wrong places.
F. **Moderate editing** (a little of this, a little of that) would be required to polish the text for publication.

1 ***Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage, and grammar and/or paragraphing repeatedly distract the reader and make the text difficult to read. The writing reflects more than one of these problems:***

A. **Spelling errors are frequent,** even on common words.
B. **Punctuation** (including terminal punctuation) is often **missing or incorrect.**
C. **Capitalization** is **random** and only the easiest rules show awareness of correct use.
D. **Errors in grammar or usage are very noticeable,** frequent, and affect meaning.
E. **Paragraphing is missing, irregular, or so frequent** (every sentence) that it has no relationship to the organizational structure of the text.
F. The reader must **read once to decode**, then again for meaning. **Extensive editing** (virtually every line) would be required to polish the text for publication.

PRESENTATION

(optional)

5 ***The form and presentation of the text enhances the ability for the reader to understand and connect with the message. It is pleasing to the eye.***

A. If handwritten (either cursive or printed), the **slant is consistent**, letters are clearly formed, **spacing is uniform** between words, and the text is easy to read.

B. If word-processed, there is **appropriate use of fonts and font sizes** which invites the reader into the text.

C. The use of **white space** on the page (spacing, margins, etc.) allows the intended audience to easily focus on the text and message without distractions. There is just the right amount of balance of white space and text on the page. The formatting suits the purpose for writing.

D. The use of a **title, side heads, page numbering, bullets,** and evidence of correct use of a style sheet (when appropriate) makes it easy for the reader to access the desired information and text. These markers allow the hierarchy of information to be clear to the reader.

E. When appropriate to the purpose and audience, there is **effective integration of text and illustrations, charts, graphs, maps, tables, etc.** There is clear alignment between the text and visuals. The visuals support and clarify important information or key points made in the text.

3 ***The writer's message is understandable in this format.***

A. **Handwriting is readable,** although there may be **discrepancies in letter shape and form, slant, and spacing** that may make some words or passages easier to read than others.

B. **Experimentation with fonts and font sizes** is successful in some places, but begins to get fussy and cluttered in others. The **effect is not consistent** throughout the text.

C. While margins may be present, **some text may crowd the edges.** Consistent spacing is applied, although a different choice may make text more accessible (e.g., single, double, or triple spacing).

D. Although some markers are present (titles, numbering, bullets, side heads, etc.), they are not used to their fullest potential as a guide for the reader to access the greatest meaning from the text.

E. An **attempt is made to integrate visuals** and the text although the connections may be limited.

1 ***The reader receives a garbled message due to problems relating to the presentation of the text.***

A. Because the letters are irregularly slanted, formed inconsistently, or incorrectly, and the spacing is unbalanced or not even present, it is **very difficult to read and understand the text.**

B. The writer has gone **wild with multiple fonts and font sizes.** It is a major distraction to the reader.

C. The **spacing is random and confusing** to the reader. There may be little or no white space on the page.

D. **Lack of markers** (title, page numbering, bullets, side heads, etc.) leave the reader wondering how one section connects to another and why the text is organized in this manner on the page.

E. The visuals do not support or further illustrate key ideas presented in the text. They may be **misleading, indecipherable, or too complex** to be understood.

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Using Rubrics to Promote Thinking and Learning

Heidi Goodrich Andrade

Instructional rubrics help teachers *teach* as well as evaluate student work. Further, creating rubrics with your students can be powerfully instructive.

February 2000

Rubrics make assessing student work quick and efficient, and they help teachers justify to parents and others the grades that they assign to students. At their very best, rubrics are also teaching tools that support student learning and the development of sophisticated thinking skills. When used correctly, they serve the purposes of learning as well as of evaluation and accountability. Like portfolios, exhibitions, and other authentic approaches to assessment, rubrics blur the distinction between instruction and assessment. For this reason, I refer to them as instructional rubrics.

What Is an Instructional Rubric?

An instructional rubric is usually a one-or two-page document that describes varying levels of quality, from excellent to poor, for a specific assignment. It is usually used with a relatively complex assignment, such as a long-term project, an essay, or a research paper. Its purposes are to give students informative feedback about their works in progress and to give detailed evaluations of their final products.

Although the format of an instructional rubric can vary, all rubrics have two features in common: (1) a list of criteria, or "what counts" in a project or assignment; and (2) gradations of quality, with descriptions of strong, middling, and problematic student work.

Figure 1 is an example of an instructional rubric that I've used in 7th and 8th grade humanities and English classes to support students as they write a persuasive essay. The criteria are the claim made in the essay, the reasons given in support of the claim, the consideration of reasons against the claim, organization, voice and tone, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions.

Figure 1. Instructional Rubric for a Persuasive Essay

Criteria	Gradations of Quality			
	4	3	2	1

The claim	I make a claim and explain why it is controversial.	I make a claim but don't explain why it is controversial.	My claim is buried, confused, and/or unclear.	I don't say what my argument or claim is.
Reasons in support of the claim	I give clear and accurate reasons in support of my claim.	I give reasons in support of my claim, but I overlook important reasons.	I give 1 or 2 weak reasons that don't support my claim and/or irrelevant or confusing reasons.	I don't give reasons in support of my claim.
Reasons against the claim	I discuss the reasons against my claim and explain why it is valid anyway.	I discuss the reasons against my claim but neglect some or don't explain why the claim still stands.	I say that there are reasons against the claim, but I don't discuss them.	I don't acknowledge or discuss the reasons against my claim.
Organization	My writing has a compelling opening, an informative middle, and a satisfying conclusion.	My writing has a beginning, a middle, and an end.	My organization is rough but workable. I may sometimes get off topic.	My writing is aimless and disorganized.
Voice and tone	It sounds like I care about my argument. I tell how I think and feel about it.	My tone is OK, but my paper could have been written by anyone. I need to tell how I think and feel.	My writing is bland or pretentious. There is either no hint of a real person in it, or it sounds like I'm faking it.	My writing is too formal or informal. It sounds like I don't like the topic of the essay.

Word choice	The words that I use are striking but natural, varied, and vivid.	I make some fine and some routine word choices.	The words that I use are often dull or uninspired or sound like I'm trying too hard to impress.	I use the same words over and over. Some words may be confusing.
Sentence fluency	My sentences are clear, complete, and of varying lengths.	I have well-constructed sentences. My essay marches along but doesn't dance.	My sentences are often awkward, run-ons, or fragments.	Many run-on sentences and sentence fragments make my essay hard to read.
Conventions	I use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling.	I have a few errors to fix, but I generally use correct conventions.	I have enough errors in my essay to distract a reader.	Numerous errors make my paper hard to read.

I describe four levels of quality but do not give them labels. In my experience, satisfactory labels are hard to come by, and it is obvious at a glance that a 4 is what everyone should try to achieve and a 1 is something to avoid. Some teachers indicate a cutoff point on the rubric, for instance, by drawing a box around the level that is considered acceptable.

The instructional rubric in Figure 1 has the two basic components of a rubric—criteria and gradations of quality. The second and third criteria, "Reasons in Support of the Claim" and "Reasons Against the Claim," emphasize good thinking—an emphasis missing from many rubrics. They not only tell students that good critical thinking must be evident in their essays, but also guide them in how (and how not) to do it so that the rubric serves as an instructional tool as well as an evaluative one.

In addition, the gradations of quality describe problems that students encounter as they write, such as not stating their claim clearly enough for a reader to understand (level 2 of the first criterion), and using the same words over and over (level 1 of the sixth criterion). A rubric that reflects and reveals problems that students experience is more informative than one that either describes mistakes they don't recognize or defines levels of quality so vaguely that it is practically meaningless ("poorly organized" or "boring"). The gradations of quality allow students to spot weaknesses in their writing and give them concrete ways to improve their shortcomings.

Why Use Instructional Rubrics?

Rubrics have become very popular, a recognizable trend in education. Experienced teachers, however, have seen numerous trends rise and fall over the years and quite reasonably ask, "Why

bother with this one?" My research and experience provide several answers.

Instructional rubrics are easy to use and to explain. Rubrics make sense to people at a glance; they're concise and digestible. For these reasons, teachers like to use them to assess student work, parents appreciate them when helping their children with homework, and students often request them when given a new assignment. After using a rubric for one project, a student remarked when assigned a second project, "You know, one of those things with the little boxes would be handy right now." This is not an uncommon request from students experienced with rubrics.

Instructional rubrics make teachers' expectations very clear. Traditionally, we educators have kept our criteria and standards to ourselves. The answers to the test were secret, and teachers tended not to articulate what counted when they gave grades. When a 5th grade girl I know came home with a shockingly bad report card, her father was dismayed. "Look, you're a smart child, you've always done well in school. Two weeks ago I asked you how you were doing in school and you said 'Fine, Dad.' How can you bring home this report card?" Sobbing, the child told him, "Dad, I don't know what the grades count on."

We often expect students to just *know* what makes a good essay, a good drawing, or a good science project, so we don't articulate our standards for them. If that child's teacher supplied written expectations—maybe in the form of a rubric—she would have known what counts, and she would have been able to do better work. That little girl needed help figuring out what the grades "count on." Some students figure that out on their own, but others need it written down or otherwise communicated to them. Instructional rubrics are one way to do that.

Instructional rubrics provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement than traditional forms of assessment do. Imagine that your employer is about to evaluate you. You have a choice between receiving a letter grade or a rubric with statements circled that most closely describe your performance. Which kind of assessment would you choose? Most people choose the rubric, knowing that it will tell them a lot more about their performance. The same is true for students: A well-written instructional rubric—one that describes the kinds of mistakes they tend to make, as well as the ways in which their work shines—gives them valuable information. Students can learn from an instructional rubric in a way that they can't learn from a grade.

