Effective, Multisensory Writing Strategies

Improves:

- Writing
- Reading
- Listening
- Speaking
Welcome to Step Up to Writing
Secondary
Grades 6–12

Secondary Step Up to Writing® provides a range of writing strategies for secondary learners with basic or advanced skills. Secondary students explore how structure and perspective can affect meaning. While using the same writing language as the Primary and Intermediate levels, Secondary Step Up to Writing:

✔ Teaches the traits of well-written expository, narrative, and personal narrative pieces
✔ Shows students how to enhance their writing with important details and create complex written compositions
✔ Provides strategies for students to cooperate with peers in order to revise and edit work
✔ Asks students to think critically about what they read and respond to literature through writing
What Will You Find in This Sampler?

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**Posters That Support Activities in the Teacher’s Guide**
Included in this sampler are the specific posters that support the sample activities presented here. The *Step Up to Writing* posters are referenced throughout the Teacher’s Guide at point-of-use.

**Handy Pages That Support Activities in the Teacher’s Guide**
Included in this sampler is the complete *Step Up to Writing* Handy Pages—Secondary. The *Step Up to Writing* Handy Pages are referenced throughout the Teacher’s Guide at point-of-use.

Throughout this sampler, look for callouts that highlight key product features.
Step Up to Writing strategies increase students’ listening and reading comprehension by teaching them to ask questions, make comments, and discover connections. ... Active reading and listening build students’ thinking skills and empower them to read and write in content-area classes with confidence.
Good listening and reading are not only core academic skills; they are prerequisites for the development of good writing skills. Students need to appreciate the meaning of the written word and the power of communication before they begin to express themselves in writing. *Step Up to Writing* teaches strategies to improve reading comprehension not only to increase reading ability but also to improve writing skills. These skills provide the framework for success in all content areas.

Recognizing and decoding words are not enough. Students must also be able to comprehend and think about what they read. Even students who are considered good readers can have difficulty obtaining useful information from classroom materials and lessons.

One of the main causes of poor reading comprehension is the lack of active involvement in the reading process. Many students have difficulty sustaining focus while reading and do not interact with the text because they do not know how. *Step Up to Writing* strategies increase students’ reading and listening comprehension by teaching them to ask questions, make comments, and discover connections. Above all, active reading and listening build students’ thinking skills and empower them to read and write in content-area classes with confidence.
As students learn to read actively, they need numerous ways to note what they have read. Step Up teaches students to mark their text and take notes. Students also use graphic organizers to help them visualize relationships between ideas. Learning these relationships also helps students see organization patterns for information writing, such as sequencing and describing. As active readers, they gain authentic knowledge of language structure and conventions.

Step Up provides explicit instruction on the important skill of summary writing. When students can write a well-organized summary, it means they have mentally manipulated the information, understand it, and are likely to remember and use it later. When students can summarize, they are ready for higher-order thinking skills such as making inferences and analyzing what they read.

Step Up strategies in this section help guarantee students’ success. Students are more successful when they can:

- Read for comprehension;
- Note what they have read—marking important ideas and information in the text (with highlighting, underlining, or sticky notes) and taking notes;
- Write well-organized summary paragraphs and use what they have learned to develop higher-order thinking skills;
- Write great short answers and essays on quizzes and assessments.

**When Teaching These Strategies**

- Provide direct instruction and incorporate your thinking (metacognition) into your model. When you demonstrate a strategy for your students, describe out loud how you determine what to do next.
- Remember to teach each skill before expecting students to use it independently. For instance, responding to the text and note taking are strategies that can be used to learn content-area information, but first students need to be shown how to respond to the text and take notes.
  - Begin with short passages until students are familiar with the skill.
  - Model the strategies often, provide numerous practice opportunities, and receive feedback before asking students to use a skill on their own.
- Offer students options for note taking, such as drawing pictures, in addition to traditional notes.
- Use Making Inferences and Analyzing the Text strategies (25, 26, and 27) to move students to higher-level thinking skills.
- Use Mapping and Webbing to address visual and kinesthetic learners’ need to see the concrete relationship of ideas.

### Tips for Using These Strategies Across Content Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Review these strategies as you use them to teach content material.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>When students have an assigned reading, require some form of student-generated written or graphic response at predetermined places in the text such as <strong>Sticky Note Responses</strong> or <strong>One-Word Responses</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>During class presentations, discussions, and videos, have students take <strong>Easy Two-Column Notes</strong>. Consider providing them with the big ideas for the left column until they are able to generate their own.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Have students write an IVF Topic Sentence from <strong>Four-Step Summary Paragraphs</strong> as a “ticket out” at the end of class. The summary sentence can address what students have read, the day’s lesson, or a discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Use <strong>Four-Step Summary Paragraphs</strong> to reinforce core concepts. Have students write their summaries on index cards and use them to review information and quiz themselves and each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Have contests with the <strong>Money Summaries</strong> strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Create class webs and cognitive maps of content material on flip charts and use them for review. Keep these poster-sized webs displayed in the room and refer to them each time a concept is introduced and studied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Have students use the <strong>Levels of Questioning</strong> strategy to write potential quiz and test questions. Many times students enjoy exchanging self-generated questions and quizzing each other.</td>
</tr>
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Choose those strategies that best meet the needs of your students.

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Taking Notes strategies are used in reading, listening, and viewing activities. Good note-takers jot down important information about a topic to learn, retain, and review the information.

**Objectives**
- Improve students' listening, viewing, and reading skills
- Develop students' study skills and help them demonstrate comprehension

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<td>1-17b</td>
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<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider using the Posters with the strategies in this section.

Posters serve as visual aids for students and instructional tools for teachers.
1-17 Easy Two-Column Notes

Easy Two-Column Notes help students organize their notes. Use them to introduce your students to note taking and help them practice their note-taking skills.

Before Class

- Make overhead transparencies and student copies of Tool 1-17a, 1-17b, and 1-17c.
- Students can use notebook paper in place of Tools 1-17b and 1-17c.
- Select a text to use for modeling and student practice.

During Class

1. Introduce Easy Two-Column Notes by reading and discussing Tool 1-17a.

2. Using Tool 1-17b, read the article about Gandhi and discuss how the sample two-column notes follow the rules: big ideas on the left and title and subtopics on the right, using words and phrases only. Stop to discuss rule 5 on Tool 1-17a, which says that each paragraph has a big idea. Use the 1-18 One Idea per Paragraph Note Taking strategy to help students identify the big idea of each paragraph.

3. Using Tool 1-17b, point out that “Mohandas Gandhi” has four paragraphs. The sample notes have a word on the left for each paragraph; matching notes appear on the right. Students use the words on the left to help them study and remember the details on the right.

4. Begin to model by demonstrating how to prepare the paper for taking two-column notes. Using the transparency of Tool 1-17b, draw lines on the fold and on the top line of the page to form a letter T. Then write “Topic =” on the top line. Ask your students to do the same on their copies of Tool 1-17b or on notebook paper.
5. Read the selected text to the class or have your students read individually or as a group.

6. Stop and take notes after students have read each paragraph a second time, following the process outlined on Tool 1-17a. Have your students do the same on their copies of Tool 1-17b or on notebook paper. Tell them that not everyone will choose the same big ideas.

7. Have your students practice using another segment of text. Walk around the room as they work, giving them feedback and support.

8. Have your students use two-column notes often. When they have short reading assignments, have them take notes one paragraph at a time. When they read textbooks and other long pieces, the bold headings from the text can be written on the left column.

**Note:** If you are using notebook paper, start by showing your students how to fold notebook paper for two-column note taking. Fold the left side of the page—the side with the holes—folding it over so its edge lies along the red margin line located on the back of the right side of the paper. You can see this red line through the paper. Crease the folded edge. When you open the page, the column on the left will be smaller than the column on the right.

**Additional Ideas**

See 1-19 Using Two-Column Notes for Character Analysis for an in-depth look at another idea for using Easy Two-Column Notes.
Here are some other ways to use Easy Two-Column Notes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning, middle, end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting, plot, conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events, characters, setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create questions and answers; plan questions in advance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Listening to a Lecture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for the position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher provides the big ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers provide big ideas for a lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steps described</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actual work done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provides note-taking strategies that work across all content areas.

Provides ideas for extending, enhancing, and differentiating instruction.
For a quick check and other support for assessment, see 10-12 Quick Check for Note Taking.

1-18 One Idea per Paragraph Note Taking

Students use the One Idea per Paragraph Note Taking strategy to learn basic note-taking skills and to become fast and accurate note-takers. Students learn to take notes one paragraph at a time using paper folded for two-column note taking.

Prerequisite: 1-17 Easy Two-Column Notes

**Before Class**

- Select a short article or text (using required readings trains students to use this skill in their other classes).
- Make an overhead transparency of Tool 1-17b.

**Bonus Tool 1-18-1** provides additional support.

Bonus Tools provide additional examples, worksheets, and overheads.
**1-24 Mapping and Webbing**

The Mapping and Webbing strategy uses lines and geometric shapes to organize notes. Webs and maps include words, quick sketches, and symbols. (See Tool 1-22d as an example.)