Instructional rubrics support learning. A few years ago I investigated the effects of rubrics and self-assessment on learning and metacognition—the act of monitoring and regulating one's own thinking (Goodrich, 1996). Forty 7th graders were assigned a classification task. I gave half the students an instructional rubric and periodically asked them to assess their reading comprehension, the classification system they set up, their explanation of the system, and so on. I asked the other half to do the same classification task, but I did not give them a rubric or ask them to assess their own work.

When the students had finished the task, I gave them a traditional quiz to test for basic content knowledge. Test scores showed that the students who used the rubric to assess themselves learned more. This is especially meaningful because I spent fewer than 30 minutes with each student, and the task did not emphasize memorizing facts. Nonetheless, students using the rubric learned more than students who did not. I concluded that self-assessment supported by a rubric was related to an increase in content learning.

Instructional rubrics support the development of skills. Another study (Andrade, 1999) looked at the effects of instructional rubrics on 8th graders' writing skills. Two groups of students wrote three essays over several months. One group received a rubric before they began writing; the other did not. The first group tended to receive better scores on two of the three essays; for one essay, the differences were statistically significant. Simply handing out and explaining a rubric seemed to help students write better, though improvements were not guaranteed. It appeared that more intensive work with the rubric might be helpful.

Instructional rubrics support the development of understanding. I wanted to know whether students would internalize the criteria contained in the rubrics and thereby develop an understanding of good writing. Several weeks after students wrote the third essay for this study, I asked them, "When your teachers read your essays and papers, how do they decide whether your work is excellent (*A*) or very good (*B*)?"

There were striking differences between the two groups. Those who did not use a rubric tended to have a vaguer notion of how teachers determined their grades:

> Well, they give us the assignment, and they know the qualifications, and if you have all of them, you get an *A* and if you don't get any, you get an *F* and so on.

This student knows that the teacher has her standards or "qualifications," but he doesn't suggest that he knows what they are. The students using rubrics, however, tended to refer to rubrics, "root braks," or "ruperts" as grading guides and often listed criteria from rubrics they had seen:

> The teacher gives us a paper called a rubric [with] information of how to do our essays good to deserve an *A*. If they were to give it an *A,* it would have to be well-organized, neat, good spelling, no errors, and more important, the accurate information it gives. For a *B* it's neat, organized, some errors, and pretty good information but not perfect.

Another student wrote:

> An *A* would consist of a lot of good expressions and big words. He/she also uses relevant and rich details and examples. The sentences are clear, they begin in different ways, some are longer than others, and no fragments. Has good grammar and spelling. A *B* would be like an *A* but not as much would be on the paper.

Several of the criteria mentioned by these students are straight from the rubrics that they used during the study. In comparing criteria mentioned by students, I found that students with no experience with rubrics tended to mention fewer and more traditional criteria. Students who had used rubrics tended to mention the traditional criteria, plus a variety of other criteria—often the criteria from their rubrics. I concluded that instructional rubrics may help students understand the qualities of a good essay.

Instructional rubrics support good thinking. In the study previously mentioned, I asked more than 100 eighth grade students to write a persuasive essay. Some of the students received an instructional rubric similar to Figure 1; some didn't. The rubric included three thinking-centered criteria: "Make a claim," "Give reasons in support of your claim," and "Consider reasons against your claim."

The third criterion—considering the other side of an argument and explaining why your own position still holds up—is a sophisticated thinking skill. That kind of thinking is something adults and students tend not to do. Rather, we make an argument, defend it, and hope for the best. Good thinkers, in contrast, know that they also have to anticipate the other side of an argument and be prepared to explain why it doesn't undermine the claim they are making. When I included that criterion in the rubric for the persuasive essay, the students who used the rubric tended to consider the reasons against their claim. Students without the rubric did not consider the reasons against their claim. Thinking-centered rubrics seemed to help students think more deeply.

How Do You Make an Instructional Rubric?

Designing an instructional rubric takes time. Needing a rubric *tomorrow,* you're likely to sit down and try to crank one out. That might work if you have vast experience with rubric design, but if it doesn't, don't despair. Take some class time and create a rubric with your students. Thinking and talking about the qualities of good and poor work is powerfully instructive. Your students will not only help you come up with a rubric; they will also learn a lot about the topic at hand.

1. *Look at models.* Review examples of good and poor work on a project like the one your students are about to undertake. For example, if they are going to give an oral

presentation, show them an excellent presentation—perhaps a televised speech—and a flawed presentation—perhaps a videotaped speech from one of last year's students (if you can get permission to use it). Ask students what makes the good one good and the other one weak. Record their responses during the discussion.

2. *List criteria.* Tell students that you're going to ask them to do a similar project and you want to think together about how you should assess it. Students will draw on the list generated during the discussion of the models. Track their ideas under the heading "Criteria" or "What Counts." When they appear to run out of ideas, ask them to think about less obvious criteria. If they haven't listed criteria that you think are important, such as thinking-centered criteria, add them yourself, and explain why they're important. District, state, and national standards are often good resources for thinking-centered criteria.

3. *Pack and unpack criteria.* You are likely to end up with a long list of criteria, many of which may relate to one another or even overlap. After class, take time to combine criteria. Avoid creating categories that are too big, and don't bury criteria that you want to emphasize. For example, if you are assigning a written essay and teaching students about paragraph format, you may want to state proper formatting as a separate criterion.

4. *Articulate levels of quality.* Drawing again on students' comments during the discussion of good and poor models, sketch out four levels of quality for each criterion. You might try a technique that I learned from a teacher in Gloucester, Massachusetts. I call it *"yes; yes, but; no, but; no."* Try using those four terms as sentence stems. For example, if the criterion is "Briefly summarize the plot of the story," the four levels might be the following:
    - Level 4—"*Yes,* I briefly summarized the plot."
    - Level 3—"*Yes,* I summarized the plot, *but* I also included some unnecessary details or left out key information."
    - Level 2—"*No,* I didn't summarize the plot, *but* I did include some details from the story."
    - Level 1—"*No,* I didn't summarize the plot."

    Don't worry about getting it exactly right; just capture some of the language describing strong work and the problems that students typically encounter. Ask students to tell you about the kinds of mistakes that they have made in the past.

5. *Create a draft rubric.* After class, draft a rubric that includes the list of criteria that you generated with your class and expands on the levels of quality. Don't get too attached to this draft—you are likely to revise it more than once.

6. *Revise the draft.* Show the draft to your students and ask for their comments. They will probably ask you to make a few revisions.
After revision, the rubric is ready to use. Hand it out with the assignment and have students use it when assessing their own and their peers' first and second drafts. It's important that you use the rubric to assign grades. To translate a rubric into grades, simply circle the appropriate level of quality for each criterion, change the 4s, 3s, 2s, and 1s into the number that represents the middle of the range for a grade (*A* = 93, *B* = 86, and so on), average the scores, and assign a grade accordingly.

How Do Rubrics Support Thinking and Learning?

Earlier I suggested that students may need more intensive work with a rubric if they are to perform better consistently. To check this out, I worked with several talented teachers in San Diego, including Anne Gramm, to develop a process of student self-assessment. The process involves students in using an instructional rubric to take an honest, critical look at their own

work.

I gave both 7th and 8th grade students an instructional rubric along with their essay assignment. Some of the classes received two self-assessment lessons. During the lessons, students looked at the rubric, then at their own work, and identified material in their work that demonstrated the criteria. For example, students wrote a historical-fiction essay using, as one criterion, "Bring the Time and Place Your Character Lived Alive." During the self-assessment lesson, I asked students to underline with a green marker the words *time* and *place* in their rubric. I asked them to use the same marker to underline in their essays the information about the time and place in which their characters lived. Confident that this would take only a second, students turned to their essays with green markers at the ready—and often couldn't find the information they were looking for. To their amazement, it was not there. Apparently, because the information was in their heads, they thought it was also on their paper. Self-assessment required that they look to see what was and wasn't there.

We went through this process with every criterion on their rubric, using different colored markers. It was quite an eye-opener for students. The results from the data analyses suggest that the self-assessment process had a positive effect on many students' writing (Andrade & Delamater, 1999). I now recommend a careful, specific self-assessment technique in any process of ongoing assessment, especially those supported by instructional rubrics.

A teacher recently told me after a workshop,

> I previously found rubrics to be very unspecific, time-consuming, and an annoyance to assessment. I now like rubrics and am excited about using a few.

I hope that you, too, feel motivated and able to design and use instructional rubrics with your students. Educators can enhance student learning when they go beyond the most basic application of rubrics by including students in designing rubrics, by seeking out and including thinking-centered criteria, and by engaging students in serious self–and peer assessment. Blurring the distinction between instruction and assessment through the use of rubrics has a powerful effect on your teaching and, in turn, on your students' learning.

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Using a rubric to guide learners' revising (Walter)

Writing assignment: Holidays are celebrated in many different ways. Choose a holiday from your country that is important to you. Describe when it is celebrated, what people do, what they eat, and what they might make for this holiday. Explain what the holiday means to the people.

The New Year in my country it's in January, first. The people do in this day some people go to visit their family, They ate tamales in the noon with their family. Some people like to go to the beach with their family or with friends. I don't have mor idea meabe nex time I do.

Walter

1. Use the rubric. What score would you give Walter for content, organization and word choice?

Content: _____ Organization _____ Word Choice _____

2. Imagine that you are sitting next to Walter to give him feedback on his paragraph. What positive comments could you say to Walter to start the conversation?

3. What are some probing questions you could ask Walter about the content and organization of his paragraph to guide him to improve his text through revising?

Using a rubric to guide learners' revising (Christina)

Writing assignment: Many mothers of young children have jobs outside the home. Other mothers choose to stay at home with their children and don't have jobs. Which do you think is better for the children? Which is better for the mother?

Some people say its OK for women who have a child younger than 12 years old to have job. For example, while the kid is at school, the Mother can work part time or If the mother has a job, she can pay for a babysitter to watch the child. They say a kid can protect their mental well being, their body and their education in the school because the school has good teachers which are familiar with the child. They teach a child a lot of stuff. Actually, I learned in school too. But a lot of times it was boring and I wanted to be home. However, my mind was basicly my mother's teaching and when I came back to my house from school my mother always stayed at home and she had space to answer my questions because she didn't have job.

1. Use the rubric. What score would you give Christina for content, organization and word choice?

Content: _____ Organization _____ Word Choice _____

2. Imagine that you are sitting next to Christina to give her feedback on her paragraph. What positive comments could you say to Christina to start the conversation?

3. What are some probing questions you could ask Christina about the content and organization of her paragraph to guide her to improve her text through revising?

PRESENTATION III: Editing – Checking Mechanics

Editing examines the mechanics of writing. This includes grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Clearly the goal is effective self-editing and internalizing the mechanics taught in class. However, in the real world you usually need a second pair of eyes. Peer editing works very well with ESL learners because it allows for negotiation and reinforcement of classroom instruction. Partners can help each other find corrections to be made. Editing checklists can be developed as a whole-class activity.

The checklist should focus on a limited number of points that have been taught and practiced in class before the writing assignment. Moving from revising to editing, students can continue to make meaning the priority if checklists are formed on that basis.

Example:
Subject/verb agreement ____
Correct verb tense ____
Pronoun agreement ____

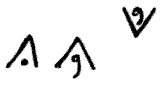
A limited number of editing points (3-5) is recommended for peer editing, especially for beginners.

Challenges and Strategies: *Editing*

Challenges commonly encountered when teaching editing.

Strategies for teaching editing.

EDITING CHECKLIST FOR WRITERS

	paragraph (start a new paragraph here)
?	confusing (I don't understand what this sentence means.)
wf	word form (noun, verb, adjective, adverb)
ww	wrong word (check the meaning of this word)
	insert word (there is a missing word)
	word order (change/reverse the order of these words)
s/p	singular/plural (change this to singular or plural)
vt	verb tense
s/va	subject/verb agreement (the verb form doesn't match the subject of the sentence)
art	article ("the" or "a" is missing, or the wrong article is used.)
	delete (take this out)
sp	spelling (check the spelling of this word)
	close up (move these two words/letters together)
	capitalize (this word starts with a capital letter)
	lower case (this word isn't capitalized)
	insert punctuation (a punctuation mark is missing)

wf

Different about writing in school or at home

ww

Most of time I prefer writing at home then in school. When I have

vt wf sp

been writing at home I can choice if I want it to be really qiuet or if I

art

want to listen to the cd. Music can to help me my mind relax. It

? opens up those ways that have the ideas I wonder. however,

ww sp

anytimes I need silence to have in order to consentrate. I also like

s/p

writing home because I can to take as much times as want. I can to

art

start in a morning and finish at the mid night if I need to. Whereas

Writing in the school is help ful because I can to ask my teacher

v sp

right then when I dont understand somthing. I also friends in class

s/va

and I can ask him questions and some help get. On the other hand,

ww s/p sp wf

I cannot listen with musics durring the class and it is much noisily in

ww vt

the class room then at home. Also when we have been freewriting

sp wf ww

on the mondays I feel prassur to write quick and I am much

nervous.

Creating an editing checklist – intermediate learner

Read the text below from an intermediate learner who is describing a day in the park. Identify all the errors using the full editing checklist. Then choose 4-5 errors that you would include on an editing checklist. Consider the frequency of the error, the degree the error interferes with meaning, and whether correcting the error is level appropriate.

On Saturday I go with my family to the park. We ate a picnic to there. Also in park was a family who has three son. One group of boy they are playing soccer. One of the young boy he is runing for the ball the ball went to the street. He don't look for the car and the man who is in the car he don't look at the boy. The man he is talking in the phone, then the boy's brothers is screming to him Be careful with the car! Everybody was very scare. The man who is in the car he hears and he finully see the boy and he stopped. The young boy he run across the street to other side and got the ball. The boy he was lucky and everybody is happy.

Editing Checklist:

Hierarchy of editing assistance

The following table shows different levels of teacher editing based on a learner's proficiency level. The table is arranged with the most challenging task at the top (for higher level learners), and the least challenging task at the bottom (for low level learners).

Teacher's editing action	Learner's task
In the margin, write a numeral, indicating the number of errors in that line of text.	Learner knows *how many* errors there are, but must find their location, must identify the nature of the errors, and must correct the errors.
In the margin, put editing marks for each error that occurs in that line of text.	Learner knows what type of errors occur, but must find their location and must correct the error(s).
In the lines of text, underline locations of errors.	Learner knows the exact location of errors in the text, but must identify the nature of the errors and must correct them.
In the lines of text, insert editing marks at the location of each error.	Learner knows the exact location of errors and exact nature of the error, but must make the correction.
In the lines of text, correct the errors for the learner.	Learner has no work to do.

PRESENTATION IV: Publishing—Making it Public

For students today, computers now provide many new ways for making written pieces available for others to read. Students can email writing or post to Web sites and blogs. Getting things 'out there' has never been easier, and subsequently motivation for learning to write is on the rise. While we must remain aware of differences in our students' familiarity with computers, and adjust our expectations and approaches accordingly, there is no doubt that adult English language learners, like the rest of us, are increasingly welcoming the benefits that computers can offer.

Not to be forgotten, hard copy outlets for writing still provide great writing incentives. Bulletin boards, self-made books, and newspapers can play pivotal roles in creating school community and make wonderful recruiting tools as well.

PRACTICE IV: Publishing—Making it Public

List ways you could have your students publish their work.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Figure 6.7 **Self-Assessment of Writing Strategies**

Name _____ Date _____

Check one box for each statement.

Before writing:	Yes	No
1. I talked to a friend or partner about the topic.	❑	❑
2. I made a list of ideas on the topic.	❑	❑
3. I made an outline or semantic map.	❑	❑
During writing:		
4. I skipped words I didn't know and went back to them later.	❑	❑
5. I substituted a word from my own language.	❑	❑
6. I used drawings or pictures in my writing.	❑	❑
After writing:		
7. I checked to see if the writing met my purpose.	❑	❑
8. I reread to see if it made sense.	❑	❑
9. I added information or took out information.	❑	❑
10. I edited for spelling, punctuation, capitals, and grammar.	❑	❑

Other strategies I used:

Adapted from materials produced by the Georgetown University Evaluation Assistance Center (EAC) East (1990), Washington, D.C.

Rubric – Mastering the 5-step Writing Process

	Brainstorming	Organizing	Writing the 1st draft	Revising	Editing	Publishing
Advanced						
Proficient						
Below proficient						

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Rubric for Evaluating a Learners' Mastery of the Five-Step Writing Process

BRAINSTORMING

Advanced

A learner whose brainstorming skills are advanced:

Can clearly explain what brainstorming is and its function in the writing process.

Can independently generate 2-3 topics about which to write.

Can independently brainstorm six or more supporting ideas for a single topic.

Can independently generate three or more details or examples for each supporting idea.

Proficient

A learner whose brainstorming skills are proficient:

Has a general understanding of what brainstorming is and its function in the writing process but may need some clarification or reinforcement.

Can generate 1-2 topics about which to write with a minimal amount of help from peers or the teacher.

Can identify 3-5 supporting ideas for a topic with a minimal amount of help from peers or the teacher.

Can identify 1-2 details or examples for each supporting idea with a minimal amount of help.

Below Proficient

A learner whose brainstorming skills are below proficient:

Has little or no understanding of what brainstorming is or of its function in the writing process.

Won't attempt the brainstorming task.

Needs extensive help to generate a topic about which to write, or may need to be given a topic.

Needs extensive help to identify a minimal number of (1-2) of supporting ideas for a topic.

Needs extensive help to identify 1-2 details or examples for each supporting idea.

This rubric was designed by participants in the training *Teaching the Writing Process to Adult Learners*
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ORGANIZING

Advanced

A learner whose organizing skills are advanced:

Can clearly explain the purpose of pre-writing organization in the writing process.

Understands how to use various graphic organizers and can independently select and complete one or can make an outline.

For each paragraph can independently plan an inviting topic sentence that precisely states the main idea, three or more relevant supporting ideas presented in a logical sequence with details and examples, and a satisfying concluding sentence that summarizes the ideas and relates to the topic sentence.

For each essay can independently plan an inviting introductory paragraph that precisely states the thesis, three or more relevant supporting paragraphs presented in a logical sequence, and a satisfying concluding paragraph that summarizes the essay and relates to the thesis.

Can independently identify and delete irrelevant ideas from a brainstorm.

Provides an original, engaging title.

Proficient

A learner whose organizing skills are proficient:

Has a general understanding of the purpose of pre-writing organization in the writing process but may need some clarification or reinforcement.