Share the following examples with your students to give them ideas for creating their own webs or maps. See 1-28 Using Graphic Organizers for additional graphic organizers.

Use mapping and webbing after your students have mastered 1-17 Easy Two-Column Notes. Try inserting small maps and webs into the right column. This is especially helpful when students need visual cues in history class and science class.

After students have taken notes, they can review the information by recasting it in webs or maps. Occasionally, have students take notes solely by webbing or mapping. Students who have practiced 1-17 Easy Two-Column Notes will make maps and webs that better show major and minor details.
Asking and Answering Questions

Asking and answering questions are important academic skills that students use to develop and demonstrate comprehension, explain any confusion, seek clarification, and share insights.

Objectives

- Teach students how to ask good short questions and answer them accurately, orally or in writing
- Help students understand various levels of questioning
- Save students time and increase their confidence as they answer questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Strategy Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-35 Great Short Answers</td>
<td>Recognizing and writing good one- to three-sentence answers</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>1-35a to 1-35e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-36 Responses to Essay Questions</td>
<td>Writing clear, concise one-paragraph (or more) answers to prompts or questions</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-37 Using the Two-Column Study Guide</td>
<td>Organizing and writing questions in a two-column study guide</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-38 Levels of Questioning</td>
<td>Using different kinds of questions and answers</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consider using the Posters with the strategies in this section.


1-38 Levels of Questioning

In this strategy, students create different types and levels of questions about what they have read. When students can name and describe different kinds of questions, they are often more prepared to answer questions independently during exams.

*Bonus Tools 1-38-1, 1-38-2, and 1-38-3* provide additional support.

A wonderful way to develop and check for comprehension is to turn students into teachers and ask them to create questions from what they have read using direct thinking and/or application-questioning techniques. (The following examples are also on Bonus Tool 1-38-1.)

**Direct, Thinking, and Application Questions**

**Direct Questions**
- Ask for specific information.
- Everyone will have the same answer to this type of question.
- Answers to these questions can be found in the book, article, or story.
- Students can literally put a finger on the words that answer the question.

**Thinking Questions**
- Require thinking and analyzing.
- Often call for opinion or insight.
- Push a student to make inferences, connections, judgments, and decisions.
- Answers depend on students’ previous experience and knowledge, as well as the text and learning that has taken place.

**Application Questions**
- Assume that the student has read and comprehended the material, and is ready to use it in some way.

---

**Teaches students to develop different levels of questions to improve comprehension**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Direct Questions</th>
<th>What is an apple?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Questions</td>
<td>What is the best kind of apple, and what is the best way to eat it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Questions</td>
<td>What can parents and medical experts do to encourage children to eat more fruits, such as apples?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QAR Questions

In the Question, Answer, Relationship (QAR) method (Raphael 1982), questions about text are classified according to the way the student must relate to the text in order to answer the question. The relationships are *in the text*, *think and search*, *author and you*, and *on your own*. The examples in the following list, also on Bonus Tool 1-35-2, come from *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>In what state does the story take place?</em></td>
<td>(The answer is in the text.)</td>
<td><em>In the text</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name four ways that Lennie helped George.</td>
<td>(The answer is found by putting parts of the text together.)</td>
<td><em>Think and search</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think Lennie and George will ever be able to save enough money to buy their own land?</td>
<td>(The answer comes from what you know and what the author says.)</td>
<td><em>Author and you</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think Lennie should’ve done when he found George at the end of the story?</td>
<td>(The answer is from your opinions and experiences.)</td>
<td><em>On your own</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Provides examples of different levels of questions to increase critical thinking.
CROWD Questions

The CROWD strategy is one of the techniques suggested by *Starting Out Right: A Guide to Promoting Children’s Reading Success* (Burns, Griffin, and Snow 1999). It provides suggestions to parents, child-care providers, and educators on how to help students become successful readers.

One suggestion is to use CROWD questions to make sure children have the opportunity to answer a variety of questions when they listen to adults read or speak. This strategy can be used to create questions for students of all ages and ability levels. It can be used in class and by family members and volunteers. (The example questions in the following list, also on *Bonus Tool 1-35-3*, are similar to those students might be asked in an Industrial Arts class.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>Completion questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The number one safety rule for this class is____.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Recall questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What safety equipment is needed to operate the table saw?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O</th>
<th>Open-ended questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>How should a student who fails to follow safety rules be reprimanded?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>W</th>
<th>“What” vocabulary questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>What is an awl?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>Distancing questions—making connections to real-life experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Why do you think it is important to follow safety rules in and out of class?</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have a paragraph-writing component on our geography exam, based on atlas research. With *Step Up to Writing*, the ninth graders attacked the assignment with confidence and skill; the paragraphs they wrote were impressive.

—Martha Riley, 
*High School Social Studies Teacher, Colorado*
Personal narrative writing gives students an opportunity to develop an individual style and voice in their writing. Through examination of important events in their lives, they also develop the ability to think critically about specific events. They then make inferences and form opinions based upon those inferences.
Personal narrative writing allows students to share an event in their lives that taught them a valuable lesson. To be successful personal narrative writers, students must be familiar with strategies for writing introductions and conclusions (expository writing), and beginnings, middles, and endings (narrative writing).

The personal narrative combines elements of report writing and narrative writing. The personal narrative is framed with an introduction and a conclusion as in a report. The writer states the message of the piece in the introduction and reinforces it in the conclusion. The body of the personal narrative is written like a narrative, with a beginning, middle, and end. The narrative serves as the evidence or illustration of the message’s significance, or personal reflection. Personal narrative writing gives students an opportunity to develop an individual style and voice in their writing. Through examination of important events in their lives, they also develop the ability to think critically about specific events. They then make inferences and form opinions based upon those inferences.

Writing personal narratives can also help students analyze themes in literature they read. After having multiple opportunities to find significance and lessons in their own personal experiences, students can more readily transfer insights into literature they are required to read.
Teaching personal narratives, like expository writing, has practical applications. Many colleges require an essay in the form of a personal narrative as part of the application process, just as many school districts and state assessments require a personal narrative at the middle and high school level. Narratives can also be required on applications for special activities or volunteer work. Students are expected to create an expository text about themselves in a narrative form; thus the term—personal narrative. It is important, then, to have the skills for success in crafting personal narratives.

To be successful at writing personal narratives, students need to be introduced to the following skills:

- Understanding the differences between a report, story, and personal narrative
- Analyzing a narrative for its significance or lesson
- Recognizing the organizational pattern of a personal narrative
- Methods of preparation for writing a personal narrative, such as:
  - Writing an introduction and conclusion
  - Adding quick sketches and quick notes for the story portion
- Practicing, sharing, and publishing personal narratives

**When Teaching the Personal Narrative**

- Have students talk about their notable experiences (such as a time when they encountered a random act of kindness or they made a new friend), and ask them questions that elicit the significance (what they learned, what they would do differently, and so on). Emerging and developing writers often benefit from rehearsing their ideas in speech before committing them to words on paper.
- Find, or have students find, examples of autobiographical incidents written by others, and then write the introduction and conclusion paragraphs to create a personal narrative.
- Provide adequate modeling and reinforcement of the components of a personal narrative before asking students to write independently. Give them plenty of opportunities to practice writing personal narratives, whether in finished or draft form. Students learn to write by writing!
- Have students read their personal narratives aloud in small groups of four or five students, and then have the listening students jot down and share the message of the piece. This activity will also build students' listening skills.

- Teach or reinforce sentence writing and word choice as you teach the personal narrative. Use first drafts to revise for precision in language and sentence variety.

- Practice different leads (the Blues) for personal narratives. (See Adding a Lead—the Blues—to a Paragraph and Leading with the Blues.)

- Teach narrative strategies: description of specific locations, objects, actions, and characters; dialogue, including punctuation rules for dialogue; sensory imagery and figurative language; variation of pace; and creation of suspense, tension, and surprise. (See Section 6 for more about narrative writing).

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**Tips for Using These Strategies Across Content Areas**

- Read personal narratives of famous people in the content area and identify the parts of the personal narrative using color coding (green for the introduction and conclusion, lilac for the beginning, and purple for the middle and end).

- Have students use RAFTS: Writing from a Different Point of View and adopt the persona of a content-specific tool, such as photosynthesis, a color wheel, Manifest Destiny, or a basketball, and write a personal narrative from that perspective.

- Read autobiographies of famous people in the content area, and have students create the introduction and conclusion paragraphs to frame the narrative.

- Have students research a famous person in the content area and then write a personal narrative from that person's perspective. Consider having them write it as a note or e-mail to a friend.

- In art classes, have students create and illustrate a personal narrative in comic book or children's book format.