Generally understands how to use various graphic organizers and can select and complete one with some help, or can make an outline with some help.

For each paragraph, and with minimal help, can plan a topic sentence that states the main idea, two or three supporting ideas with details and examples, and a concluding sentence that relates to the topic sentence. There is some logical sequence of the ideas.

For each essay, and with minimal help, can plan an introductory paragraph that states the thesis, two or three supporting paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph that relates to the thesis. There is some logical sequence of the ideas or paragraphs.

Can identify and delete irrelevant ideas from a brainstorm with minimal help.

Provides a title.

Below Proficient

A learner whose organizing skills are below proficient:

Has no understanding of the purpose of pre-writing organization in the writing process.

Starts writing with no pre-writing planning.

Won't attempt to organize ideas from a brainstorm.

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Has little or no understanding of how to use various graphic organizers or make an outline. Needs extensive assistance selecting and completing a graphic organizer or an outline.

For a paragraph is unable to plan a topic sentence, identify one or two supporting ideas with details and examples, or a concluding sentence, or needs extensive help from the teacher to do so. Ideas are randomly sequenced.

For an essay is unable to plan an introductory paragraph that states the thesis, one or two supporting paragraphs, or a concluding paragraph that relates to the thesis, or needs extensive help from the teacher to do so. Ideas are randomly sequenced.

Cannot identify irrelevant ideas from a brainstorm. Resists deleting any idea from a brainstorm.

Does not provide a title.

WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

Advanced

A learner whose first draft skills are advanced:

Independently uses their pre-writing planning (outline or graphic organizer).

Independently anticipates revision by employing tips for first draft. (Leaving margins, skipping lines, crossing out rather than erasing, not using a dictionary, writing quickly, etc.)

Writes with much fluency, fearlessness and independence.

Uses precise organization in the first draft. (Topic sentence, supporting details with examples, and concluding sentence, or introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs.)

Word choice is varied, action oriented, vivid, and reflects correct word form.

Independently uses effective transition words between ideas in sentences and/or paragraphs.

Maintains focus and sticks to the topic.

Proficient

A learner whose first draft skills are proficient:

With some guidance uses ideas from their pre-writing plan (outline or graphic organizer.)

Employs some tips for writing a first draft. (Leaving margins, skipping lines, crossing out rather than erasing, not using a dictionary, writing quickly, etc.)

Writes with some fluency and independence.

Uses some basic organization in the first draft, but some elements may be missing. (Topic sentence, supporting details with examples, and concluding sentence, or introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs.)

Word forms are generally correct, but word choices are not always varied.

Uses some transition words between ideas in sentences and/or paragraphs.

With some effort maintains focus and generally sticks to the topic.

Below Proficient

A learner whose first draft skills are below proficient:

Fears or loathes the task. Can't get started and/or hits a brick wall.

Does not use their pre-writing planning (outline or graphic organizer).

Requires frequent support, encouragement, guidance from the teacher.

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Does not employ the tips for writing a first draft. (Leaving margins, skipping lines, crossing out rather than erasing, not using a dictionary, writing quickly, etc.)

Writing lacks fluency and is not free-flowing.

Does not write with basic elements of organization. (Topic sentence, supporting details with examples, and concluding sentence, or introductory paragraph, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs.) May write sentences in list form.

Word choice is repetitive and/or immature. Many incorrect word choices and/or word forms.

Does not use transition words between ideas in sentences or paragraphs.

Frequently loses focus and strays from the subject.

REVISING

Advanced

A learner whose revising skills are advanced:

Can clearly explain the purpose of revising in the writing process. Understands the difference between revising (content, organization, word choice) and editing (grammar and mechanics).

Is willing and motivated to revise own text. Is open to suggestions from peers and/or the teacher.

Understands the concepts present on a revising rubric and independently applies the rubric to peer revising or self-revising. When guiding peers to revise, asks many well thought out clarifying questions. Acknowledges clarifying questions received from peers or the teacher, and responds thoughtfully about possible revisions to own text.

Independently revises own text based on suggestions from self, peers, or teacher, and produces a significantly improved second draft.

Proficient

A learner whose revising skills are proficient:

Has a general understanding of the purpose of revising in the writing process but may need some clarification or reinforcement. Generally understands the difference between revising (content, organization, word choice) and editing (grammar and mechanics) but may need occasional help to distinguish the two.

With some encouragement is willing to revise own text. With guidance and/or encouragement, is open to suggestions from peers and/or the teacher.

With minimal reinforcement understands the concepts present on a revising rubric and can apply the rubric to peer revising or self-revising with minimal guidance. When guiding peers to revise, asks a few clarifying questions. Acknowledges clarifying questions received from peers or the teacher. With some help can envision possible revisions to own text.

Revises own text based on suggestions from self, peers, or teacher with minimal help. Produces an improved second draft.

Below Proficient

A learner whose revising skills are below proficient:

Has no understanding of the purpose of revising in the writing process. Confuses revising (content, organization, word choice) with editing (grammar and mechanics).

Resists the task of revising. Resists suggestions from peers or the teacher.

Does not understand the concepts present on a revising rubric and is unable to apply the rubric to peer revising or self-revising. Unable to generate guiding questions for peers' texts. Despite clarifying questions received from peers or the teacher, cannot envision possible revisions to own text.

Second draft shows little improvement over first draft.

This rubric was designed by participants in the training *Teaching the Writing Process to Adult Learners*
Colorado Department of Education, Adult Education and Family Literacy
2006 Regional Assessment Trainings Jane C. Miller miller_j@cde.state.co.us

EDITING

Advanced

A learner whose editing skills are advanced:

Can clearly explain the purpose of editing in the writing process. Understands the difference between editing (grammar and mechanics) and revising (content, organization, word choice).

Is willing and motivated to edit own text.

Can identify and understand 10 or more symbols on an editing checklist (grammar, spelling, punctuation) and independently applies the symbols to peer editing or self editing.

Is able to find the majority of his/her own mistakes. Uses techniques of reading own text aloud or listening to another person read the text in order to hear the mistakes.

Proficient

A learner whose editing skills are proficient:

Has a general understanding of the purpose of editing in the writing process but may need some clarification or reinforcement. Generally understands the difference between editing (grammar and mechanics) and revising (content, organization, word choice) but may need occasional help to distinguish the two.

With some encouragement is willing to edit own text.

Can interpret 5-9 symbols on a modified editing checklist (grammar, spelling, punctuation) and applies the symbols to peer editing or self editing with minimal assistance.

Is able to find and correct some of his/her own mistakes. With encouragement, uses techniques of reading own text aloud or listening to another person read the text in order to hear the mistakes.

Below Proficient

A learner whose editing skills are below proficient:

Has no understanding of the purpose of editing in the writing process. Confuses editing (grammar and mechanics) with revising (content, organization, word choice).

Resists the task of editing.

Can interpret only 1-4 symbols on a simplified editing checklist (grammar, spelling, punctuation). Unable to apply the symbols to peer editing or self editing.

Is unable to find or correct his/her own mistakes, even if using techniques of reading own text aloud or listening to another person read the text in order to hear the mistakes.

Needs considerable guidance from teacher to find and correct mistakes. May need the teacher to identify all mistakes.

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PUBLISHING

Advanced

A learner whose publishing skills are advanced:

Can independently identify and investigate a variety of publishing outlets (classroom, school, local community, public officials, internet) for own text. Can independently modify the written piece according to the specifications of the outlet.

Can produce a well-polished "finished product" (fully edited, error free, neat in appearance) without assistance.

Can produce work that neatly fits into appropriate format.

Makes use of available technology (word processing, publishing software, etc.) and visual aids.

Proficient

A learner whose publishing skills are proficient:

With some assistance can identify a few publishing outlets (classroom, school, local community, public officials, internet) for own text. Can modify the written piece according to the specifications of the outlet with some assistance.

Produces final product on own with minimal errors. Needs minimal assistance to polish the text before publishing.

Needs some assistance with formatting of final draft.

May not use technology or visual aids, or needs some assistance.

Below Proficient

A learner whose publishing skills are below proficient:

Unable to identify publishing outlets for own text beyond the teacher. Unable to modify text to suit specifications of a publishing outlet.

Final work is not publishable outside of classroom, or needs extensive assistance from teacher to produce a publishable piece.

Does not understand proper formatting guidelines.

Makes minimal or no use of technology, visuals, or other "extras" in final draft, or needs considerable assistance.

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Resources on Teaching Writing

Instructional Materials

Blanchard, K. and Root, C. (1994). *Ready to write.* 2nd Edition. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Blanton, L. L. (2001). *Composition practice.* Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

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Reid, J.M. (2000). *The process of paragraph writing.* 2nd Edition. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

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Links and Websites

Instructional and Professional Resources

Resources for teaching writing to ESL students—all levels:
http://iteslj.org/links/ESL/Writing/

Guide to writing a basic essay – native speakers and advanced ESL
http://members.tripod.com/~lklivingston/essay/links.html

Systems for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES), Massachusetts State Department of Education, Bibliography for Writing.
http://www.sabes.org/resources/bibwrite.htm

Michael Buckoffs' Student Writings (Beginning to Advanced)

http://buckhoff.topcities.com/high%20beginner%20esl%20essays.htm

University of Minnesota Online Grammar Handbook – Process Writing (Chapter 2)
http://www.tc.umn.edu/~jewel001/grammar/

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Using Research on Writing

Using Research on Writing

by Marilyn K. Gillespie

Marilyn Gillespie highlights some research on writing instruction and discusses what it offers to adult basic education.

I was introduced to research on writing in the mid-1980s while starting up Read Write Now, a small library literacy program in Springfield, MA. Janet Kelly, who co-directed the program, had just finished a graduate course on the teaching of writing in elementary schools. She described the latest writing process research and speculated that it might be uniquely suited to our desire for a learner-centered classroom. We were looking for ways to move beyond simply teaching skills. We wanted literacy acquisition to be part of a process whereby adults developed personal goals for change, found their own voices, and acquired the ability to speak out and give an opinion on things that mattered in their lives. Janet introduced me to the work of researchers Donald Graves (1975), Lucy Calkins (1975), and others who had begun to make authors of even very young children through the implementation of writing workshops. Could our adult beginning readers, many of whom were just beginning to read words and make sentences, do the same? We decided to give it a try.

We introduced the writing process to our first group of students and suggested they write autobiographies. Soon they were teaching us. "My name is Lidia," a student began. "I was born in Italy in 1939, in the middle of the depression and in the middle of the war." Lidia had completed only second grade in Italy. She had never written so much as a short letter before, yet the urge to tell her story gave her the courage to spell words as she heard them and to suspend her need to have everything perfect the first time. Soon other students began reading Lidia's story and started their own. Over time we came to recognize that writing was not only a way for adults to improve their literacy skills. Writing about their lives also gave them a chance to reflect on what school had been like for them in the past, to set goals for the future, and

to offer their experience up for others with similar backgrounds (Gillespie, 1990, 1991).

During the years that followed, I learned of other programs that were incorporating different kinds of writing into their classrooms. Some advocated journal writing (Kerka, 1996) or dialogue journals (Peyton & Staton, 1991). Other involved adult basic education (ABE) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) literacy learners in writing newsletters, anthologies, and individual books (see Gillespie, 1991; Peyton, 1993). More recently, writing has been woven into collective research efforts (Auerbach, 1992; Gardner, 1985; Mace, 1995) and project based instruction (Wrigley, 1998).

For the most part, however, programs that include the writing process as an integral part of instruction appear to be in the minority. Most programs, if they involve students in composition at all, do so only with more advanced students. They use the traditional approach of assigning topics and "grading" the results. Even the advent of the General Educational Development (GED) essay test does not appear to have fostered writing proficiency in the way creators hoped it would. After reading hundreds of GED essays, Art Halbrook, the writing specialist for the GED Testing Service, concluded that writing instruction is frequently a "blueprint for mediocrity" (1999, p. 8). Too often, he notes, teachers simply drill students in a five-paragraph formula. Student are taught to restate the topic in their opening paragraph, to write three paragraphs of supporting statements, and to link them with transition words such as first, second, third or next, then, or finally. The last paragraph begins with the inevitable "in conclusion" and involves restating the first paragraph. Students are shown how they can adapt this formula to any topic to pass the GED test. Halbrook notes that "the resulting essay is an amorphous piece of writing, a hybrid product loosely defined as an essay only because it has sentences, paragraph divisions, and a beginning, middle, and end" (p. 9). This drill and practice approach, he points out, does a great disservice to students. Formulaic writing leaves the learner "shackled to a form that denies the individual the ability to grow and communicate as a writer..." (p. 9). Moreover, it has limited value in preparing adults for the writing demands of higher education.

Researchers have made considerable progress in understanding what people do when they write and how they learn to write. This research has made its way to public schools and universities. Yet, for the most part, it appears that only a few adult literacy educators have had the time or opportunity to learn about it. This may be due in part to the fact that little of this research has been conducted with adult literacy learners. Adult literacy educators must read between the lines to see how the research can apply to our populations. The aim of this paper is to show that such

an effort is worthwhile. I will highlight a few strands of writing research that are of interest to those of us in the field of adult literacy and suggest the implications they have for adult literacy education.

The Writing Process: A Working Model

Many teachers who learned the basics of the writing process model in the early 1980s may be unaware of how it has evolved over the past two decades. A "working model for the writing process" was first proposed by cognitive psychologists Hayes and Flower (1980). In collecting together the growing body of research up to that point, they suggested that writing could be seen, above all, as a "goal-directed, problem-solving process" (Hayes & Flower, 1980 p. 4). The writing process had essentially three sub-processes. Writers plan. They decide what to say and how to say it. Writers generate text. They turn their plans into written text, getting the words down on the page and observing the conventions of writing such as spelling and grammar. Writers also revise. They use a variety of ways to improve on the existing text. These three sub-processes do not occur in any fixed or linear order. At one moment writers might be writing, moving their ideas and their discourse forward; at the next they were backtracking, rereading, and digesting what had been written. The fact that these sub-processes are recursive, with one often interrupting the other, represented a shift in the understanding of the writing process.

An important aspect of understanding the writing process has been the study of the differences between "novice" writers and "expert" writers such as professional authors. Novice writers include young children as well as older children and adults who never learned to write or who experience difficulty writing. Some of this research came about with the advent of open admissions policies at many colleges in the 1970s. Shaughnessy (1977) examined the errors of college learners in what were then labeled "remedial" programs. Her research showed that novice writing reflects oral speech. Perl (1979) noticed that novice writers may lose their train of thought because they have to attend to more mechanical concerns such as letter formation, handwriting, and spelling (aspects of writing that are automatic and unconscious with more experienced writers). Sommers (1980) showed that novice writers typically solved problems simply by fixing grammar errors and spelling and copying the text over. Over time it became clear that there are large differences between experts and novices. Experts spend considerably more time revising. They pay much more attention to global problems (for example, re-sequencing, re-studying, and re-writing large units of text) than do novices. Experts are also better than novices at both detecting problems in their own text and diagnosing the cause of those problems (Hayes & Flower, 1986).

As the writing process model developed by Hayes and Flower has evolved, it has become considerably more complex. For example, new detailed research on memory has led Hayes to extend and expand the role of working memory in his most recent revision of the writing process model (1996). We now understand that any cognitive process that is not automated must be retrieved from our long-term memory by our working memory before it can be used to solve problems or make decisions. Our short-term storage capacity is limited (Torrance & Jeffery, 1999). This research helps us to understand why adult novice writers, for whom spelling and handwriting may not yet be automated, need to focus more attention on these aspects of writing. and why they may have less working memory available to focus on other aspects of the writing process.

Alternative Models

In the writing process model associated with Flower and Hayes, experts and novices are seen as using essentially the same writing process, only with experts doing it much better. An alternative theory developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987, 1993) explores the notion that mature, expert composing is based on a process that may be different than the process used by less skilled writers. Less skilled writers, they suggest, use a "retrieve-and-tell" approach to writing tasks. They call this the knowledge-telling model (in contrast to a knowledge-transforming model used by more skilled writers). Novice writers produce much less elaborate or abstract sets of prewriting notes. They concern themselves with generating content during composing and spend much less time considering goals, plans, and problems posed by the writing. They think about the topic or assignment and ask themselves what they know. Then they write down everything they can think of. They make less frequent use of main ideas in their writing as guides for planning and integrating information. When it comes to revision, they are less able to make global revisions that would involve reorganizing the content. As they write, they read over what they have written and use this to come up with additional information to add. In short, the knowledge-telling model uses a streamlined procedure that allows less-skilled writers to bypass the complex problem-solving activities often seen in the composing practices of more skilled writers. These strategies work especially well for writing about personal experiences. Not only is it relatively easy to find something to say, but abstract, logical organization is not usually a major concern. Students can create coherence by following a basic chronology.

In the knowledge-transforming model, on the other hand, the writing task leads directly into problem analysis and goal setting. The resulting goals, and the problems anticipated, lead to plans for how to resolve them, whether they are problems of content or problems related to how to organize the information best in light of previously presented information

and the audience to be addressed (rhetorical problems). As one problem is solved, others are created and in this way new content is generated or new ideas about how to organize the composition are developed. Becoming a proficient writer is a deliberate process in which writers learn to distance themselves from their writing and use the output — the written text — as input: food for thought, for revision, rethinking, rewriting, and writing.

Other Recent Research

Several new developments related to applying research to the classroom may have special relevance for adult education. Graham (1997) and Graham et al. (1995), for example, have conducted research aimed at diagnosing specific problems faced by learning-disabled children. They are testing specific strategies for teaching learning-disabled students the kinds of self-regulatory procedures used by skilled writers. They set up a teachable routine that externalizes the writing process and allows students gradually to internalize the goal setting and revision strategies used by their more proficient peers.

Other researchers have looked more closely at the role of spelling and handwriting. Within the writing process model, the processes such as creating letter representations in memory, accessing and retrieving these representations in memory, motor planning, and motor production are now referred to as low-level processes. Processes for planning, generating language at the sentence and text levels, and reviewing and revising written text are considered high-level processes (Berninger & Swanson, 1994). Many researchers believe that for beginning writers, "the goal is to automatize the low level processes so that working memory resources are freed for the higher level constructive aspects of composing" (Berninger et al., 1998, p. 652). Strategies are now being tested with school-aged children that seek to improve students' low-level and high-level skills during the same composition process (Berninger & Swanson, 1994; Berninger et al., 1998).

Research on learning to spell has shown that spelling is not just a memorization process but a process of noticing (as in reading) recurring patterns in the sound, structure, and meaning features of words and then trying out and revising hypotheses about these patterns in other writing situations. This is one of the few areas where research has been conducted with adult literacy learners (see Worthy & Viise, 1996; Viise, 1996).