- In drama, have students write or convert personal narratives into scripts and act them out.
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Teacher's Guide pages included in this sampler
# Composing Personal Narratives

## Objectives

- Teach students how to organize their ideas for writing personal narratives
- Teach students to use narratives as examples, along with elements of report writing, in their personal narratives
- Provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their insights and observations
- Give students opportunities to write in their own voice and encourage them to share valuable experiences

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Consider using the Posters with the strategies in this section.
7-2 Recognizing the Personal Narrative Pattern

Using this strategy, students develop the framework for writing their own personal narratives and an understanding of the importance of a theme and a message.

Note: A good way to define personal narrative is to show how it is different from reports and stories. You may choose to use the 7-1 Report, Story, or Personal Narrative? strategy to begin instruction on personal narratives. Teaching the information in that strategy first will make teaching personal narratives easier.

Before Class
Make overhead transparencies and student copies of Tools 7-1a and 7-2a as needed.

During Class
1. Explain that when students write personal narratives, they are either given a topic, or they need to select an experience of their own. Students must analyze the event or experience about which they are writing and create a plan for the personal narrative. The purpose of the personal narrative is to share a message, which conveys the significance of the event or experience.

   2. Using Tool 7-1a, tell your students that a personal narrative, in its simplest form, follows the pattern on this Tool.
      - Show them that the plan includes an introduction that sets the audience up to read the story or event and hints at the message or lesson learned.
      - Explain that the event or experience itself is told in a story format, with a beginning, middle, and end (indicated by the B, M, and E boxes on Tool 7-1a). This story component of the personal narrative can be completed by using quick sketches for the beginning, middle, and end, and quick notes can be jotted down to support the main points. These quick notes can also include story transitions, descriptions, and dialogue, as needed.
      - Tell students they must add a conclusion that reinforces the theme and clearly states the message or lesson learned from the experience described.
3. Using Tool 7-2a, read with your students the personal narrative “Surviving an Embarrassing Situation.” Point out the pattern that includes the introduction, story (beginning, middle, and end), and conclusion. Note that the story transitions are in bold print. With your students, discuss the message of this personal narrative.

**Importance of the Message**

1. Explain that an important characteristic of the personal narrative is that it always contains a moral, message, or lesson learned from the experience described in the story. Personal narratives can address a variety of general, universal themes. Themes might be light, such as embarrassment, or they might be serious, such as prejudice, anxiety, or failure.

2. The personal narrative is different from a simple story because the personal narrative has an obvious message. A story does not necessarily have a message, and if it does, it is inferred and not stated directly—the reader must guess at the message of the story. The writer of a personal narrative lets the reader know why he/she is sharing the experience.

**Prior Experience**

- Students actually have lots of experience with personal narratives, even if they have never written any. Teenagers use personal narratives to tell about their day in conversations when they encounter friends or family members.

**Personal Narrative—Conversations**

**Theme =** learning

**Introduction =** You’ll never guess what I learned today!

**The Story . . .**

**Conclusion =** The stuff we learned about angles and ellipses in geometry is going to be really useful when I build my skateboard ramp. I never knew math could be so much fun, and I’m going to try harder now.

**Theme =** success and determination

**Introduction =** I made it! I made it!

**The Story . . .**

**Conclusion =** I am going to work hard. I wanted this part in the play so badly.
Students also write personal narratives on their own long before they are assigned in class. The friendly notes and e-mails that students send each other often follow the personal narrative format. Notice in the following note the introduction, which states the message, the story transitions, and the conclusion, which reinforces the message.

**Personal Narrative—The Note**

Andi,

I just walked out of science class and I am still alive. She actually liked the project. She even liked the silly worms that I made out of oatmeal. I was a nervous wreck, but I don’t think anyone could tell. I was great!

She called my name first so . . .
As I started, I felt . . .
Then, I . . .
By the time I . . .
When I finished, everyone . . .

I know Ms. Schwartz was surprised. Shocked, maybe. I kept telling her that I had a worm project going on at home, but she didn’t ever really believe me. The best part was watching her surprise when I took the real worms out of my backpack.

I impressed her and a few others in the room, I’m sure. See you at lunch.

Peggy

Autobiographies of famous people that contain a clear message are actually personal narratives. In these autobiographies, the writers share personal experiences intended to encourage, inspire, or educate others on important and not so important topics.
Sharing examples has a powerful impact on students who are learning to write personal narratives. Look for personal narratives in the newspaper and in magazines (feature columns and personal narratives submitted by readers). Use these examples to help students when it is their turn to write. Following are two sources of personal narratives that might be appropriate for your students:
- Actress Whoopi Goldberg shares an event from her life in the collection of personal narratives called *The Right Words at the Right Time—Marlo Thomas and Friends* (Thomas 2004). She recalls an important lesson she learned from her mother.
- Most *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books are filled with personal narratives.

### Preparing to Write Personal Narratives

Using the Preparing to Write Personal Narratives strategy provides students with an organized plan for writing a good personal narrative.

**Before Class**

- Make overhead transparencies and student copies of *Tool 7-1h, Tool 7-2a, and Tools 7-3a* through *7-3d* as needed.
- You may also wish to have colored pencils or markers available for your students.

If you have introduced the Traffic Light colors for expository writing (4-1 Introducing Two Kinds of Writing) and purple/lilac for narrative writing (4-6 Color-Coding and the Five Elements of Expository Writing), use them with your demonstration. You can also introduce the colors as you give instructions.

**During Class**

1. Explain to your students that the purpose of a personal narrative is to share a message—the moral, message, lesson, or significance of the experience—described by the writer. The topic that you assign should be one that all readers can understand. For example, everyone has been embarrassed at one time for some silly thing.
2. Explain that an experience is an event or occasion that you remember. It can be very minor or quite important. It can be something that happened recently or long ago, one time or many times, and to you or someone else. Share one or two experiences from your life or a well-known story that might generate ideas for a personal narrative. Examples might include occasions when you or someone you know
   - Learned a lesson;
   - Were surprised;
   - Had to work hard to achieve a goal;
• Were excited by some success;
• Had to make an important decision.

3. Using Tool 7-2a, read “Surviving an Embarrassing Situation” to the class as an example of a good personal narrative.

4. Explain that this personal narrative started with a topic (getting over being embarrassed); shared a story in the body of the paper; referred to the topic again in the conclusion; and had a message. Personal narratives also have a theme, a general idea that readers can understand. The theme of the personal narrative on Tool 7-2a is embarrassment.

Note: If you have already taught the 7-1 Report, Story, or Personal Narrative? strategy, this should just be a quick review. If you have not, spend adequate time to ensure your students know the relationships among these three writing genres and the purpose of personal narratives.

5. Read the top column of Tool 7-3a with your students. Tell them that writers of personal narratives do not just tell stories. They also explain how an event has impacted their lives or someone else’s life. Reinforce that the purpose of a personal narrative is to share the lesson learned from the experience described in the story—the message. Reread the “Message as Purpose” section on Tool 7-3a.

6. Direct students’ attention to the Pattern section at the bottom of Tool 7-3a. Point out the illustration of the personal narrative pattern. With colored overhead markers, label the parts of a personal narrative as shown in the pattern on the Tool and ask students to do the same. The colors will help students remember that a personal narrative combines narrative writing and expository writing.
   • Mark the introduction in green and point out that the introduction includes the topic and sometimes the message.
   • Color the story blocks in lilac (for beginning) and in purple blocks (for middle and end).
   • Color the conclusion in green and show how it relates to the introduction, states the message, and reminds the reader of the purpose for writing.

7. Remind students that this pattern is actually the basic plan they will use when they write their own personal narratives.

8. Provide additional opportunities to discuss the components of a personal narrative with your class and provide additional models as needed.
Sample Prompts for a Personal Narrative

1. Using Tool 7-3a, direct students' attention to the middle row, Sample Prompts. Read the three prompts with the class. Read them more than once to make sure students understand the prompts. Have students identify the themes that each prompt suggests:
   - Being kind
   - Doing the right thing
   - Making friends

2. Ask your students to think about their own life experiences. Tell them to jot down on the back of Tool 7-3a an event or experience from their own lives, or from the life of someone they know, that could be used in response to each prompt. Encourage students to identify three different events or experiences—one for each prompt.

3. Ask your students to select one of their three events or experiences. Working in pairs, give each student a few minutes to share his/her experience with a classmate. Keep the sharing time short.

4. When students have finished sharing, explain that people are naturally good at creating personal narratives. You may choose to use the examples of conversations and notes from the “Prior Experience” subsection of 7-2 Recognizing the Personal Narrative Pattern. Remind students that they have been creating personal narratives whenever they have shared their experiences with others.

5. Give students a chance to role-play or write a short, made-up note to a friend to make the point. For example, ask them to write a note to a made-up friend that describes a wonderful experience in art class (or some other class). The note should be filled with feeling and passion about what happened. The note needs an introduction and conclusion. The description of the experience becomes the story or body of the note. As students write, create your own example to share. This note activity should take only a few moments.