Research on how to teach handwriting has also focused on automaticity. Berninger and her colleagues (1997) found that offering a series of ten-minute handwriting sessions while children were engaged in the writing process was the most effective strategy. The children responded best to

visual cues such as numbered arrows indicating the nature, order, and direction of component strokes required to produce the letter correctly. They found combining visual cues with memory retrieval intervention (in which children look at each letter, then cover it up and write it from memory) was more effective than other treatments.

The Social Aspects

Writing researchers have also come to recognize the central role of the social, affective, and motivational dimensions of the writing process. A growing body of research has explored the social aspects of writing in varied contexts, from homes to workplaces to cross cultural classrooms in public schools (Freedman, 1994). Although few studies have yet looked directly at the social and affective dimensions of writing in adult literacy contexts, this area holds great promise for future research. Many recent case studies of adult learners allude indirectly to the value of this line of research. In Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy (1995), for example, Purcell-Gates found that even after seven years of public school, four years of adult school and 31 years of life, her student Jenny had never read or written her own words. All she had ever done was copy other people's words — language that had little meaning for her. Jenny's words, Purcell-Gates noted, "were never acknowledged and affirmed, never allowed. Since people think, conceptualize, and learn with their language— with their words — Jenny was effectively shut out from the literate world" (1995, p. 218). Jenny's breakthrough began in part when she started to keep her own journal.

Other studies point to the powerful images of reading and writing adults carry within themselves, often derived from their school experience. Forrester's case study of "Laura" (1988) showed how strongly she had internalized the belief that she was unable to write because she could not spell every word correctly. Only by associating learning to write with the "trial and error" process of learning to figure skate (Laura's favorite hobby) was she finally able to give herself permission to move forward after years of limited progress. In another recent case study of adult beginning readers, Fingeret and Drennon (1997) have suggested that the decision to come to an adult literacy class is part of a wider process of personal transformation. Although the process of learning to write was not a primary focus of their study, their profiles of learners demonstrate the important role writing can play in the personal transformation process.

In my own research (Gillespie, 1991), I also found that many of the adult beginning readers I studied used writing as a way to examine their previous beliefs and experiences with respect to themselves as learners and to develop alternative images and possibilities. Writing possessed many qualities that made it a particularly important tool in the personal

transformation process. The permanence of written text allowed adults to step back, re-think, revise, and sometimes publicly affirm their new identities as they entered the literate world. We need further research with adult literacy populations to help illuminate the role writing can play in the affective and motivational dimensions of becoming literate. Such research, writing experts suggest, may be valuable not just to adult literacy educators but also to the field of writing research as a whole (Freedman, 1987).

Implications

What are the implications of this research for adult literacy education? The research shows that writing is not best taught as a linear, sequential set of skills but as a process of gradual approximation of what skilled writers do: a cycling and recycling of learning processes. Composition is not something that should wait until all the basic, prerequisite skills are learned, but can be introduced even to relative beginners. Adult learners should be given ample opportunity to write not only in GED classes, but also in ABE and even beginning ESOL classrooms. Moreover, we cannot treat writing as a neat, linear process: on Monday we plan, on Tuesday we draft, and on Wednesday we respond to drafts (Dyson & Freedman, 1991). If our writing curricula are to foster the growth of goal-oriented problem-solving skills, we need to acknowledge that students will learn at different rates and in different styles. We need to find ways to encourage them to decide on their own topics and purposes for writing and to see one another as resources. Since many adults bring with them powerful images of writing associated primarily with spelling, grammar, and handwriting, adult literacy educators should discover ways to help students learn put this aspect of writing into perspective. Low-level writing processes such as spelling, handwriting, and grammar need to be taught not in isolation but along with the higher-level processes of learning so that these tools are applied to the construction of meaning. Those of us who work with students who aspire to pass the GED also need to understand the role of knowledge-telling and narrative writing as a precursor to the kinds of knowledge-transforming writing required of essay tests.

Adult literacy learners have the ability, the need, and the right to be more than simply consumers of other people's words. Our challenge as teachers of writing is to move beyond seeing writing as simply another skill. The application of recent research on writing can give us valuable tools to help adult literacy learners to become creators of language: to make words their own.

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About the Author

Marilyn Gillespie is the author of a variety of books and monographs that connect research and policy with practice, including *Many Literacies: Training Modules for Adult Beginning Readers and Tutors*.

NCSALL

The Assumptions We Make: How Learners and Teachers Understand Writing

The Assumptions We Make: How Learners and Teachers Understand Writing

by Mary Russell

As a teacher of basic writing, I was often puzzled by my students' beliefs about how writers write. Many, for example, believed that "good" writers never misspelled words, understood punctuation, and were able to produce text in finished form, with everything right the first time. My interest in these beliefs and their effects on learners — often characterized by teachers as writing anxiety — was the impetus for my doctoral dissertation project. My project focused on the hypothesis that teaching writing to adults requires that teachers do more than encourage learners to take risks and lose their fears, and that a first step to effective instruction was to examine the assumptions both teachers and learners brought to this task. To test that hypothesis, I interviewed teachers on teaching writing and learners on the relative importance of mechanics, process, and ideas about form and structure. The study was designed as a collaborative effort, with myself as researcher, three teachers of adults, and 18 learners who were native speakers of English. The teachers used systematic inquiry — a form of teacher research that provides an ordered way of analyzing classroom events — to examine their own practice. I met with the teachers regularly both inside and outside their classrooms throughout one school year. I was a participant observer in the classrooms, and the facilitator of the inquiry during our meetings. This article focuses on what I learned from the teacher and learner interviews, classroom observations, and group discussions held at the beginning of the project.

Many adult basic literacy learners believe that their writing skills are not adequate (Fagan, 1988; Gambrell & Heatherington, 1981; Smith-Burke, 1987). They come to the task of learning to write with a mental model of writing that emphasizes form rather than content, produces anxiety about making mistakes, and assumes that writers use their personal experience

as data. In contrast, teachers who understand that writing is a complex process often focus on content over form. They urge learners not to worry about making mistakes and to view confusion and mistakes as signs of growth, the place where learning to write begins. It is difficult, however, to convince students of the validity of this view. For learners whose understanding of the writing process is limited, the injunction not to worry about form and to ignore mistakes often serves to raise anxiety rather than to dispel it. Adult learners want to know how to get the form "right," and how to recognize and avoid mistakes, not make them: they often fear that the error will became confused with the right usage, and dislike risking humiliation or embarrassment. From the point of view of these students, making mistakes of any kind is a source of anxiety and confusion, and often marks the place where learning to write stops. In effect, teachers and learners appear to be speaking two different languages, perhaps different dialects of the language of writing instruction.

This kind of instructional disconnect around issues of correctness, process, and strategy has been called "conceptual difficulty" (Johnston, 1985). Conceptual difficulty can interfere with instruction. Once an inappropriate concept is learned or an appropriate one not learned, further instruction that presupposes an understanding of that concept may be not only wasteful but also destructive because of the resultant experience of failure and its emotional consequences (p. 158). It is therefore important not to presuppose that we (as teachers) know what learners think, but to use questioning, observation, and discussion to determine what the students' concepts actually are.

The following example of a conceptual difficulty observed by one of the teachers in the project may help to illustrate what I mean. (All the examples are taken from my research data.) The teacher was helping students to practice for the test of General Educational Development (GED) and was using used topical readings as a basis for writing practice. What she asked learners to do is a common instructional strategy. Learners were to read a brief article containing information about common ailments, such as arthritis or diabetes, discuss it in their small groups, and then write about it. When she looked at the papers, she realized that one learner appeared to have a limited understanding of what she had read. However, when the teacher suggested that the learner re-read the original information, the learner said: "I don't know anything about diabetes. I don't have diabetes. I can't do it. I can't explain it. I can't learn by reading. I can't write about anything I don't have personal experience of" (Transcript, 1/24/95).

This comment startled the teacher. It was not that the learner did not understand the piece, but that she believed she could not learn by

reading. The teacher said that this response "shocked" her. When the student said "I can't write about anything I don't have personal experience of," the teacher realized that one of the student's basic concepts directly contradicted what the teacher thought was common knowledge. Intrigued, she asked other students about this, and three different learners told her the same thing. Does this mean, she wondered, that she needed to explain that you can learn things by reading? She had never thought about saying that out loud (Transcript, 95).

It would be quite reasonable for a teacher who sees a poor first draft based on a reading to assume, as this teacher initially did, that the learner was not attending to her reading, or simply had poor reading skills. But because this teacher was engaged in inquiry, she uncovered a deeper problem: the learner could read, she just didn't believe reading had anything to do with writing. This incident revealed to the group that some ideas are not always "givens" for adult learners.

To address issues of conceptual difficulty requires teaching strategies that unearth and acknowledge these often unarticulated ideas about how people write. Other strategies must help to address inappropriate concepts. To teach writing to this learner, the teacher must find a way to help her analyze and reflect not only on the belief that she cannot learn by reading, but also on other beliefs that may be impeding her progress. As learner interviews revealed, these include false assumptions about the importance of correctness, incomplete or truncated models of process, and limited notions of writing strategies such as revision.

Correctness

In interviews with all three teachers, they indicated that they used a minimum of grammar and skills instruction, both because they wanted to de-emphasize the importance of correctness, and also because they felt that teaching decontexualized skills was not effective. They therefore employed teaching methods such as individual writing conferences that focused primarily on content (Interview, 11/94). The teachers also encouraged students to self-correct by, for example, reading their work aloud and listening for punctuation, and then reformulating a part that didn't "sound right" (Interview, 12/94). One teacher said that he liked to edit as a group exercise because he believed that this process reduced the risk of embarrassing learners. He remarked, however, that this process did not seem to improve learner writing. He noted, too, that students often asked for correction and seemed puzzled about what he meant when he suggested that they revise (Interview, 11/94).

In interviews, I asked learners to estimate their own skills and what they thought their writing "needs" were. I adapted an interview protocol from an instrument called "Self Estimates of Writing Skills," which was

developed by the Ontario Institute for Study of Education (OISE), based on a model first proposed by Bryson, Bereiter, and Scardamalia. The questions were designed to elicit narrative answers on mechanics, process, and structure, and what students thought were the characteristics of good writers. The interviews provided samples of student thinking that showed the influence of partially digested elementary and secondary instruction, and a conviction that their mechanical skills such as spelling and punctuation were inadequate. The teachers and I then used this information as background knowledge when doing observations of learner writing behavior. We observed that while 90 percent of the students said in their interviews that the dictionary was the poor speller's best friend, no one consulted a dictionary during writing. And while some learners said they "edited for mechanics, like punctuation," teacher observations revealed that few learners were even re-reading their texts.

In general, learners behaved as though the correction of mechanics was a process beyond their ability, the province of the teacher or some other "they": a process that occurred outside of themselves. A student said, for example, that she would correct her punctuation by "looking to see how they would punctuate it in a sentence and then see if I did the same" (Transcript, 12/95). One of the teachers noticed the mysterious "they" and said: "It interests me that people think that writing that is printed in a book seems to be so different from their own. Learners often seem to think that [the writing] comes from some different place. They don't see the person behind it. If I ever type something on a computer, like a writing exercise, or homonyms, I'll hand it out, and people will say, "What do they want us to do here?" Like it comes from somewhere else" (Transcript, 3/95).

This may occur because the instruction is not getting to the root of the problem: in this case the learner's belief that she cannot be the corrector. Learners' spelling and punctuation anxieties might not only be about correctness, but also about their inability to conceive of a strategy that places them in the role of corrector. These strategies must be made explicit for learners to be able to use them.

Process

In my initial interviews with teachers, their answers indicated that they were assuming that certain techniques associated with writing process theory were effective for helping learners improve their writing. All three of the participating teachers used self-selected topics based on reading, brainstorming techniques for prewriting, and peer revision. But after talking about learner responses to questions about process, one of the teachers decided to observe more closely how learners were using these techniques. She found, for example, that while her students made detailed lists of the ideas that came to them during brainstorming

activities, when the time came to write, the lists — specifically created as a support for writing — were never used. When another teacher wondered why this might happen, the teacher replied, "I don't know. All sorts of little things that I am finding out that I never would have suspected [before we started the project]. Like it never would have occurred to me that they would separate brainstorming from writing the essay. And so I never made the connection explicit" (Transcript, 95).

Why would a learner not make the connection between brainstorming and writing? Why go to the trouble of making such a list, if she did not intend to use it? One possible answer is that the learner may think of writing as producing a product by taking series of discrete steps forward, of which brainstorming is one. The list, now completed, is a step finished. The next step, the draft, is viewed as a separate process. The influence of this kind of belief is subtle. While these beliefs have substantial control over a learner's behavior, without questioning and observation, a teacher might attribute the behavior to something else, or simply think that the behavior is inexplicable. What the teacher saw was the effect of the belief, not the belief itself and, for her, the behavior was puzzling.

The following example also raises questions about the learners' concepts of process. In answer to the question "What would make someone a good writer ?" one adult learner said: "Knowing how to punctuate things. And not having to have so many mistakes on a paper and everything being just right the first time. Nothing else" (Interview, 1/95). Her assumption that punctuation and avoiding mistakes are of primary importance is not only in direct contradiction to what her teachers think is important, but also raises questions about the implications of this belief for her writing development. Her comment should make it clear that, in spite of the intensive work over the last 20 years on writing as a social process, this learner still views it as a product that springs wholly formed from the mind of the "good" writer. There is no slot for revision in her mental model.

Strategies

To learn to write is to understand what revise means quite literally. With adult basic learners, it is their inability to re-vision their writing that is most puzzling and frustrating for teachers. Often, learners repeat the same mistakes, and no amount of instruction appears to make an impression. One teacher remarked that his students exhibited "a real resistance to doing anything twice" (Transcript, 3/24). Student responses indicated that they equated revision with rewriting: the physical act of re-writing, or recopying for neatness. One learner described his process: "Rewrite and revise too. ... I do all three. I edit first. Rewrite means re-copy. Should do it three times. Three times for me" (Interview, 1/95).

One teacher was very interested in revision, and observed it closely. She discovered that her students interpreted peer revision to be an entirely different activity than their teacher assumed it to be. She said: "They take each other's papers and [physically] rewrite them. I (learner Y) take X's paper, and read it. But I don't talk to X. I don't talk to the person. I just sit down and re-copy his paper" (Transcript, 95).

For the learner who believes that being a good writer means "having everything right the first time," the concept of a first draft is unclear, and therefore revisioning is an empty concept. If one cannot get it right on the first try, then what is the point of going back?

Conclusion: Making Connections

While the findings I have summarized here might help teachers understand some of the problems adults have when learning to write, they are only a small piece of what we need to know about teaching writing to adults. One of the major characteristics of the mental model exhibited by the learners in this project was their failure to make conceptual connections between reading and writing, brainstorming and drafting, the writer and the product. How can teachers help learners who have unproductive mental models for writing? How can we help them to make the necessary connections?

It may be that we need a different model of teaching writing specifically for adults: one that allows learners and teachers to co-construct representations of their assumptions about writing processes, and that makes explicit the connections that may be unclear. There may be, for example, a number of things besides "You can learn from reading" that we need to say "out loud." It might also be useful to bring samples of professional authors" manuscripts both to illustrate that professionals do not "get it right the first time," and at the same time help learners to see the person behind the text. Engaging learners and teachers in self-conscious and self-directed inquiry about the processes, mechanics, and strategies involved in writing can not only help learners to visualize themselves as the person who creates the text, but can also illustrate the complex nature of literacy and give weight and respect to the experience and knowledge both teachers and adult learners bring to writing.

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The Power of Writing, the Writing of Power

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Approaches to adult ESOL writing instruction

by Elsa Auerbach

If you had walked into an adult English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) class 20 years ago, you might have seen students doing little writing other than completing short exercises designed to reinforce particular grammar points or language functions. The teacher may have evaluated this writing on the basis of formal correctness; students may have had little opportunity to write extended pieces in which they expressed their own ideas. Today, you may see exactly the same kind of writing in some adult ESOL classes; in many others, however, you're likely to see students filling out job applications, writing notes to their children's teachers, or practicing taking phone messages. They may be writing journal entries, doing free writing, composing stories about their lives, or writing down folktales from their homelands. Some may be revising their work for publication. Others may be working together to draft letters to the editor of a newspaper about a community problem or to craft a petition to the local school board. The teacher may be writing alongside students, responding to their writing by asking questions and sharing experiences, or giving mini-lessons about a particular grammar point.

At first glance, the changes over the past 20 years can been construed as representing a new eclecticism in writing pedagogy: a "let a hundred flowers bloom" philosophy. However, underneath this proliferation of practices are several distinct tendencies that reflect theoretical developments in the fields of second language acquisition, composition theory, and literacy studies. Although most of the research in ESOL writing has been done in higher education contexts (see Cumming, 1998; Raimes, 1998) and there has been minimal writing research in adult ESOL contexts, pedagogical practices in both contexts are informed by similar approaches. Understanding the differences and similarities between the approaches is important because writing instruction is so

powerful. The way that writing is taught sends learners messages about who they are as writers, what is entailed in the act of writing, what they can do with writing, and what writing can do for them. In fact, writing instruction often goes further than shaping conceptions about writing itself: it can also contribute to constructing learners' sense of their own identities and possibilities (Ullman, 1997). In this article, I present five current approaches to teaching second language writing, the theoretical perspectives on which they are based, their implications for practice, and the messages they send learners.

Behavioral and Functional Approaches: Writing for Assimilation

One of the first departures from grammar-oriented writing instruction for adult ESOL students in nonacademic contexts was the functional or competency-based approach (Savage, 1993). This approach, which evolved in the late 1970s, is based on the view that, for immigrants or refugees, the priority is survival; according to this view, their needs for writing focus primarily on very functionally-oriented, context-specific writing tasks. Thus, where grammar-based approaches value what students know about language, this view emphasizes what students can do with language. It is concerned with the behaviors and performance demanded in particular domains or roles rather than with grammar per se. For example, workplace educators may develop an inventory of writing tasks required for a specific job and base writing instruction on that inventory. As such, this approach is parallel to the English for special purposes (ESP) approach used in academic contexts. Often writing tasks are integrated into thematic life skills modules along with reading and oral language skills: reading want ads, filling out job applications, and preparing for interviews may go hand in hand as tasks associated with finding a job. Assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate competence; this approach is congruent with outcomes-based models currently being mandated through federal policy initiatives.

Proponents of this approach argue that it will enable learners to participate in the contexts of their daily lives competently and meet the practical demands of work, family, and community life. It will, they say, prepare new immigrants and refugees to succeed according to the expectations of American society. The message here is that being able to perform the writing tasks associated with specific contexts, norms, and societally defined roles will results in assimilation into the American mainstream.