6. Remind students that the goal in the note activity was to demonstrate the three parts of a personal narrative: the introduction, the story (or body), and the conclusion. Also, point out that notes—even the made-up notes—tend to be filled with feelings, emotions, and descriptions because often notes are intended to share feelings.
Qualities of a Good Personal Narrative

Using an overhead transparency of Tool 7-3b, read and discuss the four qualities of a good personal narrative: voice, feelings, description, and message. Explain that you will be looking for these qualities when you read the personal narratives that the students write. Also, remind your students that as they edit and revise their first drafts they should look for the qualities presented on Tool 7-3b.

- **Voice:** Personal narratives are filled with writing that has voice. For students, this means that they share stories that are important to them. Tell students that good writers put voice into their writing by carefully choosing unique and interesting words, and by varying the kind and length of the sentences that are used. Writing in the first person (using “I” and “me”) will help them share their thoughts and feelings.

  Explain that their voice in the personal narrative will set the tone and the mood. That is, what they say and how they say it will change how their readers feel as they read or hear the narrative.

- **Feelings:** A personal narrative is written with strong feelings and engages or pulls in the reader. Because personal narratives are about specific topics and general themes that are familiar to readers, it is easy for readers to connect with the writer. One of the goals of personal narratives is to remind readers of events in their own lives.

  Possible topics for personal narratives that remind readers of events in their own lives are:

  - losing something
  - not telling the truth
  - being treated unfairly
  - hurting someone’s feelings
  - putting up with sisters and brothers
  - caring about nature
  - disappointing a friend
  - loving an animal

- **Description:** Personal narratives call for writing that gives details and helps the reader picture the event. Their descriptions should show, not tell, the reader what is happening. Remind students of the 3-6 Better Sentences strategy, if you have taught it already. Have them use strong action verbs and specific, interesting nouns. Warn them that too many adjectives and too many adverbs will weaken their descriptions, and too few will prevent the reader from picturing the story. If you wish, suggest that dialogue can enhance a story if it is used sparingly and for a specific purpose. (See 6-14 Writing Dialogue for additional information about using dialogue in narratives.)
• **Message:** The message in a personal narrative may be shared in the introduction; moreover, it is a thread that runs throughout the story, and it should be clearly stated in the conclusion. It shares what writers think and what they want their readers to know. Read, reread, and discuss the four message descriptions on Tool 7-3b with your students. Discuss messages they have derived from their own experiences and from books, articles, and movies. Tell students to add more message ideas to the back of Tool 7-3a.

**Analyzing Examples of Personal Narratives**

One way to ensure that your students can write good personal narratives is to have them analyze components of good writing in preselected examples.

1. With your students, read the personal narratives on Tools 7-3c and 7-3d.
2. Point out and mark in green the introduction and conclusion of each of the three personal narratives.
3. Discuss the story that appears in the body of each narrative. Draw a purple box around the story section to show it is a story.
4. Ask students to explain how the story supports the topic (what the personal narrative is specifically about). How does the story lead the reader to the lesson learned—the message?

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<td>Sometimes people really do commit random acts of kindness, and they can make a real difference in someone’s life.</td>
<td>People you think are different from you might turn out to be good friends if you just get to know them.</td>
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Have students mark or highlight the story transitions in each example. Story transitions are powerful tools for storytellers. Students will want to use story transitions when they write their own personal narratives. Following are examples of story transitions that appear in Tools 7-3c and 7-3d.

### Story Transitions for "Random Acts of Kindness" (Tool 7-3c)
- It was the last week . . .
- At first . . .
- Over an hour passed by . . .
- At the end of the week . . .

### Story Transitions for "An Unexpected Friendship" (Tool 7-3d)
- During my freshman year . . .
- The week of the election . . .
- As we prepared . . .
- When the principal . . .
- We met twice a week . . .
- When we did not agree . . .
- After the rope competition . . .

Assess and discuss personal narratives using the template shown on Tool 7-3a and the description of important qualities on Tool 7-3b. Encourage students to ask questions like the following:

- How do the personal narratives fit the pattern at the bottom of Tool 7-3a?
- What is the general theme and specific message in each personal narrative?
- How do the stories support the message?
- What feelings are shared?
- Do the personal narratives answer the prompts correctly?
- Where can you find vivid descriptions that really make a situation come to life in the reader’s imagination?
- Can you hear the writer’s voice? In what way?
- What words and what sentences catch your attention?
- Can you understand the writer’s message?

### Preparing for Successful Personal Narratives
Before you ask students to create their own personal narratives, review with them what they have learned about personal narratives.

1. Remind students of the differences among stories, reports, and personal narratives. Use Tool 7-1h, which gives examples of report, story, and personal narrative writing. Read and discuss how the three different versions of writing about a summer vacation are different from and similar to one another.
2. Take time to review the informal outline and plan used for the report on “My First Job” and the quick sketch plan used for the story “The Regular.”

3. Help students make a connection between the sample plan for the personal narrative “A Sticky Situation” on Tool 7-1h and the template for a plan at the bottom of Tool 7-3a.

4. Give students time to discuss the differences among the three writing genres and time to ask questions.

5. Use examples from books, magazines, articles, and the Internet for additional practice opportunities.

6. When it is appropriate, ask students to create their own reports, stories, and personal narratives all on the same topic. Choose topics that you think would be of interest to your students or have them pick their own.
This section provides students with the tools to use for specific writing genres, whether poetry or science lab reports, business letters or newspaper articles, book reports or math word problems. It also provides the tools to help students prepare for success on local, state, and national assessments.
Through an ongoing, integrated use of a variety of reading and writing strategies, the writing process, and writing for a variety of purposes, students begin to see themselves as independent learners and confident writers.

Once students have learned how to use the *Step Up* writing process to create both expository and narrative compositions, they are ready to use those skills to write for a variety of purposes, such as narrating, informing, and persuading. Because each category of writing has numerous subgenres, students need to have experience in many types of specific writing assignments.

In addition, a variety of specific writing opportunities occur in our school, work, and personal lives. The purpose directs the type of composition we need to create. Therefore, students need to understand the requirements of a variety of writing situations.

This section provides students with the tools to use for specific writing genres, whether poetry or science lab reports, business letters or newspaper articles, book reports or math word problems. It also provides the tools to help students prepare for success on local, state, and national assessments when they are asked to compare and contrast, for example, or to show how to address an envelope or write an imaginative description.
Success with specific writing assignments occurs when students are introduced to the following:

- Specific strategies for each type of writing
- Applying generalized strategies from Sections 1 through 8 to specific types of writing
- Skills in acquiring, analyzing, and prioritizing information, then organizing it into an appropriate format
- Using precise language and a variety of sentence types
- A broad array of illustrative examples of the many types of writing assignments, from analyzing cause and effect in a science report to writing letters for business or personal reasons

**When Teaching These Strategies**

- Provide direct instruction and models for each type before having students write independently. Repeated demonstration and practice are keys to effective writing instruction.
- Keep in mind that proficiency in one genre does not necessarily transfer to others, so teach the components of each type separately. Introduce each type of writing as a paragraph to teach the structural requirements of that type of writing.
- Review and practice related strategies learned in other sections of *Step Up to Writing* as you introduce new writing genres.
- Use the same topic to write in a variety of genres, reinforcing the structural differences among the types of writing. Have students write on the same or different topics for a variety of audiences and purposes.
- Have students practice writing in a variety of time frames—those that allow only a first draft and those that permit multiple revisions.
- Teach *Responding to Literature* in conjunction with the strategies used in Section 1 about making connections (for example, *Text to Self, Text to Text, and Text to World*). When students use active reading strategies, they have an easier time comprehending and responding to what they read.
- Use informal formats—learning logs, journals, preparations for discussion, or warm-ups—as well as formal compositions for specific writing assignments.
When students write across disciplines, they are not only learning to write; they are also writing to learn—exploring ideas, synthesizing information, forming opinions, and expressing and supporting those opinions in a coherent and sustained fashion. Use specific writing assignments to teach and review content-specific concepts. These are just a few ideas:

### Tips for Using These Strategies Across Content Areas

- **Section 9 is rich with ideas for student writing.** Guarantee your students’ success by using [Easy Two-Column Notes](#) regularly to make sure that students have comprehended information before they have to write about it. Add [Three- and Four-Column Notes](#) as often as possible to move students beyond basic comprehension. The three column note plus a summary ([Three-Column Notes with Summaries](#)) is especially effective because it will help students with content and elaboration.

- **Use [Writing to Compare or Contrast](#) to have students analyze eras in history, forms of government, or characteristics of different species.** Using Tools 9-3b through 9-3g will make compare and contrast writing faster and clearer. When there is not time to have students write out their paragraph or essay, use just the tools. They give students a chance to show their thinking.

- **Have students write a letter ([Writing Letters](#)) to favorite authors, favorite celebrities, prominent politicians, local government or civic leaders, scientists, and so on to present issues, ask questions, or to suggest topics that need attention.** Letters, like other forms of expository writing, should be organized with informal outlines ([Planning with Informal Outlines](#)).

- **Have students write a persuasive essay ([Persuasive Writing](#)) and take a position related to a time in history they have studied or a controversy such as the effects of reintroducing wolves to a wilderness area.** Use informal outlines and [Practice Guides for Accordion Paragraphs](#) to save time and to help students organize their ideas.