Cognitive Approaches: Writing for Self-Expression and Meaning-Making

As second language acquisition and composition theories have developed, an emphasis on writing as a cognitive, meaning-making

process has become increasingly popular. Critiquing behavioral and functional approaches, believers in this approach argue that writing should be much more than filling out forms or responding to externally defined norms. All too often, they claim, the functional approach limits both the kinds of writing students can do and the roles for which it prepares them. It trains students to fit into the social order as it exists, which, for refugees and immigrants, often means filling menial roles or dead-end jobs that require little thinking or extended writing (Tollefson, 1989).

In the cognitive view, often called the "process" approach to writing, the focus on meaningful communication for learner-defined purposes derives from second language acquisition theory. The focus on the process of writing as a vehicle for reflection and exploration of ideas comes from composition theory. The content, practices, and purposes of ESOL writing inspired by this approach differ from those in functional classes: writing becomes a way of making sense of experience or discovering what one thinks rather than performing functionally useful tasks. Thus, writing often starts with personal narratives, as titles such as Writing Our Lives (Peyton & Staton, 1996) suggest. Literary forms such as poetry are also often incorporated (Kazemek & Rigg, 1995). While instruction focuses primarily on writing to create meaning, form is addressed both implicitly and explicitly: advocates of this approach argue that increasing accuracy evolves through drafting, revision, and editing; in addition, teachers often incorporate mini-lessons about relevant linguistic points.

Common practices in the process approach include free writing in journals, writing extended narratives through a cyclical process, and publishing student writing. In dialogue journals, students write about thoughts, experiences, reactions to texts, or issues of importance to them, and teachers respond to the content of students' entries by sharing experiences, ideas, and reactions as well as modeling correct usage (see Peyton & Staton, 1993). The cyclical process of composing extended narratives involves generating ideas through free writing and brainstorming, drafting, conferencing with peers and teachers, revising organization and content, editing for form, and, in some cases, publishing writing for a broader audience. These publications give writers real audiences and purposes for their writing, as well as becoming the impetus for building curriculum around learner writing and serving as models for student writers (Peyton, 1993). The message this approach sends is that learners' lives and voices have value and can become the vehicle for language acquisition as well as self-discovery.

The Socio-Cultural Practices Approach: Writing for Affirmation
A third perspective coming from the field of literacy studies focuses on socio-cultural practices rather than functional behaviors or cognitive

processes. Literacy ethnographers argue that cognitive views of literacy and process approaches assume a universality to writing that is not borne out by research into actual literacy uses (Street, 1984). Their research shows that ways of acquiring and using writing vary from culture to culture, from context to context, and always depend on who is using it, under what conditions, and for what purposes (Barton & Ivanic, 1991). According to this view, people are informally socialized into the local, culture-specific literacy practices of the communities in which they are immersed. Because the out-of-school literacy practices of people from "mainstream" backgrounds are most congruent with school literacy practices, they are at an advantage when they encounter literacy instruction in school.

To value the range of practices that students bring and utilize them as resources, advocates of this view propose starting with what people know and do, by investigating how people actually use and acquire writing within specific families and communities (see, for example, Klassen, 1991). The point is to build on what people know, and to incorporate their local cultural knowledge into schooling, drawing on what Luis Moll (1992) calls their funds of knowledge. Thus, pedagogical practices may encourage the use of culture-specific genres, purposes, and content. Examples include a book about the many uses of aloe vera and other natural remedies produced by a class of Latino elders (Costanzo & Paxton, 1999) and a literacy text based on Creole proverbs developed in a Creole literacy project (Auerbach et al., 1996). Along with this goal of cultural affirmation, promoting the first language as a vehicle for cultural maintenance is often emphasized. Students in a Hmong project in California decided to learn to read and write in Hmong to preserve their first language and pass along oral histories to their children (Kang et al., 1996). The message in this approach is that learners' cultural knowledge and ways of using literacy are valuable and can become a bridge to new learning. Writing is a vehicle of social and cultural affirmation.

The Genre Approach: Writing for Access to Powerful Discourses
A fourth approach argues that both the cognitive and socio-cultural approaches to writing instruction, despite claiming to empower learners, assure their continued exclusion. They argue that because certain literacies yield more power than others, it's not enough for learners to share their stories, find their voices, and celebrate their cultures. Process writing and immersion in meaningful usage may be fine for people who come from the dominant culture, but they obscure the rules of the game for everyone else. Delpit (1995), for example, argues that what's important is not voice in itself but teaching the discourses of power. She favors explicit instruction in the rules and standards that are valued in the dominant culture. The genre approach, popular in England and Australia, proposes deconstructing dominant genres, analyzing them from a

linguistic point of view, and reproducing them (Hasan & Williams, 1996). Through overt instruction students learn to identify specific text types (narrative, factual, procedural, and persuasive), analyze their structural and linguistic features, and generate their own texts that conform to the conventions of each genre (see Spiegal & Sunderland, 1999). For example, students might be given two different texts, such as a news report about the housing crisis and a letter to the editor about housing discrimination. They would be invited to compare what the texts are about, why they were written, when one would read each, where they would be published, and how the language and structure of the texts differ (USWE, 1997). The students might then use this information to produce their own parallel texts. The message sent by this approach is that mastery of the genres of power will yield access to power.

The Critical Approach: Writing for Social Change

A fifth view argues that neither the socio-cultural practices view nor the genre view actually delivers what it promises: where the socio-cultural practices folks focus on writing practices, and the genre folks focus on text structures, the social change folks focus on social issues and action for change. They argue that it's not enough to affirm learners' cultures and celebrate their voices; they say that it is crucial to look at literacy within the context of larger institutional forces. As Giroux says, "Student experience has to be understood as part of an interlocking web of power relations" (1987, p.177). Social change advocates say that the genre approach makes the mistake of claiming that acquiring the discourse of power will actually lead to gaining power (Luke, 1996). In fact, they say, experience, history, and research show that other factors such as gender, ethnicity, and race are equally important in determining access. This approach argues that all writing pedagogy has an implicit political stance, whether or not it is acknowledged (Severino, 1998).

So within the critical approach, writing pedagogy is tied to analyzing student experience in relation to broader economic and political relations. Writing focuses on content drawn from the social context of learners' lives (connecting the word and the world, as Paulo Freire would say) and is used in the service of action for change (Freire & Macedo, 1987). For example, a parents' group in Los Angeles that began meeting the week after the L.A. riots used their classes to explore their fears and concerns about what was happening in their communities. They then wrote a book not only describing their experiences but also analyzing what was happening and why, and distributed the book in their community to prompt further dialogue (Orellana, 1996). In a Boston ESOL class, students compared and analyzed incidents of police harassment after one received an unjust traffic ticket. They then wrote a letter to the editor of a local paper about police discrimination (Nash et al., 1992). The message this approach sends is that writing can become a context for exploring

critical social issues and a tool for taking action to improve the conditions of one's life.

In Conclusion

Certain debates in the field of ESOL writing transcend or cut across approaches. They include questions such as: What is possible with new writers? Where should one start? What is the role of the first language in ESOL writing? Should learners with minimal schooling first learn to write in their first language? What should one teach more proficient second language learners? Should they be encouraged to utilize first language resources in second language writing or be forbidden to do so? How do the social contexts in which writing is taught shape the pedagogy? How can writing instruction become a tool for empowerment? It is not possible to explore these issues here, but examples of ways to address these questions can be found in work by Atkinson (1987), Auerbach (1993), Barahona (1996), Shamash (1990), and Smoke (1998).

My hope is that this article has shown how the practices described in the opening paragraph reflect different approaches to ESOL writing. I hope it is also clear that certain common elements underlie current approaches and that, in practice, writing instruction often draws elements from each of them. There is widespread consensus within the field of ESOL writing about several points: 1) that a focus on meaning rather than form (grammatical correctness) encourages writing development; 2) that instruction should stress writing for real reasons, to real audiences in order to promote authentic communication; 3) that writing should be contextualized and that content should be meaningful and relevant to learners; 4) that learners need some degree of overt instruction, which includes talk about writing, substantive, specific feedback, and multiple opportunities for revision; 5) that social and cultural variation in writing practices and genres needs to be taken into account; and 6) that all writing pedagogy reflects a stance about the learner in relation to the social order. The most important point is that teachers need to be conscious of implications of their practices and of the power of the messages that their pedagogical practices convey.

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SCALE: 4=strongly agree 3=agree 2=disagree 1=strongly disagree

Training Content:	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**
The information covered in the training seemed complete and accurate	4	3	2	1
The training was well organized.	4	3	2	1
The materials in the binder will be useful to me.	4	3	2	1
I will be able to use what I learned when I return to my program/classroom.	4	3	2	1

Training Pacing:

The emphasis and time spent sharing our experience and professional wisdom was: too little just right too much

The emphasis and time spent focusing on research was: too little just right too much

The **most beneficial section**(s) of the training was (were): (check all that apply)

___ Introduction to writing and adult learners
___ Pre-writing and the first draft
___ Revising
___ Editing and publishing
___ Evaluation of learner achievement
___ Implementing the writing process in your classroom

Comments:

The **least beneficial section**(s) of the training was (were): (check all that apply)

___ Introduction to writing and adult learners
___ Pre-writing and the first draft
___ Revising
___ Editing and publishing
___ Evaluation of learner achievement
___ Implementing the writing process in your classroom

Comments:

Presenters:				
The presenters communicated the information clearly and effectively.	4	3	2	1
The presenters responded to questions in a clear and helpful manner.	4	3	2	1