- **Use [Response to Literature](#) to have students write a multiparagraph essay demonstrating their understanding and opinion of a literary work.**
Choose those strategies that best meet the needs of your students.

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Creating Specific Writing Assignments

Unlike other sections in *Step Up to Writing*, the strategies presented in Section 9 are not always stand-alone. They often rely on concepts and strategies presented in previous sections. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that these strategies be taught after or in conjunction with the strategies in Sections 1 through 8.

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</tbody>
</table>

Fun group activities

Consider using the Posters with the strategies in this section.
Persuasive writing can take many forms. Assignments that ask students to convince, argue, write an editorial, or create an advertisement are forms of persuasive writing. The various forms of persuasive writing should be taught one at a time. Choose the type that is right for your students.

**Before Class**

Make overhead transparencies and student copies of *Tools 9-la through 9-1k*.

**During Class**

1. Discuss *persuasion* with your class. Explain that the purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the reader. The writing tries to prove to readers that something is true, or attempts to motivate readers to change or take action by appealing to the readers’ intellect and/or emotions. In persuasive writing, there is always a call to action—to buy something, join something, do something, and so on. Effective arguing and persuading relies on reasoning and clear logic to influence others. It pushes the audience to think about an issue.

2. Inform your students that the process used for persuasive writing is the same used for any other type of expository writing. Direct them to follow the same writing process as noted in Section 4 or Section 5. Inform or remind them that good persuasive writing needs

   - Research that shows understanding of the topic;
   - Clear, concise organization, as is planned using an informal outline;
   - A topic sentence that clearly explains the topic in a way that fits the audience;
   - Respect for and knowledge of opposing opinions;
   - Interesting, accurate, and engaging key/star ideas that support the topic sentence;
   - Elaboration that is clear, makes sense, and engages the reader;
   - Strong word choices that engage the reader’s attention;
   - A conclusion that gives the reader a final reason to consider the topic and the purpose for the essay.
3. Read aloud the example persuasive paragraph on Tool 9-1a.

- Ask students to look for the topic sentence and supporting key/star ideas by highlighting the paragraph with the Traffic Light colors. Show students how the informal outline was used for organization—topic, key/star ideas, transitions/elaboration/conclusion. Discuss the importance of organization in persuasive writing.
- Help your students find and evaluate the facts used as proof and/or evidence.
- Point out to your students that persuasive writing is often enhanced by good word choices that make it easy for the reader to follow the logic of the writing. Encourage students to bury these terms for smooth flow and stronger impact. Persuasive writing often includes words and phrases such as:
  - should  must  ought
  - since  because  for that reason
- The conclusion in persuasive writing often includes words and phrases such as:
  - certainly  clearly  for these reasons
  - definitely  therefore  in fact

4. Read with your students Tool 9-1b and explain that there are a number of techniques they can use to frame their writing and make it more persuasive. Have students mark their copies as you read, explain, and answer questions about each entry. Read through the examples; ask students which examples are most persuasive. Give them a chance to add a few ideas that they would use if they had to persuade students to learn more science.

5. Point out that the words EITHER and OR are a good memory hook for some of the common strategies used for persuasive writing. Display Tool 9-1a and have students determine which approaches were used in the example paragraph. Following are the persuasive strategies used in “Turn Classrooms into Gyms!” (Tool 9-1a):

- **T**—This is good for you (lose weight, get in shape)
- **R**—Many good reasons (blood to brain, won’t fall asleep)
- **I**—Intelligent people agree (experts say kids not getting enough exercise)
6. In guided lessons, have students practice writing persuasive paragraphs using your topics or ones suggested on the Bonus Tools CD. As a class, develop a position to take on the topic and write a quick informal outline before writing.

7. Explain to students that when preparing for persuasive writing, they will often need to research or gather facts and details to support their topic, but after gathering the information they should narrow their key points down to the strongest few and provide supporting evidence and examples for each key/star idea.
   - Remind them that there are a variety of strategies they can use to write the topic sentence. (See 4-18 Topic Sentence Variety for more information.)
   - Note that, in the conclusion, they should appeal directly to the reader and restate their goal and reason for writing.

8. Have students work independently to develop persuasive paragraphs using a topic you have provided or one they want to share with others. Give feedback on their writing.

9. When students are ready, have them move from writing paragraphs to persuasive essays. The process is similar to the concept of stretching a paragraph into a multiparagraph essay, as outlined in Section 5. Begin by displaying and reading Tool 9-1c.
   - Using the Traffic Light colors, highlight the organization of the essay.
   - Help students find what persuasive strategies listed on Tool 9-1b have been used. Writers often use more than one. Following are the persuasive strategies used in “Why Choose Science?” (Tool 9-1c):

     \[
     T — This is good for you (more secure; good choices; knowledge; safety) \\
     I — Intelligent people agree (people who want to enhance lives) \\
     R — Many good reasons \\
     R — Responsibility (to be informed and stay safe)
     \]
   
   - With input from students, judge the effectiveness of the essay.

10. Create or select a prompt from the Bonus Tools CD. As a group, write a persuasive essay, or allow students to work independently or with a partner. Use Tool 9-1b and the example on Tool 9-1c to help complete the essay.
Noting the Opposing Position

- Explain to your students that a good way to make their persuasive writing more effective is to provide a rebuttal to the opposing point of view.
- Read with your students Tools 9-1d and 9-1e and note how writers address the opposing position along with their own perspectives.
- Point out that in these examples, the writers mention the opposing positions but focus primarily on their own beliefs. Explain that in a multiparagraph essay, the writer’s position might be in one paragraph, the position of others in the next paragraph, followed by a rebuttal paragraph. Writers acknowledge opposing opinions in different ways.

Writing an Argument

1. Tell students that well-written arguments win over the reader by presenting strong evidence and by being logical. Tell them that even though a written argument is filled with emotion, the emotion is expressed in a clear, well-organized manner. Remind them that writing an argument is not about engaging in a fight, but rather winning the reader through logic and the strength of evidence.

2. With your students, read and discuss the examples on Tools 9-1f and 9-1g. Together list the reasons presented.

3. Use Tools 9-1h and 9-1i to model writing an argument. Read and discuss the chart on Tool 9-1h. Explain that this is a good prewriting strategy for sorting ideas to use—or not use—in a final essay. With students, read the matching essay on Tool 9-1i. Discuss and evaluate its effectiveness.

4. Give student volunteers a chance to present both sides of an argument orally. Use topics related to content that students have studied. Keep the sharing light and fun—but know that each time students practice orally, they are building the foundation for good writing.
Writing Editorials and Letters to the Editor

1. With your students, read through Tool 9-1j and/or additional grade-appropriate examples you have found in newspapers and magazines.

2. Explain that, along with stating personal reasons, good editorials give information and facts to back up the writer’s claims and statements. Besides trying to convince readers of their viewpoint, editorials may name the “who, what, where, when, why, and how” of a problem and/or ways readers can get involved. Often, editorials use humor to make their point.

3. Have students write their own editorials using the same writing process they would use for any other form of expository writing. Give them feedback and opportunities to share their best work. Encourage your students to submit editorials on issues that are important to them to a local newspaper or the school newsletter.

Writing an Advertisement

1. Explain that although many advertisements may look different from a formal paragraph or essay, they need to be organized and developed like other forms of persuasive writing so that the reader can follow the writer’s logic and point.

2. Share with your students advertisements from many different sources and formats. Ask families to help collect ads. Focus on the sentences in these ads.
   - Stress the importance and strength of action verbs and catchy words or phrases. Discuss how they help get the audience’s attention.
   - Ads sometimes include sentence fragments. Explain to students that sometimes advertisements break the rules to make a point, for emphasis, or to save space.

3. Display Tool 9-1k and discuss these examples of advertisements. Point out that the two examples are written for the same product, but one is written for radio and the other for a newspaper. Discuss how the format is different depending on how it will be used.

4. Working as a class, individually, or in pairs, have students pick a product to write an advertisement for. The product can be real or imaginary. They should choose whether their ad will be in print, on the radio, on TV, or another medium.

Additional Ideas

- Write two persuasive paragraphs on the same topic—one from each opposing point of view.
- Write a persuasive essay from the point of view of the person you are trying to persuade.
Write a persuasive essay for younger students; organize a class visit so students can read their essays with and to the younger students.

Write persuasive essays about content-area subjects to demonstrate mastery of content and concepts.

Write a persuasive essay that could be read on a radio program; create a “pretend radio station” as a way to practice. Another suggestion is to use a digital voice recorder to record students reading their essays, and then upload them to a free Internet radio station or the school’s Web site.

9-2 Supporting an Opinion with Facts

Students use this strategy to share and support their opinions in writing.

Prerequisites: 9-1 Persuasive Writing

Before Class

- Make overhead transparencies and student copies of Tools 9-2a and 9-2b.
- Have available 5” × 8” index cards and two colors of highlighters.

During Class

1. Display Tool 9-2a and read the examples aloud to your students. Explain to your students that opinion writing
   - Is often very open-ended and less structured than other forms of expository writing;
   - Includes statements of personal belief about ideas, objects, events, food, and so on, or about situations encountered in life;
   - Is validated by knowledge of a subject, life experiences, likes, and dislikes.

2. Use this opportunity to teach or review the difference between facts and opinions by creating a simple two-column chart. Choose a topic and write a topic sentence at the top; write the word facts at the top of one column and the word opinion at the top of the other. Ask your students to help you fill in the two columns with information from the examples—always stopping to ask students to justify their choices. Later, when students write their own opinion paragraphs or reports, ask them to identify their facts and their opinions by highlighting them each in a different color.

3. Ask students to look for the topic sentences and the key/star ideas that explain or prove the topic, as well as the E’s that provide additional evidence and examples to support the opinion.
4. In a whole-group guided lesson, help students create an opinion paragraph using an informal outline and one of the topic sentence strategies found in Section 4. Remind students that it is always best to start by identifying the key/star ideas, and then adding the dashes and dots needed for elaboration. Use a prompt from the Bonus Tool CD or ask students for suggestions.

5. Writing, speaking, and listening to classmates are important ways to share opinions. Use this time to help students learn how to respect the opinions of others without necessarily agreeing with them.

Writing a Critique

Like opinion paragraphs and reports, critiques give writers an opportunity to rely on personal observations, insights, and knowledge of a genre to pass judgment on architecture, plays, movies, art, music, video games, poetry, and so on.

1. Read and discuss the two examples of critiques on Tool 9-2b.

2. Practice writing critiques with students as a whole-class activity before asking them to work on their own.

- Show students a picture, have them listen to a piece of music, read an article or other text, or watch a movie on a subject related to something they are studying.

- Give students questions (or help them create questions) to help them make judgments and form opinions. For example:
  - Does the organization of the piece make sense?
  - Is it trying to make a point, and does it succeed?
  - How powerful are the graphics and illustrations?
  - Does the piece surprise me or disappoint me?
  - How does it compare to similar works?
  - Is it better or worse than other pieces, and in what way?
  - What are others saying or writing about this?
  - Is it worth reading, seeing, buying, and so on?

- Tell students that it is important to elaborate on the personal impressions that they share—not to just make a statement about how they feel. They should support their judgments with references to the text or to their personal experiences.
3. Have students develop critiques while working in small groups, with partners, and individually. Critiques can be a fun way to encourage discussion.

4. Consider developing a classroom bulletin board about movies, books, articles, poems, songs, and plays. Make critiquing a regular class activity. Keep 5" × 8" index cards handy. On the card's back, students can write informal outlines and drafts for short paragraphs that critique movies, books, songs, artists, and so on. On the front, students write a polished version of their critiques. Display good critiques for all to enjoy, and submit them to the school newspaper for publication.
Effective, Multisensory Writing Strategies Improves:
• Writing
• Reading
• Listening
• Speaking
Easy Two-Column Notes

Rules

1. Include the title and the date.
2. List main ideas, topics, and key words on the left.
3. List information and subtopics on the right.
4. Indent subtopics and leave plenty of empty space.
5. Remember that each paragraph has a key idea.
6. Use words and phrases.
7. Use abbreviations when they are appropriate.
8. Make notes neat and complete.

Topic = Maps

A map – picture of an area
- shows where things are located
- uses special marks and symbols
- design depends on purpose

Political map – shows earth divided into countries, states
- indicates capitals and major cities
- uses different sizes of type
- for rivers, lakes, cities, etc.
Mohandas Gandhi

A tiny, smiling man who wore a simple white robe—that was Mohandas Gandhi. He carried no weapons and commanded no army. Yet he forced the great British Empire out of India.

Gandhi knew that the British Empire was powerful. Indians could not fight the British with guns. But Gandhi had another plan. He organized Indians and told them not to obey laws that were unfair. He also told them not to fight back. His method was known as nonviolent resistance.

Indians followed his lead. They organized strikes and protests around the country. This created many problems for the British. Many Indians were arrested, but they did not fight. Instead, they simply filled the jails.

Gandhi led the peaceful protests. The English laughed at this man with his calm, peaceful ways. But in 1947, they were forced to grant India its independence. Mohandas Gandhi had helped to bring it about. His idea of nonviolent resistance had won, as he said it would. Martin Luther King, Jr. believed that this same idea would work for black Americans.

Source: Rita Hakim, *Martin Luther King, Jr. and the March Toward Freedom*
**Personal Narrative**

**Start by...**

- picking the **title** that supports your topic, message, and the story. Next, write an **introduction**.

| Introduction |

**Then...**

- tell the **story**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Quick Sketch *Quick Notes*

**In your conclusion...**

- help your reader remember the **message**, the reason for sharing your story.

| Conclusion |

---

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My Summer Vacation
Surviving an Embarrassing Situation

Embarrassing things happen to me all the time. After I made a very silly mistake in P.E., I was so embarrassed that I didn’t think I would ever go back to school. But my brother convinced me that I could.

P.E. at our school is competitive. We play games as if our lives depend on them. Sometimes it takes at least an hour to get over a loss. Last week in P.E. was no exception. The basketball game was so close. Red Shirts would take the lead and then the Green Shirts would score and tie it up.

Ms. M. finally put me into the game with minutes to go. I was happy on the bleachers and nervous to go out on the court. I didn’t want to make a mistake. But I joined the Red Shirts anyway, determined to help them win.

Within seconds I had intercepted a pass and started to dribble down the court. I could hear my teammates Screaming and yelling. Their cheers gave me confidence. I neatly laid the ball up and scored.

I was jumping up and down waiting for my teammates to run out and congratulate me. I couldn’t understand why the opposing team was as excited as I was. For a minute I thought, jezz they sure are being good sports for a change.

Then I realized what I had done. It finally dawned on me. I had made the shot in the wrong basket, giving the Green Shirts the win!

When I got home that night, my brother, who goes to college, asked me what I was moping around about. I didn’t want to tell him, but I blurted out the whole story, sharing all of the details.

I waited for him to laugh and give me a hard time. Instead, he just smiled and said that it could have been a lot worse.

“When I was in junior high, we were playing for the championship game. Same situation—the score was tied and there was a jump ball with five seconds to go. The ball came to me and I took off and scored the lay-up. I scored the lay-up in the other team’s basket and they won the championship,” he told me.

“Oh, that must have been awful.”

“You know, it was, but only for a little while. Now, my friends and I joke about it.”

I didn’t really want to go back to school the next day, but with a push from my brother, I made it.

I hated feeling silly. It was hard walking back into the gym for P.E. class, but now I know that I am not the only one who ever scored a basket for the wrong team.
# Personal Narrative Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Message as Purpose</th>
<th>Entertain or motivate readers by sharing an experience that taught you a lesson, influenced you, or changed your opinion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sample Prompts     | 1. A “random act of kindness” refers to a time when someone helps someone else unexpectedly, without asking for anything in return. Write a personal narrative describing a time when you were the recipient of a “random act of kindness.”  
2. Write a personal narrative explaining how you or someone you know “did the right thing” when it meant making a difficult or unpopular choice.  
3. Using friendship as a theme, write a personal narrative about how you met one of your friends and explain how you became and stayed friends. |

| Pattern             | Title  
|---------------------|--------|  
|                     | Introduction  
|                     | Quick Sketch  
|                     | Quick Notes  
|                     | Conclusion  

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### Personal Narratives

**Voice**
- Evokes feelings
- Sets the tone
- Shows good word choice
- Varies sentence structure

**Feelings**
- PRIDE
- SURPRISE!
- Contentment
- Anxiety

**Description**
- Vivid
- Paints a mental picture
- Detailed
- Shows, not tells, what happened
- Realistic

**Message**
- Insights
- Beliefs
- Lessons about life
- The point you want to share with your reader

---

Overhead provides key elements of personal narratives.
Personal Narrative

Random Acts of Kindness

I thought that all of the stuff about “random acts of kindness” was a bit silly until a random act of kindness saved my day.

It was the last week before final tests. I was struggling in math. My mom had been trying to find a tutor to help me, but tutors were all booked up. I had even gone to my teacher and gotten extra help, but I still needed practice. To pass the class with a C average, I was going to need to score at least an 85 percent. My mom said I had to have a C in order to go to basketball camp. I sat through class getting more and more confused and more and more stressed. I couldn’t understand why I needed this stuff anyway.

“Hey, are you okay?” The voice was Will, the head of the Math Club. He probably thought I was pretty stupid. I sure felt stupid!

At first, I was afraid to answer. I didn’t think I could speak without choking, and someone being nice made it even worse. Finally, I managed to tell him that I was okay.

Will told me that math can be kind of confusing, especially if it isn’t your thing. Although he was already late for track practice, he said he could help me for a couple of minutes.

I had a choice. I could flunk the test and not get to go to camp, or I could swallow my pride and accept some help.

“I hate to make you late, but I really could use a little help,” I said.

Over an hour passed by. Will really helped me and the formulas actually started to make sense. I thanked him for helping me. I apologized for getting him into trouble with his track coach.

“I’ll just have to run a lot of extra sprints. I was glad I could help.”

At the end of the week, I took my test. I not only passed, I earned a 90 percent. I hate to admit it, but without Will’s help I wouldn’t be going to basketball camp this year.

Because of Will, I learned that reaching out can make a real difference in someone’s life. From now on, I will practice random acts of kindness wherever I can.
Personal Narrative Example

An Unexpected Friendship

Friendships sometimes happen in the most unusual way.

During my freshman year, I campaigned for class president. I was already the captain of the junior varsity girls’ basketball team and the president of the Drama Club, but I wanted to see what it would be like to be a class president. I didn’t know what it would involve, but it seemed like a good idea when my friends nominated me.

The week of the election, I debated a girl named Audrey. I didn’t even know her. We had never even had a conversation before I met her the morning of the debate. She hung out with a different group, dressed differently, and had a number of piercings. Because she dressed in dark clothes, mostly black, I assumed that she and I were opposites.

As we prepared for the debate and during the event itself, I was surprised and impressed with Audrey’s ideas. Most of them were great. In fact, I felt a little embarrassed at my responses. I knew that Audrey really deserved to win.

When the principal announced the winner on Friday, the most deserving person lost and I won. I felt good that my classmates thought I could handle the job, but I kept thinking about what might be best for the school.

Since the elected class president in our school gets to choose a vice president to serve with them, I decided to ask Audrey. I realized that I might be more comfortable with one of my friends, but I knew there was only one person for the job.

“Thank you for voting for me,” I said, as I stood in front of the freshman class. “I will try hard to do a good job. To make sure I do, I plan to add Audrey Vandering to my team as our class vice president.”

I think she was as surprised as the rest of the school. I know now that she was a little unsure about working with someone like me. But she said that she was willing to give it a try.

We met twice a week. We worked well together. As we talked and made plans for school events, we laughed at how much we had in common. We both enjoyed books, and we had both had to live without one of our parents. I learned that she wrote poetry and had already sold some of her paintings.

When we did not agree, we discussed options and went with the most practical choice. Audrey wasn’t afraid to deal with sensitive issues at school.

She was the one who came up with the ideas for bringing together some of the diverse groups of students in our school. She arranged a school-wide Ropes Course competition. Teams took on an obstacle course that required students to trust one another. It was a great first step in getting everyone together.

After the ropes competition, we planned a dance-a-thon fundraiser. Audrey found a DJ who played every kind of music—punk rock to country. We both met with local businesses and asked for prizes. All of the winners received gift certificates for a shopping spree!

I think back to my friendships in the past. I had good friends. Most were a lot like me. I still call them friends, and I spend most of my free time with them. But running for class president gave me one more good friend. Our friendship may surprise some, but not those who know us best.
# Persuading

**T = Turn Classrooms into Gyms!**

| ★ | better shape | - not enough exercise  
|   |              | - 25% kids obese  
|   |              | - get in shape while learning  

| ★ | better students | - increased blood flow to brain  
|   |                | - won’t fall asleep in class  

| ★ | not too distracting | - only in lecture or study hall  
|   |                    | - can read  
|   |                    | - benefits outweigh distractions  

**C = Creative way to solve obesity problem**

---

Almost every time I open the paper I read about how Americans are getting heavier with each passing year. Health experts are especially concerned about kids and teens becoming lazy and overweight from too many video games, too much television, and not enough exercise. Some experts say that up to 25 percent of our country’s kids are obese. I have the perfect solution: install stationary bikes and treadmills in classrooms! That way, school becomes a health club where kids lose weight and get in shape as they learn! I have even read that exercise makes the brain work better because of increased blood flow. Plus, it would eliminate the problem of kids falling asleep or text messaging in class. Agreed, you would have to limit the classroom “gyms” to lecture classes or study hall since kids wouldn’t have a free hand to write. They could flip pages, though, so reading wouldn’t be a problem. Sure, all the heavy breathing and flying sweat might be distracting, but the benefits would be well worth it. It must be obvious to everyone reading this that turning classrooms into workout gyms is a creative way to solve the weight problem many kids face today.
**Either–Or**

Strategies for Persuasive Writing

Use the word *Either* and the word *Or* to help you remember some of the popular techniques used to persuade a reader or a listener.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>Everyone is doing this or buying this!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Science is in. Everyone who is anyone wants to know about life, the planets, the world and how it all works. They want to feel confident and in control.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Intelligent people agree with this!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>You are intelligent, so join other intelligent people. Science is all about thinking and creating.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>This is good for you or someone you know!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Studying science is good because knowledge can keep you out of danger and help you make good choices.</em></td>
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<tr>
<th>H</th>
<th>Happiness: Doing this will make you happy!</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Studying science is just plain fun. You will learn so much interesting stuff. And you will like the research and the experiments.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>Entitled: Everyone is entitled to this. It is their right.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>People are entitled to study any kind of science that interests them.</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Reason: Many good reasons prove this is so!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Studying science is a great idea for many reasons.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>O</th>
<th>Opposing point of view is wrong. I see their point, but the facts disprove their position.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Some people think science has made things worse, but they couldn’t be more wrong. It’s true that science has caused some problems, but it has solved so many more.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Responsibility: This is an important responsibility!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>It is your responsibility to be informed in a world where new things are created every day. It is your responsibility to be informed and have an opinion.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Choose Science?

Want to make a good decision for yourself and for your life? Then spend more time and energy studying science on your own and at school. Studying science enhances our lives by teaching us how the world works. Learning about science gives us four important life skills: It helps us make good decisions, creates a curiosity for learning, gives us access to common, universally accepted facts, and keeps us safe.

First of all, when we understand how something works, we feel more secure dealing with it or making decisions about it. Take weather. If we can identify a cumulus cloud and notice it is becoming dark, we know that bad weather is coming. Another example is human nutrition. Knowing how the body uses fat, protein, and carbohydrates in our food allows us to make healthy choices about what to eat.

Science feeds curiosity, helping people get excited about learning. Even if it may seem unpleasant to some people, it is hard to not be curious when dissecting a frog or a pig. Seeing its organs, some similar to our own, is fascinating. So is watching chemicals mix and react in chemistry. Doing science creates a curious spirit which helps us become lifelong learners. Knowing there are still discoveries to be made adds extra motivation.

Studying science also gives us a base of knowledge about objects in our world, the ground we walk on, animals, humans, the solar system, and more. When things are proven by strict, scientific methods over and over again, they become fact. For example, mammals are animals that give birth. This is a fact we all accept. These universally accepted facts help us all feel secure in our world. They give us a base to stand on and a common language with which to communicate.

Finally, science can keep us safe. Knowing how things work can help us avoid danger. For example, if someone knows the habitat of rattlesnakes, he or she will know how to avoid them while hiking. Or, if people know the symptoms of altitude sickness, they will know to turn back when their friend starts sweating, turns red, and feels dizzy or nauseous.

Studying science is synonymous with learning how the world works. People who want to enhance their lives and learn important skills will choose to study science. Be one of those people. Read science articles, subscribe to a science magazine, check science books out at the library, take challenging science courses, and watch science documentaries on television. You will be glad that you did.
Analyzing and Evaluating Persuasive Essays

Prompt: The school leadership team at U.S.A. High has $5600.00 to use for school improvement. One option for spending the money is to replace the tile and carpet at the entry of the school. Both are worn and unattractive. Some members of the school community feel that the entry gives visitors a bad impression and sets a negative tone for everyone.

A second option is to spend the $5600.00 on reusable frames for artwork that students have completed. The artwork will, according to the student council, improve school spirit and give everyone a sense of pride. The artwork will be displayed throughout the school.

Both projects need the full $5600.00, so splitting the funds is not an option.

Write a short persuasive essay on how the money should be spent. Take the point of view of anyone in the school who might have an opinion on this topic.

Essay 1

Support the Art Project

The students of U.S.A. High School seem to have more budding artists among the student body than the average high school. This last year, U.S.A.’s art students placed in almost every category at State Show and had five first-place, eight second-place, and four third-place winners, more than any other high school in the region. We, the sophomore class officers, are proposing that the school leadership team use the $5600.00 allocated for school improvement to frame and hang student artwork to beautify the entrance and hallways of our high school.

The accomplishments of our art students should be shown to parents, educators, all students, and the community. Often, the best athletes and the honor roll students among us are given much recognition, but sometimes those talented in the arts remain unnoticed. It is important to give them the recognition they deserve. It isn’t every student who can compete at the state level and win.

More than that, students should take pride in their accomplishments and we can empower them by showing their wonderful work. The “U.S.A. Art Project” will be a source of school spirit and pride for everyone. It is always great to be able to point to a student accomplishment and say that that student attends U.S.A. High School. Who wasn’t happy and bursting with pride when Annie McDougal’s oil portrait, a state first-place winner, was on the front page of the local newspaper, complete with a half-page story of her love of art? Think, then, how great it will be to walk the hallways and see all of the student artwork that hasn’t yet been seen except at contests.

Another benefit of our artwork display will be to inspire other students who may have ability, but haven’t yet tapped into it to begin their own art projects. Artwork has the unique power to inspire its creator and others, to lift the human spirit out of the ordinary day-to-day routine, to beautify its surroundings, and move others to create.

There is no other project proposal before us that is as worthy of our investment as the work of the students of U.S.A. High School! Let’s get behind this project and urge our leadership team to move forward this month and make the art project a reality for the good of the students, their parents, the community, and our school.

(continued)
Analyzing and Evaluating Persuasive Essays (continued)

Essay 2

Beautify the School

“One never has a second opportunity to make a good first impression!” The school leadership team at U.S.A. High School knows this is true. The team is clear that first impressions are lasting ones, and that the school improvement funds allocated this year must be used to replace the carpet and tile at the doorway of the school.

On January 20, we, as a student body, are going to vote on which project will be given the monies allocated for school improvement for the current calendar year. Our school leadership team is making this specific recommendation for very sound reasons. We are asking for your attention, consideration, and, importantly, your vote!

As you know, the school leadership team is comprised of student representatives: the president of the Student Council, a representative from each class, freshman through senior, and then, adults including the football coach, an English teacher, an elected parent and the principal. All members of the team have been a part of several school evaluations from outside the school over the last two years that have noted the entrance to U.S.A. High School is an eyesore. The brown tile is faded and chipped in several places and the green carpet has become almost threadbare. While the tile was of good quality, the carpet was not the best grade for the amount of money spent on it originally and has worn rapidly. The school evaluators have noted the unattractiveness of the entry to the school and the potential for it to become a safety concern.

The leadership team at U.S.A. High is advocating that the $5600.00 available for school improvement be used to re-tile and carpet the entrance and hallway, and to use the school colors as part of the project. The team realizes that there are other proposals being put forth to beautify the school and make it more attractive and eye-appealing. However, the team believes that since the entryway as it is could quickly become a safety hazard, this project supercedes all others at this time. In a phrase: Safety rules! The evaluations of the last two years only confirm the team’s stance. The leadership team also wants to beautify the entrance at the same time it is solving a safety issue.

Since the funds cannot be split, U.S.A.’s leadership team wants to use all of the money for the carpet and tile, and then they are proposing to organize several fundraisers for other school beautification projects to follow.

The team is sensitive to the other proposals being advocated, but clearly is asking for your vote to remove the entry eyesore, not only for first impressions, but for your safety and welfare. Please vote for safety, beautification, school colors, and “first things first.” Your school leadership team is counting on your vote!
Writing to Argue and Convince

Example 1:

Seating Charts

Some teachers let the students on our team sit anywhere they want. This may seem like the right thing to do, but it really isn't. In the rooms where there aren't any seating charts, I feel pressured to sit by friends. Many of my friends like to talk and pass notes. If I am near them, I can't just ignore them. I also cannot pay attention to the teachers. In the rooms where teachers use seating charts there seems to be more peace and order. The teachers know how to make sure that everyone sits in a good place. I like my friends, but I also want to learn what I need to know. If I sit away from my friends, I can concentrate. More teachers should think about their policy on where the students sit.

Example 2:

School Hours

Many things in schools across our country have changed in the last twenty years: technology, the media center, food in the school cafeteria, computer graphics lessons, research on the Internet. But school hours and the school year have not changed. High school students still go to school between 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. from August to June, Monday to Friday.

School hours should change because what high school students do and how they live has changed. First of all, many students have jobs. Some, like me, do not get home until late at night. If schools were open at different hours, I could take all the classes that I need. If, for example, the school stayed open until 7:00 each night, I could come in at 9:00 and leave at 5:00 to get to work. This way I could get my sleep and earn my credits.

If the high school was open all year round and on Saturdays, I could take a lot of different classes that fit my schedule. Now I have to take whatever class is open. I try to plan ahead and sign up for what I really want, but it doesn't always work. Last year, I tried to get into an advanced math class but it didn't fit my schedule.

I work because I have to work, not just for the fun of it. Many young people are like me. We have special responsibilities that do not fit with the “old way” of doing things. Those who run the schools should do more to get in touch with what high school students really need.
Writing an Argument

Example 1:

Neuter Your Pets!

The world is overrun with stray cats and dogs. Do you realize what happens to most of these animals? Many are euthanized. In our city alone, 36,000 animals are put to sleep each year because there are not enough people for all the stray pets. If this shocks you then you don’t want to travel to other places where strays roam every city street. There’s just one way to stop this problem: pets need to be neutered. Neutering, a procedure that sterilizes a pet so it can’t reproduce, not only helps solve the pet overpopulation problem but it’s also good for your pet. Just one un-neutered stray cat can be responsible for hundreds of kittens in just a few years. She has kittens, then her kittens have kittens, and so on until her family takes up a city block! The fewer strays that are born, the fewer homeless animals and animals that need to be euthanized. Besides decreasing overpopulation, neutering pets has been shown to make them live longer and have fewer medical problems. Female dogs and cats don’t suffer from mammary cancer or uterine infections. They also do not come into heat. If you have lived with a female dog in heat you know what a hassle that can be. Male animals have fewer prostate problems. Finally, neutered pets behave better. They are mellower and tend to fight less. Do the world and your pets a favor; have them neutered so no more dogs and cats get sick, become homeless, or worse yet, get euthanized.

Example 2:

Head to the Library

You may think it is old-fashioned to go to the library for research, but there are advantages the library offers that the Internet cannot. One advantage is that you can get help and information from librarians. Librarians are fascinating people who know a lot about many different topics, things like local history and new scientific inventions. Most of all, they know how to locate information that a good research project needs. Another advantage is that you get to research at a slower pace. You might discover small but interesting details or side notes that sometimes get lost in the efficient, bulleted lists of Web sites. Finally, there is something wonderful about being around books. They are like mini treasure chests that you search out, gather up, and carry back to your table. You choose the one that looks most promising and open it up. As you feel the pages slide between your fingers, you anticipate the treasures it holds. The Internet may, in some ways, offer a more efficient way to research, but don’t count the library out. It’s a place you will want to visit before and during your research project.
Activity: Charting an Argument

Step 1: Use a chart or columns to map out an argument.

Decision: Should I get a job and save for college or run track each spring while in high school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arguments for getting a job</th>
<th>Arguments against getting a job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have more money for college which equals a smaller student loan. Studies show that most college graduates have a large debt upon graduation.</td>
<td>Don’t have enough time to join the track team, work, and keep up with grades.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience in the “real world.”</td>
<td>Still a kid, should enjoy my friends, school, and extracurricular activities while I can.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will meet new people.</td>
<td>Interesting, but I don’t have time for new friends. Having a hard enough time keeping up with current friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s the responsible thing to do.</td>
<td>It appears to be, but maybe being responsible is really being true to your interests? Mom is always saying to be true to yourself!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad wants me to do it.</td>
<td>Maybe if I am really good, I might get a track scholarship? I will be in better physical shape if I run track.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Turn the information into an argumentative essay.

Run Track or Work?

I am facing a big decision. I want to run varsity track but I also need to work to save money for college. I went to tryouts and made the team, which was really exciting. I can’t handle working, running track, and keeping up my grades at the same time, so something has to go and it can’t be the grades. Now I have to decide between running track every spring and working to earn money for college. Both have benefits. Maybe weighing the two, side by side, will help me decide.

The biggest reason to work instead of running track would simply be money. It would feel great to start college with money in savings for books, housing and food. Mom and Dad said they will cover tuition, but the rest is up to me. If I don’t earn money, I would have to take out student loans and I have heard horrible stories about how it can take years and years to pay them off.

Working would also give me experience in the “real world.” I would learn how to be responsible with my time and money and how to be an employee. I would get to meet new people and maybe make friends with kids who don’t go to my high school. Finally, working feels like the responsible thing to do. Besides, Dad is really pushing for it.

Despite these good reasons to work, running track has benefits, too. For one, I am still young, so a part of me thinks I should spend time becoming who I want to be, and being a runner is something I really want to be. When else in life do people get the time to explore things? My parents are too busy working their lives away. It seems there is a lifetime for that!

As for the argument of meeting new friends, that sounds good in theory, but the truth is, I don’t have time for my current friends as it is! Adding new friends would just be a hassle.

Yes, working appears to be the responsible choice. Yet, maybe being true to yourself is ultimately the most responsible thing to do. If I really want to run track and I don’t, won’t I always regret it? I know Dad really wants me to work, but Mom cancels that out by always saying, “Be true to yourself.”

The truth is, I really want to run track more than work a job. There are some extra benefits to track, too. For one, I will get in good physical shape. Yet most intriguing is that maybe, just maybe, I could win a track scholarship if I am really good. That would solve some of the money worries. I know it may be a long shot, but I believe if people follow their hearts, they can be surprised by what life brings their way. I’m going for it. Track team here I come!
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